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Not All Dreams Are Nightmares, Not All Nightmares Are Dreams

Neal G. Polallis

Polallis1987@live.missouristate.edu

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NOT ALL DREAMS ARE NIGHTMARES



**NOT ALL DREAMS ARE NIGHTMARES,
NOT ALL NIGHTMARES ARE DREAMS**

Neal G. Polallis

Exhibition scheduled at the Springfield Art Museum
COVID-19 closures required the virtual exhibition:
<https://art-design.missouristate.edu/exhibit/MFA-2020/>

May 1-25, 2020

I want to thank my family for their support, especially my wife for her understanding and support of me through these past three years has been invaluable. I would like to dedicate this book to my wife, to my children, and to my mother who passed away during the making of this book.

To my professors, I want to express my extreme gratitude for their feedback and insight coming from their experience. I would like to thank them for giving me direction throughout the program.

I want to say a special thank you to Bruce West, Sharon Harper, Fatih Benzer, Catherine Jolivette, Gwen Walstrand, Sarah Williams, Marcus Howell, Deidre Argyle, and Josh Albers.

Missouri State University
Art & Design Department
901 South National Avenue Springfield, Missouri 65897
artanddesign@missouristate.edu
art.missouristate.edu

Publication credits
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Photographs: Neal Polallis

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NOT ALL DREAMS ARE NIGHTMARES, NOT ALL NIGHTMARES ARE DREAMS

Art and Design Department

Missouri State University, May 2020

Master's of Fine Arts

Neal Polallis

ABSTRACT

My art deals with mental illness, particularly schizophrenia, PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder), and addiction. It is how I work out the problems in my relationships and within my head. My art is where I explore ideas, alternate possibilities, my dreams, and my fears. Drawing inspiration from photographers such as Jerry Uelsmann, Richard Avedon, and Irving Penn; painters like Caravaggio, Picasso, and Bacon, as well as, concepts from the Surrealists and the Futurists, the art I produce is dream-like: familiar objects in unrelated places. The work that I create stems from years of working with patients in their most acute states. For over a decade in an Adult Inpatient Psychiatric Unit, I worked with, and cared for those with mental illnesses. I was drawn to those who were suffering from Schizophrenia. I might be close enough to relate, touched enough to understand, or just insane enough to get a sense of their worlds. I use several juxtaposed images to replicate both movement and multiple points of a figure. This approach shows the struggle that I witnessed in patients and the frustration that I had in trying to go where I couldn't. Within a stack of juxtaposed images, I display various states of the fight I have with the situation; anger, helplessness, exhaustion, defeat, and acceptance. It is a terrible position not to be able to reach someone who needs help. We often end up harming ourselves in our attempts to save them.

KEYWORDS: schizophrenia, surrealism, dreams, photography, installation, mental illness, PTSD, addiction

Dr. Fatih Benzer
Chairperson, Advisory Committee
Missouri State University

NOT ALL DREAMS ARE NIGHTMARES, NOT ALL NIGHTMARES ARE DREAMS

By

Neal Polallis

A Master's Thesis
Submitted to the Graduate College
Of Missouri State University
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Master of Fine Arts in Visual Studies

May 2020

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Establishment of the Doctrine



Fig. 1. Broken saftey glass, 2017,
Digital Capture. 24.5 x 16.4 in.



Fig. 2. The Unseen, 2017, Archival Pigment Print. 32 x 40 in.

I am a photographer by trade and all my work has a photographic base. My art deals with the search for the elusive, the search for a child, the anger, and the rage at circumstances that I have had to endure in my life. The layers of situations, interactions with people, and certain events have made me angry, withdrawn, quiet, fearful, and at times full of uncontrollable rage. These layers entered in my art and they run throughout my art making process.

I have spent my life being the child of, the caretaker of, the victim of, and the parent of someone with mental illness. The stigma that we place on those who have mental illness has prompted me to research the disease, writings, images and art work produced by those with mental illness, and to research the conditions and treatment of those in our society who we want to hide away. Of course, mental illness, like any other human condition is an ebb and flow with variations of tides and cycles of tides. Unfortunately, there are those days that reflect the storm surge. I like the phrase “there is a fine line between insanity and genius” and I have often wondered who can bounce from one side to the other.



Fig. 3. They Won't Leave Me Alone, 2017, Archival Pigment Print.
33 x 40 in.



Fig. 4. My Space, 2017, Archival Pigment Print. 33 x 40 in.

Schizophrenia has been an unseen force throughout my life; affecting it, changing it, and altering its course. While I was working in a psychiatric unit, a patient in a paranoid state of their schizophrenia physically assaulted me which caused a great amount of trauma. I was forced into a nightmarish situation of dealing with doctors, insurance companies, lawyers and the courts. I suspect my father had the disease, and I know my child has it. All three of us were addicts. Spending summers as a small child with a father who could be erratic was tormenting. He would use me as a verbal punching bag, causing emotional distress. By the end of our conversations, which he called “sessions,” I wouldn’t know if I was up or down. My head would be spinning and developing a migraine. I almost always ended up vomiting. The next day, he would pretend as if nothing had happened. Eventually, there were rages that petrified me so bad that I couldn’t move. This rage is something that I found that I possess. The title of my exhibition “Not all nightmares are dreams, not all dreams are nightmares” came partially from this experience. Years later, watching my child hunt for people in the vents, in the ceiling, and in the wall left me trying to fix what I perceive as the “loss” of my child into a world I cannot go. I only have my interpretation of dreams, chemical experiences, secondhand accounts, my imagination, and my own trauma to give me a glimpse into this world.

I have been fascinated with the dual worlds concept for a long time. When I started working with schizophrenics and witnessing their duality, I started piecing it together, and realizing that the patients were inhabiting two worlds. My image White Rabbit hints to a dual world which could be a nightmarish possibility. The dream-like appearance of the work is based on the idea of faded memories. The duality in this work emerges from the notion of not knowing if it is a dream or a nightmare. The image in this work is inspired by conversations with my child and patients in the unit I worked on. I could see in some patients and my child that their life could be a nightmare that they could not wake from without help. While I empathize with the feeling of wanting a situation to stop, I understand being helpless means being able to do nothing but pray. My prayers were not answered. At some point, you detach from being present and you check out into your own reality. White Rabbit 2018 is a prime example of how I illustrate a heaviness of the situation. (Fig. 1) This photograph depicts a disjointed world. There are multiple horizons, hidden figures. Familiar objects in unfamiliar places, distorted perspectives and a depressed heavy atmosphere. Living in dual worlds can be confusing, heavy and distorted.



Fig. 5. Study with broken glass,
2017, Digital Capture. 24.5 x 16.4 in.

The reason most of my art identifies more with the horrifying parts of mental illness is deeply connected with the trauma and helplessness that I have had in my life. To visually represent this, I use layers and overlays as a simple vehicle to portray our inner state of being. These images became boxes to represent a person's head. They gradually evolved to include a stand and a base, representing a human figure. I used glass, films, and resin to create a physical space that shows this dream-like, sometimes nightmarish world. Each box is figural, represents individuals with the same basic form but slightly different exteriors and unique inner worlds; some pleasant, some angry, some tormented and tortured. Like each of us, no one can accurately be judged from the exterior. Even with examination of what we are shown, it still takes time and effort to know all aspects of someone. One cannot be aware of the trauma, psychosis or genius without spending time with the individual.



Fig. 6. Booneville House No. 1, 2018, Archival Pigment Print. 34 x 42 in.

Lifting the Veil



Fig. 7. Study with broken glass, 2017,
Digital Capture. 24.5 x 16.4 in.



Fig. 8. White Rabbit, 2018, Archival Pigment Print. 60.5 x 41.5 in.



Fig. 9. Bridge No. 1, 2018, Archival Pigment Print. 32 x 40 in.

