WHAT ESSENCE WAS IT THAT TIME WAS OF:
The Ephemeralization of Paintings Lens

A Thesis Submitted to The Faculty Of thePainting Department
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I dedicate this to my patient wife, Erin, who took me by the hand 20 years ago and pulled me through loves portal to a track of poetic discovery in the quest for wonderment within the question of times essence. My three children, Iris, MezzMyrh, and PINATOVA, who, seasonally show me new blossoms on the tree of this chockablock life. And to my mother, father, and my unbelievable extended family of friends, teachers and patrons, most being all in the same, of which the realization of these works could have never had happened.

Big love and thanks to you all for believing in my "streak."- Jimmy

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Abstract

With a phenomenological attitude, this document explores a broad spectrum of perspectives on various painting situations over the past 23 years of my art practice. The narrative is contextualized by core concepts in the theoretical works of Jean Baudrillard, Jaques Derrida, and Buckminster Fuller, and by my continuous search for a painted mark to reflect moments of human circumstance. This expedition bounces lyrically along a timeline of projects ranging from electrocution drawings to riding a painted mark in a roller coaster simulator. Perspectives shift as the journey moves from the creation of a drawing-propelled time machine to a contraption that paints from brain waves, and on to the ephemeralization of a Whookie by the side of a river, with many stops in-between.

Keywords: paint viscosity, simulator rides, phenomenology, ephemeralization, narcissism, mirror, mirror neurons, Anthropocene, self, empathy

Introduction

This thesis examines an untraditional time span of creative work and research—from 1995 to the present—compared to what is typically a 2-3 year masters degree program. I completed my first year in 1995, and then after an 18-year recess into the life of the art world I resumed classes online to complete the degree. Looking back over this time frame, I see connections between my painting practices and the sociological theories of Jean Baudrillard, as well as the work of French philosopher Jacques Derrida and American systems theorist Buckminster Fuller. This narrative explores various understandings of these connections, whether they were consciously intact at the time of a work's creation, gleaned from research after the fact, or arose simultaneously with the exercise of a painting situation. Primarily, my work has reflected concerns with simulated experience, elements of structuralism, and the concept of ephemeralization. These ideas can be seen emerging in various painting situations, including a drawing-propelled time machine, brain-driven devices that paint non-locally, and works that have the viewer physically ride the simulations of the viscosity of a painted mark in a mirrored painting. The work searches through different perspectives and speculations as to the nature of reality as we know it, with a significant concern for the state of the self within that reality.

My art practice is one of phenomenological exploration, toward and in poetic search of a mark exemplifying new perspectives on the dance between life's sense-data and the innate, empathetic self, ever-present within a physically disconnected "global society of self" in the advanced stages of simulated circumstance. The works presented here deal with the idea of an ephemeralization of what I see as the "programmed self," offering viewers an experience that is participatory yet introspective, and serving as paradigms for continuous, conscious reintegration of perspectives

as we move forward, with our unavoidably narcissistic and destructive nature, as we progress into unusual future human conditions.

Time Machines, Life Support Drawings and Feeling Constellations within Simulated Sails

In 1995 I had my first illustrative eye-opening experience of simulated disconnect from what I considered at the time to be natural reality. I had a routine meeting with a close artist friend for coffee where we would sketch, on napkins, idea doodles of the possible shapes of space-time and the like, until the humbling numbness of self-realized pretension usually changed the subject for both our sakes. On this particular occasion, he had no need of napkin or pen. He had brought a Wacom tablet to show me the magic of his newfound electronic technology that could store thousands of doodles; at the time, he was much more involved with the context of the doodle than the content. What was doodled at our meeting was simply deleted without remorse, as if he found it to be an exercise in getting to know his gadget, rather than one of creative human connection. On this day I went back to my studio, humbled by the idea of an all-context-no-content simulated situation and this is where my phenomenological journey begins.

At the time, I was using an electronic pouncer for the large cartooning of images in the studio. Cartooning is a technique where the artist transfers large drawings to surfaces using paper patterns that have been outlined by poking holes with a stiletto and then pouncing the holes with powdered chalk, leaving a line to paint by. The device I was using was electric and would arc current between the stiletto and the steel easel, thereby burning small holes in the cartoon paper. I chose to connect a wire to my toe, placing myself within the circuit so that when a stiletto mark was made I would feel a shock. I saw this as the ultimate reactionary technique I needed for creating a declaration of mockery--or should I say, in Baudrillardian terms, a "mock function"—

Fig 1. Jimmy O'Neal, *In Mythological Kneeling*, 24"x 18", 1997

of the need of electricity for mark making[1]. The action—forcing feeling and natural consequences back into the drawn mark, which consisted of burned holes that were absolute and beyond deletion—was a reaction in contrast to the pending technological numbing of the natural self. (Fig.1)

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[1]Jean Baudrillard, *Vital Illusions* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 65

Energized by my actions as I reflected on the situation, thinking of the intensity of the electrical arc and the resulting sepia burn marks around each small hole in the paper, I felt it had the possibilities, if pushed further, of the tonal essence I always admired in Rembrandt's drawings. It also brought to mind my admiration of Goya's drawings and their sense of uniquely defining the direction of lighting, and capturing the essence of a moment in time. I postulated the condition of light one would have to capture in such a time of increasing unparalleled light in motion. Also, what angle and position for a subject within a not-so-virtuous virtual reality? What essence of what moment in what time, if any, could be mined from an era of time-based media? Were there any hand-drawn theoretical reaches outside the magic box that could exemplify the timeless ephemeral self? My drawing fantasy found solutions to its self-effacing obstacles. I realized that the light source should be those distracting, unparalleled light screens of simulation, as we all seem to be lighted by our magic distractions. Our angles and perspectives are in

Fig 2. Jimmy O'Neal, 3-d rendering of figure in the *Time-Drawing-Machine*, 1999

constant flux and flow with our new lenses on track and in heavy rotation, to capture every aspect of human and feed us a new virtual live feed time-based reality show of new self-images. Days later, a theoretical time machine found an existence in the center of the studio floor.

The situational time machine consisted of the electronic pouncing drawing device, a metal easel, and the artist/subject in the center of a hexagonally-shaped toy train track. A camera was mounted on an electric toy train, with the lens aiming inward toward the easel where the artist/subject would sit for a self-portrait. The camera moved around the subject in a continuous hexagonal dolly shot, creating an ever-changing perspective. (Fig.2) This installation is in a
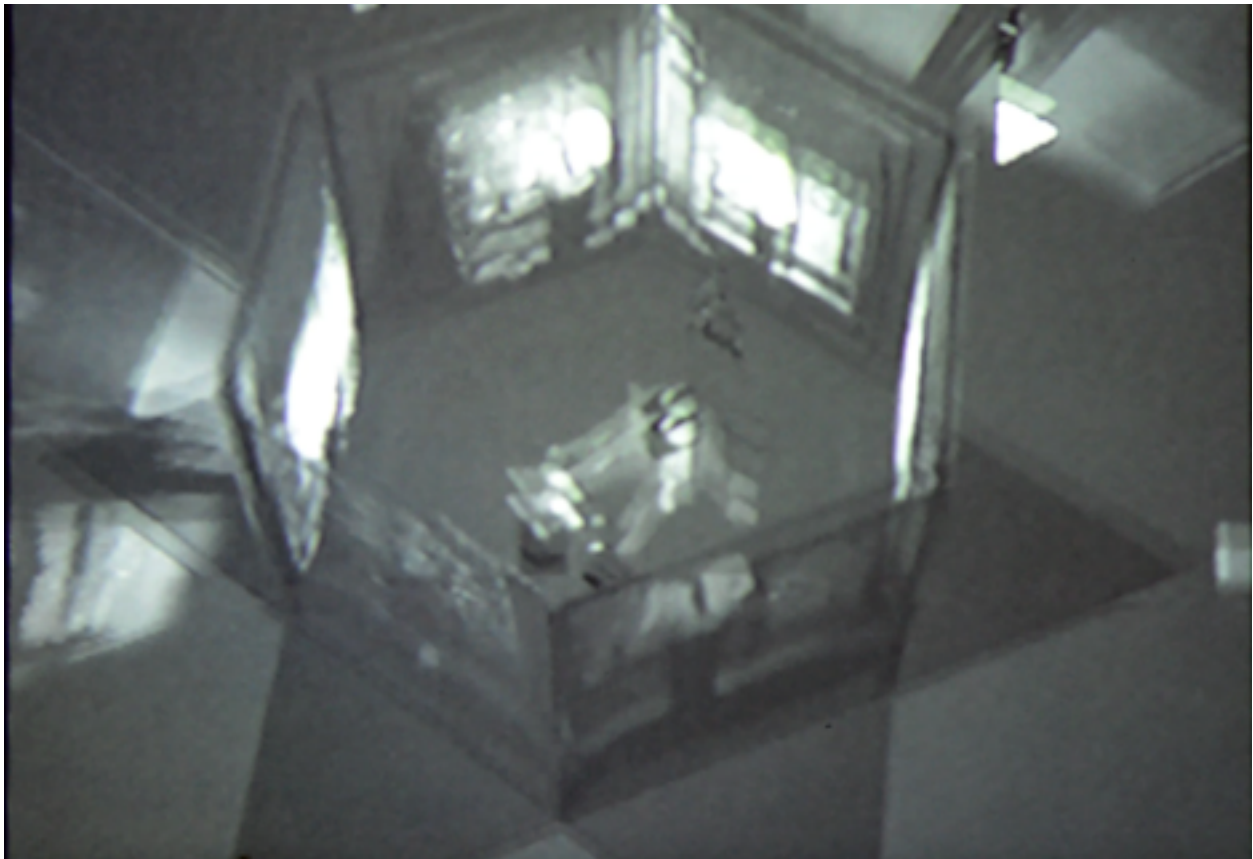
Fig 3. Jimmy O'Neal, 3-d rendering of walls, *Time-Drawing-Machine*, 1999

hexagonal room built from translucent rear projection walls that have video images projecting and lighting the subject by distraction. (Fig.3) The electric drawing utensil, otherwise referred to
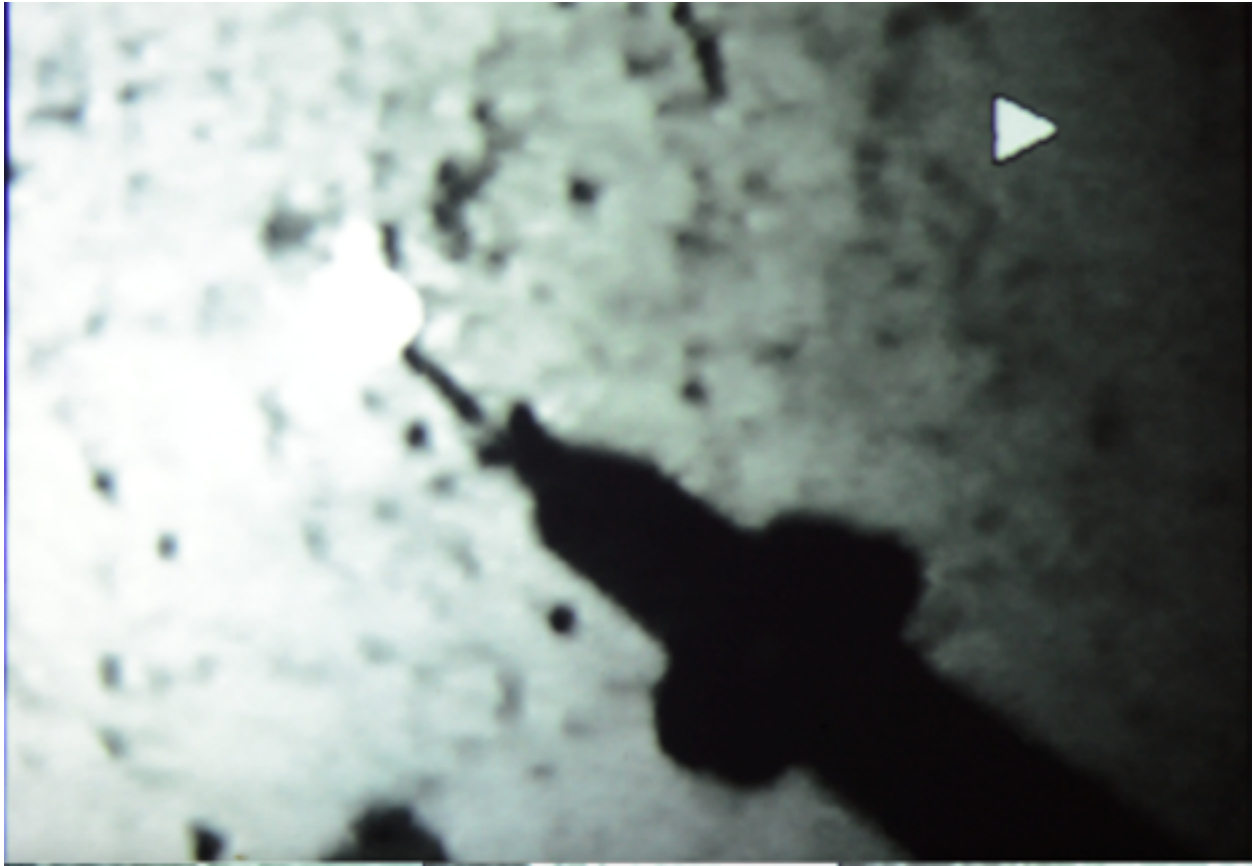
Fig 4. Jimmy O'Neal, video still of electronic drawing device, *Time-Drawing-Machine*, 1999

as completion nib, burns a dotted line through the paper and in this case, instead of shocking the artist, completes the circuit of the projectors. (Fig.4) Therefore, the artist-subject is only lit when the artist-subject is drawing. The camera train, on the other hand, continues to orbit the artist-subject in light or darkness, as if it were a ghost-eye of changing perspective. (Fig.5) The final link in the flow of visual information is the camera view from the train that is sending this information back to a virtual immersion visor which the artist-subject has strapped to his or her face for a real-time contour drawing, ending with a phenomenological self-portrait. The resulting image resembled an elaborate constellation of what I poetically considered to be a theoretical "self," which I linked back to David Hume's ideas of there being no such thing as the self, just a

