

“We Are in a Time of New Suns”

Interview with adrienne marie brown,
On Being with Krista Tippett, 2022.



adrienne maree brown

She/They - Writer / Activist / Organizer / Doula
author of *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds*, *We Will Not Cancel Us: and Other Dreams of Transformative Justice*, *Pleasure Activism: The Politics of Feeling Good*, and the co-editor of *Octavia's Brood: Science Fiction from Social Justice Movements*.

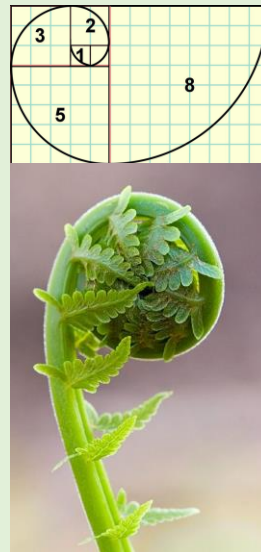
-adrienne marie brown:

- grew up in Evangelical Christian home

- said their parents were in an interracial marriage in the 70s, met in South Carolina.
- their parents encouraged a relationship to nature, took the kids out on hikes etc
- mentions that their relationship to **SPIRITUALITY** was based in gratitude and compassion, and their parents helped them cultivate this. Still with them today.
- This spirituality was important, helped them when they encountered racism.
- **OCTAVIA E. BUTLER** huge influence on their writing.
- octavia was a science fiction writer, brown mentions that at the time of her writing, she was one of the only black women writing science fiction.
- this really resonated with adrienne marie brown, and she felt empowered as a young black person herself.

Interview Key Themes:

- **OCTAVIA BUTLER** rules and was ahead of her time, predicting a number of modern-day phenomena, from "Trumpism to Big Pharma"
- **EMERGENT STRATEGY**: book title, and way of looking at the world coined by adrienne marie brown
- **NATURE CAN TEACH US**: resilience, how to live, how to die and how to relate to the world in a better way



Photograph of Ostrich fern by Tim Lyons

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- **EMERGENT STRATEGY**: book title, and way of looking at the world coined by adrienne marie brown – **inspired by Octavia's books that explore the human relationship to CHANGE, : as a model for transformative justice**
- **NATURE CAN TEACH US**: how to live, how to die and how to relate to the world in a better way

...predicting a number of modern-day phenomena, from "Trumpism to Big Pharma"...paraphrased from, "Why Octavia E Butler's novels are so relevant today"

By Hephzibah Anderson, 18th March

2020. <https://www.bbc.com/culture/article/20200317-why-octavia-e-butlers-novels-are-so-relevant-today>

Octavia E. Butler

Science-fiction writer

author of *Kindred*, *Wild Seed*, *Parable of the Sower*, *Fledgling*,



- Started writing science fiction as a child as a means for escape and a way to entertain herself.
- Watched a B-movie, "Devil Girl from Mars" Which made an impression on her in two ways, she explains, "Geez, I can write a better story than that!" And second: "Somebody got *paid* for writing that story!"
- This made her feel like if they did it, she could do it too.
- Her books seem relevant to today in that they envision ways of creating social and political change in a world that is extremely fragmented and deteriorating
- Her books have been banned from many American Prisons, because they often depict autonomous black women protagonists, and critical ideas of hierarchies of power like racial injustice.
- Her books were also very important as they pushed beyond status quo ideals of heteronormativity
- In *Fledgling* for example, she writes about a polyamorous community

Have any of you read her books?
Any cool themes?

Octavia E. Butler, notes on *Parable of the Sower*,
"This is the coming-of-age story..." ca. 1989.