Empathy is understanding and knowing. In order to develop my thesis work, I had to begin by examining myself. I started a brand-new series in November of 2017. The images *The Unseen*, *They Won't Leave Me Alone*, and *My Space* started with the word barriers (Fig. 2, 3, and 4). I felt that my age was one of the barriers I needed to overcome to succeed in the MFA program. This is where I started to lift the veil to discover how my layers and life experiences could be used to express myself through art. At that time, I felt that I was old and broken, hiding to not get hurt. The first image in the series *The Unseen* wraps up the feelings I was having. This image shows my eyes, a transparent image of my head, and shoulders.

I photographed myself through an old piece of glass. I resisted the urge to clean the glass. I felt that it added to the idea of age as a barrier. The image portrayed a sense that I have been sitting on a shelf for the past 25 years. I was pleased to see that my fellow grad students were uneasy with the dust and dirt on the image. They wanted to wipe the dust off. I am always in the hunt for the ultimate image. Through trial and error, experimentation, lots of exposures, and editing I gathered the inexhaustible possibilities into a workable image. I had shot the images for *The Unseen* so that the dust, dirt, and even my fingerprints were very sharp. Then, I digitally increased the sharpness to the point that it was almost overdone. I also brought up the highlights to emphasize the cracks in the glass. Later, I just photographed the glass and converted it to a black and white image getting rid of the blue flare in the cracks. All these techniques gave an edge to the image that expresses my turmoil.



Fig. 10. Shadow Figure No. 1, 2018, Archival Pigment Print.
34 x 42 in.

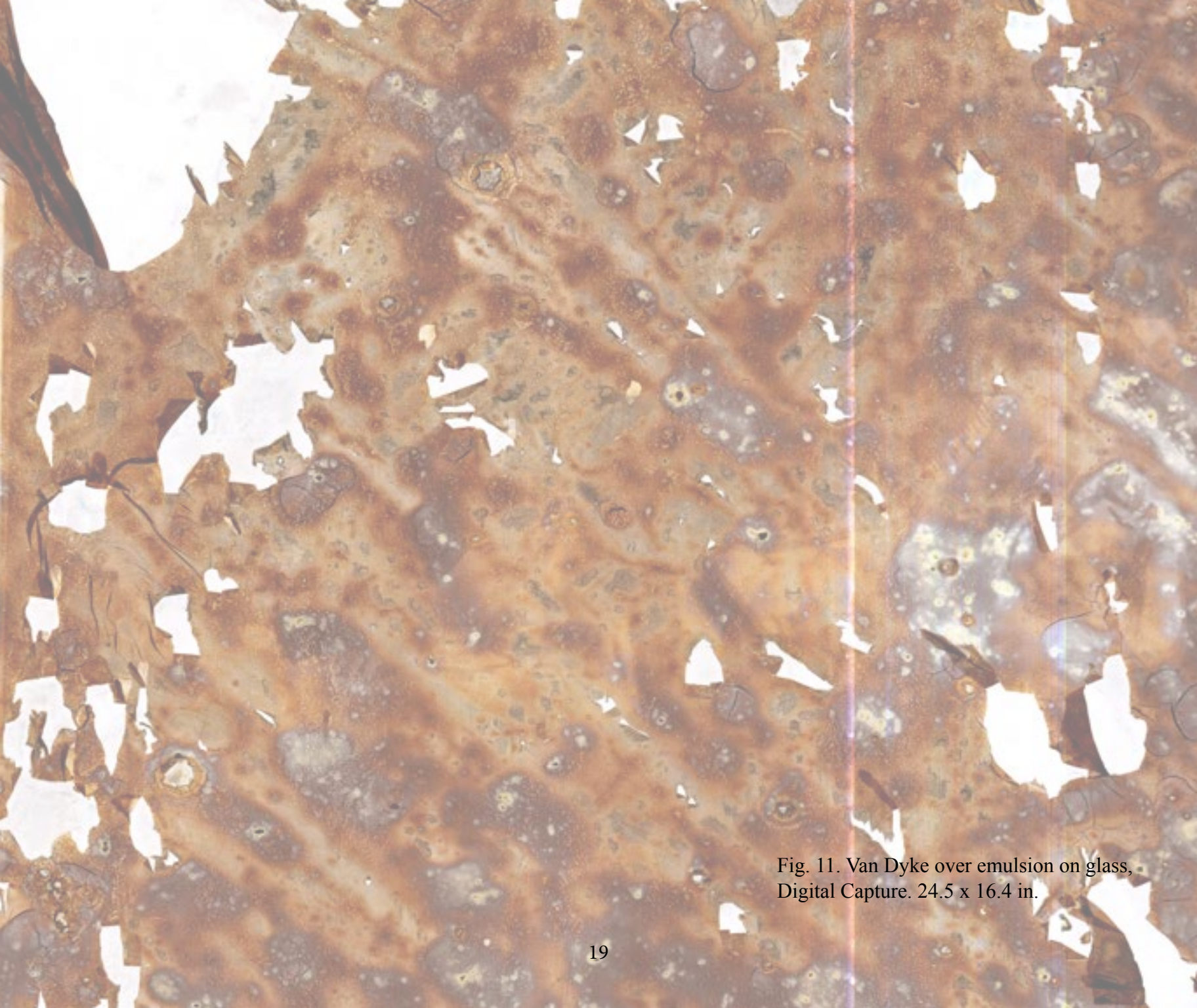


Fig. 11. Van Dyke over emulsion on glass,
Digital Capture. 24.5 x 16.4 in.

