

# Presence and The Loosening of the Hand

St. Mary's Project Document Book

Michael Bargamian

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All writings and images are presented in the chronological order that they were written or created in, with the exception of the Introduction.

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Introduction:  
Nocta Recta Con Def Tanata

Throughout the semester I have been constantly asked by my fellow peers, “Oh you are doing an Art SMP? What is yours about?” For most of the semester I have simply shrugged off their questions or said that I am working on figuring out what my own art is really about – which is absolutely true. If this semester has taught me anything it is that I could have in no way fully understood how my art would change and how my own thoughts would evolve with it.

However, I now feel that this changing and the personal searching/understanding is central to the work that I am making, I have changed so much already as an artist, probably in ways that I cannot yet see. As such, I am interested in the work that I make, as it is a unique response to the world that is unlike anything else. It is entirely Michael Bargamian and as such it is now known through the phrase “Nocta Recta Con Def Tanata.” This is a phrase that is my way of saying that the works I am making are my imprints, they are my presences, my evidence, they are connected to me through an umbilical cord of marks and gesture that spell out where I made myself known.

## Presence

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A Presence can be felt in body and spirit, yet cannot be physically seen or interacted with in any way.

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You pick up the phone and it is silent on the other end. Despite that you can still feel that there is something on the other line. Maybe some breathing is all that comes across the line.

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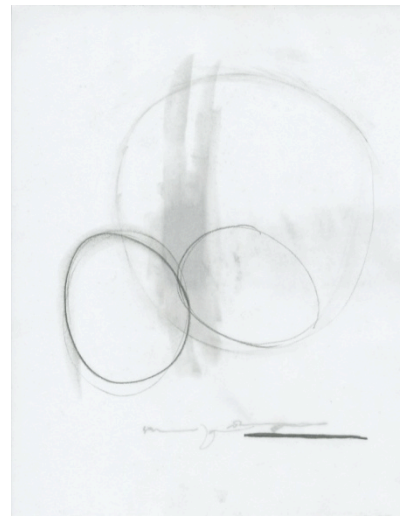
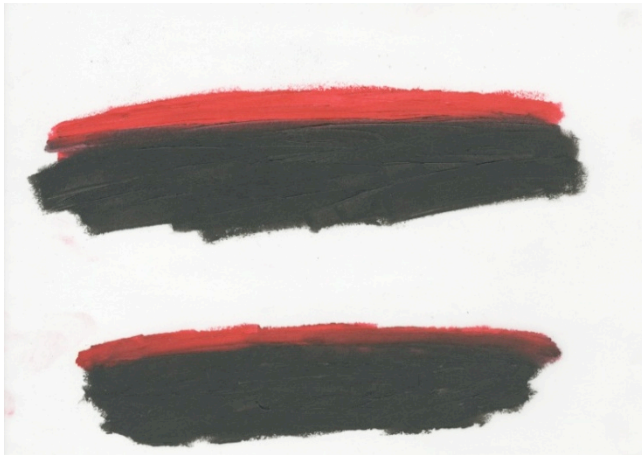
Presence can be defined or pinned down by way of immediate gesture and color.

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## Summer Statement

The works that now permeate my thoughts are markers. They are images of shapes and statements, masses and untranslatable figures. These images call out to me as a way of feeling connected to a larger idea or figure, whether it is the abstracted images my mind formed from the pages of Melville or thinking about how my own hands are capable of recording a testament to anything that my being comes into contact with. These works are not the “things” themselves, but are instead the “presences” that track me down in my dreams.

## Summer Work Examples



These are a few examples of the many works that I produced in preparation for the beginning of SMP during the summer of 2012. In retrospect, these early works seem to be very interested in shape and the layering of marks, while being devoid of any necessarily “representational” imagery, all of which I continued to deal with as SMP began. All works are *Untitled*.