Fig 5. Jimmy O'Neal, video still from toy train camera view, *Time-Drawing-Machine*, 1999

collection of sense data that makes a person think they exist.[2] In this case, the sense datum would

be the distant connection to physical "star stuff." (Fig.6)

Around the time of this work, I had read in WIRED magazine about a computer scientist

from Cal Tech, who had come up with a program through which he could create data from a

photograph of the night sky by scanning it into his recognition software. From this data, a

possible time, date and location on the earth from which the photo had been taken could be

gleaned. I found this to be an attractive opportunity for my celestial self-portrait. I contacted him

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[2] Harold Noonan, *Routledge Philosophy GuideBook to Hume on Knowledge (Routledge Philosophy GuideBooks)*
(New York: Routledge, 2002), 195
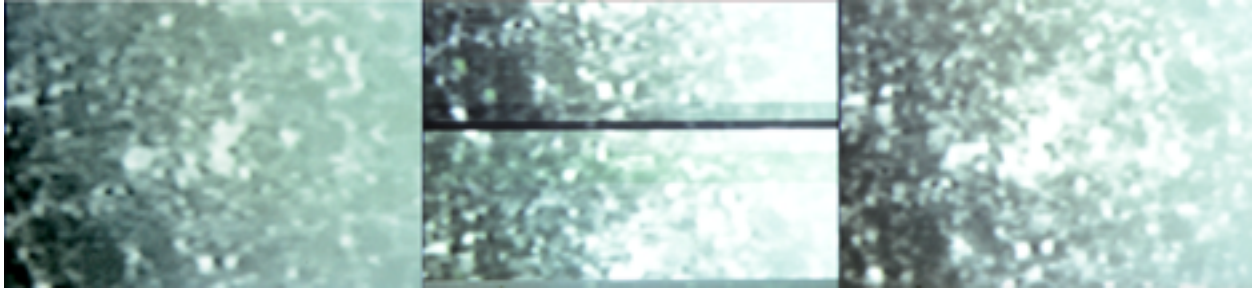
Fig 6. Jimmy O'Neal, inverted images of constellation drawings, *Time-Drawing-Machine*, 1999

and asked to use the program for the interrogation of my drawing in search of time, date, and location in the name of existential phenomenology, but he declined. His energy towards the idea was much like mine when I was introduced to the Wacom years earlier. He dismissively said, "Why don't you just roll a dice and leave my system out of this?" I thought to my programmed self, wasn't he rolling some dice by the sheer nature of his ideas? Reacting to challenge rather than desire in this thought, I realized I was starting to be involved in a Baudrillardian seduction. Was I now infected with the simulation bug of "asking the great machine," even though it was in the name of the tradition of drawing? I thought about Baudrillard's distinctions:

> These are the two extremes: obscenity and seduction, as is shown by art, which is one of the terrains of seduction. On the one hand, there is art, which is capable of inventing a scene other than the real, another set of rules; on the other, there is realist art, which has fallen into a kind of obscenity by becoming descriptive, objective, or the pure reflection of the decomposition - the fractalization - of the world.[3]

I was guilty of both extremes concerning spectacle in my work.

In 1999, I was invited to be in a show at the Nexus Contemporary Art Center in Atlanta. It was titled, appropriately for the Y2K scare at the time as well as the rumblings of global warming, *"Requiem."* By this time, I was seduced by Photoshop's many filters of simulation, and I had visions of creating the look of filters covering my electronically felt drawings in a real-

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[3] Jean Baudrillard, *Passwords* (London: Verso, 2003), 28

world situation. I discovered the technique of thermal-forming plastics, which is used in the creation of those three-dimensional lighted signs of consumerism that pollute our world's word. I realized that this technique was an answer to my idea, as it can produce a clear embossed encasement and layer for my drawings, which acted visually as an embossed filter of Photoshop. In regard to the tone of the show, I wanted to produce drawings that would reflect the Requiem sentiment by "passing away" through the duration of the show. I created two large-scale pouncer drawings on (and through) a thermal paper, a paper which reacts to heat and eventually turns to black if not kept in a cool environment. These drawings were then encased inside the clear acrylic cooling "filters." Thinking about the supposed pending doom of computer simulation due to the Y2K phenomena and global warming, I had created what I called "Life Support Drawings." By connecting air-conditioning units via air tubes to the filter encasements, using the acrylic encasements as cooling units for the thermal drawings, I was in effect keeping the drawings "alive."

One of the drawings, titled *When Filters Fail*, was left unplugged at the wall. The resulting paper piece became a dark vertical rectangle resembling an image of a bright constellation, as there was a mirror behind the drawing reflecting through the burned holes. The initial image was a 1950s standard household fan, a technology from the era of the birth of the anthropocene. Among all the pressuring questions at the doorstep of the new millennium, my biggest one at that point was how to bring the painting to my new sense of drawing and a new understanding of the implications of simulation.

My ridiculous attempts at profundity in the name of drawing, imbued with universal metadata, led me to the following painting situation. With my unconscious ego and programmed self at the helm, revving the engines of pomp, I decided to scale the size of the electrocution

Fig 7. Jimmy O'Neal, *Feeling Rabbit Spark's*, 120"x 96", 2000

drawing style to grand proportion. It seemed appropriate to push this idea of forcing a feeling of

shock, burning holes through a surface for cosmic simulation, into the painting realm. With my

quiet narcism nodding like some mirrored bobble-head on the dashboard of sincere exploration, I

jumped into a large scale painting situation on printed simulations of unpainted linen with

contextually organic frames. (Fig.7) The printed cloth surface was drawn on, or through, with the

electrocution process for the pinhole constellation effect. The pieces were hung floating 12 inches from the wall, creating a projection on the wall behind of star-like patterns.

The cartoons were then painted with a high body clear paint that created brushstroke-lenses over the holes, causing the subtle prismatic shift in projection. I realized these simulated veils of distorted tradition, i.e. the frame and linen format, as being analogous to society's

Fig 8. Jimmy O'Neal, Installation view of, *Felt Time*, 120"x 96", 2000

technological hole-riddled sails set high, projecting a false North Star of guidance within a self-simulated constellation. The effect of this work was a gallery full of simulated emptiness in the name of painting, and the paint itself had to drop all opacity to survive. It was the first time I had a sense of what was to come in regard to the ephemeralization of painting. (Fig.8)

Looking back on this body of work, I realize it echoes my new understandings of Baudrillard's theories in simulacra and simulation. It has also brought to light, in this self-examination, that beyond not painting with one foot in the method book, I also never actually painted with any concern for art or what it was becoming. I was painting towards my understandings of painting itself, which had always been the way in which a painting had the dual power to reflect the human condition at the time in which it was created and still survive in a timeless manner. After an interview about this body of work, Diana McClintock put it this way:

> Jimmy O'Neal's maximalist paintings occupy a space somewhere between utopia and heterotopia. Like the balanced geometries of Piet Mondrian, they symbolize the relationship of human being to the cosmos. Like the reductive Suprematism of Kasmir Malevich, they embody feeling. Their context is postmodernism, but their content is decidedly not post-utopian. Embracing electronic media while acknowledging the profound impact of new technologies on painting. O'Neal has not lost his belief in the effectiveness of painting as a site for exploration and revelation. He is a painter in the traditional sense-the painter's tools have simply changed. [4]

The Ephemeralization of Color Through the Lens of Mirrored Paint

R. Buckminster Fuller, in his postulations of the future fate of society's progress, coined the term *ephemeralization*, which stood for the idea that technological advancement would do "more and more with less and less until eventually one could do everything with nothing."[5] This of course, for the sake of this thesis, is directed toward our present state of simulated reality where entire worlds are made up of 1's and 0's. I am also directing this conceptual term at the

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[4] Diana McClintock, "Maximal Overdrive: Diana McClintock Visits Jimmy O'Neal," *Art Papers*, Vol 24, No. 3 (May/June 2000), 18.

[5] *Anticipatory,* Interview with Buckminster Fuller at his "World Game" offices in Philadelphia in 1974, 51:43 / 58:10, Uploaded on Jan 27, 2007, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hYtQ_-rpAUo.

self, where, simply, less and less energy towards our commercially-fueled narcissistic programmed selves would create more and more of an empathic global society, on into a state of wholeness. The greatest "everything" conceivable could be achieved with zero percent of the energy it would take for a truly ephemeralized selfish self to feel "with" other selves. In regard to my endeavors as "painter," I am exploring poetic painting situations that parallel these thoughts and ideas as a representation of my understandings of the ever-present human condition and conditioning. With that said, I find myself in a Schopenhauer dichotomy, where he concluded (though more pessimistically than the underbelly of this thesis intends) that a person could either cut themselves off to the world like a sage or spend as much time as possible with art and philosophy. I, of course, am choosing the latter.[6]

Realizing the impending progressions in virtual reality and the simulated human experience, within a society soon to be arming itself with powerful pocket tools for constant manipulation of those realities, I, of course, desired a painting sentiment to reflect these new conditionings, while also fueling the conversations with the abstract expressionist in my head. In other words, I wanted to keep a brush in my hand. Unfortunately, my instincts were that I would have to drop color and opacity without going quietly into a chromophobic state of the minimal. I wanted to make a mark that would contain a particular abstract reality in real-time. My primary fantasy came into being as a mirrored mark, which I ultimately achieved by taking a hint from our state-of-the-art technologies and the present "states of art" at that time that seemed to be due to our technological advances.

I listened to the babble of my inner thoughts and metaphors on the matter, which included "virtual realities will possibly discard natural reality" and "everybody now seems to be painting

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[6] Durham, *Philosophy of Schopenhauer.* (GB: Acumen, 2005) 118.

Fig 9. sanding acrylic mirror

Fig 10. mirrored paint example

using the camera lens," and proceeded to do the following: I sanded away the surface and the natural reflection of an acrylic mirror, (Fig.9) researched the chemical makeup of the mirror, and found a chemically bonding crystal clear acrylic paint to put reality back—by way of lens viscosity—with a traditional brush. (Fig.10) With a "sky's the limit" attitude and a strange sense of loss and vulnerability, I started on my journey of mirrored works.

Saying goodbye to color out of some self-proclaimed ascetic need gave me a sense of accountability, as I was losing an entire spectrum of the self with which I had always identified. I looked at the loss, producing memory colors from what it reflected, in the sense that Marcus Aurelius describes this way: "The soul becomes dyed with the color of its thoughts."[7] The

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[7] Marcel van Ackeren, ed., *A Companion to Marcus Aurelius (Blackwell Companions to the Ancient World)* (Hoboken, NJ, USA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 415

Fig 11. Jimmy O'Neal , *Under the Charge*, 46"x 39", 2002

ephemeralization of color and opacity in the paint itself gave the painted lens mark a hyper-real

clarity that indeed measured up to the "doing more with less" of which Fuller spoke.