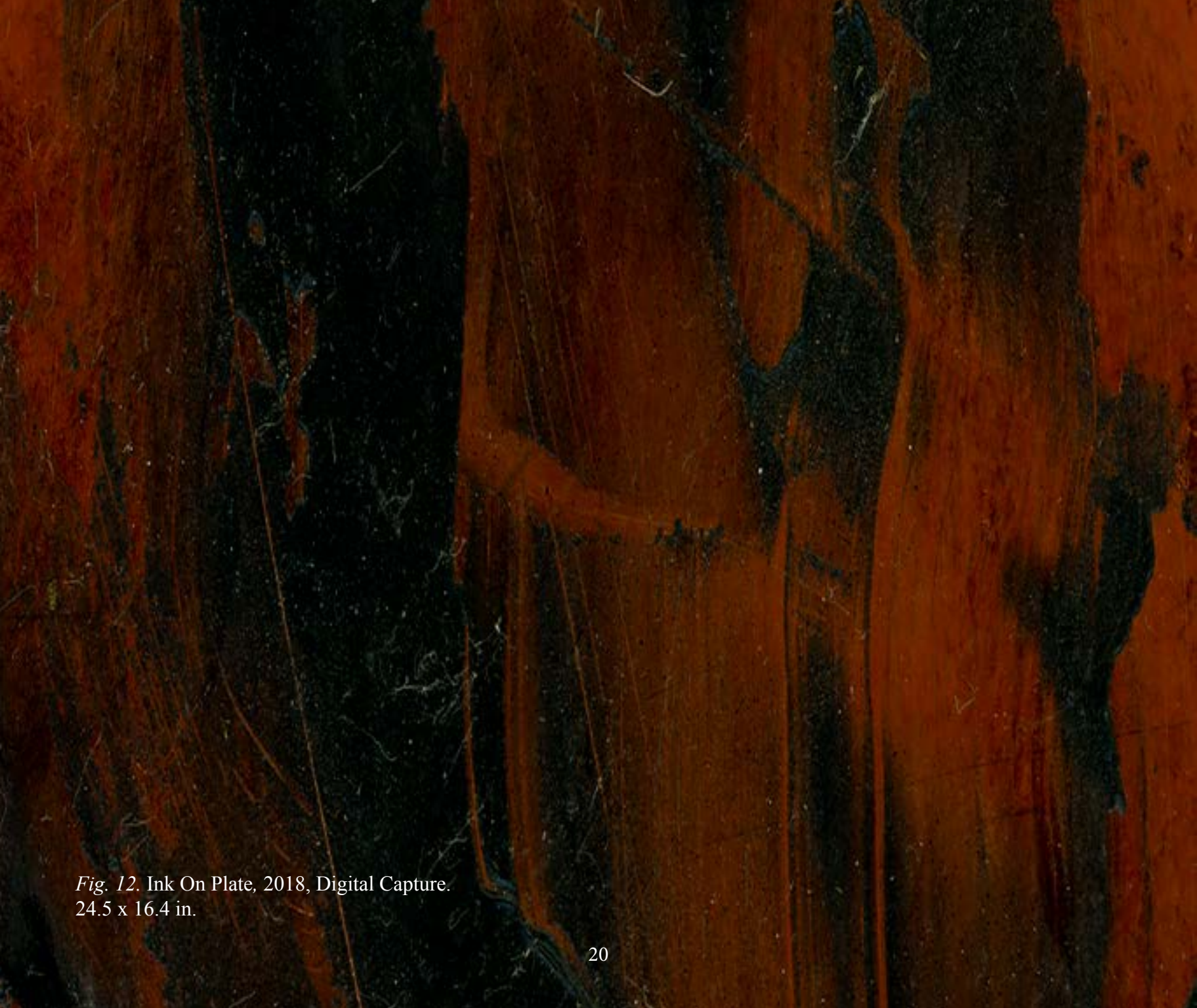


Fig. 12. Ink On Plate, 2018, Digital Capture.
24.5 x 16.4 in.

Looking at the world from a different perspective, I continued making art. My studio experiments led to an image with a double exposure which led me to think about twins. The double-exposed image that appeared to be a set of conjoined twins led me quickly to the patients that I had been working with on the unit. This is how I began to produce the work They won't leave me alone. After a few more sessions in the studio, I found the base of the third image, My Space. I had a new drawing tablet that I was learning to use. That gave me chance to make marks on the image digitally. I started incorporating old printmaking plates. I liked the different types of marks that were on the rejected plates. I scanned them at a very high resolution so that I could take a very small section or group of marks out to use in my photographs. On a whim, I also scanned the backs of the plates for color, ink smudges, and scratches (Fig. 12 and 18). I believe that new eyes and experiments lead to key steps to the ultimate image.



Fig. 13. Shadow Figure No. 2,
2018, Archival Pigment Print.
120 x 42 in.

Discoverers and Creators



Fig. 14. Study for Seeking Justice, 2018, Archival Pigment Print. 8 x 8 in.

I should, at this point mention the influence of Psychology on my work. I spent 12 years working in the Psychiatric unit. This experience affected me. I learned a greater level of empathy, witnessed situations the average person never sees. In a way, I met God, Buddha, and the devil. One of the gifts in working at the Psychiatric unit was the questions I started asking myself. Questions that seem to lead to more questions. I couldn't help myself but wondered why some of these actions were labeled as "crazy." What is the difference between insanity and enlightenment, prophetic and eccentric? This is not to say that all the patients were happy. In fact, I could easily see the reason for the confinement for some of them. For others, the opposite may be true that I didn't see why they were made to stay. I wonder if madness, schizophrenia, memories, and dreams are all distortions of time. To me, detaching myself from the world in which we live provided a safe place, but for others it is frightening, torturous, nightmarish a world where they cannot get out.

Throughout my career as an artist I have used layers to create duality and am always trying to discover new techniques and processes I can use to find the ultimate image. I am also trying to discover empathy, safety, and clarity while living in a hostile world. Having an undergraduate degree with an emphasis in photography, my influences are studio photographers such as Richard Avedon and Irving Penn. I love the classic studio lighting that each artist has mastered. My study is light, and at times, the absence of light. Light is everything. Without it, there is no visual arts. Even Barnett Newman's black paintings are affected by light. The lack of light can accentuate the presence of light. Without bad, there is no good.



Fig. 15. Church, 2018, Archival Pigment Print. 34 x 22 in.



Fig. 16. Transition, 2018,
Archival Pigment Print. 15 x 32 in.

I am influenced by other artists who have multiple layers to their images that become apparent the more you study them, and the deeper you go, the more you find. One of the artists that I have been introduced to is Anthony McCall. McCall became more relevant to me when I started looking at projections and the use of light in Sacred Space. McCall's work relies on dark backgrounds to give his light sculptures a sense of a physical body. He projects white sign waves from the side to the opposite wall, later from the ceiling to the floor. The sign waves slowly change frequency, animating the line. McCall creates pools of light in the darkness, that due to the movement become a living 3-dimensional piece. In an interview, Anthony McCall had stepped back to critique one of his pieces, watching the movement of the line on the wall, and then the space between. He suddenly realized that the piece was "breathing". The movement of the light in space to the rhythm of the sign wave he had programmed was causing the light to expand and contract like that of a lung. This did not happen, according to McCall when the work was fresh in the 1970s, but rather in the 1990s when he picked it up again.



Fig. 17. Bridge No. 2, 2018, Archival Pigment Print. 32 x 40 in.

The Baroque painter Caravaggio uses light in the paintings *The Crucifixion of St. Peter*, *Saint Jerome*, and *Narcissus*, to represent God's light. He bathes the Saint's in a pool of light within a harsh, dark world. This may have been driven by the turmoil he caused and the redemption he longed for in his own life. This is my motivation, to depict the torment and helplessness I have observed in my life and witnessed in those who deal with schizophrenia. Although, Caravaggio committed horrendous acts, people don't have to be guilty of anything to be the victim of torment and this is what I explore in my work.

Both artist influences can be seen in my work *Torture* and *Alone with My Thoughts* (Fig. 30 and 30). I use a different duality, a duality of the mind not the soul, reality and the expanse or the dark hole of the mind. One that has inner turmoil, not related to religious doctrine. A modern fight of light and dark; sanity verses insanity, peace and joy verses depression and torment; the free verses the condemned.

I like to employ shuttering and multiple views in my photography and digital works. This is a search for capturing the elusive element which is time. Time just like dreams, memories, insanity can be elusive. The Cubists, Futurists, and Surrealists were interested in similar concepts. *Portrait of Ambroise Vollard* (1909) by Pablo Picasso is an image that I have admired for years and it is an inspiration for some of my figures. The portrait has the emphasis on the head with little to no reference to the body. Picasso has employed multiple points of view, a strong sense of movement as if we, the viewer is examining the face of the figure, and multitudes of layering. We see similar visual strategies applied in his piece *Nature morte à la chaise cannelée*, 1912. I see this is also reflected in Marcel Duchamp's *Nude Descending the Staircase, No. 2*. The jagged lines in stair stepping give movement to the figure while introducing another element: Time.

One of my favorite surrealists was Man Ray, for not only for the work he produced but also the work ethic and the tirelessness he had for searching for something new through experimentation. The Surrealists looked at the world with open eyes. Everyday objects no longer had to carry their given purpose. One of my favorite sculptures is Pablo Picasso's *Bull's Head* ca. 1942 because it was made from found objects such as the seat and the handlebars of a bicycle.





Fig. 18. Back of copper plate, 2018,
Digital Capture. 24.5 x 16.4 in.

Victimology: Repression and Rage



Fig. 19. Assault No. 1, 2018, Archival Pigment Print. 40 x 40 in.

The images *Assault 1*, *Assault 2*, and *Just Inside The Door* are the start of a painterly phase in my work, that introduced heavy use of texture and digital brushes over layers of photographs (Fig. 19, 20, and 28). The three images in the series are created from the victim's traumatized point of view. Being the victim, I am aware of the rage that I have towards the patient that assaulted me. I still have dreams that my assailant are the victims and I release that rage. This is what fueled these images. The rage comes from the pain that I deal with daily. I've learned that not all scars can be seen, not all pains are physical. Every time I walk, climb stairs, roll over in bed, I am reminded of my experience just like adding another layer to my artwork.