## Marathon Post-Intention Statement

### I.

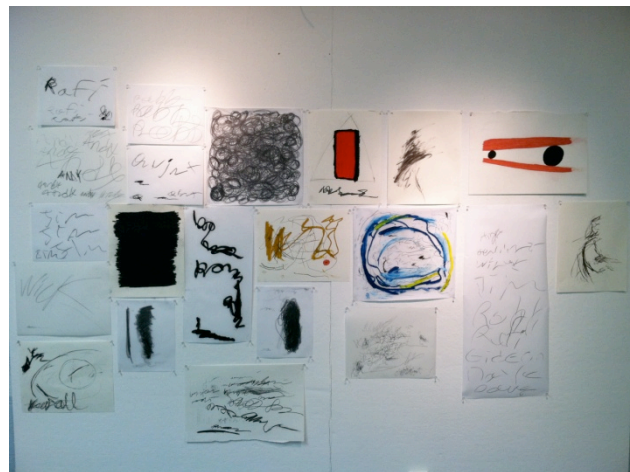
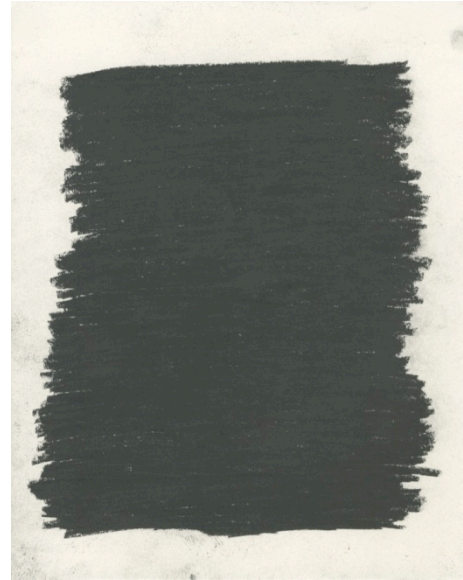
I saw the newly completed Marathon as an excuse to make work quickly. In my time researching and developing work over this past summer I came to the realization that I find my work to be the strongest when there is little time to “mull things over.” The work I did was the boldest, or at least stood out the most to me, when I felt exhausted after only a few minutes (or sometimes seconds) of having a pencil in my hand. With that understanding I think I saw the Marathon as a sort of playground – one where I was trying out different ideas (the variety of prompts was incredibly helpful on this end) which led to a wide visual-range of final pieces, and also working with various sizes of paper/vellum/canvas was a way to add more to this “rapid pace playground.”

Since I was constantly in the mind set of “working quickly” I felt myself continually drawn to certain materials that enabled a “quick piece” or a rapid response to the idea that was in my mind at the time. Namely, I was most enamored with Paint Sticks (Oil Sticks) and Vellum as the opaque nature of vellum and the fast-pace application on the Oil Stick allowed me to play around with the idea of “Presence” which has been the driving force behind all of the recent work I have done. However, even when I was not working with those materials (I also utilized charcoal, drawing paper, graphite pencils, and pens to varying degrees) my ideas on “Presence” began to change; a Presence no longer had to be a dominant shape or color field, but instead could be a hurried mass of lines or a simple stroke of a pen that conveys an undeniable truth: I was there, I put material to material, and nothing can take that away.

### II.

Now at the end of the Marathon, I think the most important information I have as to where I am now going with my working is that I am going to be utilizing print making. I think that if my hand holding a tool can create such a rapid sting of “Presences”, then the process and product of printing will allow me to look at the same concept in similar, yet different ways. Namely, I am interested right now in how a “presence will be affected or responded to differently if there are multiple versions of the same Presence (making multiple pulls off one plate). Will that dilute the idea of the “Undeniable Presence”? Will I even take it as seriously as a medium to reach the end goal? I think it will be interesting to see where printmaking takes me and, possibly, if it will ever collide with my rapid handwriting work of the Marathon.

