The other side of the wind

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The Other Side of the Wind

by

Tanner Mothershead

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the
Master of Fine Arts
degree in Art in the
Graduate College of
The University of Iowa

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Thesis Supervisor: Professor Andrew Casto
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PUBLIC ABSTRACT

My work contains themes involving the duality of the human mind’s ability to transform and mirror the physical realities surrounding it. Through imagery, proximity, and reflection the elements of space, time, and place become modified to transport the viewer into a mental landscape. These surreal narratives pose questions, but no answers. They remain as un-declarative statements for reflection and exploration.

Through biomorphic structures and portals viewers are granted access to otherworldly and private chambers that narrate notions of relationships, advancement, and preservation. These viewing apparatuses allow for a personal encounter with their own head spaces, as well as others that are alien.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEGREES OF ABSTRACTION</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROLE OF NARRATIVE THROUGHOUT HUMAN HISTORY</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALCHEMY</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIGURES</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Andre Masson *Massacre*, 1931 painting Collection Ulla and Heiner Pietzch ............................... 36
Figure 2. Jackson Pollock #23, 1948 enamel on gesso Tate Gallery London, England .............................. 36
Figure 3. Rene Magritte *Son of Man*, 1964 oil on canvas, Private Collection ........................................... 37
Figure 4. Rene Magritte *The Treachery of Images*, 1929 oil on canvas Los Angeles County Museum of Art ........................................................................................................................................ 37
Figure 5. Tanner Mothershead *Head Space*, 2018 acrylic, mixed media New American Painting Issue #137 ........................................................................................................................................ 37
Figure 6. Stanley Kubrick *Monolith*, film still 1968, Stanley Kubrick Productions, Distributed by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer .......................................................................................................................................... 37
Figure 7. Tanner Mothershead *Reflection and Refraction*, 2018 ceramic, (Image) University of Iowa MFA Thesis Collection ........................................................................................................................................ 37
Figure 8. D*Face *Feels So Good*, 2008 screenprint, etching, Gregg Shienbaum Fine Art/ Private Collection ........................................................................................................................................ 38
Figure 9. Tanner Mothershead *Mountain Top Removal*, 2018 ceramic, acrylic, crushed coal NCECA National Juried Student Show 2018 ........................................................................................................................................ 38
Figure 10. Tanner Mothershead *Last Light*, 2018 ceramic, coal, (Image) University of Iowa MFA Thesis Collection ........................................................................................................................................ 39
INTRODUCTION

With this work exploring notions of world forming, I explore the function of the unseen psychical realm from both obsession and curiosity, driven by the desire for both people and place to make sense. My conjured representations of liminal space serve as a mirror to reality where psychological and historical elements layer and become intertwined in biomorphic landscapes that become windows for reflection and exploration.

In this thesis I will layout the historical contexts and influences that form my work by evaluating how visual representation is done and how it relates to the physical and mental worlds. Next I explain certain icons and their contexts over time to justify their selection. These first two sections will give you the understanding of what I have created and how I have arrived at making the work that I do, while the third section will convey why I’ve focused on this particular theme for my art. First, however, I must address the main theme and central connection between all my collective research.

I’ve decided to title this thesis, *The Other Side of the Wind*, in reference to a film directed by a legend in the cinematic industry, Orson Welles, of the same name. The title alone is direct in bringing one to the idea of a particular kind of ethereal space through its carefully crafted ambiguity, but there is much more to it. The life and history of the movie are synthesized together in a documentary called, *They’ll Love Me When I’m Dead*, by Welles and those who were involved in its’ several decades of construction.

Narrator Alan Cumming describes the structure of Welles’s film as being two movies put together. On one hand, it tells the story of the last day in a director’s life who is having issues surrounding his last movie. On the other, it has the very story the director is filming, and both move simultaneously.
What makes this film stand apart is more so the method by which it was made. Welles was recorded as saying, “Everything else I have ever done has been controlled.” Here he capitalizes on the magic.¹

Welles’s staunch belief is the phenomenon, or magic, which can occur in a moment is a stronger tool to evaluate life than the normalcies of the everyday. All the scenes were shot over many decades with pauses from one to the next, and it was constantly evolving in Welles’s mind. When questioned he would say, “It’s all come down to the editing.” ²

Similarly, I too set out to try working in this fashion in order to get away from my straightforward illustrative approach. Instead of knowing from the start what I wanted the work to discuss, I started off with a general focus, the relationship between physical and mental space. Through a layering process I gave myself the freedom to let it explore and evolve in the manner it was telling me. Over the next few years, I studied several elements and avenues, conducted a variety of experiments and, with each new piece of information, refined and connected seemingly disparate topics to bring about my own vision of the world.

When you look at the general structures over the course of human history, storytelling and imagery have always been integral. In today’s day and age imagery is everything. It’s how we communicate important information, entertain, and advance our understanding of life. These anecdotes held truths we were prone to missing in our day to day activities. They had the power to remind us, inspire us, and teach us with a clarity that not everyone could grasp on their own. Like shamans and gurus, brilliant storytellers

¹ *They’ll Love Me When I’m Dead*. Film documentary. Directed by Morgan Neville. Los Gatos, California: Netflix, 2018.

² ibid *They’ll Love Me ....*
could bring a culture forward in their thinking. Look at who we’ve deemed the most brilliant scholars of our time. Plato’s, *Allegory of The Cave*, is one such example.

