

The enduring spiritual energy of the 2020 FIDEM US Delegation Medal: its creation and legacy

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Fig 1. 2020 FIDEM U.S. Delegation Medals

For the past few years, I have been making the *Save our planet* series of medals and sculptures. The series expresses my lifelong wish for the beauty of our planet to be preserved as we pass it on to our children and future generations. In 2019, after hearing about the open call for the 2020 FIDEM U.S. delegation medal, I decided to apply, thinking it would be the perfect opportunity to spread my message.

Fortunately, my design was selected for the medal. While I was elated, it wasn't until I was selected that I learned I had to make 55 pieces. Since each piece was very labor intensive, I was quite concerned about the challenging task of creating all of them in a timely manner. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, FIDEM Tokyo was delayed

that year, allowing me to put extra effort into the pieces. In creating each medal, I gained a further appreciation for the beauty of handmade art. Each piece, with its subtle differences and uniqueness, had a special feel, unlike the uniformity of their mass-produced counterparts (fig. 1).

This was the procedure for making my delegation medal. Please also refer to some photos:

- 1) Cut out the copper plate and apply a pattern to the copper plate with a pattern hammer (fig. 2a).
- 2) Anneal the copper plate. Make three-dimensional curves with a mallet and more complex textures with a thin hammer and chisels. Use a Tig welder to make holes while melting the center. Melt



Fig 2a. Cut out the copper plate and apply a pattern to the copper plate with a pattern hammer



Fig 2b. Use a Tig welder to make holes while melting the center. Melt randomly from the edges as well



Fig 2c. Sprouts have formed the shape with a chisel and hammer on the anvil to make one sprout on each end



Fig 2d. Apply green patina with a burner, engrave the letters, splay an anti-tarnish coating, and finally apply gold leaf

randomly from the edges as well (fig. 2b).

3) About 240 leaves are cut out of copper sheets and textured with a hammer and chisels. Shape the leaves with a chisel using a mold that I carved out.

4) Cut out the shape by striking both ends of the copper wire to form two leaves at a time. About 150 sprouts have formed the shape with a chisel and hammer on the anvil to make one sprout on each end (fig. 2c).

5) Silver solder the twin leaves on the buds. Solder the buds on the first medal. Apply green patina with a burner, engrave the letters, splay an anti-tarnish coating, and finally apply gold leaf (fig. 2d).

6) The completed *Save our planet*, a double-sided planet-shaped medal, with slightly different shapes, colors, and sprouting patterns. In the end, 60 medals were made, including spares.

The FIDEM U.S. Delegation Medal is sponsored by FIDEM U.S. and is presented to each national delegate at each biennial FIDEM Congress, and I am very honored and grateful to have been selected to produce it. I hope this presentation will give you a new perspective on my medal besides the long process of making it.

During FIDEM Canada, I shared my journey as an artist navigating the complexities between Western and Eastern cultures in America and Japan. This exploration led me to delve into the depths of our subconscious and manifest consciousness, where I realized that people have a universal cosmic connection that transcends language and culture barriers. I also discussed my creation, *Planet plants*, and its genesis in these concepts.

At FIDEM Tokyo, my focus shifted to the concept of 'sustainable art' in medal making. I discussed my approach to sustainable art; how I recycle, change my production methods, and use electroforming to avoid wasting materials (fig. 3). In addition to incorporating mindfulness and intentionality into the production process, I firmly believe that infusing a work of art with a deeper awareness enhances its value. An art dealer friend shared a valuable insight – a work that exudes strong energy, regardless of its age or artist, will be appreciated, sold at

Fig 3. *Galaxy brooches*, 2022

Electroforming copper, silver, gold leaf, patina, 50 x 60 x 40 mm each

a fair price, and accepted as part of a valuable collection. By adding spiritual value to the work, the work will not become garbage even after it leaves the owner's hands but will find eternal life. This new way of thinking, from a different perspective than the existing 'sustainable art' one, resonates strongly with me.

With the onset of the pandemic in 2020, I became even more aware of the urgent need to communicate the message of *Save our planet* in today's world. This experience reinforced the importance of bringing a deep consciousness to my work. One subject matter that greatly influenced my work was the field of quantum mechanics. Although I understood little about it at first, the more I learned, the more amazing I found it to be. While regular physics explains the workings of the larger-than-atomic world, quantum mechanics describes the subatomic laws that govern the smaller-than-atomic world. What I found most interesting, however, was how quantum mechanics also revealed the existence of parallel worlds, a concept I had been unconsciously exploring in my creations. I also took inspiration from Dr. Chiaki Mukai, who was the first Japanese female astronaut to experiment with growing plants and animals in a different time-space in the universe. For this commemorative medal, I tried to create an alternate world in the 5th dimension (fig. 4).

In this tiny world, the conventional rules of physics are radically different. To illustrate, consider Einstein's theory of relativity, which challenged Newtonian mechanics. Contrary to the simple Newtonian notion that speed equals distance divided by time, Einstein's revolutionary insight revealed that for light, speed does not equal distance divided by time, so that time is not absolute but relative, depending on the speed of the observer. Time also flows differently in space and on Earth. The theory of relativity was a discovery that overturned Newtonian mechanics, which had been the conventional wisdom. In the world of quantum mechanics, the rules of motion are even stranger than we imagine in our everyday lives. Everything, including our bodies, is made up of tiny particles called atoms. Quantum mechanics deals with these particles and their constituents, such as electrons, protons, and neutrons, which obey very different laws from those



Fig 4. *Life science in space-five dimensional world*, 2017
(in honour of Dr. Chiaki Mukai, the first Japanese female astronaut)
Copper, 150 x 150 x 60 mm (when spread out, it becomes 650 mm long)
Exhibited at FIDEM 2018, Ottawa



Fig 5a. *Planet Anju* sketching, 2000



Fig 5b. *Planet Anju*, 2001
Cast iron, 120 x 150 x 150 cm
Pirkkala Medical Center, Finland

we experience in our daily lives. It's a complex area of physics, but what's fascinating is that when we break our bodies down into these tiny particles, they also follow these strange quantum laws.