I jumped into the mirrored paintings straight away with both feet and started running the

gamut of images in the spheres of poetic expressions for viewers' reflection. The first series was

simply layers of hand-painted woodcut pictures of angels and demons, creating almost

completely abstract images. (Fig.11) They were very simple and to the point as far as real-time portraiture goes, but they elicited interesting responses as they revealed unexpected layers within the viewers. Some people would sweetly say, "Oh, look—I see a beautiful angel!" and others would say, accusingly, "so why are you painting a bunch of ole devils?" I found this telling, as they were all looking into mirrors.

Another gallery situation that was of great surprise occurred at a show called "Qualia," which consisted of mirrored paintings of large-scale Rorschach tests, images from thought

Fig 12. Jimmy O'Neal , *Happy Tear's*, 60"x 72", 2006

experiments, bundles of squirting flowers and various other things. While this show was mounted, the Democratic party rented the gallery for a function, and they chose for my work to stay up, even selecting a work for behind the podium where Bill Clinton was to speak. This piece happened to be of two hyenas mating, entitled *Happy Tears*, and it ended up as the backdrop for his speech. (Fig.12) The jury is out as to whether or not it was intentional, but the show's title, "Qualia," is a philosophical term for individual instances of subjective, conscious experience. I include this because I can't think of a more "programmed self" than a President of the United States who pressures out, with Baudrillardian hyper-real spectacle, such quotable utterances as "Character is a journey, not a destination."[8] In the context of the chosen image, I find his statement funny. I could also take another perspective and present Schopenhauer, who states that "after copulation, the devil's laughter is heard."[9] With this religious reference, I move onto a corner altar painting.

Lead into Gold: Holographic Corner Altars and Losing the Red Hand of O'Neal

Having embraced the digital simulation of Photoshop to the extent that I could morph images, I found in the progression from image to image a new responsibility, of sorts, to explore an age-old quest in the name of my new digital wizardry. I immediately thought of it as a digital alchemy. Therefore, choosing to morph the alchemical sign for lead into the alchemical sign for gold, I digitally attained the previously unobtainable magic quest. With an immense respect for,

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[8] "Bill Clinton: Character is a journey, not a destination," *All-Swagga: Clever, Confident Men,* Nov 5, 2011, http://allswagga.com/blog/2011/11/05/bill-clinton-character-is-a-journey-not-a-destination/.

[9] Sabine Weiber, "Max Klinger and Wilhelmine Culture. *On the Threshold of German Modernism.*" *The German Quarterly* 88, no. 4, (October 01, 2015) : 46.

Fig 13. Jimmy O'Neal , *Cornering the L of Gold, **Speculum*** 96"x 96", 2001

and extreme interest in, corner altar paintings, I decided it to be a format to explore in this piece

(Fig 13).

I created the painting by layering each of the seven frames from the morphing process, in

succession, one on top of the other, using the transparent lens technique on the sanded mirror to

give it an ephemeral illusion. The painting was painted as a diptych with a vertical seam in the

middle and joined in the corner of the museum; thereby both halves reflected each other, creating

a ghost-like, symmetrical, holographic corner space. For reasons of self-reflection and to light the

viewer as the subject within in the area, I applied vertical fluorescent lights on each side of the

piece, much like a vanity mirror, thus adding to the illusion of what had become more of a portal than an altar.

The symmetry of the illusion fascinated me because the composition, when unfolded and not in the corner, was just an asymmetrical arrangement of a layered morph sequence—but the corner placement brought the symmetrical illusion to life as each side reflected the other. (Fig.13) I owe the illusory center of this piece for introducing me to the work of Derrida, as a writing student who was at the opening told me that the center being inside the piece as well as outside the piece brought his theories to mind. I of course researched and fell in love with Derrida's term "the transcendental signified," which would have been a great title for the work if it had not already been titled *Cornering the L of Gold*.[10] I realized that the word-play mechanics of my chosen title worked as a loose example of what the Derridean term stands for.

Derrida's infamously challenging-to-grasp ""transcendental signified" is rooted in the understanding that language systems convey signs. These signs contain two elements: a signifier (the tangible character or symbol), and the signified (the thought or reflection from and beyond the symbol). The signifier and signified are always there in operation, and always separated by distinction from one another by varying degrees. For example, if the signifier were "river," variations of the signified could be thoughts of floating on one's back, feet first in late Summer; a tugboat's chugging engine; or—more broadly—just "water." In this example, the most potent of the "signified" would be simply "water," as it is experienced in some way by all life in our planetary closed system. Not all are fortunate enough to experience the other two signified thoughts, so the thought of "water" wins as being closest to a transcendental signified.

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[10] Marian Hobson, *Jacques Derrida : Opening Lines (Critics of the Twentieth Century)* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 25.

Without going too much further down this Derridean rabbit hole, I will hopefully express the connection to the work as well as its title, *Cornering the L of Gold*. With a general understanding of the hierarchal steps toward a transcendental signified (which Derrida believed did not truly exist), one could move from "river" to "water" to "life," to possibly a notion of "creator" or "god." With this in mind, the imagery of the painting being the morphing from lead to gold (an element attributed to embody divine qualities) with a corner icon placement presenting a symmetrical reflection (resembling a cheeky uncanny smile, in the image included here) references an ever-present godlike possibility. Title-wise, the phrase "cornering the L of gold" intertextually excludes the "L," leaving the word "God." Simultaneously, the intertextuality can reverse to a mental image of an "L of Gold" in a corner.

As I was having fun with images and how they interplay with the viewer, and exploring how different painting situations could set up exciting platforms for emblematic conversations, I also took the time to focus on other ideas that were not so full of programmed self. Realizing that the paintings to date were still just images that I painted using my self-programmed hand, I felt I was ignoring the possibilities of my exploratory self in regard to the big picture, whatever that was. Once again, I had that feeling of needing to get rid of something in my work. I soon became caught up in the implications of advanced robotics. I thought how interesting it would be for a robot to paint in mirrored paint because of its inability to process its own reflection (this was before robots began to show such abilities). A robot could be a slave to the mirror as I had self-amusingly been, only minus the capacity for narcissism. Its lack of cognitive dexterity would also achieve that mark I was looking for, only with new expression. I could, and had, made those abstract expressive strokes, but not without a sinking feeling of pretension in my gut and a

pomposity in the muscle memory of my hand. At this thought, I realized I needed to lose the hand.

I am not suggesting another "red hand of O'Neal" 5th-century scenario, where the forefather of my ancestors, the Celtic chieftain "uá Niáll," in a neck and neck sea race with another clan, cut off his hand and threw it onto shore with his other to win the race and claim Ireland. In the ephemeralization of elements of my programmed self, I, of course, could not lose myself (or should I say the essence of self)—after all I am still a painter. I couldn't see myself as

Fig 14. Jimmy O'Neal , *EEG Painting Machine*, 72"x 72", 2003

a voyeur to that level of disconnect, so I decided to use my brain waves--without my hand--to control the robot situation. It seemed to be an action that fit my feelings towards the self-essences

that had been left from painters on the surface throughout time, no matter the period of art. This conclusion also gave me essential input in the results of the painting. In the end, I decided not to use a robot due to the affiliation with the "simulated other." So I built a machine, based on the principles of an Etch A Sketch, to replace it. The machine translated my brain activity nicely within the field of the painting surface that seemed in line with my abstract expressionistic mirrored vision and at this point, I was ready to see what new journeys lay ahead. (Fig.14)

Spooky Painting action at a Distance: Painting with Brainwaves and Empathic Mirror Neurons

In 2002, I was invited by curator Raphaela Platow to be in a show at The Rose Art Museum at Brandeis University, entitled "Painting4." She chose four artists: Ingrid Calame, Katharina Grosse, Michael Lin and myself. I saw this as a perfect opportunity to explore my hand-less notion. At that time, I had a head full of concepts based on non-local activity in painting. I had recently read about non-local activity in theoretical physics, and while I do not pretend to understand all aspects and full implications entirely, I will explain my basic grasp on the subject that propelled my primary fantasies. My humble understandings were this: particles can transcend space and time and act as if interconnected. In other words, particles can behave in unison at two different locations, regardless of the distance or time. Einstein explained it nicely by calling it "a spooky action at a distance."[11] This information gave rise to an idea of a non-local painting situation where an artist could have an experience and simultaneously translate it non-locally to a surface and—most importantly—place a viewer within a reflection of its so-called "real time" at any later date. So the breakdown is as follows: I, as the painter, directly experience

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[11]Dean Radin. *Entangled Minds: Extrasensory Experience in a Quantum Reality, (*New York: Paraview, 2006), 1.

a moment in time, and the resulting cognitive information creates frequential brain activity. The EEG machine then amplifies the resulting frequencies, and they are sent to the painting apparatus. The apparatus creates marks on the X- and Y axes of the painting's surface, using the mirrored painting technique, subsequently placing the viewer of the work within the painter's cognitive experience of the moment in time.

So when the question of "What to experience?" arose in concert with such a painting situation, I decided to respond in a meta-cognitive way—or should I say meta-cognition apparently played a role in my decision to turn my painting back onto itself with what I did next.. I had a studio full of mirrored paintings, created with a brush in hand, that by this time had exhausted my patience with poetic imagery for reflection. These pieces were to go to the museum for the upcoming show, but in my heart of hearts, I felt the works were irresponsible and without a connection to each other as a series. With my fantasy of the non-local brain painting in tow, I decided to take the images of these works—some 70 in all—and put them in a successive loop of video for a viewing experience as I wore the EEG headgear, which would then produce a single mirrored painting using the painting machine. The resulting painting, then, was a cognitive culmination of the previous works that I had force-fed to myself as a catalyst for a new piece.

With this single mirrored painting loaded with conceptual distilled action staring me in the face, I realized I might be taking painting way too seriously again. I mean "reality," as I thought it to be, was going to hell in a hand basket in terms of our primary human effects on our natural environment, and what right did I have to play in the paint? At the time, I would often go out the back door of my studio, which backed up to the French Broad River, and watch it flow, wondering how sick humanity had made this ancient artery of the world. As I watched the sun's

glistening reflection off of the unending flow of water, I would often throw my overbearing questions about reality in general into the fold and flow of this organic mass, as if to let go of questions and just be, sending my metacognition adrift. Realizing this, I found an opportunity for

Fig 15. Jimmy O'Neal , *In Karreza Noemata*, boat on the river, 2003

the condensed work in question and decided to set the painting adrift on the river, as if to conceptually let all previous pretensions go for that day's moment. I investigated the implications of such an action with regard to non-locality and found the potential for what I will consider a metacognitive closure to this painting situation: targeting the cognitive conceptual architecture of the viewing participant. (Fig.15)

The understanding that I was sending a newly realized mirror painting down a river brought into question the imagery that would be reflected in the mirrored marks. Of course, as we understand the situation we can assume it would be a flowing, low-res distorted reflection of the many green subtleties of the vegetation on the banks of the river, but this mental image

Fig 16. Jimmy O'Neal , *In Karreza Noemata*,, installation, 2003

opened an opportunity to emphasize the non-local nature of the work even further by adding a

video camera to the situation. The painting had been mounted on a nonfunctioning air boat which

resembled a 3D computer wire frame. I then up-fitted the boat with an arm to support a video

camera that projected out and away from the painting's surface to capture video footage of the

reflected fleeting landscape. The resulting footage was a futile record of what is much more

beautiful in the mind's eye, which led me to title the installation, "In Kareza Noemata." The

installation consisted of all the paintings that were in the original video loop, with the actual boat

in the middle of the gallery, which had the non-local landscape painting that traveled the river at

the helm for the viewers to reflect within. (Fig.16) By giving the installation the title, "In Kareza

Noemata," my sentiment closely paralleled a Baudrillard thought where he explains his

philosophical opinion on human subjectivity in a simulated existence. In 1999, he gave a lecture

at Wellek Library of University of California, Irvine, in which I had a misunderstanding, due to his accent. The miscommunication was of the last word from the following quote:

> Where the human subject as such disappears and then automate personal lives. In virtual reality, the subject no longer has a function or critical incidents. It can vanish without the world taking out of it; it becomes a useless function, just as a sex function in _____.[12]

It was not until I read the condensed, translated book version of the same section of writing which was this, "Human subjectivity becomes a set of useless function, as useless as sexuality is to clones," that I realized he was saying, "sex function in **clones.**" I had initially thought he had said "sex function in **clothes**."[13]

When I was in Boston for the installation of the show, I was introduced to a neuroscientist who was making breakthroughs in his research on mirrored neurons. The curator thought that this would make for an interesting meeting, as the scientist was dealing with mirrored neurons and I was painting in mirror via EEG machine. The scientist and I met for coffee and discussed his research and findings in the realms of the mirrored neuron and we made various correlating connections to some of the concepts in my work, but nothing beyond a poetic association. He found it interesting that I was painting with mirrored marks that only existed as such when a human perceives its reflection. Yet, I had taken the self of the human reflection out and sent the painting downstream for the viewer to perceive the experience in the essence of the action, with only their mental visuals acting as the actual painting. Concerning the fleeting landscape that was mentally reflected in the painting, we both agreed that the state of our

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[12] *Baudrillard - The Murder of the Real* (1/6). Audio recording of a 1999 lecture given at Wellek Library of University of California, Irvine, 6:07 / 9:05. Uploaded on Feb 9, 2008. https://www.youtube.com/watchv=aOIjI2gFizM.