In it he tells a story about a group of prisoners chained in a cave from birth and have never seen physical forms. Not even their own. Their heads were restrained to face only in one direction. The only things they saw where shadows cast straight in front of them by other people moving objects past a large fire. By happenstance one day, one of the prisoners gets loose and has a mind blowing epiphany after he walks outside. The prisoner learns things aren’t what he has experienced as shadows, and his mistake at thinking the words assigned to them were of anything he had ever seen.

This tale of perspective gets one to understand something complex simply. It helps illustrate the idea that the world isn’t always the way you think it is, or just what you have experienced. Its wisdom speaks to a raw quality of living that we all experience. Today, however, with the overabundance of books, television dramas, and movies that come out, some seem to forget the crucial importance stories have had on our societies. Maybe they are just desensitized. Maybe they were not taught the “specific knowledge.” Either way, I find it interesting when educated people forget. The power people can have through creation and their moral obligation, as well as to how and what they create, is something that has been carried with us through our entire history. The television host Bill Maher sent out a tweet on the internet after Marvel Comics creator Stan Lee passed away:
"America is in mourning. Deep, deep mourning for a man who inspired millions to, I don’t know, watch a movie, I guess."

His ignorance is apparent and he stubbornly clings to it because he doesn’t want to admit that he sees the world through a pin hole. A limited context of understanding. We produce an overabundance of all kinds of products that have been deemed important without time tested proof, much in the way of Maher’s uninformed opinion on this subject. Pre-human species created not just tools, huts, and clothing out of necessity, but also stories. Those stories served a social function. Creation without purpose just adds clutter to the world. Millions of people across the globe found inspiration from the movie adaptations of Lee’s beloved characters. People of color especially felt a strong sense of pride after the release of Black Panther in early 2018. You can’t just belittle or write off that kind of influence.

Look at the Christian myth of Jesus walking on water. Historically, if you’re looking at it within the context of happening solely in physical reality, then it never happened. To put it simply you can’t read it as 1+1=2. The ones being the physicality of the man and water as well as their limitations. Two ends up being either fantasy or faith because people can’t walk across the ocean’s surface unaided. You’re looking at it with two physical properties and none of the mental elements present. How we really should look at it is 1+2=3. One being the physical being of a person and two being the psychical representation of water as the subconscious. Three could be summed up as the journey that happens within that being who comes back bearing sustenance in the form of inner wisdom to hand out. It is about what this physical symbol plus this metaphoric context can say together that alone they can not. Life is not just that which we can

see, smell, taste, hear or touch. There are two realities living side by side that are forever intertwined, and it’s important to know how and why.
When attempting to illustrate the psychic world that can’t be seen, how do you define its properties? What is this space and how does it work? The two overarching genres of depiction are realism and abstraction. Everything else falls into a subgenre within these two. Between the 19th-20th centuries, art moved away from traditional depictions of objective reality and began experimenting with impressions, the inner subconsciousness, and abstract thoughts. If we look back at the art produced in relationship to the formation of the psycho-sciences, we find that artists began to transform and juxtapose elements of concrete reality.

In the multi-authored volume edited by Carl Jung, *Man and His symbols*, Aniela Jaffe, a psychologist and analyst, stated that “the deeper the dissolution of reality,” by this she means objective reality, “the more the picture loses its’ symbolic content.” This leaves me to wonder where and what exactly is this point where content and reality dissolve, how can you avoid it, and where is the balance between mental and physical experiences?

To start, abstraction is the representation of ideas that transcend outward appearances. It exists along a spectrum were it poles between direct and indirect representation. This imagery remains as your used to seeing it, or is juxtaposed in ways you might otherwise not be able to observe from the natural world.

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By this definition, abstract leaning art, like surrealism, cubism, futurism, etc. are less concerned with the physical existence of things and focus more on the mind. Surrealism, one of the most important art movement of the 20th century, came about as a kind of escapist retreat from a global political era that caused many to struggle with intense feelings and thoughts in relation to events that darkened the world stage. The man attributed as being a founder of surrealism, Giorgio de Chirico, once described his work as “metaphysical”\(^6\) which by definition means that it relates to things that cannot be seen by the physical eye.

Andre Masson’s *Massacre* is one such surrealist painting (Fig. 1). The artwork is done in warm monochromatic tones that are accentuated through contrast of darker green patches. It resembles that of a cubist painting by Picasso, whose own work has been thought of as surrealist at certain points in his career. This very geometric painting is fragmented with curvilinear and aggressively angular lines. *Massacre* possesses haptic movement created in a voided space. The anguish, tension, and aggression of world events occurring at the time it was created are rendered clearly in this nightmarish illustration despite the artwork’s abstract nature.\(^7\)

In his book *Psychology and Philosophy of Abstract Art*, Paul M. W. Hackett talks about degrees of abstraction. He recalls seeing an exhibition of works by Pablo Picasso and Francis Bacon being shown side by side. This juxtaposition led him to see similarities between the artworks that he would refer to as being “semi-abstract” or “barely abstract.” He makes an important observation on the degree of abstraction within the artworks produced as remaining representational in comparison to the art of Mark


\(^7\) ibid Brodskai pg.163
Rothko. You can see this semi-abstract quality within the segments of body parts and headless figures that are left faintly intact in Masson’s *Massacre*. The fact that one can still see figures and objective elements within their work keep them from becoming wholly abstract, which is the case with Rothko’s minimal use of patches of color.