Fig 6. *Facades and essences*, 1989
Copper, 183 x 135 x 56 cm
Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art, New Paltz NY, exhibiting 2023



Fig 7. *Subterranean soul 4 & 5*, 1993
Copper, steel, #4 (left) 64 x 64 x 110 cm; #5 (right) 76 x 76 x 66 cm
Tenri Gallery, New York

The surprising fact that our very own bodies operate under these unique rules became a realization that has completely changed the way I think.

In quantum mechanics, particles exist in fuzzy 'wave' states until someone observes them, at which point they become 'particles'. The act of observation changes how those particles behave. This idea suggests that the world is made up of this wave-like energy called quantum, and it's shaped by our very own observations – even yours and mine.

This concept echoes the teachings found in Buddhism, such as the idea that 'form is emptiness, and emptiness is form,' and the idea that our thought shapes our existence. The absence of self, where color is emptiness, a state of mind liberated from illusion embodies the essence of *sikisokuzeku* – where matter becomes void, all is impermanent, and my existence finds its grounding in my thoughts. The world is created by you and me, the observer. This may be difficult to understand, but I think it is easier for artists, because when artists start a new piece, it usually starts as a nebulous idea, much like the initial 'wave' state. As we delve into it, sketching, imagining, and pouring our thoughts into it, that concept solidifies into a



Fig 8. *Bridge to the planet*, 2007
Cast iron and bronze, 230 x 210 x 245 cm
Sculpture Garden, Pirkkala, Finland



Fig 9. *Planet plants*, 2014
Copper, gold foil, silver, patina, 60 x 70 x 30 cm

tangible creation, similar to the ‘particle’ state (figs. 5a and 5b). Our conscious effort, imagination, and focus essentially shape this transformation. It’s a compelling reminder of the connection between our thoughts and the material world.

So what exactly is consciousness? It’s an incredibly complex concept, but in scientific psychology theory, it is often divided into two parts: the manifest and the subconscious.

In an old 1989 work of mine in the collection of the Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art at New Paltz NY, titled *Facades and essences*, I explored the idea of a piece that was about half manifest and half subconscious. I originally thought of the manifest and the subconscious mind as 50% and 50% at that time (fig. 6).

However, according to a study by psychologists, what we perceive as conscious thoughts in our minds makes up only about 5% of our consciousness. This is called manifest consciousness. The remaining 95% is in the subconscious mind.



Fig 10. *Six-dimensional square world*, 2020
Copper, gold leaf, silver, patina, 120 x 120 x 40 mm
(when spread out, it becomes 290 mm long)

The subconscious mind is part of an individual’s unconscious mind. It refers to the psychological elements of thoughts, feelings, behaviours, experiences, wishes, and desires that exist in the mind without conscious awareness. It also has an important function and greatly influences people’s behaviour, thoughts, and feelings. Furthermore, the subconscious mind is the one that understands and grasps complex information, such as ideas and concepts of the manifest mind, and creates a compilation of conscious information that makes you act. Isn’t it more unreasonable to think that there is only one set of such consciousness in the world?

These findings have led me to believe that our reality is a virtual construct, almost like another dimension of time and space. Even before I fully grasped these profound concepts, my art took on a unique form – a sculpture representing the invisible realm of the subconscious (fig. 7), which also bridges the connection between our inner universe and the greater cosmos (figs. 8 and 9). Inspired by these thoughts, I have been creating medals that seem to belong to a parallel world, a world in which our subconscious mind is intricately intertwined with the universe at large (fig. 10).

I’ve always created my art from my gut. Recently, learning about quantum mechanics has felt like connecting the dots for what I’ve instinctively known. It is impossible for me to explain quantum mechanics to you with my poor English skills, but I hope I can at least convey how much I try to put my consciousness into my artwork. If, like atoms, our consciousness can change depending on



Fig 11. *Save our planet from COVID-19, 2021*
2022 American Medal of the Year (AMY) Award
from the American Medallist Sculpture Association (AMSA)
Copper, gold leaf, patina, 150 x 150 x 75 mm

the observer, doesn't the value of artwork also change depending on how we perceive it? For example, perhaps the work of a 'great master' exudes a strong energy that can physically affect people deeply.

There are strange moments in my jewelry-making process. When I shop for gemstones, I sometimes find gems that seem visually ordinary but speak to me through their energy. It seems to say 'Buy me, take me!' Although I don't think I'm psychic at all, the jewelry I make with these particular stones quickly finds takers. It's as if there is a resonance to an energy beyond our normal senses that guides our choices. I'm sure that this power exists because of the existence of wave motion, but also because there are still so many things in the universe that are unexplained.

The piece I'm exhibiting at this year's FIDEM is a self-portrait medal (fig. 11). It captures the resilience of life in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. It serves as a reminder to adapt, to live in symbiosis and harmony with all living things, and to face challenges without giving up. In the slow, hands-on process of creating my art, I believe my thoughts and emotions have become part of the medal, leaving a subtle imprint. This energy remains in the metal, growing and spreading from and with the people who encounter it. I'm sharing these thoughts to emphasize how these subtle, unseen aspects are vital to my work. I hope that exploring these energies will help me understand the true power of art and how it can resonate with people, even in its simplest forms.