[13] Jean Baudrillard. *Vital Illusions* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 63.

landscape could do with a little less human. I found his research to be profoundly interesting as his findings were unraveling evidence that mirror neurons seemed to be rooted in what I understood to be the nature of empathy.[14]

OV: The Map of Decaying, Unexperienced, Experiences

Another situation where the actual image and experience existed mainly in the mind, or within a sense datum, was a commissioned work entitled *The OV Project*, created on a private 300-acre peninsula. The land in question started off in 1997 as the Little Italy Peninsula Arts Center and was envisioned by its founder, Andreas Bechtler, to be an art center where the guest artist could seek inspiration within nature. I was commissioned to create cabins, or other enclosed spaces, where the artist could find refuge from nature throughout the private peninsula.

The idea for *OV* was propelled by thoughts of people hurtling through nature, to a shelter window from which to safely view the "nature" and the fetishizing of the gear and gadgets that would outfit them properly to complete the mission to serenity. Serenity—that particular beautifully intangible mental place where humans enjoy going, if not but for a few moments of self-understanding, often triggered by nature and the necessary grounding effect it has on the psyche. These ideas and ideals, along with the opportunity of the request, created a unique platform for an exciting work of art.

The spaces ranged from a ten-sided, mirrored decahedral dome floating within the forest and acting as a moving real-time camera obscura propelled by wind and sound frequency, to an underground spherical room serving as a museum for microscopic findings from the surrounding

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[14] "Mirror Neurons and Empathy," *DNA Learning Center,* Accessed April 22, 2016. https://www.dnalc.org/view/852-mirror-neurons-and-empathy.html.

Fig 17. Jimmy O'Neal , *OV,* mirrored dome, 2001

nature, and a crystal clear polycarbonate dome partially submerged in the landscape to act as a protective space for night vision goggle observations of animals in the wild. The participants would be given specially equipped backpacks before their exploratory hike, which included batteries, keys to the enclosures, and a map of the peninsula.

The title, *OV*, was conceived with this certain "mission to serenity" in mind, and the idea of such a mission itself being able to be psychologically inhabited. "OV" is an acronym for *Oecist Vorstellung,* "Oecist" meaning colonizer and "Vorstellung" standing for a sensual, mental image. The title represents and means, in an imprecise translation, "colonizer of a sensual, mental image."

The concept for *OV* is composed of several aspects dealing with the nature of being in a time of perceived fading reality. The factors facing the participant, i.e., the viewer, come in various styles and forms reflecting the commonalities of life in modern culture as well as our timeless perceptions of nature's complex mystery. For example, the spaces for the participant to experience are hidden, in an "interactive computer game like fashion," thus maximizing the entire peninsula as a closed system of reality.

One of the connective threads within the system was a book on sacred geometry by author Michael Schneider, titled *A Beginner's Guide to Constructing the Universe*. The book has ten chapters which illustrate the journey from the monad to the decad, exploring the mathematical principles behind reality itself. I divided the book into its ten separate sections and placed them throughout the closed system within the various structures and pods created for the participants. If someone were to take on the challenge of finding and reading all ten chapters to complete the book, there again we find a mirror to our need for an origin and the journeys of fragmented, so-called sacred information as insight into reality.

Fig 18. Jimmy O'Neal , *OV,* under ground pod, 2001

For the sake of this writing, I will only explore three of the spaces created for the project and the aspects of the low-tech virtual experiences within to give a range of the sub-realities of the *OV*. The pod representing the decad, or chapter ten, was realized at a location on the land where a large tree had been struck by lightning and blown apart in three sections, leaving a 16-foot tall stump measuring in at 5 feet in diameter. It acted as the pedestal for a 12 foot by 12 foot completely mirrored decahedral dome that created the illusion of invisibility at a distance—therefore, hard to find yet hidden in plain sight. The inside of the space resembled that of a small black box theater in the round, with a 5-foot circular screen on the floor for the projection from a swiveling lens at the peak of the dome attached to a weather vane. So in essence, one would enter the darkened pod and see the image of the trees in real time projected on the central screen; but in addition, the lens would also move with the wind and give the illusion that the pod was turning. This movement was also activated, on non-windy days, by the playing of a symphony set of 7 crystal singing bowls tuned to different notes. These bowls range in sizes from 10 to 30 inches in diameter, and the resonance was quite active when the correlating resonant frequency of the space was played, creating vibrations high enough to create rotating movement in the lens, and placing the person in a virtual rotating music box hidden deep in the forest. (Fig.17)

The monad pod reflects the book's 1st chapter, in space and shape, by being an entirely spherical room buried beneath the ground, as if it were a seed or a hidden egg. The room was equipped with a solar powered projectable microscope for viewing specimens from nature on the concavity of the white inner walls of the sphere, tools to produce slides for viewing and an automated talking slide library for culminated findings. This theatrical experience, or theater of experience, acted as an investigative lab for a deeper look into the core geometric structures in found objects of nature along the path within this closed system of self-search. (Fig.18)

The last of the three spaces that will be mentioned in this writing is a 16 foot in diameter geodesic dome, made from unbreakable polycarbonate. The dome is sunken into the ground 3

Fig 19. Jimmy O'Neal , *OV*, clear dome, 2001

feet, to place most participants' viewpoint eye-to-eye with the various wildlife that could be viewed at night, using the provided night vision goggles that were tethered within the space. The dome acted as a protective shield against bears, bucks, snakes, and various other wild animals. (Fig.19) The transparent dome also kept in the human smell, so it would often act as a reverse zoo, where the human zone served as an enclave to the wild terrain, which is thoroughly illustrated in the map.

The map is encoded, by design, with imagery and symbols to visually and informationally unfold with an unfolding journey of discovery along the hike, in search of the

Fig 20. Jimmy O'Neal , *OV*, the MAP, 2001

fragments of text. The map was also designed to be the only existing element that the public can

experience—hence the translation of the name again—"Colonizer of a Sensual Mental Image."

My total concept of the piece was to create a series of actual installations in nature on the private

peninsula featuring dream-like, low-tech simulation experiences. These experiences were meant

to go unexperienced, thus creating a work exemplifying the idea of a decaying, unexperienced

experience. The map and the various explanations of the map are the only thing that goes physically experienced, other than in the mind, as the decay of experience continues to deteriorate for its 18th year. The human experience happens in the mind, so in essence, this is where the decaying, unexperienced experience has just now been painted. (Fig.20) The work put me in mind of this passage from *Vital Illusions*:

> We live as if inside Borge's fable of the map and the territory; in this story nothing is left but pieces of the map scattered throughout the empty space, the territory. Except that we must turn the tale upside down: today there is nothing left but a map (the virtual abstraction of the territory), and on this map, some fragments of the real are still floating and drifting.[15]

Scrying in New Scopes

At this point I would like to move forward and away from tattered, floating fragments of the real and decaying unexperienced experiences and on toward the visual perspectives of frequencies created by moments of sound. In my continued exploration of hidden geometries, I found myself turning to light's spangle-like glistening off of turbulent waters, again with a feeling that I would find some overarching understanding hidden within it. In this case, my focus became the turbulence from sound in a controlled system using cymatics, a term which is well-explained in this overview from the researchers at the "CymaScope Shop":

> Cymatics is the study of sound and vibration made visible, typically on the surface of a plate, diaphragm or membrane. Direct ocular viewing of vibrations involves exciting inorganic matter such as particulate matter, pastes (both magnetic and non-magnetic) and liquids, under the influence of sound, although recent research has extended the range of media to include organic matter and the range of viewing has been extended to include the light microscope. The generic term for this field of science is the study of 'modal

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[15] Baudrillard, Jean, *Vital illusions* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 63

phenomena,' named 'Cymatics' by Hans Jenny, a Swiss medical doctor and a pioneer in this field. The word 'Cymatics' derives from the Greek 'kuma' meaning 'billow' or 'wave,' to describe the periodic effects that sound and vibration has on matter. The apparatus employed can be simple, such as a Chladni Plate (a flat brass plate excited by a violin bow) or advanced such as the CymaScope, a laboratory instrument co-invented by

Fig 21. Jimmy O'Neal , *Reactants*, 2009

English acoustics engineer John Stuart Reid, that makes visible the inherent geometries within sound and music.[16]

My chosen controlled system was that of a "DIY CymaScope," created to make visible the inherent geometries within sound, using water as the chosen matter to be influenced by the various frequencies found in the two situations I encountered next, in search of images for painting.

In 2009 I was fortunate enough to win a commission from The Arts Council of Winston-Salem and Forsyth County, NC, for a wall piece in the lobby of HanesBrands Theatre in the Milton Rhodes Center for the Arts in Winston-Salem. For this piece, I got to explore the concept
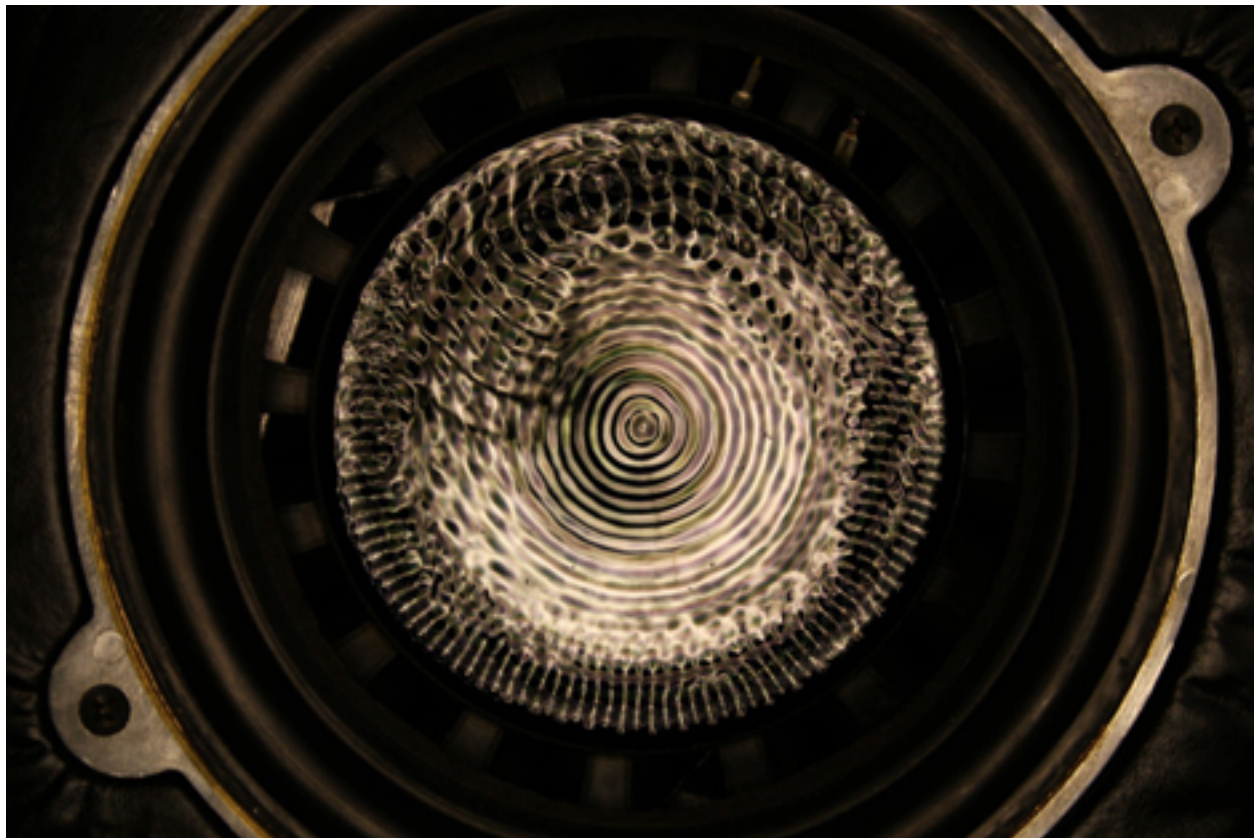
Fig 22. Jimmy O'Neal , *Reactants*, image beginning to form, 2009

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[16] "Introduction," *Cymascope,* Accessed August 15, 2016, http://www.cymascope.com/cyma_research/history.html.

of placing the patrons of the theater within a mirrored painting of a large cymatic image. The question of what sound *is* was at the forefront of my thinking, and as I wanted to express the sound of a closed system further, I decided to use the resonant frequency of the actual theater itself to influence the cymascope. Using a tone generator, I played amplified frequencies into the space, slowly sweeping through frequencies until I found the one in tune with the room itself, as if tuning an instrument with its resonant body. (Fig.21) Then I subjected the cymascope to the newly producing a cymatic image for painting in mirror. (Fig.22) By choosing the resonance of the architectural space of the theater, I was able to create a symbol that encompassed the resonance of all future sounds created within that space, be they theatrical laughter, cries,

Fig 23. Jimmy O'Neal , *Reactants,* 2009

screams, applause, etc. As the piece was in the lobby of the building, it acted as a foreshadowing of the resonant frequency the theatergoer was about to enter. (Fig.23) The work places the viewer within the shimmering, vibrational spirit of the theater.