As can be seen in the artwork of Rothko and other purely abstract painters, they step further away from objective reality than that of the surrealist. Removing any presence of concrete objects in their work, they rely on simple line, color, and form while still trying to communicate complex narratives. Theoretically, by creating work solely embodying the realm of the mind, artists could create a universal visual language.

The artwork of Jackson Pollock is some of the most recognizable abstract painting produced in the 20th century. In his succinctly named painting #23 there is a strong chaotic energy and raw aesthetic of marks dwelling inside a voided space (Fig. 2). His work simply expresses or attempts to personify the pure subconscious within himself. Intuitively crafted lines of neutral tones were made autocratically. No observable trace of objective realism can be seen within most of the painting’s composition except in the curious addition of insect wings housed in the upper right corner.

Hackett relays the importance of an artwork’s inception as being key to the understanding of that work. An issue with work similar to Pollock or Rothko arrises from their attempt to completely dissociate

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visually from direct realism making it difficult for a viewer to recognize what they’re saying through the art. As stated in an excerpt by Jaffe earlier, when you keep removing the tangible elements people can identify, the context of the work becomes harder to grasp. Hacket puts it another way when he talks about how people have different levels of seeing and understanding and thus “problems may exist in attempting to find a common art experience.” The context of *Massacre* is more identifiable than Pollock’s #23, which possesses a higher degree of abstraction than the former, because *Massacre* still retains some elements of the human figure blended into its’ composition. This subtle detail makes it easier to process the visual context as dealing with a human emotion because there is something tangible to make that connection. This does not mean that pure abstraction is a bad thing. Work as abstract as Pollocks’s does still connect with and pull at the subconscious mind. It provides subliminal hints without ever directly telling you visually what it is. Hacket would suggest “that by juxtaposing any form of art, including abstract art, with the context of its inception, inspiration, and/or creation” viewers can still be brought to an understanding of an artwork no matter the degree of abstraction. This of course champions the importance of artist statements and manifestos within modern and contemporary art.

Returning to the surrealists, whose works juxtapose objects we are used to seeing in unfamiliar ways, Rene Magritte’s paintings called into question the very idea of representation in painting. By calling attention to the everyday in this abstract fashion, it makes it seem less familiar, more mysterious, as though it holds some secret life we don’t know. It forces a viewer to have a greater consideration for the objects they might find mundane and normally glance over. The item in question then begins to take on a


11 ibid Hacket pg.3
seemingly new context in relation to the perception of the entity. Magritte’s use of ordinary objects in unfamiliar spaces is joined to his desire to create poetic imagery.

Why does this occur? In her essay *A Discussion of Representation as applied to Selected Paintings of Rene Magritte*, Betsy Fulmer explains that “to communicate ideas, they must be part of a system of conventions.”¹² In this she means that there has to be some method or structure that others can connect with in an artistic work. Fulmer states that Magritte’s intention when composing his paintings was to get a viewer to “look and think more deeply about what they see.”¹³ The smallest amount of objectivity in an abstraction can help leave a clue to the narrative of the piece, as I’ve talked about in relation to Masson’s *Massacre*. In Magritte’s *Son of Man*, one sees the face of a figure in a bowler hat being obstructed by a green apple (Fig. 3). The fruit, figure, and landscape behind him are all common forms. With these familiarities being readily identifiable, it speeds up the analysis to arrive quicker at the meaning of this work.

It is a well-known fact that both Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung deduced that dreams are the product of the most abstract and alien part of our brain that is trying to communicate repressed or subliminal experiences. The subconscious is like a voice processing and telling you what is going on internally within yourself. It evaluates what we are not actively interpreting from our living experiences. Another example provided by Fulmer is *The Treachery of Images* (Fig 4.). This painting of a tobacco pipe proclaims that it is not what it appears to be: a pipe. There is truth to what it proclaims in that it is not an actual functioning device. Instead it is the symbol or representative form of the object. Fulmer relates this

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¹² Fulmer, Betsy. *A Discussion of Representation as Applied to Selected paintings of Rene Magritte*. Academic Forum 26, 2008-09

¹³ ibid Fulmer
artifact to that of a dream symbol.\textsuperscript{14} Something that looks like one thing, but is meant to convey something altogether different.

This aspect does correlate to the pure abstraction of drippy lines produced by Pollock. What we see are fluid marks, but to him they were like a code or a written language that his subconscious used to communicate. They, like the pipe, are by nature symbols. Both paintings are, in a sense, metaphors trying to convey the ethereal qualities of humankind, but there is this communicative quality in Magritte’s remaining traces of objectivity that Pollock’s work doesn’t have. The answer to Magritte’s \textit{Son of Man} in relation to why the apple is where it is or what is it hiding remain unanswered at face value. However, the bold simplicity, slight familiarity, and the in your face directness of the composition make one feel like they are on the verge of knowing some secret message. The objectivity is what connects us. It is what bridges people’s minds because it incorporates a part of the shared physical plane that has shaped the way we correspond with one another. That element keeps something as individualized as to how a particular artist or person feels, perceives, or thinks from becoming too obscure in its iconography.