## Marathon Work Examples



(Installation View)

Work that was produced during the Marathon varied greatly – some works were based on prompts given to the class, while others were entirely of my own choices and ideas. These works have again been dealing with my interest in materials that allow for a rapid application of marks to be put down on the surface that I was working on. Materials that were allies in this period were: Charcoal, Graphite, Oil Stick, and Vellum.



## A. What My Art Is and Not About

### **Affirmative**

- My work is about marks (Mark making)
- My work is about the undeniable
- My work is about how my hands move
- My work is evidence
- My work is personal
- My work is the visualization of demands
- My work is opaque or vague
- My work is romance
- My work is about colors and shapes
- My work is present
- My work is about feeling it happen
- My work is about writing
- My work is about smudges, build-ups, dark lines
- My work is about the gesture
- My work is about gray

### **Negative**

- My work is not about trees
- My work is not about the body
- My work is not political
- My work is not narrative
- My work does not have a clear ending
- My work is not about romance
- My work is not about complacency
- My work is not about history
- My work is not about proportions
- My work is not about gender
- My work does not play with others
- My work is not about geometry
- My work is not about portraiture
- My work is not intentionally clean
- My work is not about faith
- My work is not about sunlight
- My work is not about infinity

## Post- Class Critique Intention Statement

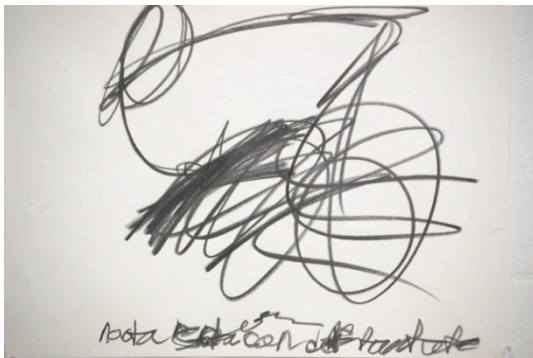
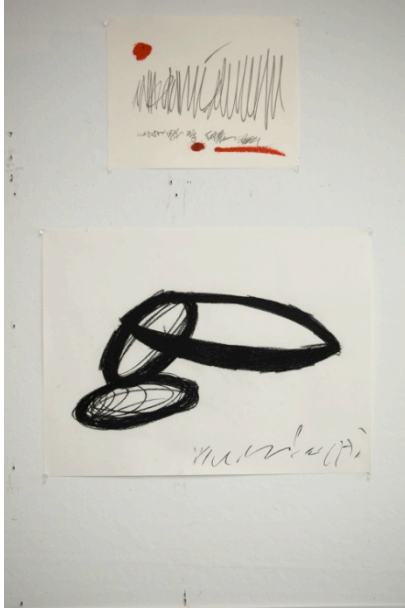
I.

I see these first series of works that were developed after the Marathon really as a confirmation of what I know my artwork should feel like when I make it and as a result, what the work might end up looking like. Breaking that statement/idea down I have confirmed for myself that work I complete (and feel is successful during the creation process and afterwards) is work that is rapid, or quick, in the moments of creation. The materials that I consistently find are allies to me in this mindset or working habit are: Graphite, Oil Sticks, Charcoal, and vellum. However, after completing these works I have become much more comfortable with working on “normal” paper and have just realized the potential uses of the eraser – in that the eraser can be used to rework marks and make them even more bold or cryptic, depending on the specific work or idea at hand. Despite this knowledge of what materials I find are strong accessories to the work I am making I did encounter a setback in the realm of printmaking in that the process and mindset I was in while printing was just not the healthy state-of-mind that I have had when working on paper. I was too distracted and worried about what the final “print” would look like; if I want to go back to printmaking I absolutely need to “loosen my grip” on what I think needs to happen.

II.

