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## PLATINUM CHEESE

### Art Chat with Meg Hitchcock

By Stephanie Chefas  
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Utilizing the sacred text of various religions, **Meg Hitchcock** weaves a tapestry of inspired writings that transcends words. Each work of art is what Hitchcock calls ‘a visual mantra of devotion’—a continuous line of text forms the words and run-on sentences without spaces or punctuation. The end result is a multi-layered narrative that culminates into the human need for connection with the sacred.

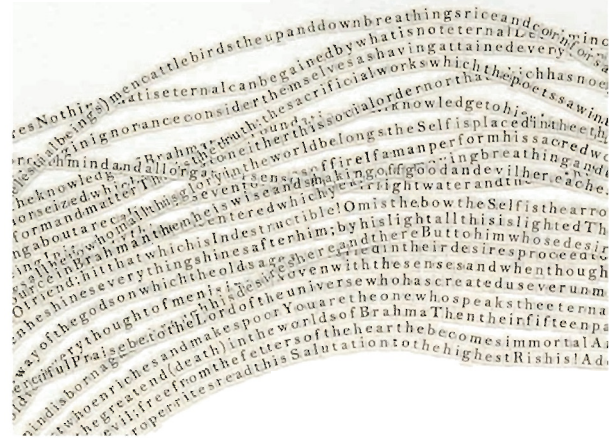
In anticipation of her upcoming group show at Design Matters Gallery entitled ‘*Word Play*’, I had the chance to chat with this unique artist. Here Meg talks about her Christian background, growing up in a New England town, and the message behind her work.

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**You grew up in Springfield, Vermont – an area that’s steeped in Colonial history. What was life like growing up in the New England state and how did it nurture your creative talent?**

Growing up in a small New England town wasn’t terribly nurturing to my creative spirit. Southern Vermont isn’t exactly a cultural mecca, and my exposure to the arts was minimal. But I always had a talent for drawing, and my parents encouraged me to keep at it. Like most parents who have artistic kids, I think they hoped I’d become an art teacher.

**You've mentioned in previous interviews that you were raised a born-again Christian, but prefer not to follow any organized religion. Obviously you are a spiritual person, as noted by the "cross pollination" in your artwork. Was there a specific event that led you to embrace all religions equally and what message are you trying to send us with your work?**



My parents are Christians and we were raised Methodists. When I was a pre-teen, my dad became a very outspoken born-again Christian, and his influence was huge in my life. I became an evangelical Christian in my teens, and spent most of my 20s witnessing for Christ. But I traveled a lot, saw new places, met interesting people, and in doing so, my religious beliefs were challenged. I slowly embraced the possibility that the Christian path was not the only path to God. And with that profound realization, the doors opened for me to examine other spiritual traditions. There are no answers in religion or spirituality, only speculations, most of them absurd and arrogant. God, or Consciousness, as I prefer to call it, is a shared human experience, not unlike love and compassion. If there is a message in my work, it is to raise the possibility that God is nothing but an expression of our humanity. Beyond that, the conversation breaks down into specificities, and it all goes to hell.

**One of your works for "Word Play" reads the poem by the Christian Saint Teresa of Avila, 'Christ Has No Body but Yours', with letters cut from the Koran. Tell us a little about the inspiration behind this work and what significance does the poem hold for you?**

Saint Teresa of Avila was an interesting character. She irks me with her writings, a little heavy on the ego, but her love for Christ was unparalleled. Devotion of this kind impresses me; it speaks to conviction and unwavering belief in oneself, which can also lead to psychotic tendencies. It's a fine line, and mystics often cross it. Her poem is unusual in that it states that Christ's body is your body. This is a very unorthodox expression, since most of the Christian lingo is firmly based in duality. I cut the letters from the Koran to allude to the patriarchal belief system of Islam, which permitted only a handful of female saints a voice.

**If you could hang one artwork from art history in your home or studio, what would it be and why?**

Pontormo's "*Deposition from the Cross*", assuming that I was living in a large house. He captured the restlessness of his time: the unauthentic swooning in the aftermath of Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel and the search for a new visual expression to replace the perfection of the High Renaissance. I love his courage to paint the Deposition with such disregard: he didn't even include the Cross!

**What's a day in the life of Meg Hitchcock like?**

My day is largely spent trying to afford time in the studio. Fortunately I have a husband who is a sculptor and who also likes to work, so we support each other to maximize our studio time.