\textsuperscript{14} ibid Fulmer
ROLE OF NARRATIVE THROUGHOUT HUMAN HISTORY

With this understanding, what residual elements of objectivity are needed? There must be a particular way to create the liminal realm with its universality intact. Looking further back, before the artistic periods of modern and post-modernism, you can find reoccurring symbols that relate to that place of otherness. To some, this could refer to the place of gods or spirits, but that would be only at their face value. The answers we seek can be found in the countless legends and stories of which we are all familiar. As the renowned historian Joseph Campbell once said, “Myths were clues to our spiritual nature. They could help guide us to a sacred place within where we might unlock the creative power of our deeper unconscious self.”

Myths depict this psychical terrain, for example the Celtic “otherworld”, as being both apart of objective reality and beyond it. Greek folklore uses the forests and lands untamed by humankind to represent the subconscious. These stories in part expounded about the dangers of going too far from towns or cities for the ancient peoples because the wilderness was beyond human control. It was the place where anything could happen. Thus, the journey within begins at the point where civilization ends. Here the individuals of myth would for one reason or another go beyond their consciousness to dive further within. Campbell defines this as “The Hero’s Journey.” This particular element being in most, if not all, stories relates to the core experience of all individuals. Here we learn how one fits into systems. We learn how to either live within it or rise above it.

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16 ibid Campbell

17 ibid Campbell
The two most common environmental symbols of the mind in these wilder spaces are mountains and water. The mountain, being defined as “a region characterized by remoteness and inaccessibility,” perfectly mirrors the properties of the inner world. It is one of the prominent symbols utilized in my work (Fig. 5). Returning to the notion of symbolisms within dreams, numerous sources site the mountain as the representative whole of the journey one must go through. This is reiterated in the “story arc” diagram taught by English instructors; the image itself resembling a mountain range with its’ rising and falling actions. This is typically the place where one reaches transcendence, meets the wise guru at the mountain top, or enters the realm of gods. Truth is found and resolution begins. To this end, I build my landscapes as if they were mountain ranges that ebb and flow. The perceived sense of time and place become hazy. The formations shift back and forth overlapping in a strange space with usually multiple horizons.

The second prominent symbol in the work is the door. Jung and his followers describe the symbolism of a door or threshold as “the entry point which marks the place of transition from outside to inside or from one place to another.” Depending on the orientation, it can represent whether or not one is receptive and accessible, as well as a desire for exploration. In her essay, Stephanie Buck states, “a psychic threshold refers to the place of transition from one belief to another, or the shift from one state of being to another. Here threshold is both place and process.” Again this reiteration of place and process being emulated, as with the mountain’s journey, illustrate the ever growing, changing, and evolving entity we refer to as ourself.


19 ibid Buck
In the text *Crossing the Threshold: Architecture, Iconography and the Sacred Entrance*, it is stated that all doors are liminal zones. A doorway separates your room from the rest of your house or apartment where you might entertain guests. In this way, it connects and divides private and communal realms. Temple doors form the in-between of what we perceive to be natural and other worldly.\(^{20}\) In the paintings and sculptures I create, portals float and divide up the mental space creating access to other places. These doorways can be interpreted as either individuals interacting in a shared physical space that mirrors them or the interior world of an isolated individual reflecting on the people and events that have shaped them.

The portals within my landscapes, like the mountains, push forward and recede into a strange depth of space. The doors at times overlap into one another. The shape of the sculpture’s body mirrors that of the illustrated entrances, relating to the pieces themselves as being the first layer of these recessed doorways. In ancient times, starting as far back as the Ubaid period of Mesopotamia, the recessed decorative accent around the doorframe itself was reserved only for temples, royal graves, and divination chambers. It signified a place of power, or rather things associated with that motif held power.\(^{21}\) This psychical phenomenon in repetition is no stranger to today. Though it takes another form, the *Obey* imagery produced by Street Artist Shepard Fairy is one such example of the design element’s power.\(^{22}\)

Over the last 100 years, architectural doors are no longer the only kind we interact with on a daily basis. Today almost everyone in the modern world is bound to a screen, whether it be computer, television, or phone. These products of technological advancement now arguably carry the power and role of

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\(^{21}\) ibid Garfinkel and Mumcuoglu pg.10-30

forming society. So much of our lives center or connect to them. It’s how we communicate, plan our lives, promote our economies, receive our information, and find entertainment or pleasure. Written stories and myths have gone from books to movies and video games. Video games especially find themselves being relayed as animated stories where, unlike any time before, the agency of the individual is acted out right before them in real time. No longer an act of imagination. Even now as I type these words, I am functioning within a recessed tab mirroring the shape of my laptop’s screen.

These screens into liminal space between reality and what some deem fantasy hold a power to shape and influence what we know as well as how we function with the world around ourselves. Campbell’s research into myth and its role as mirror to reality has influenced hundreds of thousands of writers. His teachings have spread and influenced television media. George Lucas, the director of Star Wars, took his teachings and carried the universal themes shared across time and culture to produce his movies.23

In another science fiction cult classic, *2001: A Space Odyssey* by Stanley Kubrick, this idea of screen and myth as an access point is iterated in a subtle way. The screen takes the form of what he calls monoliths. A monolith, being defined as “a large single upright block of stone, especially one shaped into or serving as a pillar or monument,” typically conjures up images of structures like Stonehenge, a site comprised of numerous upright stone structures that evokes a feeling of mysticism and power. Kubrick’s monoliths, however, are smooth, upright black rectangles of indefinite size as they appear in numerous locations and situations (Fig. 6).