In 2010, I received a public commission from The Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS) in Charlotte North Carolina to produce a work for their bus garages, which consisted of seven visually connected architectural facades. (Fig.24) While I was exploring cymatics, I had found it to be a perfect opportunity to try multiple images, or sounds, in a phrase or melody. So for this piece I recorded the sounds described in each verse of the classic childhood song "The Wheels

Fig 24. Jimmy O'Neal , *Wheels on the Bus in Seven Cymatic Sanats,* 2010

on the Bus." I recorded the wipers on the bus as they went "swish, swish," the driver saying "move on back," the horn, etc., and created cymatic images from those recordings to adorn the facades. As large-scale reflective imagery was what my public work consisted of, and as at the time of this work Frank Gehry's concave architecture was raising temperatures in nearby buildings, I was asked to have a professional solar impact analysis created for the work, to show that the reflection of sunlight from the work would not set fires. After seeing the results of the
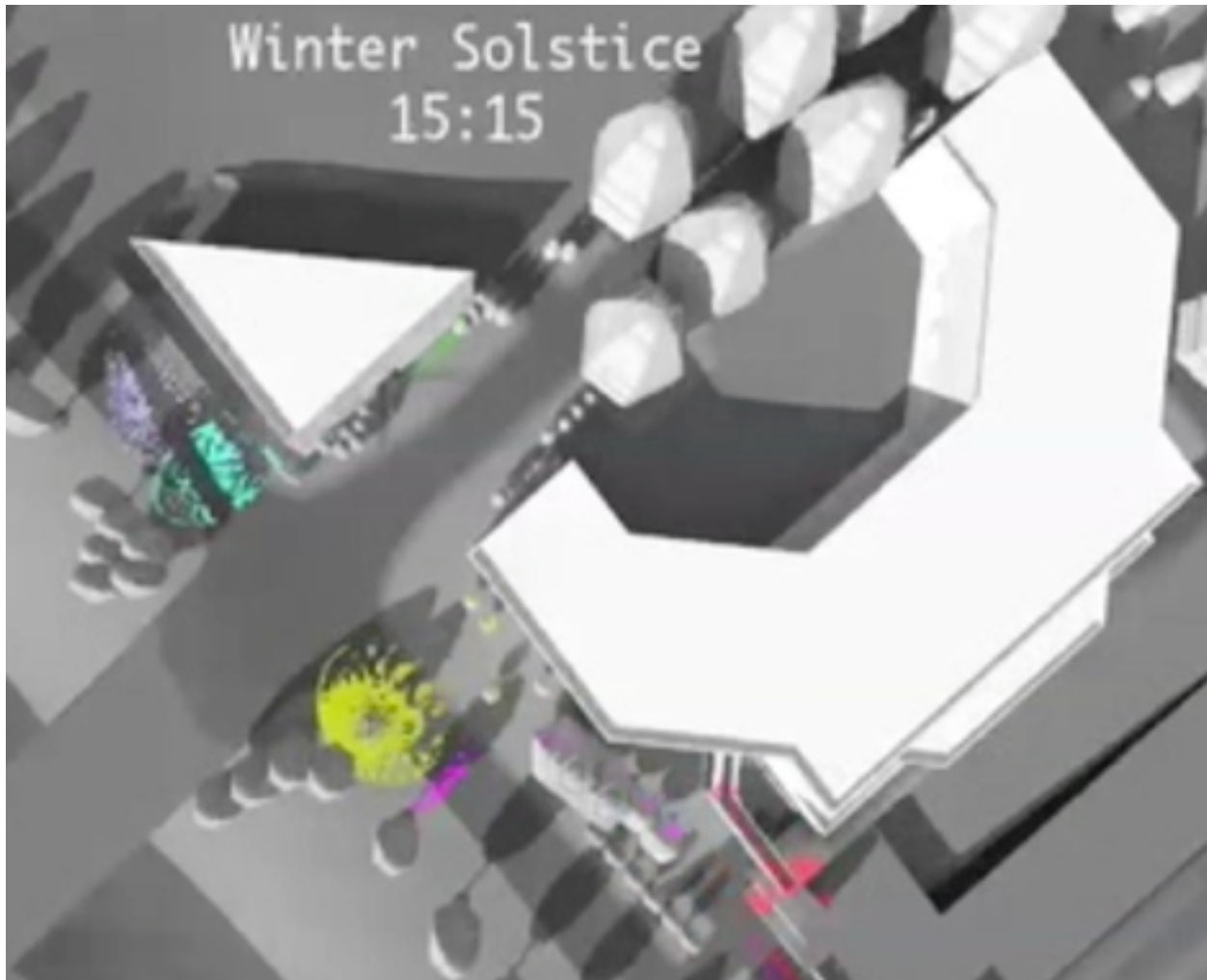
Fig 25. Jimmy O'Neal , *Wheels on the Bus in Seven Cymatic Sanats,* 2010 Detail of solar impact analysis, the colored cymatic shapes show the reflected sunlight on the earth below during Winter Solstice.

study, conducted by Daylighting + Energy Performance Laboratory at UNC-Charlotte, I was again blown away by the implications of the work—it acted, from the perspective of the 3-D simulation video, as a phenomenological sun dial as it revealed the sun's reflection on the surrounding landscape around the building over 265 days a year. (Fig.25) It was as if the images reflected cymatic shafts of daylight light in constant motion, derived from sounds of a nursery rhyme orbiting the building from which the sounds originated. As a result, the appearance of the work constantly shifts in response to the daily and seasonal atmospheric changes.

The bus garage as point of origin within the situation's system, as well as the significance of the room of the theater, brings to mind structuralism and Derrida's philosophical systems as all insisting on a center—the bus garage or theater being the system's special amplified central rational, or what he called "central presence."[17] This is simply implied and applied to these situations that I was employed to illuminate for culturally systematic purposes, because what is to be understood about Derrida's "central presence" is he was casting the net to the whole of the
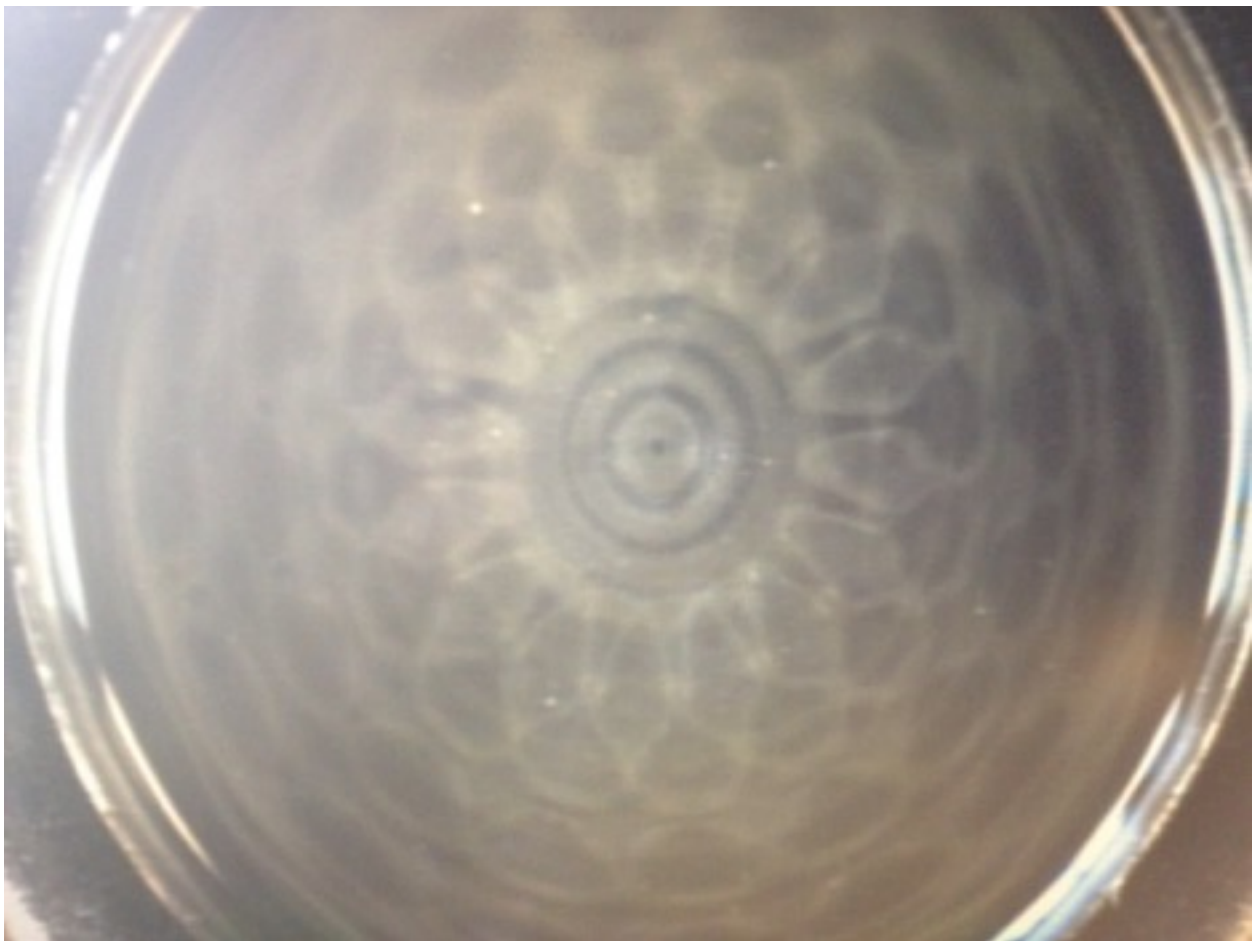
Fig 26. Jimmy O'Neal , detail water in the cymascope ,

system as we know it in philosophical terms.

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[17] Jaques Derrida, "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," PDF from California State University, Dominguez Hills, Accessed on Aug 13, 2006, http://www.csudh.edu/ccauthen/576f13/DrrdaSSP.pdf.

Being, myself, the self at the center that created this particular systematic painting situation of turning frequencies into images, to then paint with a mirrored mark for the presentation to a cognitive receiver to experience, I asked myself what sound was at the center of this system. I reverted back to the amplification of my brain's frequencies as a catalyst for a new work. The set -up for the painting was to connect the EEG to the cymascope and paint the sub-sequential geometric mandala-like image. (Fig.26) While I was adjusting the focus of the

Fig 27. EEG head gear

cymascope, to my surprise, the image was thrown into a dissonance by a tiny moth that flew into the surface of the water, as if a rock were shattering a rosary window of a cathedral. This new terrestrial life-form riding the waves of water generated by my brain in the petri dish of the

cymascope really got in my head. As I watched the trajectory of movement of the new bug from the waves, I realized it had no specific pattern it followed. While continuing to watch, my thoughts went to the tracking motion of the pie fight, and as a result I saw an opportunity for a real time, EEG, cymascope-plus-projector painting situation. I put on my EEG head gear (the EEG head gear is ironically named the MUSE) (Fig.27), connected the live feed from the

Fig 28. reflection in painting of the original moth incident

cymascope to a projector, and started painting the path of the moth on the surface of the water. One downfall of painting the floating moth was that it never sank to give closure to the painting process. So eventually, with experimentation, I ended up using the hull of a seed which would eventually sink as if it were a boat on troubled waters. (Fig.28) So in essence, my moth-in-the-brain-waves breakthrough—to look inside for a suggested transcendental center—came… like a rock through a sacred rosary.