There is a section of time that is missing from the assault which I perhaps intentionally omitted. It may be repression, or it may be a situation that the time was physically removed by the hit to the head. This is the time I no longer have. In the recovery process, I became obsessed with this gap of three minutes. I was able to view the time since it was caught on video, in which I was there the whole time. The obsession of the elusive element made its way into my art. The impact of Duchamp's *Nude Descending the Staircase* and the works by other the Futurists revealed

itself in my application of their techniques to my image-making process. For this body of work, I have taken the multiple exposures to another level in pursuit of motion. Marcel Duchamp's *Nude Descending the Staircase* is a prime example of using fragmented shapes that to create a feeling of forward-movement. I use multiple exposures or Photoshop to overlay my photographs. Cubist artists used multiple points of view with a single image. For example: Picasso's *Nature Monte a la Chaise Cannee*, (1912) used multiple views of a scene to capture the event. In my images, I use multiple horizons and odd skews of buildings. The futurists were also obsessed with speed, movement, and time. Although one would think of *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space* (1913) by Umberto Boccioni, I was drawn to the work of movements in *States of Mind I: The Farewells* (1911) by Umberto Boccioni. I can see the motion of the steam from the train, while people move about. I liked this work of art as an example of the interpretation of time.

Aesthetically, the influences for the series were based on the Baroque painter Caravaggio with the use of color, light, and shade as seen in his *The Crucifixion of St. Peter*, *Saint Jerome Writing*, and *Narcissus*. I have set the figure in a pool of light, making him the center of interest. The background and foreground are more implied than present. The use of





Fig. 20. Assault No. 2, 2018, Archival Pigment Print. 40 x 40 in.



Fig. 21. Burning in the Hall, 2018, Archival Pigment Print.
26.7 x 40 in.

movement, achieved by the multiple exposures gave images an uneasy feeling, a tension of fighting the weight of the chains.

Francis Bacon's, *Velázquez's Portrait of Pope Innocent X* series had a subliminal effect I was not quite aware of until of late. I describe his work as tortured. Bacon was never diagnosed with mental illness, although I would say he had PTSD from the horrific beatings he received from his father, which he reenacted and acted out in his very violent mosaicist behavior. In an interview, Bacon is quoted:

The feeling of desperation and unhappiness are more useful to an artist than the feeling of contentment, because desperation and unhappiness stretch your whole sensibility.¹

The series was created from the pain, burden and frustration of life. Bacon's, *Velázquez's Portrait of Pope Innocent X* captures the silent scream that will last for an eternity. That is despair. Going back to the Plato's cave, the work is about perception. Not all works have to come from torment or depression. This particular work happens to come from that anxiety.

In this series, I am fighting the physical weight of the chains, this adds to the authenticity of the image. (fig. 27) I believe this is a universal human condition, a test of the medal as it were. It can also be seen in Hans Arp's sculpture from his last years, titled *Collapse*. Though the figure has been simplified, Arp has captured the movement, the movement that the figure has hit the ground, but the arms and upper body have not reached the full fall. I have seen this when my children were just learning to walk. The key is to not give up, even if we are broken, don't become complacent and don't quit. This is another layer for the movement of my work. My children, my art and I share the same tenacity, determination, and resolve.

1. French, Gregg, "The Fraught Relationship Between Creativity And Mental Illness Health." Think Peices, *I-d*, Apr 15, 2016. <http://www.i-D.vice.com/en/uk>



Fig. 22. Scratches on copper plate, 2018,
Digital Capture. 24.5 x 16.4 in.



Fig. 23. Hand of Death, 2018, Archival Pigment Print.
32 x 21 in.



Fig. 24. Assault No.3, 2018, Archival Pigment Print. 40 x 40 in.



Fig.25. Detail of zink plate, 2018,
Digital Capture. 24.5 x 16.4 in.



Fig.26. Detail of zink plate, 2018,
Digital Capture. 24.5 x 16.4 in.



Fig. 27. Alone with My Thoughts detail, 2019, Archival Pigment Print. 10 x 10 in.



Fig. 28. Just Inside the Door, 2018, Archival Pigment Print. 32 x 19 in.



Fig. 29 Back of copper plate, 2018,
Digital Capture. 24.5 x 16.4 in.

Perception



The series of images, *Alone with My Thoughts*, *Torture*, and *Transition* all depict heavy chains wrapped around my shoulders (Fig. 27, 30, and 31). These chains represent the weight I felt in 2018 with family, life and society at the time. It had been a rough year: the death of my mother, a two-week stint in the hospital, and the death of my cousin. His mother is dealing with one of my greatest fears, the death of a child. I am also dealing with a child with addiction, who might end up dead from their actions or actions of those around them is quiet frightening. This child of mine brought chaos along with her, spending time being homeless and wanting more. But that is the nature of addiction; we want what we want, and we can't see that the addiction is causing us not to fulfil our dreams, or for some, like my child, the basic needs of life. Even though I have a history with addiction, I cannot relate to not having the basics of life such as shelter, water and food. We all differ in our tolerance for pain and lengths we will go to get high. The chances of addicts returning to active addiction is very high. I am no different, even after decades of not using.

Fig. 30. *Torture*, 2018, Archival Pigment Print. 32 x 50 in.



Fig. 31. Are You Content, 2018, Archival Pigment Print. 32 x 32 in.



Fig. 32. Beneath the Lake, 2018, Archival Pigment Print.
32 x 40 in.

As a parent, you start to wonder what it is that you have done to raise a child with problems. What were our mistakes? Where did we go wrong? Did we not love them enough? Did we love them too much? Was it the friends we let them have? Looking back, we did the best we could, and it just wasn't good enough. We raised each of our children to think for themselves, to be independent, to be aware of situations. My child, young adult, seems to have missed the whole message. Who do we get angry with? Each other? As I mentioned before, we can hurt ourselves while trying to help those who need it, or we can also hurt the ones we love in some cases where the one who needs help does not want help. This is part of the weight I portrayed in the chain series.

Transition is about a transition from one side of the crevasse to the other. A transition in which I have been in for several months. This image, like a gilded cage is full of iconography. It represents a bridge for transition, as well as the chains for the burden I sometimes feel with my child, as I am sure my mother felt with me.

Are You Content? looks at chains that one picks up over the years on their own and live within their self-constructed prison. Shame would be another description for this specific piece. (Fig. 31)

Aesthetically, the influences for the series were based on the Baroque painter Caravaggio with the use of color, light, and shade as seen in his *The Crucifixion of St. Peter*, *Saint Jerome Writing*, and *Narcissus*. I have set the figure in a pool of light, making him the center of interest. The background and foreground are more implied than present. The use of movement, achieved by the multiple exposures gives the images an uneasy feeling, a tension of fighting the weight of the chains.

Francis Bacon's *Velázquez's Portrait of Pope Innocent X* series has a subliminal effect I was not quite aware of until of late. I describe his work as tortured. Bacon was never diagnosed with mental illness, although I would say he had PTSD from the horrific beatings he received from his father, which he reenacted and acted out in his very violent masochist behavior. In an interview, Bacon is quoted:

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In this series, I am fighting the physical weight of the chains which adds to the authenticity of the image. I believe this is a universal human condition, a test of the medal as it were. It can also be seen in Hans Arp's sculpture from his last years, titled *Collapse*. Though the figure has been simplified, Arp has captured the movement, the movement that the figure has hit the ground while the arms and upper body have not reached the full fall. I have seen this when my children were just learning to walk. The key is to not give up, not to become complacent and not to quit even if we are broken. This is another layer for the movement of my work. My children, my art and I share the same tenacity, determination, and resolve.