One can easily see, however, that my monoliths don’t resemble the ones in Kubrick’s Odyssey. I have chosen to shape my monoliths with rounded tops shaped like elongated tombstones, resembling

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openings in medieval architecture, a period bridging the ancient to now, and relating to notions of tran-
scendence and transformation. When one stage in life comes to an end, there is a metaphoric death and 
rebirth. I am a strong believer in reincarnation. The idea that nothing ever truly ends. Like energy, things 
just take on different forms once certain criteria is met. Campbell, Jung, and others would say it’s like go-
ing from being a child into adulthood for example. Who you were as a child is not who you are as a 
grown up due to a different social climate and set of demands in order to live. The scenes created within 
the portals and monoliths could be viewed as abstractions of the past, present, or future events; but it is 
not always clear.

These doorways, portals, and monoliths have become my avatars or human representatives. They 
allow me to express the idea of one’s inner world with a physical form. The abstracted appearance serves 
to remove notions of gender, race, and sex in order to question who or what they represent beyond the 
surface. This is done in an effort to actively bring one to, unknowingly, seek to understand that which is 
alien, different, from themselves. To lead one psychically closer to understanding another person, culture, 
and way of seeing the world, as well as pushing to the forefront a basic principle. We are all human.

Jung had three personal symbols representing points of transition. The home, hearth, and grave 
served as representations of places he was connected to the physical world and marked the progression of 
his research. They represent three points in his life and eventual death serving as physical vessels that af-
forded him the space to traverse the psychical landscape.24

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24 Buck, Stephanie M. *Home, Hearth, and Grave: The Archetypal Symbol of the Threshold on the Road to Self.*
This added context of specific points, and again death, as containers in space and time further inform my monolith’s forms. The painted surfaces wrap around seamlessly atop an undulating form that bends, bulges, and recedes inward. This makes them feel alive through implied motion. The seamlessness brings one to the understanding that the vessels are windows where the area they take up is really of another plane of existence being pulled into ours. They act as both containers of the mental realm and access points through which we can interact with it (Fig. 7).
ALCHEMY

As stated earlier, in Welles’s film physical, and mental reality exist simultaneously as they do for all living things. This is mirrored between myth, fantasy, and recorded history. Forms of what some see as pure entertainment merge them into pseudo histories with added ideas of how things could have gone or where events could lead. These first two sections have covered the “what” and “how” contexts influencing my work. In this segment, I will explore the answer of “why,” among many other questions. Why does this inner world exist? What good comes from symbols and understanding the language of the other space? Why do we use it and remix it? What is its purpose?

To begin, Campbell, citing the Upanishads’ origin myth from 9th century B.C.: “In the beginning there was only the great self in the form of a person. Then it found nothing but itself and its first word was ‘I Am’."

In another way, Nicholas Humphrey, a leading philosopher on consciousness studies, has said we don’t exist without experience and that experience is always internal: “There is a sense you have of being there, present and embodied, and yet as if on a separate plane of existence from the physical world that carries you. There is the feeling of singularity, of occupying a place in the universe that cannot be accessed by anyone or anything else.” The reason for self-awareness would be to give us something to care for; a thing held within us that can never be taken away. It gives us purpose while promoting survival. This explains the origin and function of the world within. What it doesn't explain is why it had to connect to a shared physical reality in order to actively promote living.


It’s a well-known fact we learn from hearing and observing. As a baby that’s all you could do. You then take and imitate what you’ve experienced before as you put the pieces together, and eventually you found yourself walking and talking. This is how you learn to interact with the physical world. An authority on intellectual property and remix culture, Lawrence Lessig, states that remixing is nothing new. What is new is the number of people capable of committing the act. The European Middle Ages held tight control over important cultural information. This was due to the distribution of information in a language the masses could not speak or write: Latin. The new age technology has opened up and given entry to the populous to have a hand in critiquing and creating what is important to current culture.27

Looking at the last eighty years, pop art and collage brought art back in connection to everyday life after modernism’s focus on formalist theory took it away from it. With Andy Warhol’s *Brillo Boxes*, common items could be seen as art if given the right context.28 The mass production and commercialism centered around art being made for the public. Street Art, in a sense, is very much the same. It retains the “for public” context in a way public art like Richard Serra’s *Tilted Arc* doesn’t. Serra’s work claims the space for its’ own, shutting people out, and forces one to navigate on its’ terms. Street Art, however, generally is either up high and out of the way or apart of the walls. It forms a less obstructive relationship


with the site in which it is placed.\textsuperscript{29} The difference in the relationship here can be attributed to the gap between high art and the general public. This illustrates Lessig’s point that contemporary living seeks to be more accessible and relatable to the everyday person.