The Unavoidably Narcissistic Destructive Selfie

I can't think of anything that is quite as painful as the destruction of art. In the recent past, a rash of narcissistic, destructive selfie-takers has seemed to start literally, physically self ephemeralizing, by way of situations such as backing into the paths of high-speed trains, falling off mountains, falling into the sea, etc. One of these characters even put an entire plane full of humans in danger by grabbing the infamous "hijacker selfie."[18] Unfortunately, now these crazies are destroying art by seeking acceptance from a society of other self-programmed selfie-seekers. The antics go from bad to worse—from "selfie" fulfilled fantasies such as an American student getting stuck in Fernando de la Jara's marble vagina sculpture in Germany (which did no damage to the sculpture but certainly sets a precedent[19]) to a tourist climbing a 126-year-old statue of

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[18] Scott Simon, "Hijack Selfie' Photo Subject Sought Fame In Dangerous Circumstances," *Simon Says/NPR,* April 2, 2016, http://www.npr.org/2016/04/02/472783226/hijack-selfie-photo-subject-sought-fame-in-dangerous-circumstances.

[19] Sarah Cascone, "32-Ton Marble Vagina Traps US Exchange Student," *Artnet News*, June 23, 2014, https://news.artnet.com/people/32-ton-marble-vagina-traps-us-exchange-student-46442.

Dom Sebastiao at Lisbon's Rossio train station, only to topple it into pieces.[20] This unavoidable

folly of the inhuman is addressed well by Rick Roderick's take on Baudrillard's *Fatal Strategies*:

> Where ever we find power, even the power of the hyper-real, we find counter-power and where we see
> an image that reduces as inhuman, occasionally we see an image that has the bizarre transcendent
> power to make us, slightly more human again. But it is along that terrain I think the battles and
> struggles of the self, will fight with its self and it will be fought in the future. [21]

The future Roderick was speaking of, in this 1996 recording, is now, and the gut reaction

I have had to these situations is to use the tools of the hyperreal narcissist as a mirror to their

Fig 29. *"The Drunken Satyr"*

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[20] Sarah Cascone, "126-Year-Old Statue Destroyed by Man Taking Selfie," *Artnet News*, May 10, 2016, https://news.artnet.com/art-world/126-year-old-statue-destroyed-by-selfie-493421.

[21] *Rick Roderick on Baudrillard - Fatal Strategies [full length]*, Part 8 of 1993 lecture series *The Self Under Siege: Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*, 48:02, Uploaded on Jan 25, 2012, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2U9WMftV40c.

society of self, by creating a selfie app that places the viewer in the painted mark. The image I

have chosen to paint is from a recent art destruction—the crumbling aftermath left behind by an

Italian student trying to impress his Instagram self by hopping in the lap of a copy of an ancient

Greek sculpture outside a museum titled *The Drunken Satyr*. (Fig.29) With this painting

situation, the stages of Baudrillard's "precession of simulacra" is as follows. The first is the

original sculpture, as the faithful copy of the real. The second is the destructive selfie image

where the copy of the real (or in this case, as it was a copy that was destroyed, a copy of a copy

Fig 30. Jimmy O'Neal, "*The Drunken Satyr*", oil on canvas, 114"x 72" , 2016

of the real) is only alluded to in the obscure reality of the selfie image that denatures the reality

of the original. Third is the painting of the selfie destruction, which masks the absence of the

original sculpture by way of its intercontextuality to it—Baudrillard considered this the "order of

sorcery." (Fig.30) And finally, alluding to the fourth stage are the simulated selfies that are taken

Fig 31. Jimmy O'Neal, "*The Drunken Satyr*", image from the oneal app, 2016

using the app, from the painting of the selfie destruction, from the original copy of reality. (Fig.

31) This image has no visual relation to the real, becoming total simulation.[22]

Growing up, I considered the thoughts in this realm, and art in general, to be like an

analogy contest, where art was working in analogies of a profound reality. I saw it as producing

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[22] Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* (Ann Arbor : University of Michigan Press, 1994), 6.

an analogy of an analogy of an analogy of an analogy until we forget what the profound reality was in the first place that started the spiral away from itself. Personally, I always found this to be an exercise in humility in the end, which seems to be something the society of self is lacking at present.

New Perspectives in Pie Fighting

C. S. Lewis once said, "Humility is not thinking less of yourself; it's thinking of yourself less."[23] With this, he poignantly expresses, in a simple statement, a description of one of the legs on which this thesis stands. It also brings me to a reflection on an immersive painting situation loaded with new perspectives on humility, and the understanding of how a family portrait can rattle the programmed self into a deeper family connection and on into a timeless reflective experience.

In 2011, I a got call from someone who was interested in commissioning me to create a painting for his wife's birthday. He wanted to surprise her with a gift that he knew she would enjoy, as she was a patron of the arts, yet would also be an out-of-the-ordinary gift for him to give. He explained that he was not experienced in purchasing art, or familiar with very much art in general for that matter, but he wanted to indulge in his wife's interest, and it was up to me as to what to create. I accepted the request with great responsibility and wanted to create something special.

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[23] As it turns out, this quote is commonly misattributed to Lewis, according to writer William O'Flaherty, whose best guess at the true source is Rick Warren's famous bestseller, *A Purpose Driven Life*, as discussed in his article "Quotes NOT by Lewis: A Preliminary Examination" from *Essential C.S. Lewis* at http://www.essentialcslewis.com/2014/01/26/quotes-not-by-lewis-a-preliminary-examination/.

At the time, I was working with a painting situation where perception and perspective would create a mark that involved eye tracking technology that was not commercially available at the time, which was initially designed for commercial testing in the realm of product placement in stores that explored the consumer's perspective while shopping. Eye tracking glasses are specially designed to track the viewer's pupils to produce data, revealing where the eye is looking within a 2-dimensional field. The technology I was using was a hacked version,

Fig 32. Jimmy O'Neal, *Pie Fight Painting*, boy with eye trading glasses, 2010

created by a group of graffiti artists. They had designed software that could draw with eye movements for a mutual artist friend who had been left paraplegic after an accident; needless to say, I accepted this technology with great responsibility as well.

My primary desire was to push the idea of perspective, and mainly, in a deeper sense, a perception of an experience, as a compositional director of a painted mirrored mark. The situational set up was two separate 12'x12' pods. One was white on the inside, and acted as the stage area for action. The other was black on the inside and served the projection room for painting. The "stage pod" had a small viewing window which the "perceiver" watched the action while wearing the eye tracking glasses. (Fig.32) Then the darkened video projection pod received the two-dimensional data from the glasses, in real time, as a moving dot that was projected and followed by the paint brush on the surface of the piece. The situation allowed me to conceptually place a viewer in the abstract mirrored painted field created from the perception of a visual experience. In other words, and being conscientious of the history of painting and its many directions, such as action painting, I let the simulation of someone else's visual perception of an action inform my compositional mark. With this in mind, I processed the request for the surprise birthday present painting and thought about what action would be appropriate. After several phone conversations with the husband of the birthday girl, I gleaned enough information as to their family situation to start tossing around ideas for an action that would be actively exciting, full of emotion, and create a sentiment that would last a lifetime.

Knowing that the couple had two young children close in age, a boy and a girl, who were also excited to surprise their mother, I proposed a family pie fight between the husband and the two children, and we coordinated the portrait of the situation to be when the mom was out of town. The husband and children drove to the mountains and showed up at the studio, he decompressing from a job as president of a worldwide corporation and they from the constraints of a school environment. I invited them in, and we got down to the business at hand. I explained the scenario: the three of them would each take a turn with the eye tracking glasses to watch

while the other two would take turns telling jokes and throwing pies at each other. For each joke deemed bad, a pie would be thrown. Meanwhile, I would be painting from the real-time movement of the projected dot from the glasses. We, or should I say they, went through all the motions, emotions, and feelings one would go through in such an exercise: starting with anticipa

Fig 33. Jimmy O'Neal, *Pie Fight Painting*, girl with pie on her face, 2010

tion, leading to fear, then shock, exhilaration, anger, remorse, and humility on into relief, happiness and contentment outside the programmed self, all within minutes. With pie on her face, the little girl asked, with a Marina Abramovic stare, "Is this painting going to look like me?" (Fig.33) I just replied, "Sweetheart, it will look like you for the rest of your life." When I made the delivery to their house, installing the painting, along with a small video monitor showing footage of the experience, the little girl said, "I get it! Thanks for the fun!"

As I drove back to the mountains after the installation, I noticed, as I always do, the fun perspectives that happen on the highway as an eye in a human head hurls across the surface of this planet at speeds upwards of 70 miles per hour in a metal machine with a glass surround. Illusory wonders like the tyndall effect from the sun light spreading through the early morning fog and mist, or the amazing afternoon Fata Morgana mirroring the horizon from the surface heat. But the illusion that particularly caught my eye in this moment was one that depends on the speed of the situation—a barn that was caught in the parallax view about 300 yards out in a field. This is the view from a window of a moving car where objects in the distance appear to move slower than those in the foreground. These phenomena led to distracting thoughts and deeper questions of the underlying systems at play in the nature of reality itself due to the quantifiable, ever-clarifying resolutions of our new simulated virtual realities. As my thought appeared to be turning into an inside-out sensation, I saw a hot air balloon appear out of the mountain skyline, and in a "note to self" way, I set those unsettling questions existentially adrift inside the colorful balloon and continued home.

Luciferin Fading

I decided to explore the hot air balloon metaphor, from the inside out, as my new installation. The design for the upcoming studio show was already in my head—an immersive collection of paintings dealing with an idea of a palimpsest layering of the painted lens onto reality. The painting installation would be similar to that of "Painting 4," only I wanted the shape of the space to be a heptad, in honor of the seven-sided council houses of the seven tribes of the Cherokee. I also wanted something to take central focus and be reflected in the mirrored

Fig 34. Anish Kapoor's *Leviathan*, monumenta, 2011

paintings as a background behind the viewing subject, so I thought of the fleeting landscape of the painting on the boat in the river. That led me to the movement of the trees dancing in the

Fig 35. Jimmy O'Neal , *Luciferin Fading*, 2011

reflection of the boat painting, only for this application, I needed a rotating movement behind the

viewer, which led me to a carnival ride in which I placed four trees in movement. Then I placed

the entire installation inside an actual inverted hot air balloon (I was strangely unaware of the involuted space of Anish Kapoor's "Leviathan,"(Fig.34) which he created for Monumenta that same year), complete with my son in the gondola—the focal point of the parallax view— entertaining the visitors with vocal and violin performances of David Bowie's "As the World Falls Down." (Fig.35, 36)

Fig 36. Jimmy O'Neal , *Luciferin Fading*, 2011

Where some could take a Schopenhauer attitude to this work by feeling it represents a life with no intrinsic worth, but is kept in motion merely by desire and illusion, I feel this famous monologue by comedian Bill Hicks to be somewhat more appropriate as to my romantic intentions:[24]

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[24] Jacquette, Dale. *Philosophy of Schopenhauer*. (Durham, UK: Acumen, 2005), 139

The world is like a ride in an amusement park, and when you choose to go on it, you think its real because that's how powerful our minds are. The ride goes up and down, around and around, it has thrills and chills, and it's very brightly colored, and it's very loud, and its fun for a while. Many people have been on the ride a long time, and they begin to wonder, "Hey, is this real, or is this just a ride?" And other people have remembered, and they come back to us and say, "Hey, don't worry; don't be afraid, ever, because this is just a ride." And we … kill those people. "Shut him up! I've got a lot invested in this ride, shut him up! Look at my furrows of worry, look at my big bank account and my family. This has to be real." It's just a ride. But we always kill the good guys who try and tell us that, you ever notice that? And let the demons run amok … But it doesn't matter because it's just a ride. And we can change it any time we want. It's only a choice. No effort, no work, no job, no savings of money. Just a simple choice, right now, between fear and love. The eyes of fear want you to put bigger locks on your doors, buy guns, close yourself off. The eyes of love instead see all of us as one. Here's what we can do to change the world, right now, to a better ride. Take all that money we spend on weapons and defenses each year and instead spend it feeding and clothing and educating the poor of the world, which it would pay for many times over, not one human being excluded, and we could explore space, together, both inner and outer, forever, in peace. [25]

While writing this thesis, I was having second thoughts about including this section, so I went outside to take a breather in the evening air. Normally at this time of year I would have seen a multitude of fireflies (growing up we called them lightning bugs), but on this particular night I saw only one glow in the field which caught my attention. And where I was used to the intensity of a "lightning bug's" glow flickering out much faster, this single particular light dimmed ever so slowly, and when it was gone, the bray of a donkey in the distance happened as if on queue. The sound of the donkey created an absurd laugh track to my question regarding this section, thus cementing the inclusion of this work: after all, the title is "Luciferin Fading," and luciferin is the light-emitting compound found in fireflies.