I thought the feedback that I received during the critique was very helpful, especially in terms of what I might try to work on in the future. On this occasion the big idea that was suggested was the idea of “surfaces.” I should try to create some “grounds” – different paper types, background textures, patterns, or other surfaces on which to operate on. Having a variety of new surfaces will allow for a wider range of response to the rapid movements of my hands and the materials I am then grasping. Another issue I should be more conscious of is the final placement of my work; when I hang my pieces I consistently choose to group them in a larger “mass” like organization as oppose to giving each work its own space to breathe. I know that I the creation of the works I am in no way thinking about how one work will look next to another, or if one will spark a dialogue with another. But when I place my works on the wall I am most likely organizing them based on what I think “looks right.” I should think about this as it might lend me to creating works that are more “series-like” versus more individual works. If anything, this critique made me excited to continue working.

## Class Critique Images



The work that I produced immediately following the Marathon is very much still connected to the mindset that I was in earlier in the semester. Specifically, I was only interested in making works as quickly as possible, if a piece took my longer than 10 minutes, then it was useless to me. These works are a quick and sudden as anything I had produced up to this point; but I also began to take notice of which works physically affected me, such as the bottom left image, which cause my hand to cramp up for several minutes afterwards. All works are *Untitled*.

## Loosening of the Hand

Undulating rhythm and systematic shaking that results in the creation of a totem of what the surrounding world has poured onto the artist.

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The works are not pictorial representations in the traditional sense; they are the essential marks that are produced as an act as a system of memory for the artist. No subject can thereby be forgotten since the “subject” has already had its essence taken into the work.

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The “Loosening,” however, does not have to occur necessarily through being open to making a massive variety of marks on one work, such excess can at times weaken a work as opposed to adding to the artist’s response to a stimuli. Instead the Loosening can also be related to the Process of the artist; should marks be made first and then worked on top of with paint? What materials make the mark? Do the materials directly relate to the subject or are they related more to the artist?

Interview Part One: Conducted by Kat Eisenberg

Kat: What kinds of things about art making practice are really mysterious to you?

Michael: When you're working on a piece, and it feels good and looks good- so like, trying to understand is it the attitude and material that makes it good, or is it a coincidence? And trying to replicate that.

Kat: What's the worst fear you have about your own work?

Michael: That it wouldn't be seen as serious. I mean because making it is a mix of seriousness and play, but it wouldn't be seen as having any substance. Substance is good, but I don't want it to be right out there.

Kat: Who was the last person/thing you were afraid of?

Michael: This happened yesterday, I was running in historic and I was coming back on the main path...There was this tree on the left, and there was a bundle of hay and the way I was moving I thought it was a big fox. And I got so freaked for a second. When I kept moving then it stopped, and I found out it was a bundle of hay.

Kat: What natural occurrences do you find inspiring?

Michael: I'm a big fan of rain, even grey days like we've been having, I'm a fan of. Probably clouds, a wash of clouds everywhere. Makes it easier to think.

Kat: Let me go further and ask, what are you not a fan of?

Michael: Humidity- it saps everything. It drains my motivation. I'd want to stay in a cool, dark place underground. Oh, and when it's raining a lot and then it gets sunny, I hate that. I like consistency.

Kat: Is your work aligned with order or chaos? Why?

Michael: I think its like structured chaos. Or no- I don't know. I don't like to say its like chaos. There are some elements of "I'm not thinking" but at the same time, if I'm using one thing too much and I need to leave some blank space or jump to another place I know I need to do that. There are rules but I don't know them all.

Kat: Do you think it's important to know them all?

Michael: Not in the sense that not knowing them will lead to a good work. If I knew all the rules, I'd check them off as I was working.

Kat: Do you prefer tactile or visual art making?

## Interview Part One, Continued

Michael: Visual. Probably. I'm not so much interested in working with objects or feeling out materials.. I like how they look, but it doesn't mean I like handling them. I like graphite or oil stick, but because they are tactile in how they look.

Kat: What do you and your role models have in common?

Michael: I'm not really sure as of right now. I can make an assumption that they probably knew and know when one of their works was good or had that something in it that they can't express in words. I'm assuming some of them had that gut reaction.

Kat: When you work, do you love the process or the result?

