

## CHRISTOPHER BUCKLEY

### Applied Science

Everything adds up according to atomic theory, though we won't be on hand for the final tally . . . spectral extinctions, ice ages melting away, Artaxerxes's fluted columns of Persepolis equal and unbounded dust . . .

But how many actually are doing the math? Who's really interested in infinity, or conversely, satisfied in the zen moment? Most muddle along in brown shoes, with life insurance, debt consolidation, investments in assisted living in Arizona or Arkansas . . . make your payments on time and no need to worry about parallel universes, rifts in a space-time continuum.

In rural precincts there are still votes for animal gods, six days of intelligent design, and everything from nothing—*presto chango* and sanctifying grace. And there are those who believe that whatever presents itself is the result of failings in a former life, though the fact-checking has come up a bit short on that.

More likely we're looking at planned molecular obsolescence, not karma and reincarnation, not Rosicrucians walking golden streets, wearing mystic crowns.

At the Large Hadron Collider, they've traced the collision of protons so that you can believe in God particles on an inductive level, but that doesn't tell us where the clouds have disappeared to in the west along with any hope of rain—why Greenland, Iceland, and the poles are melting like popsicles in July.

For fifty years scientists have been explaining the connection of carbon to corporate profits, to global warming—CEOs figuring to sell their cabanas in South Beach before the residuals from investments wash away with the rising level of the sea.

I keep looking west—hoping the sea clouds circle back and help us catch our breath, hoping they continue to circulate with oxygen and other elemental bits in our blood that pulled us out of the waves, filling our lungs so we could become aware of the sky, take a moment to speculate about our chances, the long shot of endlessness . . . unlikely as every bit of evidence surrounding us is . . .

Christopher Buckley's most recent book is *AGNOSTIC* (Lynx House Press, 2019). *The Pre-Eternity of the World* (Stephen F. Austin State Univ. Press) is due January 2021.

## SUSAN MANCHESTER

*Floating World No. 2: Conveyance*, 2019  
Oil on wood, 20 x 16 in



COURTESY THE ARTIST