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[25] "Bill Hicks," *Good Reads*, Accessed May 23, 2016, http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/494647- the-world-is-like-a-ride-in-an-amusement-park.

The Sensuous Feeling of Character and Riding a Simulated Viscosity

A roller coaster is analogous of so many things, like life, love, business, parenting, "writing," and the list goes on, but as for my newest painting situation that I created for my thesis

Fig 37. Jimmy O'Neal , *DIAPAUSE: Riding the Viscosity*, roller coaster simulator, 2016

show, it turned out to be a perfect analogy. In my latest exploration of self and the ephemeralization of the programmed self in a painting, I use a physical roller coaster simulator as a choreographer of my paint brush. The roller coaster simulator is one in which the participants lie back in seats that physically move with the motion of action on the video screen in front of them. (Fig.37) The action on the screen is, of course, a journey of twists and turns on parallel tracks in motion toward a never-ending vanishing point. Watching the movement of the seats, as well as the screen's activity, I painted with a brush that was equipped with a tiny video

camera, mimicking the twists and turns of the action to place the rider in the perspective of riding a brush mark instead of the roller coaster tracks. By doing this, I painted an abstract mark choreographed by a preprogrammed simulation, as if mining an ephemeral path from some simulated map of otherness.

Fig 38. Jimmy O'Neal , *DIAPAUSE: Riding the Viscosity*, 6 character video screen, 2016

The simulator is equipped with six buttons for six separate tracks. (Fig.38) I "cast" these buttons, or independent simulations, as if casting actors as characters in a stage production— more specifically, I cast them as the six main characters of Marius Petipa's ballet, "The Magic Mirror." The characters are the Benevolent Princess, the Audacious Prince, the Evil Queen, the Noble King, the Humble Gnome and the Empathetic Nurse. Each of the choreographed abstract

Fig 39. Jimmy O'Neal , *DIAPAUSE: Riding the Viscosity*, 2016

marks, I conceptually consider as individual character traits of the programmed self, creating a

situation where the rider is not only riding the viscosity of paint in the mark making, but also a

line of character. In other words, each simulated roller coaster of character has its own "track," "mark," "path," or Derridean "trace" as it were, (which also brings new meaning to Bill Clinton's "character is a journey" idea). [26]

The perspective of the rider is that of a vast horizon of a surface as it's being painted, where the rider, much like in life and reality, cannot see the big picture--only sees, hears and,

Fig 40. Worlds Largest Painting, 1995

[26] Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena* (Northwestern University Press, 1973), 156.

quite importantly in this simulated situation, "feels" the surface texture of the path. (Fig.39) I

Fig 41. Worlds Largest Painting, 80,000 sq ft, 1995

find it visually reminiscent of the perspective of a painting I was in involved in my first year of

graduate school at the Savannah College of Art and Design, way back at the beginning of this

writing in 1995. (Fig.40) Three fellow graduate painting majors, Micheal Brown, Jeff Louviere,

Ivan Morris and myself all worked in large scale. Ivan, being the one whose work was the most

massive, spearheaded a proposal for the four of us to create the world's largest painting. We

accepted, and four days, 500 gallons of paint and 80,000 square feet later we entered into the

Guinness Book of World Records for the largest painting at that time. The painting was a tongue-

in-cheek image of the Hawaiian Elvis on a postage stamp, as the subject was relevant at the time.

(Fig.41) (We wanted to paint a picture of Lady Chablis but she was relatively unknown, and the populous majority did not get behind the idea drag queens back then, only kings.)

Ephemeralizing the programmed self in a painting using a roller coaster simulator creates interesting visual properties in the paint, and new psychological dimensions of the painting in general, by way of layering the clear paint on the sanded mirrored surface as if compiling or stacking abstract lenses of character. If one were just to paint one layer of one abstract character —take the Evil Queen, for example—the viewer would be able to see themselves in the mirrored mark, representing the Evil Queen, quite clearly, thus only accepting the conceptual reflection of Evil Queen character traits. However, as you layer each of the other characters as representative

Fig 42. Jimmy O'Neal , *Magic Mirror*, 96"x 120" , 2016

abstract painted lenses, the reflected visual information of the viewer's physical identity starts to

distort, and eventually, with all of the character layers, an ephemeralization of the reflected viewer's detailed physical identity occurs, creating a reflection of an essential human. This loosely suggests the idea that, if we as programmed self-characters accept as our own the lenses of other programmed self-characters, over time we begin to ephemeralize the programmed self toward a more empathetic wholeness in human reflection. (Fig.42) Empathy is not about feeling for others; it is feeling with others the connection to the wholeness of global self.

Where the first five buttons on the roller coaster simulator were designated to five of the six characters from the magic mirror, the sixth button on the simulator is designated to a sculptural painting ride experience—in honor of the transition of the Benevolent Princess into a Sleeping Beauty and her subsequent resurrection. The video visuals of this ride consist of a micro camera view, following a brush as it paints a green chrome key mark over a 3-D

Fig 43. Jimmy O'Neal , *Sleeping Beauty,* video still from *DIAPAUSE*, 2016

environment consisting of a terrain of office carpet, woven textured wheel structures and fields of fur, and then rattling down the vertebrae of a spine. (Fig.43) In the gallery, the actual sculpture was also present, adding the element of a larger macro perspective in contrast to the perspective of the simulation ride. The sculpture consisted of a full-sized Chewbacca, lying face down as if he had collapsed from over-exhaustion from pulling the full-scale rickshaw still in his hands

Fig 44. Jimmy O'Neal , *Sleeping Beauty*, 2016

behind him. (Fig.44) This green painted Wookiee scene is completely enclosed within an office cubicle, complete with glass panels for viewing the scenario as if in a natural history exhibit. (Fig.45) With this it is suggested that not only is the physical office space becoming a thing of the past, but so are our darling iconic characters as they are being exhausted by simulation, and the most important meta implied thought is of the human perspective of character, as we have known it, belonging in a future tomb of spectacle.

As for the technical painting and visual aspects of this work, this could be a case of "the excess of information puts an end to information," in Baudrillardian terms.[27] Concerning the

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[27] Richard G. Smith, *The Baudrillard Dictionary* (Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 65.

Fig 45. Jimmy O'Neal , *Sleeping Beauty,* 2016

human condition, it would be considered "fragmentation to wholeness," in a Bohmian understanding.[28] Looking to a pre-programmed roller coaster simulator as a choreographer of a painted mark may seem to be a conceptual extreme, but to what extremes does simulation play a role in our reality as we think we know it?

The concepts within the sensuous feeling of a simulated character are important in this case as we are moving into a time where simulation of physical stimulation is hard wired into our new perspectives, almost jarring us into new realities. Simulation is the imitation of the operation of a real-world process or system over time.[29] As I was writing this I came across an image that

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[28] David Bohm, *Wholeness and the Implicate Order* (New York: Routledge, 1980)

[29] Jerry Banks, John Carson, Barry Nelson and David Nicol, *Discrete-Event System Simulation* (Prentice Hall, 2001), 3

Fig 46. Heji Shin, *#lonelygirl* new photographs, cover of ARTFORUM, 2016

triggered thoughts on the subject that can only be explained in a picture. (Fig.46) It was one of

Heji Shin's new photographs on the cover of ARTFORUM[30]. Where the image is intended to be

an allegorical self-portrait of sorts dealing with the #lonelygirl identity in the age of the "selfie"

on Instagram, I found the image to haunt on even deeper, primal levels. Regarding the character

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[30] "Heji Shin - *#lonelygirl*," *Artlikeyou Network*, Accessed May 23, 2016, https://likeyou.com/events/heji-shin-lonelygirl/.

of a simulated sensation, I was left trying to envision the Jeany's sense datum (Jeany being the monkey).

Clogging a Simulated Sky

As Steven Moffat puts it, "Well we've moved through the fun fair a bit - we've done the roller coaster, now we're on the ghost train."[31] This sentiment is a little too on point for my sentimental nature towards what I thought nature was. The following set of statements from NASA scientist Rich Terrile will explain what I mean:

> Right now the fastest NASA supercomputers are cranking away at about double the speed of the human brain, if you make a simple calculation using Moore's Law [which roughly claims computers double in power every two years], you'll find that these supercomputers, inside of a decade, will have the ability to compute an entire human lifetime of 80 years – including every thought ever conceived during that lifetime – in the span of a month. In quantum mechanics, particles do not have a definite state unless they're being observed. Many theorists have spent a lot of time trying to figure out how you explain this. One explanation is that we're living within a simulation, seeing what we need to see when we need to see it. What I find inspiring is that, even if we are in a simulation or many orders of magnitude down in levels of simulation, somewhere along the line something escaped the primordial ooze to become us and to result in simulations that made us – and that's cool. The idea that our Universe is a fiction generated by computer code solves a number of inconsistencies and mysteries about the cosmos.[32]

The above statement brings to mind the imagery within thought experiments as being future theater, or mental ballets of our life's sense-data as in *OV*'s decaying un-experienced

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[31] "Doctor Who: interview with Steven Moffat," *Press Office/BBC,* April 5, 2011, http://www.bbc.co.uk/pressoffice/ pressreleases/stories/2011/04_april/05/doctorwho2.shtml.

[32] "NASA scientist says we may be living in a Matrix-like digital imprisonment designed by Aliens," *The Event Chronicle,* May 13, 2013, http://www.theeventchronicle.com/metaphysics/galactic/nasa-scientist-says-we-may-be-living-in-a-matrix-like-digital-imprisonment-designed-by-aliens/#.

virtual experience. As I understand it, in the comprehension of a situation or experience, the

viewing participant is directly conscious of a sense-datum. The situation could be a total illusion,

but the sense-datum is a mind object within the situation or experience, and has all the attributes

it seems to carry.[33] With this, along with the postulation of "every thought ever conceived during

an 80 year lifetime" being computable, I question the differentiation of intentional art sense-data

Fig 47. Jimmy O'Neal, Rebeca Parker, *Transporting Location*, 2013

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[33]   Virgil C. Aldrich, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol. 15, No. 3 (1955) : 369

from that which would be considered mundane thought sense-data: will art become a meta YouTube at a mental magnitude? With all of this in mind, I set my final stage for the last two works to be included in the thesis show.