Michael: Right now, I like the result more....just because I'm not in a spot where I really know where my procedure is. Materials work together to make a good combination, so when it finally comes together-there's a big set up, and then when I go to execute it- its done in 15 seconds. But that probably has to do with my type of work.

Kat: What do you draw when no one is looking?

Michael: The same thing, but I save all the good ones when no one is around.

## Midterm Critique Intention Statement

### I.

As I look back on the newest works that I completed in the week before the midterm critique I am quite pleased with how far I have come in terms of the quality of work I produce and in the development of my artistic practice, but also in how familiar this work feels to me. I think one reason I feel somewhat accomplished is in the fact that I have begun to bring another new medium into my working process – being paint/painting – I think this addition has really allowed me to add to the “surface” on which I work upon as well as add depth, contrast, and more variety to the areas in which I create my marks. However, I have realized that despite reaching this new territory (I feel my newest works look very different from my earlier ones) I still feel that they all have a strong kinship to one another; I essentially still sees these new works as “drawings,” which allows me to feel more confident and forceful when working with them.

I should also highlight that my working process has also changed in ways that already seem like second nature to me. Namely, I am referring to the act of applying paint and the marks made with charcoal or graphite while the paper, or “surface”, is on the floor of my studio. While at first this was a challenging and intimidating step, it feels very much like something I should have been doing for a long time. This new nature of working has helped to alleviate some of my fears of working with paint while at the same time further changing the marks I produce and changing my relation to how I move around and see the work. Finally, I also feel slightly more in tune with many of the Abstract Expressionists whom I admire.

### II.

In terms of the responses I received from the visiting faculty, I felt that they were all very interesting comments, many of which I, now retrospectively, find to be helpful in thinking of how to proceed from here. Firstly, I felt connected to Professor Scheer’s comment about the “autographic mark” – I absolutely feel a sense that I am “putting myself into the world” through these marks that I am making. I am also interested by Professor Caldwell’s statement that my new process makes my current work a whole different situation than my earlier work, and I should now think about that more in depth to better understand how it might affect my future work, especially if I want to retain some ideas of “presence.” Finally, I thought that the suggestion that was overwhelmingly supported was that I should first make a “piece” (preferably working larger) and then cutting up that image into “smaller” compositions to “find the picture” – doing this practice could seriously open my eyes to what I look for and seek out in a successful composition.

My current next goals are to attempt and put into practice the suggestions given to me by the faculty and see/study how this affects my mindset and beliefs about my work.

## Midterm Images



With these next works that were created for the Midterm Critique, I expanded the nature and appearance of the marks by adding paint into the pieces. Specifically in these pieces, the paper I worked on was coated with gesso and then painted on with acrylic paint. To achieve the look of the paint in these images I used a mop and several larger paintbrushes. Marks were then added onto of the painted ground several hours or days later. This point in the semester marks the first time that I was actually okay with a work taking me a longer amount to complete. I feel that these pieces are the evolutionary next step in the direction and process that my work has been involved with so far this year. All works are *Untitled*.



Outside Mentor Meeting:  
Professor Joseph Lucchesi

Having just had my Midterm critique the night before, I had no idea what to think or expect when I went to talk to Professor Lucchesi about my most recent work. However, I was happily surprised during our conversation in how he seemed to, on one end, reaffirm what some of the other professors had said, while also giving me some serious questions/topics to think about in relation to my own work. Firstly, he also agreed with what Professor Scheer had said about my work in that it “tends to rotate around the edges” – being the result of my physical action with the work. He thought it was interesting that I still had so much respect for the edge, but that it might be something that I want to notice that I do more in the future. To this extent Professor Lucchesi also agreed with the idea that I might want to try making larger works at first and then reinvestigating them and finding compositions/images within the original composition. He also agreed with my belief that I still see these works, at least now, exclusively as drawings.