Gill Saunders, senior curator at the Victoria and Albert Museum, credits themes within punk, anarchism, hip hop, skate board culture and art school’s realms of site-specific installation, pop, print making, and land art as some contemporary influences of Street Art.\textsuperscript{30} This sure sound like it is a remix. His stance on Street Art being a continuum of Pop Art alone is easy to see. Artist D*Face is known to appropriate comic book heroes in echo to Roy Lichtenstein. His piece \textit{Feels So Good} shows Superman enjoying a state of decay that we are unaccustomed to (Fig.8). D*Face has also been known to appropriate Warhol’s Marilyn Monroe to discuss themes of endless circulation and consumption as her image and quotes permeate the internet as a source of inspiration for beauty and young women. Likewise he has used John Lennon to discuss fame as being the thing that grants everlasting life after death in the memories and legacies left behind.\textsuperscript{31}

The act we refer to as remix, collage, sampling, whatever name you choose to give it, gives those currently living agency. It allows them to actively speculate on all the information that we as a species have built up, and the opportunity to understand through the physical act of interacting with it.\textsuperscript{32} It is like

\textsuperscript{29} ibid Riggle pg.255

\textsuperscript{30} Young, Alison. \textit{Street Art World}. London, UK: Reaction Books Ltd. 2016. pg.3

\textsuperscript{31} Riggle, Nicholas Alden. “The Transfiguration of the Commonplaces.” The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism vol. 68. No. 3 (Summer 2010): pg.243

the myth of Prometheus bringing fire to humanity, the deed of taking that which was once reserved solely for those at the top of the mountain to be disseminated for the betterment of all.

Shared space, like ideas, to my mind calls to be democratic. Collage’s disposition to empower the individual is an element I have tried to incorporate into the philosophy within my work. At times I’ve used reclaimed cardboard as the canvas for paintings. Their making is in a kind of reactionary process. These works have been layered with collage material, building up and forming my mental landscapes, on top of what I perceive to be the farthest form of abstraction that retains the necessary amount of concrete realism. The ink blot.

The paintings are finished and framed in a variety of ways to represent the fact that not all worlds share the same framework. Some frames are made using the same materials to show similarity, but not sameness as they take on different forms and shapes. Most recently I’ve begun removing the frame altogether, making more sculptural paintings as well. Depending on their form these worlds I see as representations of worlds without borders. Others take the shape of shards, fragmentary worlds thinly veiled as being grounded and sound. In any of these cases, they all have been encased in resin.

You, as a psychical entity, develop things within your inner world. Other psychical entities can interpret or derive completely different meanings from the same object or idea when its placed within the shared space. This means that what makes sense in one world may not in another. Point in case: the calculation for gravity in other galaxies does not always match the one in our own.\[33\] In short, what you bring from your sacred realm can have unintended repercussions. A perfect example of this is with Frederick

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Nietzsche’s *The Will to Power*. It has been documented that this literature, abandoned by Nietzsche before his death, was falsely edited by his sister after the fact in order to bolster Nazi propaganda; it was political party that he was against.

This all builds to the final question that I have yet to answer. What is to be gained from attempting to share the things we cultivate within ourselves? Swoon, an American female street artist, has said, “Ephemerality can also mean evolution and collaboration rather than just destruction and removal.” The concept act of digging into and revisiting is an element I want to illustratively apart of my work (Fig. 9). Swoon recounts a particular doorway she frequently tagged in New York where her work was always left to decay in the street without worry of being buffed away by cleaners. When it got weathered enough, she would paint something fresh on top of the piece. In doing so, she creates a temporal conversation or interaction with the doorway about presence and revisitation.

Through my visual metaphors, people and place are joined through proximity and repetition of form. We are the world and it in turn is both ourselves and those around us, a multi-verse. Every person is a door to a world we can never fully know. To further reduce a sense of distinguishable identity, race and gender are often at times removed to show this universal trait. These phenomenal worlds appear locked in a transitory state as they overlap and interact with one another. This interaction promotes growth and change. Worlds that are built are called into question and prompted to evolve over time.

35 Young, Alison. *Street Art World*. (London, UK: Reaction Books Ltd. 2016) pg. 76
36 ibid Young pg. 76
This energy and sense of agency in the formation of physical space is embodied through the incorporation of collage and street art-esque surfaces. Their ideological acts are symbolic of revisitation, reworking, and layering. They seek a reclaiming of space and imagery that alters the shared landscape and the things within it. I recycle once stagnate materials and, pun fully intended, gives them a fresh coat of paint, a new twist in order to layer my narratives.

At times the imagery runs and bleeds together. This collapse of imagery represents worlds on the brink of destruction, chaos, or in their final moments (Fig.10). They are the worlds that are on their way out, but that will give rise to newer ones. Elements from past and ideas of future are placed together to convey this cyclical process of reincarnation. Just Like Welles’ film wasn’t really about making a movie, my work isn’t about making a painting or object. It is about an understanding of “the world” in my efforts to make clear its’ workings as a whole. The picture at large.

Art has this ability to connect to the undefinable realities we experience through living. In absence of writing, dubbed the most democratic form of expression, I’ve carefully selected symbols that reference exactly the themes and dualities my work demands of me to express. The particular imagery is tailored to the desire to retain a democratization of understanding. As I grow my characters and symbols, with this series of work, they must be ones that both hold a sense of mystery as well as the ability to express a very particular quality with people of various experiences and educations. The work demands of me to express connections and to remove barriers. A true liminal space. A place where ideas can truly be exchanged. That’s why I create landscapes of otherworldly places we can only imagine, scenes that hold a certain kind of magic and wonder. It is a practice devoted to bringing together the mind, body, and society.
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They’ll Love Me When I’m Dead. Film documentary. Directed by Morgan Neville. Los Gatos, California: Netflix, 2018.


