



“PRE-ECLIPTIC PAINTING”

32 x 29
oil on canvas
early 1991

I did this painting in the Mission flat I lived in during the winter of 1991, fresh after graduating from the Academy of Art. This is based on a stunningly cosmic dream I had, of larger-than-life astronomical spheres converging to create a dark opening to another dimension. Kind of an emerging black hole, whose massive gravitational pull causes extreme dilation of time and

space occurring near the event horizon. The millennia sped by, with a circulating phase of moons changing as the centuries flew, as if riding a time machine in the sky! It was epic. No doubt influenced by my astronomy studies at CCSF that season, and thoughts of the upcoming total solar eclipse!

This piece led to a wide ranging series that I explored for several years, featuring the recurring “vesica piscis” motif* of converging geometry.

The archaeological norse ship was added later to give relative scale, and tie in with a motif I had been painting during that time.** It's not necessary for the cosmic theme here, yet serves as a pivoting compositional anchor of sea to skies.

This has always been among my top favourite paintings for its atmospheric paintwork. [and I'm not that crazy for most of my paintings of that year, save a few] The subtleties are mostly lost in the photo — but that is a big aspect that make physical oil paintings special! Scale, texture, hues and tones. [and for a brief time after being finished — scent.]

This now belongs to dear friends Joe and Jane, who were around during the season when I painted this — Joe was my flat mate in the Mission back then. It was a great year of incredible, shared times!***

Ever since, both have expressed love for this piece. They have a good home for it among their lively collection of diverse art!

- * for more about this, see my other art essay; 'Chalice Well'.
- ** consult my June 1990 writing.
- *** see my 1991 essay.

~~ Dean Gustafson, February 2021

p.s. I just read a brand new book by Janna Levin, titled 'Black Hole Survival Guide'. A small volume and a highly recommended read for understanding black holes!