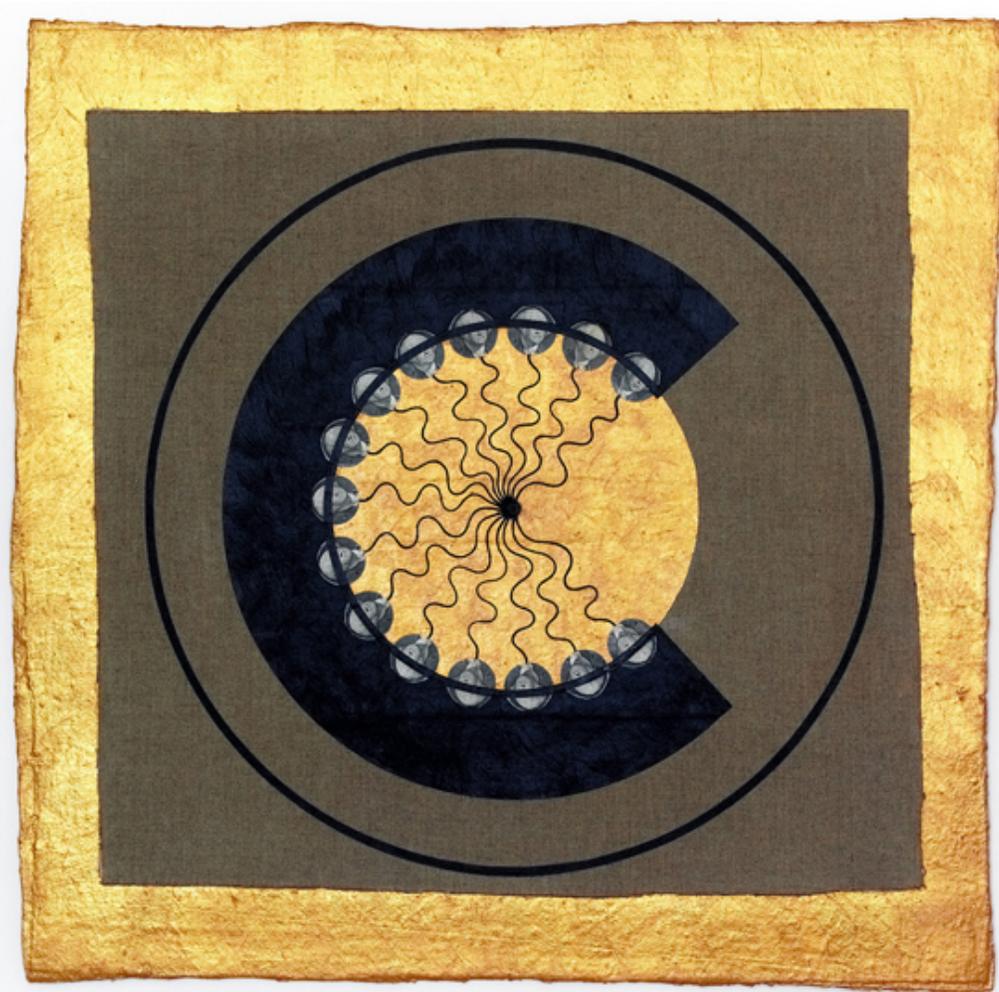# INTERVIEW: MARC BLANE, Financial Statements

By Marcus Papadopoulos

Copyright Mandala—2013—61 x 61cm—linen, acrylic paint, US currency (hand cut), nylon fishing line

Marc Blane, a New York-based artist, explains to **Marcus Papadopoulos** where the idea for his latest thought-provoking work came from and how politicians can and should learn from art.

Q: How did the idea for Financial Statements come about?

Financial Statements grew out of my desire to develop an image that I had been thinking about. I call it "Germ / Sperm". It is an image constructed with George Washington's face cut out from the centre of the Dollar Bill as a circle, his eyes

are then blindfolded by a black stripe and then a wiggly tale is attached. That creates an image that can be seen as a metaphor for a germ or a sperm.

As a sculptor, I look at the Dollar Bill, in its most basic form, as a combination of different materials: cotton, linen and ink. However, the completed design is embedded with symbolic meaning. So, in short, the "Germ / Sperm" is essentially an image that embodies the conundrum of globalised capital. "Germ / Sperm" begs the question: is globalised capital positive or negative energy? Is it a sperm inseminating consciousness with solutions to the pressing issues that face the world today? Or is globalised capital a disease, a germ, adversely affecting modern civilisation? Or is it both?

Q: What are the works in Financial Statements saying?

Artists are often asked what their work is saying. If we could answer that question precisely, we probably would not be visual artists – we would be writers. As artwork, Financial Statements are not trying to say anything precise or verbally specific. The work acts as a visual catalyst to engage the viewer in thought about aspects of our collective economic lives. Those works celebrate capitalism as it exists today, in life and art. The work engages the viewer to think about something that has both destructive and beneficial capacities. Globalisation works great for globalised business, but not for ordinary people, who work much better within their own cultural and social identities. The never-ending search for low-priced labour anywhere on the planet is a race to the bottom.

Q: Has there been an inspiration for the work?

The inspiration for all my work is my desire to keep an accurate historical and visual record of what I see and experience. And the specific inspiration for this work, Financial Statements, is one's primary connection to globalised capital in today's world.

Q: Can politicians learn from art in today's world?

I believe that everybody can learn from art, including politicians, who themselves learn from books, newspapers and, of course, Politics First! I ask what is the purpose of art if not to highlight the intellectual, social, civic and moral issues of our time while keeping the historical record. To learn from art one has to think outside the box. One has to translate visual symbols and, in the process of doing so, one learns to think in non-verbal terms. Visual thinking can help politicians by providing fresh insight into critical issues. Art can help political decision- making in the world today, certainly in the United States and Britain where the Left and Right say, to a large extent, the same thing. Politicians need to be reminded that they were elected for a purpose. In my opinion, politics for the sake of politics and art for the sake of art are without purpose. One purpose that art and politics have in common is, at their best, they exist to serve the citizens.

Q: Will you be staying with the political theme for the foreseeable future?

Yes, I believe so. As previously stated, my work is founded in civic, social, personal and political issues. That is who I am. That is the world as I experience it. I will continue to design artwork that will be a signpost for thought. Consciousness is fundamental to art and politics. My constant is knowing that artists do not make art; artists create a catalyst. Art is the connection between the catalyst and the viewer.