Nathalia Brodskaiia is an art history writer whose focus is within the modern arts era. In her writing of *Surrealism, Genesis of A Revolution*, she educates the reader on the origin and history of the famous art movement. Sporting a wide variety of sources and research, she gives a pretty detailed account on the ideas of the Dadaist and their influence on the birth of Surrealism as well as Surrealism’s influence on abstract art. Brodskaiia’s assessments go beyond visual connections between surrealist paintings. She presents a broad panel of artists as well as the psycho-sociological connections of these individual creators. Many personal anecdotes and writings are presented from many artists like Max Ernst. One such example is in a letter written by Rene Magritte to P. Waldberg on the subject of Ernst’s paintings. Offered in conjunction with this is their relation to the world events occurring at the time to build a greater understanding of the ideology and justification. Brodskaiia’s research covers the broad spectrum of surrealism while at the same time providing vast amounts of scholarly detail and references that indicate an astute understanding of her research topic. For my research this source will serve to provide insight to surrealism, one of the main artistic genre referenced by Aniela Jaffe in *Man and His Symbols*.

This essay was written and presented at the Jungian Society for Scholarly Studies 2004 International Conference. The Jungian Society for Scholarly Studies is a group of academics focused on discourse involving Carl Jung’s analytical psychology. They hold yearly conferences and present many peer reviewed scholarly articles. Stephanie Buck is a private practicing psychotherapist and Jungian analyst. In addition to her psychotherapy education, she has taught at several colleges. Buck also holds a BS in Studio Art. This essay is used to further talk about Jung’s ideology on symbolisms covered in *Man and His Symbols* as well as to present further research on Jungian analytics.


This documentary series, taped in 1988, records famed American Professor of Literature at Sarah Lawrence College, Joseph Campbell, who specialized in both comparative mythology and religion. His research has influenced hundreds of authors and entertainment media, such as the original Star Wars trilogy films. His extensive research on the myths of many different cultures and major religions is apparent in the documentary. The structures and symbolisms posed by Campbell are used to elaborate the cultural importance of art, narrative, and to further develop a concept of abstraction within my paper.
This paper on the symbolism and contextualization of the works of surrealist artist Rene Magritte was written by Betsy Fulmer. She serves as an Art faculty member at Henderson State University, as well as holding membership to both the Society of Layerists in Multimedia and the American Folklore Association. In her article, she conveys a great understanding of how symbols as a language work in relation to meaning through the paintings *Son of Man* and the *Treachery of Images*. For this paper, I will use this source to build greater support for my argument that retaining a degree of objectivity helps to better communicate abstract ideas better than non-objective abstraction.

Both Madeleine Mumcuoglu and Yosef Garfinkel are research fellows in Archaeology at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Each have their own specialties and interests, and with the aid of other researchers they create an expansive timeline and history of the recessed door across the centuries. They look at cultures across the globe and from numerous cultures. They evaluate the social, political, and religious factors surrounding the sacred entrance. This book is used to talk about the symbolisms relating to the doorway or mystic opening, as well as the power of the repetitive motif. These two elements present themselves strongly in the work that I create.

In the book *Psychology and Philosophy of Abstract Art* by Paul M.W. Hacket defines and explains numerous philosophies and methods for interpreting and defining both abstract art and direct representation within the same process. He provides a personal anecdote comparing Francis bacon to Picasso and Rothko when thinking about degrees of abstraction. This source is aided by the input of various scholars from the University of Oxford Cardiff University to strengthen Hacket’s research. For my paper, this source will be used to define abstract art and realism as well as to help think about defining degrees of abstraction. These parameters will help lay the framework for better understanding the point at which meaning can become dissolved.


This documentary, originally aired on BBC Four, stars historian Bettany Hughes. Hughes has written and directed several well received documentary series and broadcasts. In it she goes over the life and work of Frederick Nietzsche. The fact she presents about Nietzsche’s sister stealing and altering the notes for *The Will to Power*, and using them as Nazi propaganda, is used to present a reality on what happens once something enters into the physical space. It conveys the fact that no matter who you are your work can be taken, twisted, and used for other people’s agendas. This is to draw a distinction between the elements of mental and physical realities.


Nicholas Humphrey is neuropsychologist who is well known in his field. He has been a recipient of many prestigious awards, and held teaching positions at Cambridge and Oxford. His research and writing position him as a leading voice in consciousness research. In *Soul Dust*, theories present an idea on
the function of inner private worlds and potential reasons for its existence. In my paper these ideas are used to build upon the exploration of the inner world and its relationship to the physical plane.


This book is written in five sections by different psychologists and edited by the famous psychologist Carl Jung. This research oriented writing explains the development of symbolism and its orientation within psychology, society, and art. The interesting thing also presented in this book is to hear a psychologist’s perspective on how they see the evolution and function of the arts and their genres. The particular section being used is the part four by Aniela Jaffe *Symbolism in the Visual Arts*. In her writing she says “The deeper the dissolution of reality, the more the picture loses its symbolic content.” This statement forms the main question driving my research paper. The question of how abstract can you go without losing touch with concrete reality? Is there a definable middle in between the two? This source seems highly credible as it boasts a lengthy research process by the numerous authors involved and is edited by a highly accredited psychologist. It presents interesting points from individuals outside the art world who approach the subject from a different perspective than an artist or art historian.


