

Dissolution 7: The Radiant Black Sky



The drop moves towards the heart center where the extremely subtle combination of wind energy and consciousness reside. Upon reaching it, the drop encloses between them. All thought stops and one experiences the radiant black sky.

"I visualize all black with a white crack like fault line across my body. The shimmer of black stars starts to come. The hands slowly start to open one by one to receive what is to come."



Dissolution 8: Emptiness



One starts to become conscious again, the clear light of death manifests. This appears as a clear vacuum-like empty sky.

"I visualize the vastness of traveling through space. An open vacuum of blackness with shining stars and colorful nebulae, harnessing the energy of the sun in order to be reborn."

Sculptural Processes

Kombucha Leather

Developed similarly to kombucha tea. Scobys (symbiotic culture of bacteria and yeast), water, sugar, and tea are brewed in a large container and fed once a week. The scobys produce a layer on top of the liquid as a way to protect themselves, which after a month is removed. This thick flat sheet of slime dries into a translucent piece of leather after a week. The leather is colored using different types of tea and food coloring during the growing process. It took almost a year to grow enough leather for the pieces in the exhibition.

Seaweed Textile

Developed from sodium alginate, glycerin, and water mixture then laid over wool roving and sprayed with calcium chloride to harden.

Grown Crystal Textile

Pipe cleaners with rubber mat backing are soaked in a bath of borax and water to crystallize. The mixture is then sprayed with translucent tint spray.

Armature Wire and Wax

Armature wire is hammered down and wrapped with wax thread to create strands that sound like water when a hand is run over them.

Drums

Rawhide is soaked and stretched over a wooden frame and laced together in the back.

Bismuth

Silver charms are dipped into melted down bismuth to create colorful bismuth crystals.

Erik Bergrin The 8 Dissolutions

January 28 - July 10, 2022

Morris Museum



In Tibetan Buddhism, meditating on the eight dissolutions, or eight stages of death, allows the practitioner to prepare their consciousness to move into the cycle of rebirth without fear.

Erik Bergrin first experienced this visualization meditation at a monastery in Nepal, where he was struck by imagery of colors and textures. Through repeated practice, clear visualizations of each dissolution emerged with a corresponding symbolic hand gesture known as a mudra. Each of the pieces in this exhibition is a representation of Bergrin's visualizations realized.

"Meditating on your own death is a way to realize how precious your life is."

Morris Museum

-Erik Bergrin

Dissolution 1: Earth and Sight



The element of earth dissolves. The eye sense power deteriorates. The person ceases to see clearly, unable to open or close their eyes. As the earth element dissolves it evokes the experience of the dying person being buried beneath the earth.

“The visualization of this dissolution brought forth imagery of straps crossing and binding over my body as my arms hung lifeless at my sides sinking back.”



Dissolution 2: Water and Sound



The element of water dissolves. The ear sense power deteriorates. The person can no longer hear sounds. The body can no longer feel the three types of feeling: pleasure, pain, and neutral. The fluids from the body dry up: urine, saliva, blood, and sweat.

“The burning heat of red pain creeps up one arm and the uplifting icy blue creeps up the other, meeting at neutral at my neck. My body starts to shrivel and dry up, like a vacuum sucking away all the fluid leaving the fossilized bones remaining. What hangs in the center is the reminder of the sound of where water once was.”

Dissolution 3: Fire and Smell



The fire element diminishes, the body begins to lose its warmth. The nose sense power deteriorates. The person can no longer smell odors.

“Images of lava washed over me with the sound of a deep drum beat thrumming overtop. The hands embrace under the drum allowing the fire to leave peacefully.”



Dissolution 4: Air and Taste



The air element dissolves and breathing stops. The tongue's sense power has deteriorated, it becomes thick and short, its object taste is lost. The sense power of touch can no longer be experienced. The mind loses its ability to remain upon its object, the body loses the ability to perform physical actions, and all awareness of external activities is lost. In worldly terms, we would describe this person to be dead, no pulse is detected.

“Visions of wispy white felting are evoked, the internal vision a sputtering red and blue flame of a candle burning out. I can feel the colors on my leg.”

Dissolution 5: The Radiant White Sky



The gross forms of consciousness have ceased, and the subtle forms are revealed. The white drop obtained from the father, which has remained at the crown, begins to come down the central channel towards the heart center. The internal experience is of a radiant white sky pervaded by the whiteness of the moon.

“Layers of white coils snake their way up and across my body completely covering me in a sea of white. The black center is slowly swirled in white. The hands frame the one part left of the former body.”



Dissolution 6: The Radiant Red Sky



The red drop obtained from the mother, which has remained at the level of the navel, begins to rise towards the heart. One experiences the radiant red sky. A clear sky pervaded by the redness of the sun.

“For me, it was all about texture. The red sky is revealed as an interlocked cage-like form. My body splits open to reveal a leathery rotting inside. The internal sound of the drum beats on. The red sky feels wet. The hands are open but clamped in a grasp.”