Huntington Library, Art Museum, and Botanical Gardens © Estate of Octavia E. Butler

© Estate of Octavia E. Butler

Ignorance Poverty
Disease
Hunger
Suspicion
Hatred
War

This is the
coming-of-age
story of a woman's
struggle to help the
free poor of her
time to unite, arrogance
help one another wealth
and partner Unenlightened
the Earth — Self-interest
restoring it, Inertia
not Fear
subduing it The elements
Swirl around them but their enemies
are the rich and the free poor themselves

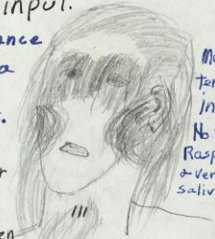
Octavia E. Butler, notes on Oankali for the
Xenogenesis trilogy, ca. 1985.

Huntington Library, Art Museum, and Botanical Gardens © Estate of Octavia E. Butler

Sensory Tendrils around
ears, eyes, mouth
and breathing slits
on throat (closed during
speech) These are tough
fibers that protect delicate
openings and intensify
sensory input.

The appearance
is more of a
mask than
of hairiness.
Tendrils can
come together
and appear to
be slightly
darker, unbroken
flesh, or they can wave free or
clutch at objects, examining them
microscopically

Mouth
tendrils
inside.
No teeth.
Raspy tips
& very acid
saliva



"Emergence is the way complex systems and patterns arise out of relatively simple interactions."

- adrienne marie brown

WHAT IS EMERGENT STRATEGY:

- *Emergent Strategy* is an examination of how social movements can be made with sustainability as a model, to resist power structures (based in white supremacy).
- *Emergent Strategy* celebrates change, continuous self-reflection and critical thinking,
- This idea is inspired by the miracles of nature and collective leadership and thinking as a way to approach social justice work in a transformative way.
- It acknowledges the importance of **multiplicity, complexity and nuance** in our approach to the people and things around us, our environment...

"Transformative justice will be a lot of us learning the skills to hold conflict within our communities, within our families, within our schools and institutions. We're learning, ourselves, to hold it in different ways." ---Adrienne Marie Brown

Nature as a Teacher

"Everything dies, but that's kind of good. [laughs] It makes for a very rich world. All the richness, all that fecundity, all that beautiful miracle of life, it happens because we live in cycles, not perpetuity."

- adrienne marie brown

Brown:... "and what you're speaking to is the life force, right?

Everything dies, but that's kind of good. [laughs] It makes for a very rich world. All the richness, all that fecundity, all that beautiful miracle of life, it happens because we live in cycles, not perpetuity.

- Talks about mushrooms: grow out of the shit! And interconnectedness, to themselves as structure but also to the surrounding forest

Fractals & the Fibonacci Sequence

Wiki definition of Fractals:

In mathematics, a **fractal** is a geometric shape containing detailed structure at arbitrarily small scales, usually having a fractal dimension strictly exceeding the topological demension. Many fractals appear similar at various scales, as illustrated in successive magnifications

Wiki definition of the Fibonacci Sequence:

In mathematics, the **Fibonacci numbers**, commonly denoted F_n , form a sequence, the **Fibonacci sequence**, in which each number is the sum of the two preceding ones. The sequence commonly starts from 0 and 1, although some authors omit the initial terms and start the sequence from 1 and 1 or from 1 and 2. Starting from 0 and 1, the first few values in the sequence are:

0, 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34, 55, 89, 144.

Most interesting part of the interview for me, talks about fractals, a mathematical concept that refers to a never-ending shape or form that has complex patterns that repeat over and over from a macro to micro scale.

Fractals are often found in nature, good example is the leaves of a fern, snowflakes, (under a microscope, their structure resembles what we can see with our naked eye), etc.

Adrienne Marie Brown says, "look at a head of broccoli. Look at a fern. Look at the delta around New Orleans, and then look at how these veins and artery systems move through your system and your heart and your lungs. Look at the spiral shapes on your fingertips, and then look at the shape of galaxies.

And in that way, we can begin to see there are no isolated patterns. The universe has some favorites, and they repeat and they repeat, at every scale. And then people are like, Ohh. [laughs] I'm like, yes, your body is a whole water system. There's all these different formations that are all how to move water. And we're one of them. And I find it very comforting to find myself in one of those patterns.