Lawrence Lessig is a professor of Law at Harvard and founded the Center for Internet and Society at Stanford University. He is noted as an authority on intellectual property and internet culture. Time magazine has dubbed him a ‘philosopher king of internet law.’ In this book, Lessig presents the history of information as it relates to technology over the centuries. Citing evolutions in musical invention, turn of the 21st century events, and the artistic practice of collage he creates a linear narrative surrounding the
use and important act of remix. His writing is used to discuss art and culture in contemporary contexts, the interaction we have with ideas, and to build the case for screens as portals and doorways.


This journalism story was published by USA Today and numerous other news and online sources. The particular one used for this paper was used because of its’ word for word documentation quoting Bill Maher as well as following the responses to the story as it progressed from the event’s initial start. It is used to point out the flaw in having people who hold a powerful platform to speak, yet don’t understand the topics in which they are passing judgement.


Steve Nadis has been published in several scientific journals, books, and is a former MIT fellow and consultant at several institutions. This scientific journal was used to build the case for world’s possessing unique characteristics by citing differences in gravitational calculations between galaxies. I’ve used the example to serve as an illustration for the concept that the private inner worlds within each human being also possess this same characteristic.


Gill Saunders is a Senior Curator at the Victoria & Albert Museum in London. Her publication goes through the research on the evolutionary history and ideology of the Street Art movement. Citing
many image sources and research texts, she presents the depth of the movement beyond graffiti on city streets. I focus specifically on the claim by numerous street artists that it is about a reclaiming of space. The ideologies are taken as influence for the work that I produce in order to help create a pictorial language focused on the liminal connection between the physical and psychical realities.

http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/pollock-number-23-t00384/text-catalogue-entry

The given resource is an entry from an online catalogue for one of the most prestigious galleries in the world. The Tate Gallery of London is an entity that cannot afford to not have their facts straight and documented in a proper fashion. Being an international gallery, they are an integral part of academia. Their focus is on modern to contemporary art, which covers the eras I will be researching into as well. The Tate’s focus on contemporary art also keeps it up on theories and perceptions of art and art making; making it an up to date resource. For these reasons I feel it is an excellent and a credible resource to use for this paper. For this paper it will be used to expand further on a Jackson Pollock painting referenced in Aniela Jaffe’s section of Man and His Symbols. The painting, #23, will be used to compare and contrast the difference in levels of abstraction between a surrealist painting with that of an abstract one. This comparison will help to point towards where Jaffe said the “dissolution” of meaning can occur.


Nicholas Riggle is an assistant Professor in philosophy at the University of San Diego. He has written articles published in several articles on topics relating to philosophy and aesthetics. In this article Riggle covers the street art movement. It goes into discussion about Pop Art’s influence on street and
graffiti artists. I have specifically pulled out his research on the artist D*Face, who remixes icons and celebrities, similarly to Warhol, and injects them with cultural critique. This is used in the remix discussion and to address what many street artists I have researched have stated as a desire to reclaim space and imagery.

_They’ll Love Me When I’m Dead_. Film documentary. Directed by Morgan Neville. Los Gatos, California: Netflix, 2018.

The aforementioned film documentary is about the life of legendary film maker, actor, and director Orson Welles. It centers around a specific project of his not completed until his death and goes over his inspirations, methods, and philosophies on its’ creation. The document is compiled from old footage of Welles, as well as the people who helped make _The Other Side of the Wind_ Possible. This source was used to illustrate the magical power of artistic expression and its’ role as a cultural narrator. The information pulled from the source serves to build the argument for entertainment media’s ability to connect the individual reality with that of the common one.


This book written by Alison Young sites many researched sources from live interviews to historical accounts about street art. She is a professor at the University of Melbourne whose areas of expertise is in cultural criminology, street art, and socio-legal responses to art. Her writing is aimed to provide one with the history of street art from its’ beginnings to the present, as well as to draw distinctions as to what defines street art. This source was used to build conclusions between pop art’s influence on street art and its’ impact on contemporary culture. There is also a specific excerpt used to connect the symbolism of the door to that of a particular artist interviewed by Young.

Exit through the Gift Shop is a documentary about street art by street artists. It records several well known graffiti artists on the contemporary art scene and their thoughts, feelings, and perceptions about what their movement is and represents. The video documentary has been used to provide greater insight into the street art movement and its relationship to contemporary culture in relation to class, ideology, and surface relationship to the work I create.
FIGURES

Figure 1. Andre Masson *Massacre*, 1931 painting Collection Ulla and Heiner Pietzch

Figure 2. Jackson Pollock #23, 1948 enamel on gesso Tate Gallery London, England
Figure 3. Rene Magritte *Son of Man*, 1964 oil on canvas, Private Collection

Figure 4. Rene Magritte *The Treachery of Images*, 1929 oil on canvas Los Angeles County Museum of Art

Figure 5. Tanner Mothershead *Head Space*, 2018 acrylic, mixed media New American Painting Issue #137
Figure 6. Stanley Kubrick *Monolith*, film still 1968, Stanley Kubrick Productions, Distributed by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer

Figure 7. Tanner Mothershead *Reflection and Refraction*, 2018 ceramic, (Image) University of Iowa MFA Thesis Collection

Figure 8. D*Face *Feels So Good*, 2008 screenprint, etching, Gregg Shienbaum Fine Art/ Private Collection
Figure 9. Tanner Mothershead *Mountain Top Removal*, 2018 ceramic, acrylic, crushed coal NCECA National Juried Student Show 2018

Figure 10. Tanner Mothershead *Last Light*, 2018 ceramic, coal, (Image) University of Iowa MFA Thesis Collection