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At the Nexus of Passion and Accuracy: A Vision for the Art-Science Synergy

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Standard modes of scientific communication – the grant proposal, the conference talk, the journal article – follow many formalities of style and tone which often conceal the creativity, intuition, and passion that imbue and motivate the very people who practice science.

This impartial scientific voice is vital in order to standardize the process of sharing and evaluating discoveries so they may be incorporated into a universal scientific worldview, as a grand work in progress. Yet, in popular culture and even in the arts, the very idea of a universal scientific worldview is often derided and even feared as sterile and mechanistic, precisely because of its impersonal voice, and this view can alienate the public and discourage science literacy.

In recognition of this disconnect, there is a growing societal movement to foster overlap between art and science, both in popular and professional circles, as a broader cultural initiative to share insights from scientists with the public. We posit that art which supports science communication is an authentic artistic vehicle to humanize our evolving scientific worldview by connecting it to human intuition and emotion as a shared first-hand experience of education. Specifically, we consider that visual metaphor is a crucial tool for communicating the multifaceted insights of modern science, as it captures the inner enthusiasm of researchers themselves, and thereby qualifies as fine art as a channel for human experience. It is this stance which we call Accurate Passion, and which we offer as a new celebration of and conduit for our current wealth of science discovery which urgently needs to be made palatable and understandable to the public at large. We give examples to support the notion that art which delivers our new flow of foundational knowledge is vital to make that knowledge part of the everyday human landscape, and available for basic reasoning in an educated society. In this manner, didactic scientific art has new and important roles in this post-modern era — roles which carry much heavier potentials than art of the past to shape societal-level attitudes toward environmental stewardship, responsible use of technology, and to give a fuller perspective than ever on the human presence in the context of deep time on earth.