

ELECTRON BLUE 2

An artist studies mathematics and physics

The original ELECTRON BLUE Weblog ran from 2004-2008.
This is its successor.

Mathematics • Physics •
Music • Art • Philosophy •
No Politics

FRIDAY, JANUARY 22, 2010

Lack of Light

A day without solving a math problem is like a day without sunlight, to paraphrase a famous fruit juice slogan. But in the dead of winter, dark January, it's hard to see my math, even though it glows with intellectual light. My studio is a little island of greyish-orange light in a cold sea of darkness. But I have one bright light, and I've set it next to my math books. This is the "WinterBright 2001," a fluorescent fixture designed to combat "seasonal affective disorder."

Seasonal affective disorder is not something recently made up by conniving psychologists. It is an authentic feeling of melancholy and lethargy caused by winter's lack of light. I have always had this, especially when I lived in my homeland of New England, a place where winter never seems to end. I hoped to be more mellow in the Mid-Atlantic area, where the climate is a bit milder, but it wasn't much of a difference. So in about 1999 I bought this optimistically dated light.

Turn it on, and I can see my math. I'm huddling close to it while I pore through yet another review of functions. The union of $f(x)$ and $g(x)$ is $f \circ g$, which doesn't spell "fog" (though that would be appropriate) but stands for "Run function G through function F." F "operates" on G. You can treat a *process* as if it were a single thing. The light from my WinterBright 2001, though, doesn't reach very far.

For years I have held on to an ad I tore from a gadget catalogue. It says, "Turn any room in your home into a sunroom." My old standing studio light, an overheated obstacle that I never failed to bump into, finally fizzled out late last year. I called the catalogue people at the number on the ad and found that the company had gone out of business and been sold to [another similar company](#). I reached a real person on the phone and asked for illumination. In a short while I had bought an expensive new lamp hoping for more light.

It arrived this week and I heaved it up the stairs. Who knew that light was so heavy? It is still in its box, but will soon be deployed. It is waiting, the "BlueMax Lighting High Definition Patented Dimmable Task Lamp and Light Therapy Unit." If this works, my studio with both art and math will be a friendly sunroom and not a campfire in an industrial cave. But what I need to know is, will this mathematical light make me *brighter*?

Posted by Pyraantha at [2:00 AM](#)

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I was inspired to study mathematics and physics after a visit to Fermilab in September 2000. I studied on my own, from books and with helpful friends. If physicists can create art and play music, why can't an artist do physics?

From 2004-2008 I kept a blog about my studies and thoughts, ELECTRON BLUE. Now, after a two-year hiatus, I am back studying, and have returned with ELECTRON BLUE 2.

You are invited to peruse [the archives of the original blog](#).

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