2. French, Gregg, "The Fraught Relationship Between Creativity And Mental Illness health." Think Peices, *I-d*, Apr 15, 2016. <http://www.i-D.vice.com/en/uk>



Fig. 33. They're in the Vents, 2018, Archival Pigment Print. 42 x 34 in.



Fig. 34. Alone with My Thoughts, 2019,
Archival Pigment Print. 33 x 40 in.

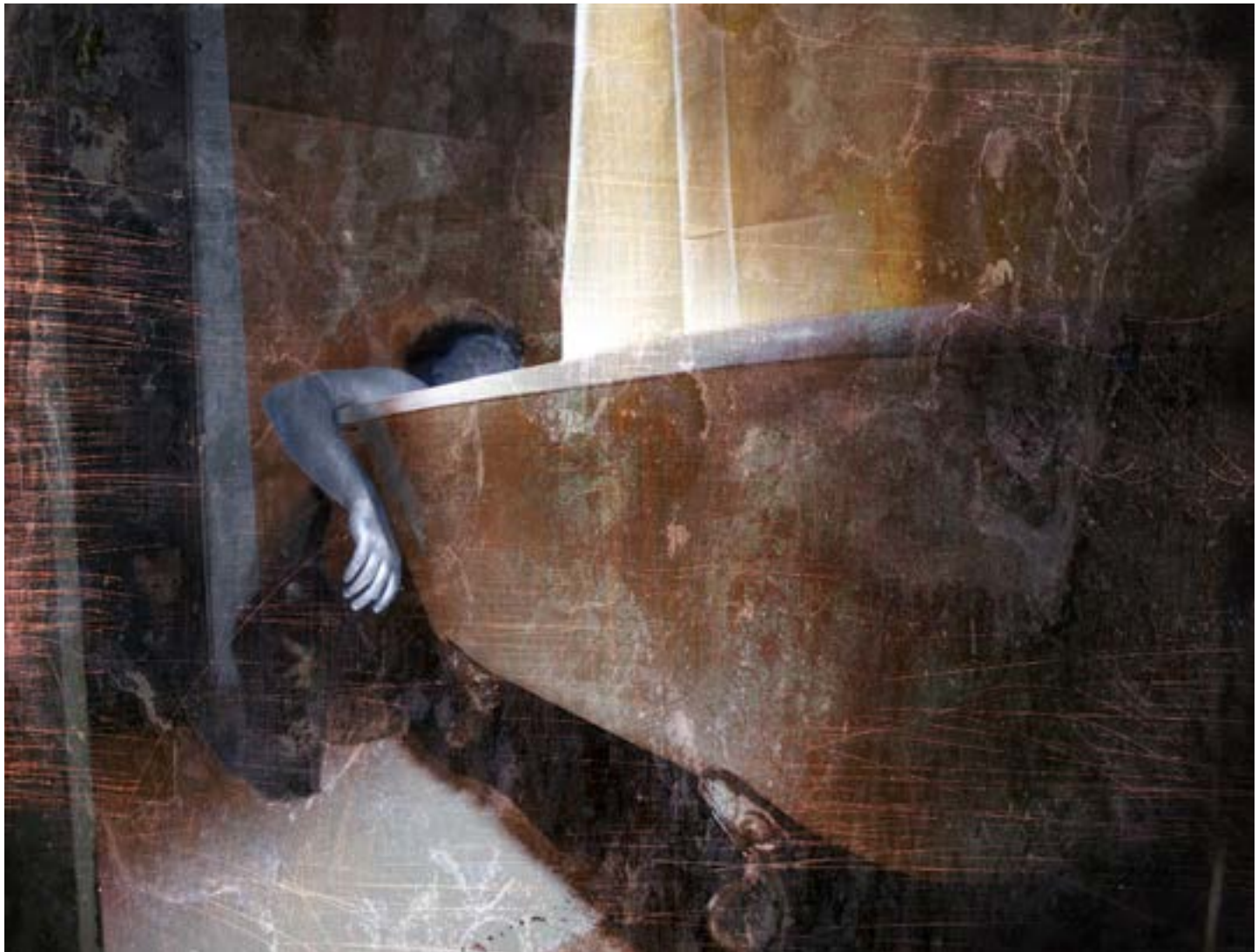


Fig. 35. Fear of the Death of a Child, 2018, Archival Pigment Print. 42 x 28.75 in.

Generalized Anxiety

I express myself in my art for a release. Like life my art can be raw, disturbing, and emotional, yet beautiful and full of wonderment. When the stress of life comes to me, I must create in several ways: cooking, building, planning work for our house and, of course, taking pictures and creating digital images. These are the steam valve on the pressure cooker for me. I know that with stress and pressure, I change, morph and compress to become better, if I don't implode. In these times, my only saving grace is my art. My art is how I work out problems or situations. But then there are times that I must look for the beauty in life, the world, or even in my mind. I have the need to create an image or two that are completely out of sorts with the series of the main body of work. It is my brain telling me I need to take a break. Recharge.



Fig. 36. River City, 2018, Archival Pigment Print. 34 x 40 in.



Fig. 37. Cloud study for Clouds, 2018,
Digital Capture. 24.5 x 16.4 in.



Fig. 38. Clouds, 2018, Archival Pigment Print. 32 x 40 in.

The Mind's Expanse

For this body of work, I created boxes that later became figures. The more I work with the boxes, the idea of the boxes, the concept and the materials, the more they became figures. I have entered the area of installation art which really excites me. My work has a story to it, all of it. These figures are just another way of telling a story about family, memories, death, and birth.

The figures are simple in their overall construction. A box with an image contained in it, sometimes in layers. Some boxes have a thick coat of resin over glass for protection and functionality. To view all the details, we the viewer must get face to face with the figures. The projections on the wall do not represent the physical reality of the box. They are merely the shadows and light on Plato's cave. Do we fall in love with the being or with the shadows? These images can represent our thoughts and our memories; changing, morphing, becoming what we want, not the reality of the event. I cannot help but ask myself: Are we always being lied to by our brain. Reality is nothing but our perception of our senses. The truth is all our brain does is to receive electrochemical impulses. Even though what our eyes process is upside down, our brain compensates it by lying to us, so we see the world right-side up. There is no vision, no hearing or feeling of touch in our mind. Are these electrochemical data we receive the shadows on the wall as Plato suggested? We are all one. We come from the same place if we go back far enough. This body of work brings awareness to mental illness and trauma, whether physical, sexual, mental abuse to name a few. Why must it be "Us against them", "those kinds of people", or "you're different and that's not okay?"



Fig. 39. Box Figure No. 1, 2019, Mixed Media. 21 x 21 x 60 in.