In 2012, I was asked by a friend and fellow artist, Rebeca Parker, if I would like to join her in a performance work titled Transporting Location, which was a collaborative migratory clogging performance where we would transport a small experience of Southern tradition to Brooklyn. Clogging is traditional folk dance developed in the south of Appalachia. As children raised in Tennessee and Georgia, clogging was taught to both Rebecca and myself. Without hesitation, I accepted the offer, asking if I could design the stage to be danced on for a possible situational painting work later on. I built a portable platform out of unbreakable mirrored

Fig 48. Jimmy O'Neal, Rebeca Parker, *Transporting Location*, 2013

polycarbonate scraps to carry and use as our stage, similar to the wooden ones used at bluegrass festivals and hoedowns. Throughout the day, we roamed through the streets of DUMBO, selected sites for impromptu clogging, and taught others the basics of the dance style. (Fig.47)

Taking to task with frustrating questions as to the nature of being and obscure speculation of reality in general, as well as feelings of the impending future loss of physical contact in basic human interaction, we danced. I saw an opportunity to lose myself physically in dance along with scuffing away the physical reflection of reality in the mirrored dance floor by way of the metal bottomed clogging shoes. The reflection that was scuffed away was the underbelly of myself, the Brooklyn sky above and the visual connections to the many strangers of which I held on to throughout the days performance. (Fig.48) Ephemeralizing the self in this way does not totally fit Fuller's definition of ephemeralization as being a situation of less energy creating

Fig 49. Jimmy O'Neal, *The Leftover Essence of Transporting Locations*, 72"x72", 2013

more, on the contrary, it seemed to be the more energy by way of clogging erased more and more of the reflection of the big everything. The physical and emotional exertion of the dance reminded myself of the water within its physical makeup by way of the fluid viscosity in my sweat and tears that were falling at my feet. The water brought back visual information and reflection to the scuffed mirrored stage. The fundamental aspects of this new resulting piece, titled *The Leftover Essence of Transporting Locations,* flows into the intention of my final situational painting work for my thesis show. (Fig.49)

Ephemeralization in Plein Air and the Laughter of a Programmed Wookiee

As I prepare to visit the river again for the setting of another piece, the unfortunate reality of our system of water comes rushing over my conscience. The enormity of the situation is explained in the following statements by Sandra Postel, director of the Global Water Policy Project and Freshwater Fellow of the National Geographic Society:

> In late May 2013, 500 scientists from around the world gathered in Bonn, Germany, to converse about the global dimensions of water in the so-called Anthropocene – the proposed name for a new geologic epoch in which humans are a dominant driver of planetary systems and processes. Without question, the scholarly evidence for massive human disruption of climate, water, and other global systems is robust and growing. Our changing of Earth's climate has diminished snow cover and sea ice, intensified the water cycle, and altered patterns of rainfall and river flow. Human actions have acidified the oceans, altered the nitrogen cycle, drained half the world's wetlands, trapped behind dams 100 billion tons of sediment that would otherwise replenish coastlines, and diverted major rivers to the point where they no longer reach the sea. Without question, humanity is now an agent of change of geologic proportions. In convening a meeting in 2011 to discuss the merits of designating a new epoch called the Anthropocene – anthropo, for "man," and cene, for "new" – the Geological Society of London, noted: "In the blink of a geological eye, through our need for energy, food, water, minerals, for space in which to live and play, we have wrought changes to Earth's environment and life that are as significant as any known in the geological record." But we would be wise to broaden the

conversation about what to call the new phase we have unleashed, lest we initiate solutions with as much hubris and disregard for the interconnectedness of life as characterized the actions that got us into this mess".[34]

The weight of the statistics in our new epoch arrests my faculties with such a deep self-shame that the thought of even acting toward art seems ludicrous, but as it is the platform of voice that my programmed-self has built for my empathetic self to express from, I work further toward a proposed ephemeralization. In keeping with the idea of using less to create more, my desire is that of a minimal action. Yet I am not at all suggesting the less-is-more of minimalism, or even the intertextual literary connection to the term less is more's origins—the 1855 Andrea del Sarto poem "The Faultless Painter," which of course my creative ego would like to drop anchor on at the moment. I would, however, like to present a painting situation that self-ephemeralizes before the viewer's eyes. And, in the continuation of grinding away reality's reflection from a mirror and putting it back by way of the viscosity of lens, I will focus on the grinding, or taking away, from the original mirrored reflection and the inspiration behind the concept of the takeaway.

In 1953, Robert Rauschenberg created an all-erasure drawing titled *Erased de Kooning Drawing*, where he obviously erased an existing de Kooning drawing. (Fig.50) Years later, Rauschenberg explained in Emile de Antonio's 1972 documentary *Painters Painting* that he wanted to create an all-eraser drawing, but it had to be art in the first place. "If I did scribbles and erased them, that would be 50/50, but erasing a de Kooning drawing, that made it real."[35] The

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[34] Sandra Postel, "Water—and Us—in the Anthropocene," *National Geographic,* Last modified June 3, 2013, http://voices.nationalgeographic.com/2013/06/03/water-and-us-in-the-anthropocene/.

[35] Emile de Antonio, *Painters Painting,* 1972 Documentary, 52:26 / 1:58:26, Uploaded on May 11, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=COZmmQIqvCM.

Fig 50. Robert Rauschenberg, *Erased de Kooning Drawing*, 1953

idea of a reactionary mark on an already-charged surface in the case of my new self-ephemeralizing work pressed me to do the following. Instead of just sanding away the surface of the mirror and splashing clear paint on it to bring back the reflection—as Rauschenberg said, "that would be 50/50,"--I decided to use the surface of the clogging stage, where the reflection

was already taken away by charging intention, and cut the center out of the clogging stage to use as the starting point of the piece.

Feeling taxed by emotionally paying too much attention, I thought back to the reflections put back on the surface of the dance floor from the fluid viscosity of sweat and tears from the clogging performance years before, and decided that what needed to be taken away in my new painting situation was the paint itself. The painting scenario I had originally envisioned was a framed ground mirror surface, mounted on a pole in the forest next to the French Broad River and splashed with clear paint. I saw this as an instantaneous, birth of a landscape reflection, plein air painting. But thinking of the speed of nature's flux and flow surrounding the piece, the static dried mirrored paint seemed to embody the false stability that we humans have striven for, and that has put us in our present situation. Realizing the possibilities offered by its placement by the riverside, and mentally following the evaporative path of the sweat and tears, I instead mounted a bull's horn on a retractable cable for gathering water from the river to be splashed onto the surface of the framed dance floor. The result would be a momentary self-ephemeralizing plein air reflective watercolor painting. The low-definition watery reflection would fade and evaporate, making way for another splash of reality's reflection. Instead of the static action of drying clear paint, the birth of the reflection reacts in an egg-and-dart fashion toward multiple realities. The frame around the piece acts as a splash guard, directing the water to ornate downspouts, watering two patches of narcissus flowers on either side of the piece on the forest floor as a requiem for an intention.

In keeping with the ephemeralization of the "programmed self" in remembrance, I connected a famous character mask painted with the green chrome key paint (tethered to the river side piece) of simulation to be worn in the reflection of the work from our present societal

perpetuation. The May 19th, 2016 "Chewbacca Mask Lady" video meme (7,497,749 views and counting) is loaded, I feel, with poignant characteristics of the "self under siege" in a strangely beautiful way. The video is of a woman named Candace Payne who treated her programmed self with a Chewbacca mask for her birthday, which had an actuating jaw that would electronically

Fig 51. Candace Payne and Chewbacca, 2016

make the classic high-pitched gurgling sounds of the Wookiee in the Star Wars movies. As she excitedly puts on the mask outside the store for her phone camera performance, she transforms with ample humility into a simulation of the iconic Chewbacca character with a Candace Payne, trapped by uncontrollable laughter, inside. (Fig.51) When her mouth opens with laughter, so does

the jaw of the mask, creating Wookiee sounds that perpetuate an infectiously psychotic laughing fit, with her intermittently saying, "That's not me, it's the mask!" as if she had become a new collective of programmed selves. [36] As I enjoyably laughed out loud with her, or should I say "them," I was also conscious of what resulting complications come from such innocent indulgences on a mass scale. The resulting viral video caused a sell-out situation of the mask,

Fig 52. Jimmy O'Neal, *Magic Mirror*, Gallery Floor, 2016

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[36] Candace Paine, *LAUGHING CHEWBACCA MASK LADY (FULL VIDEO)*, 4:04, Uploaded May 19, 2016. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y3yRv5Jg5TI.

and I of course followed suit for the show, perpetuating the obviously already out of control environ-mental conditions due in large part to consumerism.

For the show I created a photographic image of the sculptural piece by the river, with obvious photo-shopped touch up simulations in contrast to the actual sculpture that I dug from the river bank and placed in the floor of the gallery. (Fig.52) The actual 3-D thermoformed poly

Fig 53. Jimmy O'Neal, *Magic Mirror*, Image of the image of the installation by the French Broad River, 2016

carbonate sculptural frame around the piece in the gallery floor resembled that of a poorly digitally touched up 2-dimensional image, resulting in a contrasting conversation back to the wall's simulated image for the viewer, if inspecting, as to what was actually simulated when, where and why. (Fig.53) A question that may not matter any more as the progression of simulation takes further hold, is taken for granted and taken in acceptance as the new antiseptic hyper real.

Fig 54. Jimmy O'Neal, *Chewy Face*, Image of the image using the oneal app, 2016

By presenting the relics and remnants of such an absurd and obscure exercise in a gallery setting, I was reaching for exemplary elements from the fringe of the obscene in our new simulated possibilities, in the name of presenting new perspectives of self within such a system. (Fig.54) I of course am in favor of the possibility that one could grasp the idea of the show's ridiculousness and take note as they laugh at or play with such ambiguous concepts concerning themselves within the system as a whole, perhaps even finding new empathetic perspectives for life's journeys forward.

Conclusion-

I am not sure what hard conclusive answers there are to be gleaned from a dilation on 23 years of exploratory poetry in the act of painting and art. Hegel puts it beautifully, describing art as being simply "the sensuous presentation of ideas."[37] In the case of this writing, it is becoming for me a time release of sensuous memory stains involving scrying from a river's surface and listening to donkey laughter for momentary guidance. And I am still not sure what essence that time spent was of. I do feel, however, that whether or not we are living in a simulated universe created by future ancestors, aliens, a centralized transcendental signified god-head or what ever other spangle-maker, we owe it to our very existence to take compassionate notice of the trajectories within our present understanding of our system and the existing beings within it. We can move in this direction by opening our eyes wide with new attitudes, to see that a little less programmed self could engage our empathic selves and catalyze us toward global self-preservation, and that we are a collective of individuals understanding the same closed system.

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[37] Slavoj Zizek, *Hegel and the Infinite : Religion, Politics, and Dialectic*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 188.

So in a conclusion with an ephemeralizing spirit, I leave off with a mental image for the reader looking into a gold mirrored painting of the layered momentary scenes described in Govinda's vision at the request of Siddhartha to kiss his forehead in Herman Hesse's masterpiece, as they see themselves as looking back from within the surface of the imagined work[38]:

> He no longer saw the face of his friend Siddhartha, instead he saw other faces, many, a long sequence, a flowing river of faces, of hundreds, of thousands, which all came and disappeared, and yet all seemed to be there simultaneously, which all constantly changed and renewed themselves, and which were still all Siddhartha. He saw the face of a fish, a carp, with an infinitely painfully opened mouth, the face of a dying fish, with fading eyes[39]—he saw the face of a new-born child, red and full of wrinkles, distorted from crying[40]—he saw the face of a murderer, he saw him plunging a knife into the body of another person[41]—he saw, in the same second, this criminal in bondage, kneeling and his head being chopped off by the executioner with one blow of his sword—he saw the bodies of men and women, naked in positions and cramps of frenzied love[42]—he saw corpses stretched out, motionless, cold, void[43]—he saw the heads of animals, of boars, of

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[38] Herman Hesse, *Siddhartha*, (New York: New Directions Publishing, 1951), 123

[39] (http://enews.earthlink.net/article/us?guid=20160819/77e81c28-92e6-4d55-9208-f4ed734c9f9b)

[40] (http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-05-06/newborn-babies-do-not-imitate-us-we-imitate-them/7383396)

[41] (http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2987901/Photos-claim-IS-beheadings-homosexuals-northern-Iraq.html)

[42] (http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/life-style/relationships/man-woman/Why-Kamasutra-is-not-all-about-sex/articleshow/6129753.cms)

[43] (http://epreston3.blogspot.com/2013_11_01_archive.html)

crocodiles, of elephants, of bulls, of birds[44]—he saw gods, saw Krishna, saw Agni[45]—he saw all of these figures and faces in a thousand relationships with one another, each one helping the other, loving it, hating it, destroying it, giving re-birth to it, each one was a will to die, a passionately painful confession of transitoriness, and yet none of them died, each one only transformed, was always re-born, received evermore a new face, without any time having passed between the one and the other face[46]—and all of these figures and faces rested, flowed, generated themselves, floated along and merged with each other, and they were all constantly covered by something thin, without individuality of its own, but yet existing, like a thin glass or ice, like a transparent skin, a shell or mold or mask of water, and this mask was smiling, and this mask was Siddhartha's smiling face, which he, Govinda, in this very same moment touched with his lips. And, Govinda saw it like this, this smile of the mask, this smile of oneness above the flowing forms, this smile of simultaneousness above the thousand births and deaths, this smile of Siddhartha was precisely the same, was precisely of the same kind as the quiet, delicate, impenetrable, perhaps benevolent, perhaps mocking, wise, thousand-fold smile of Gotama, the Buddha, as he had seen it himself with great respect a hundred times. Like this, Govinda knew, the perfected ones are smiling.

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44 (https://www.pinterest.com/pin/367536019568058155/)

45 (http://pyreaus.com/inspired_manifestation/2015/
pyreaus_inspired_manifestation_Agni_eternal_gift_of_divine_and_mystical_Fire.htm)

46 (http://themetapicture.com/your-brain-is-not-ready-for-this/)

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