This idea that things are sort of interconnected and woven in a form of symmetry is

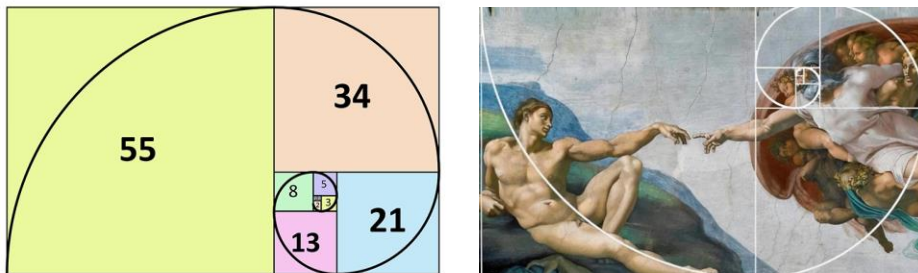
an interesting way of thinking about social justice movements.

Adrienne marie brown talks specifically about an experience that they had while doing political organization in 2004:

"And it clicked for me that it's like, actually, it's a fractal system. And it's layer on top of layer on top of layer. And if none of us are practicing democracy anywhere, it's not going to just suddenly work at the top layer. [laughs] And I got it. And then I realized — so something about smallness, I was able to gain respect for, because I was like, every single large system or structure or network or political protocol, all of it is made up of small things: of humans either having or not having necessary conversations, and humans being willing to stand up for what is right and stand up against what is wrong. It's all these small activities that we need to get great at if we want to actually have anything that would be a real democracy."

- Lack of observable hierarchy in the visual aspect of a fractal
- Interconnectedness
- Important concept for artists
- fibonacci sequence used in art to find the ideal focal point for the scale of your work

Fibonacci Sequence



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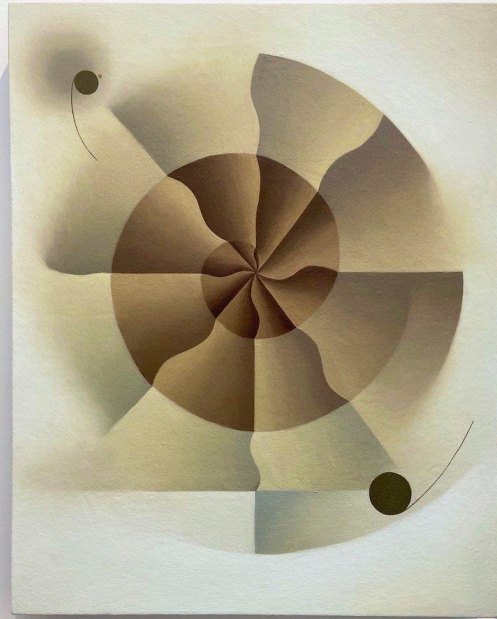
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Themes of
nature, spirituality &
imagined realities in art

Angela Heisch
The Drain
oil on canvas over panel
16 x 20 inches
2020



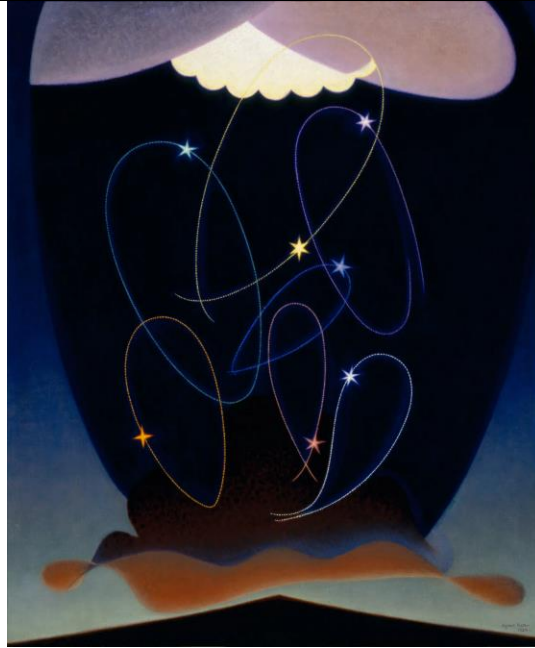
Fibonacci

Symmetry-slight asymmetry in nature

- The podcast me think about how artists both figurative and abstract, create worlds of their own, not always in an escapist way, or trippy spiritual way...help people think outside the normalcy of day-to-day life and speak to the human condition.