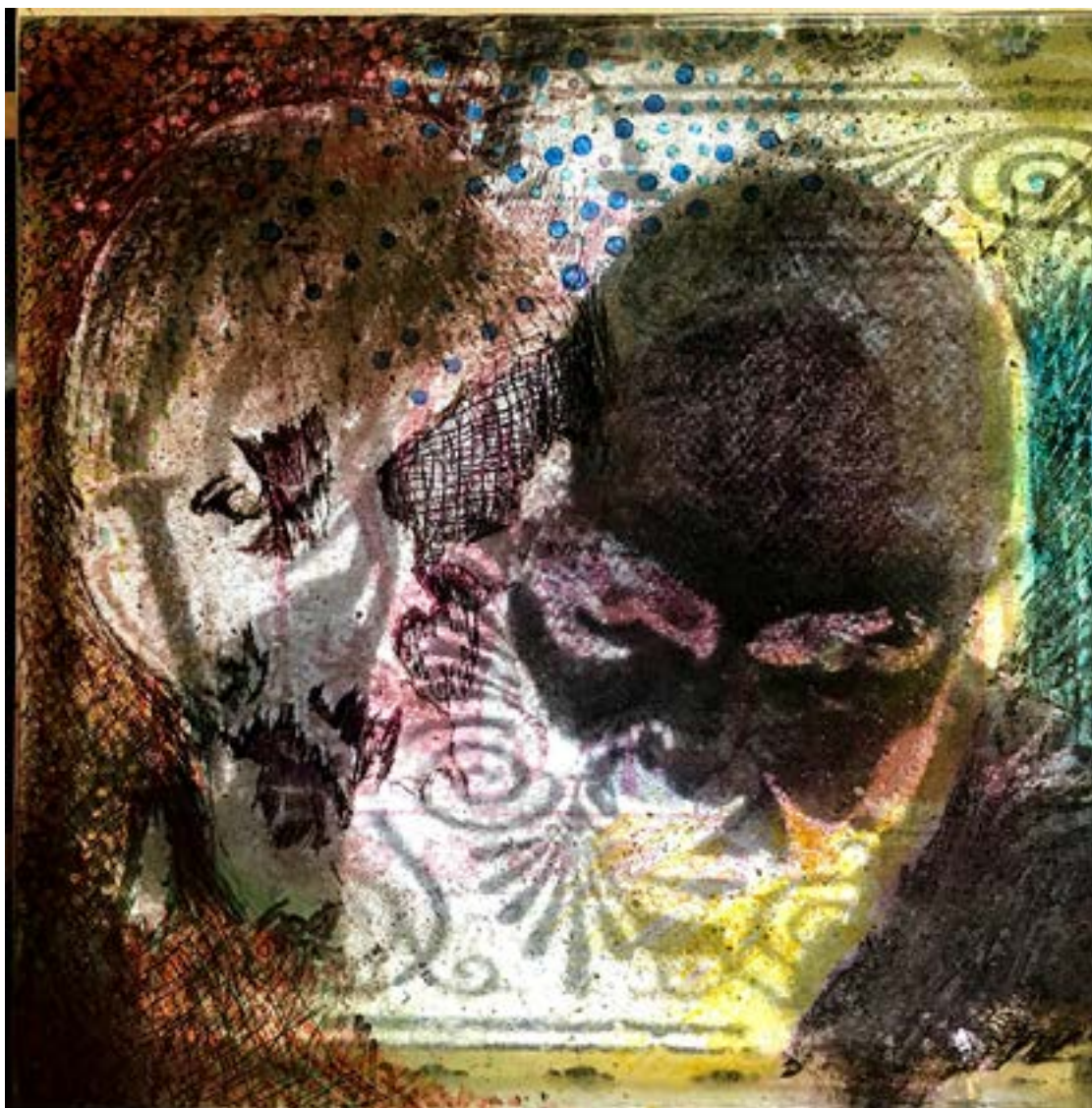


Fig. 40. Seeking Justice. 2018, Mixed Media, 10 x 10 x 10 in.

The work of Anthony McCall originally would not work in a museum or gallery setting, due to the clean air. The work relies on atmosphere to give it body. McCall's work takes shape not only on the wall, but the distance between the source and the wall. The ethereal effect in that space, not the line, the conclusion of the journey, it is the journey itself from source to line. Light dancing, taking form, becoming beauty from and in the journey. Is that not life itself?

The materials I have chosen to work with are wood, metal, glass, film, and resin. The wood represents nature. Even in the manipulated form of processed plywood, it is still a natural element, whereas the black iron piping is processed and uncompromising. The boxes are the head of the figure. We are looking into their thoughts, fears, dreams, or memories. The natural wood branches for the body symbolizes a natural figure, in tune with the world. The ones with the black iron pipe are in tune with modern society, stiff, ridged, man-made. Even though we still cannot escape the fact that we all come from the natural world, we find ourselves in a rigid, man-made society. The blue light underneath the platform of some sculptures represent the elevated sense of freedom (Fig. 39). I have chosen blue to represent enlightenment, which comes from a personal experience I had in a sweat lodge 25 years ago. I learned how to ground myself, a very valuable lesson which I still apply today. The blue comes from what I saw in the rocks, once the flap closed on the lodge. This happened again and again over the two years I participated. I have never found a pigment that could reproduce this color. Colored light was the best option.

I started my work dealing with schizophrenia and trauma by focusing on how we often never know when we meet someone with a mental illness. My work is personal in this matter. I have mental illness several places in my family tree that I know about, so I assume there is probably more. It is amazing how we deal with the disease. I was told my child was ill because I didn't know how to pray. This is irritating, laughable and sad all at the same time. The person who made such comment had no empathy since they had no reference for the disease and the pain it could cause. If I can get someone, anyone to look at situations like schizophrenia with new eyes, I have done a good job.



Fig. 41. Tellers of Time Figures, 2020, Mixed Media. 36 x 48 x 60 in.

Sacred Space

In Sacred Space, I created a space, an altar, a room of the mind. A mind that encompasses troubles with the same visual language as in the rest of the book and show. The theme is continued: trouble of the mind or perhaps trouble of the soul. I have employed several different visual dialects to deliver the message. These include time-based videos that are projected from the box-shaped heads of the figures that stand around a monolith decorated with symbols. The main idea is to transform the entire space into an altar by asking the following question: Is the altar itself the source, the cause, or the condition? I have invited the viewer to become part of the whole experience, not just a spectator from a safe distance. Here you find sounds, lights, visions, memories for an entire immersion. I want to produce a feeling of uneasiness, a crawling just below the skin, yet captivating and beautiful. In the years on the psych unit, there were those who, though sick, were very pleasant and happy. What they would describe or talk about seemed beautiful.



Fig. 42. Sacred Space, 2020, Mixed Media. 204 x 204 x 96 in.



Fig. 43. Sacred Space series detail of box and projection, 2020, Mixed Media.
11 x 11 x 60 in.

They would be caught there for hours. Only acknowledging me when I addressed them, and then only for a brief time. The monolith in Sacred Space is my attempt to make something that is consuming, full of light that we don't understand. I chose to make nonsensical symbols so there would be no attachment by the viewer. It is simply not for us to understand; we don't have the key. We are just visitors in this place, a place where we are not chosen to live in. Again, this recalled the phrase "There is a fine line between genius and insanity" has its implications in this work. Who is to say we are not the ones who lack something? Maybe they have a higher use of their senses, while the rest of us are left with the restricted chemical electrical impulses? Can anyone say for a fact, or is it the social norm on which we base these concepts on? Knowledge can be scary, frightening and even magical if we are ignorant. Think of Orville or Wilber Wright taking a ride on the SpaceX rocket; they would probably be filled with fear even though they know they are riding a rocket. Upon their return, telling their tales from this trip to people of their own time would surely be a life spent in a sanitarium. I no longer profess to know the answers to these questions; I just ask to consider the possibility and lend some empathy.

I have chosen images that reflect innocence, love, trauma, fear, and torment. These figures are life size and stand among the viewers. The light which illuminates the images within and is projected from the figures, can be broken by the viewer, showing how our memories can be fleeting.

Videos: *Shadow Figure*, *White Rabbit*, and *Stairs to My Mind* project on the walls. The viewer stands at the East point of the Installation. The monolith is in the middle, to the right stands the *Stairs to My Mind* video playing to the north. Directly across from the viewer is the video *Shadow Figure*. Three of the points represented by figures circle around the Monolith. The viewer fills the fourth place, becoming the fourth figure. I ask the viewer to walk around the installation. The monolith stands at 8 feet-tall (Fig. 42 and 44). I intentionally made it to tower over the figures and the viewer. I have purposely filled the space with symbolism. I hope that no one will consciously pick up on it. The overall symbolism is a mix of icons, with references to Eastern symbolism and psychological theories. This can be a safe or unnerving place, depending on viewers' own experiences.

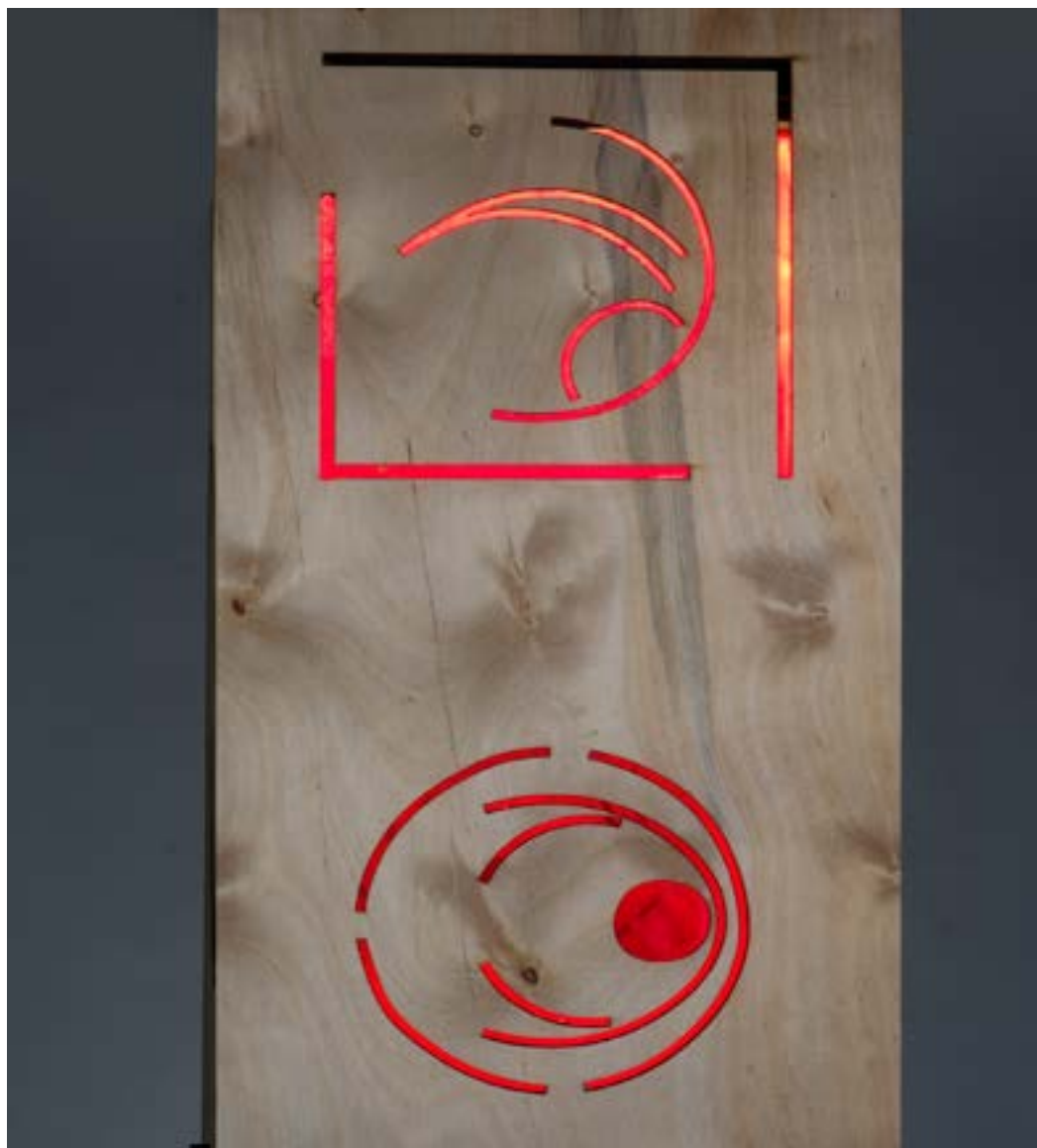


Fig. 44. Sacred Space series detail, 2020, Mixed Media.
11 x 11 x 18 in.



Fig. 45. Sacred Space series detail with viewer, 2020, Mixed Media.

The fabric between each of the four positions represents the veil of dreams and memories. The fabric is slightly translucent, allowing for light and shadows to pass through. This is another reference to Plato's shadows on the wall, as well as memories and dreams. As the Plato describes, we see only the moving shadows upon the wall. We have no reference to understand that they are merely shadows. Is it that we are hallucinating? I am attempting to re-create both a mind and a world which is just out of reach. It seems that both dreams and mental illnesses are out of reach for those who don't have them.

The sound that is played is scratching, clanking, and unnerving. This is intentional to make the viewer tense. Even though the imagery can be beautiful at times, I want that uneasiness to come through or be present. This turns out to be the use of ASMR, Anonymous Sensory Meridian Response, which is not recognized by the psychological scientific community.

*Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response (ASMR) is a previously unstudied sensory phenomenon, in which individuals experience a tingling, static-like sensation across the scalp, back of the neck and at times further areas in response to specific triggering audio and visual stimuli. This sensation is widely reported to be accompanied by feelings of relaxation and well-being.*³

3. Barratt, EmmaL, and Nick J Davis. "Autonomous Senseory Meridian Response (ASMR); A Flow-Like Mental State" PeerJ vol. 3 e851.26 Mar. 2015, doi:10.7717/peerj.851

Either way, it's an effective way to make the viewer uneasy to have a full experience of the installation. I intend for the viewer to walk away with a feeling of empathy, for the viewer to understand the phrase "not all nightmares are dreams." I hope to have a greater amount of empathy. If I reach just one person, I have done my job.



Fig. 46. Sacred Space series column detail, 2020, Mixed Media. 11 x 11 x 18 in.

We all have dreams and nightmares. Most of us have memories. Some of us have insanity. But all of us are affected by the element of time; according to Plato, the way we see the world depends on our perspective. This work gives a view based on my experiences, dreams, and fears of the effects of a disease in my life. It has also been a hunt for the elusive: the elusive image, the elusive child, answers and the other worlds. Art making gives me a chance to go through a healing process. My biggest hope is to connect with others who resonate with my art. I have given you a view of how schizophrenia and trauma have affected my life and those around me. I am not alone in this situation. One of my goals is to bring awareness to this problem. There will be approximately 100,000 people diagnosed with Schizophrenia this year. With the average family size of 2.6, that is 260,000 people newly effected by this disease this year. Approximately 1.2% of Americans (3.2 million) live with the disease.⁴ I have shown the audience a view into the dual worlds our minds can occupy. Whether that is a place inside or outside one's head of which I am not sure. I know for myself and others like me, it exists. My experiences are not as nice as some, nor as terrible as others'. My work is meant to encourage people not to judge without the knowledge of the facts. For me, creating the work was about finding empathy for those who suffer from or are impacted by the disease of schizophrenia. As I stated earlier "I might be close enough to relate, touched enough to understand, or just insane enough to get a sense of their worlds."