Themes of
nature, spirituality &
imagined realities in
art

Agnes Pelton
Orbits
oil on canvas
26 x 30 inches
1934



Agnes Pelton (1881–1961) was a visionary symbolist who depicted the spiritual reality she experienced in moments of meditative stillness. Art for her was a discipline through which she gave form to her vision of a higher consciousness within the universe. - <https://whitney.org/exhibitions/agnes-pelton>

Themes of
nature, spirituality &
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Hilma af Klint
Installation View – Moderna Museet
Malmö



Swedish artist and mystic
Possibly first person ever to make an abstract painting
Went to seances as a young woman
Art as mechanism for spirits to move through her

Themes of
nature, spirituality &
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art

Oreka James
Installation View – COOPER-COLE



James has been painting “officially” since 2012. She is a member of the GTA-based Black Artists Union, also known as the [BAU Collective](#), and a 2016 graduate of Toronto’s OCAD University, where she tells me she was the only Black person out of 72 students in her thesis year.

Oreka James (b. 1991, Toronto, Ontario, Canada) creates paintings and sculptures of portals to alternative realms, in which moments of love, spirituality, the metaphysical and the ephemeral collide. Informed by oralities and folklore, she recalls peoples, places, and stories deeply rooted in their personal life and culture, considering the excavation of histories and futures as a means of wayfinding. Sometimes rendering objects and symbols that hold esoteric knowledge as placeholders for the unknown, James is committed to finding connections between fabricated and literal scapes.

Themes of nature, spirituality & imagined realities in art

Oreka James
Installation View – COOPER-COLE

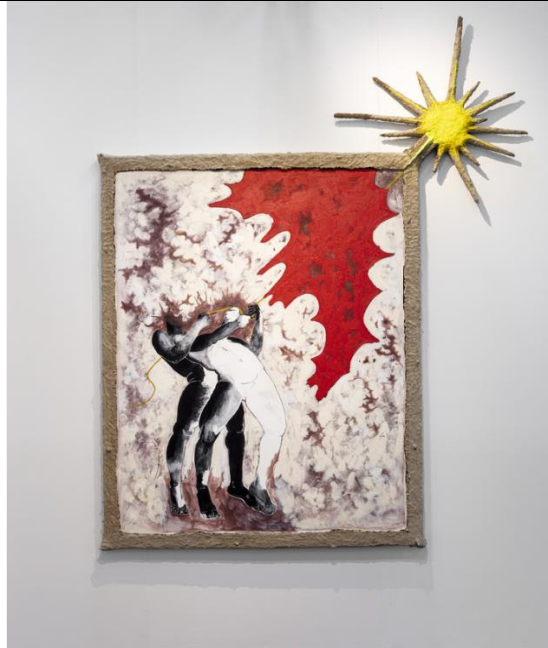


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Oreka James
To be Titled 1
oil and acrylic on canvas, wood and
papier mache frame
106 x 83 x 3 in
2022



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Michele Arismandez, Catlike, oil on
canvas. 16 x 16 (2017 - 2018)



Michele Arismandez was born in Toronto of Afro-French descent and is currently based out of Montreal. Her sister, their relationship and the experiences they shared growing up mixed heritage in Canada is what her new work explores.

Michele Arismandez

Michele Arismandez interrogates modalities of painting to create alternative histories, and new mythologies. Her own identity is explored through contemplating lineage, and complicating the real and the surreal. The colours are living, theatrical, and wordlessly express character cues. Movements, planes, and rhythms make dreams and sacred memories spring to life.

From little sister gallery show curated by madeline beckles