4. MentalHelp.net An american addiction center resource: *Schizophrenia Syptoms, Patterns and Staistics and Patterns*<http://www.mentalhelp.net/schizophrenia/statistics/> Last modified, 2020

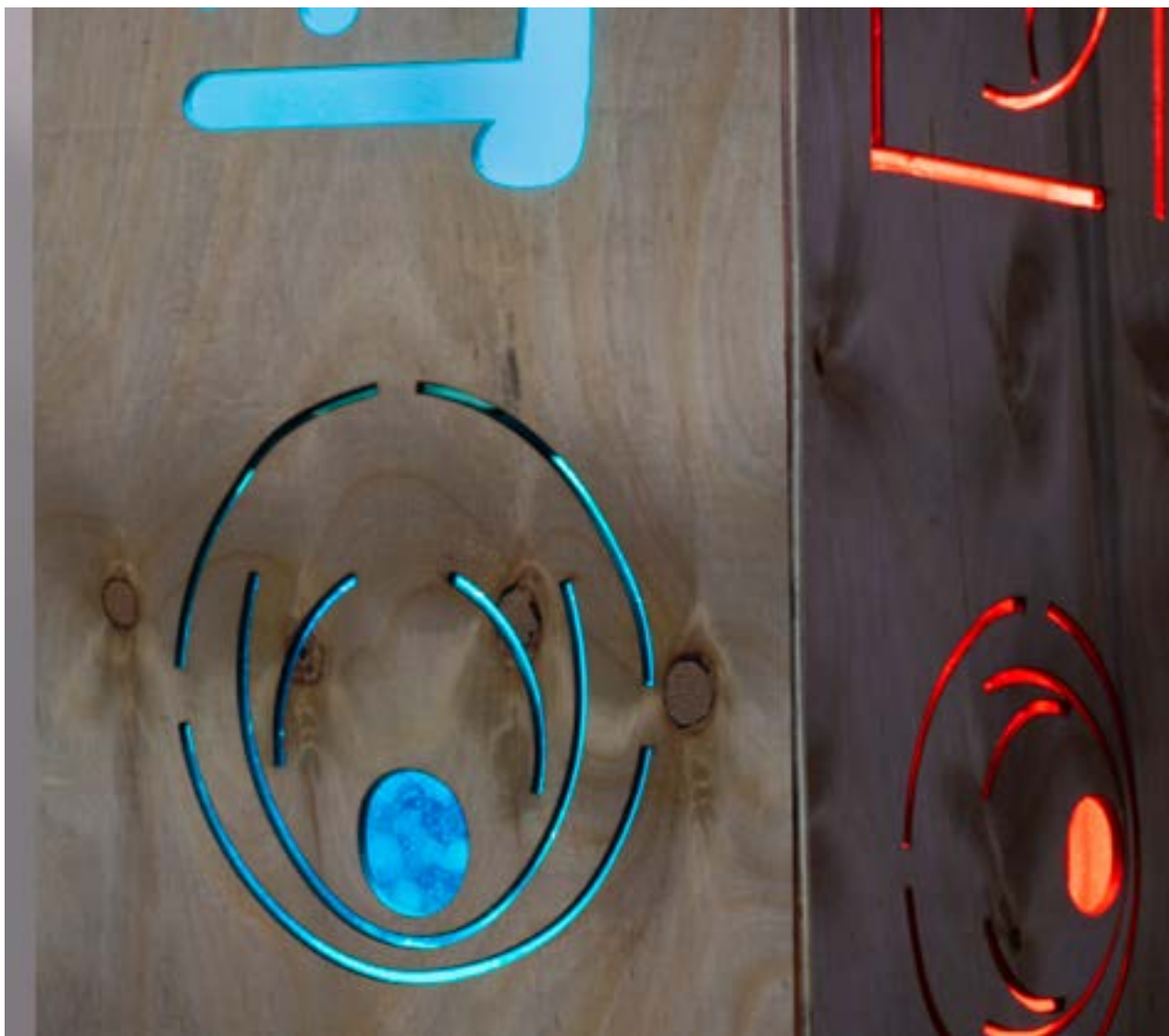


Fig. 47. Sacred Space series Column detail, 2020, Mixed Media. 11 x 11 x 18 in.



Fig. 48. Sacred Space series still from projection, 2020, Mixed Media. 12 x 18 in.

I will let you decide if these are reality or
delusions, practice or concept.



Fig. 49. Sacred Space series still from projection, 2020,
Mixed Media. 12 x 18 in.

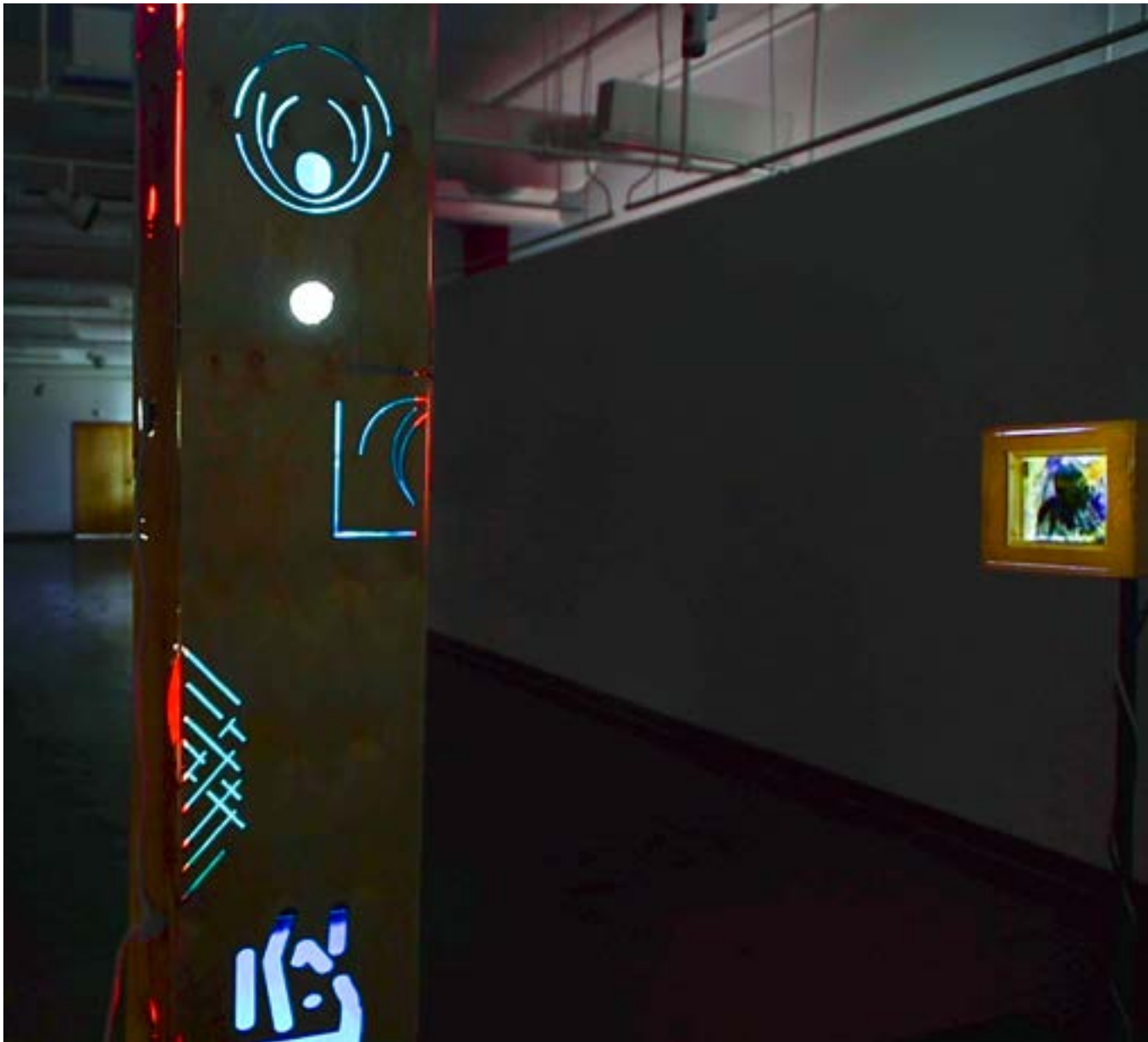


Fig. 50. Sacred Space series detail of column and box, 2020, Mixed Media.



Fig. 51. Sacred Space series still from projection, 2020, Mixed Media. 12 x 21 in.



Fig. 52. Sacred Space series still of projection with viewer, 2020, Mixed Media, projection 12 x 21 in.

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NOT ALL NIGHTMARES ARE DREAMS