In terms of the idea of myself needing to work “bigger” or “larger” he was quick to point out that there is a strong difference between a work being “large” and a work being “monumental” while also telling me to think about how “scale” and “freedom” are not the same thing. I think these are interesting pairs to balance in possible future works because making these types of judgments will totally change the method in which I work – Do I put marks down first and then paint? Or vice versa? Do the marks need to be more heavy and shape-like or can they be more calligraphic?

Also, I think the main point that is becoming central to my own SMP work is the idea of “loosening the hand.” Professor Lucchesi pointed out that in terms of my own process and pieces there is a huge difference between literally “loosening my hand” and conceptually doing the same. Should I be more fluid in how my hands rework/add marks to a piece or should I be more open to the “process” behind the work and how my concepts are formed? To this end he pointed out that I seem to have a lot of self-given “rules” for making these works (which I agreed with) and he said that it might become important to find or understand what they are to better continue this type of work.

Finally, he gave me a list of artists to look at that I found interesting in how “different” some of the suggestions seem to me (at least right now). It was recommended that I look at works by Kandinsky, Degas pastels from the 1890’s, Gorky, Cezanne, and drawings by Ellsworth Kelly. Also, Professor Lucchesi described me as a “modernist” after I read him the lists about what I think my work is about/not about – which I find slightly amusing, but maybe its true – I just need to do more work to find out.

## In-Progress Review Intention Statement

I think I have a lot of confused or mixed feelings/thoughts about last night's progress check. Before the review started I felt like I had made some amount of ground, or at least kept working enough to have some interesting compositions. However, afterwards, the more I think about what I have done, I just feel unsatisfied. Maybe I got too comfortable in working with paint and saw that as enough as a next step or maybe I thought the marks I was making were already varied enough. Either way I think this is my body's way of telling me that I do need to make a drastic change in the next work that I produce. Namely, out of the multitude of things that were said last night, the one that I am now thinking of in the most interested way is the concept of scanning a ground (some simple background marks or colors) into the computer and through scanning and Photoshop, printing the surface out at a much larger size.

This potential direction interests me more as I think about it because it seems like a much simpler way of arriving at a large piece on which to work on. Scanning in something (a mark or a wash/ground) will already make me see it and approach it as something totally different – due to the increase in size, which as was discussed last night, will immediately make my marks larger. I think was initially wary of such a process because the idea of using a computer somehow felt like “cheating;” but if using the computer immediately helps in the process to making a more powerful work, one that immediately impacts the way I move and confront the working surface, then it seems absolutely necessary right now.

Another option that I have been thinking of since last night is the idea of attaching/gluing together several large sheets of paper to make some type of a conglomeration paper. In my mind this “paper” is uneven, and is not a standard size, it might look something like the capital letter “L.” This idea might be another way to work larger, but in a more completely physical sense (not using a computer). Right now, both options seem very exciting as possibilities. In addition to those new directions I think my use of materials will be impacted greatly, how I apply paint and charcoal or graphite will be impacted in ways that I know I cannot expect right now, but I think it will be interesting to see how I react in the future.

One final thought: Last night there was some discussion as to what the works looked like, there was talk of “caves” or the work appearing as an “abyss.” The more this talk went on, I became more uncomfortable – hearing what the work looked like to others was an unusual to experience. But I think this is telling me that the marks I have made are working in some specific manner, and if I blow my marks up in scale, then perhaps everyone will see them differently.

## In-Progress Review Images



The work that I had completed at this stage of the semester was very much similar to the work that I had been doing at the Midterm critique. However, one difference was at this point I had begun to push my painting and marks to the edge of the paper, and thereby confront the edge more directly. Despite this advancement, it was noted that this work seemed too much like what I had already done in the semester, and in some pieces, the marks that I made overwhelmed the composition, thereby removing any power from the work. Some positives that came out from this part of the semester was the absolute decision to work larger and thereby challenge and differ my marks, simply by the size I would be working at. Although, in retrospect I think the piece pictured above with the orange smear in the middle of the composition was an effective use of a minimal amount of marks in relation to the background. All works are *Untitled*.

## Interview Part Two: Conducted by Kat Eisenberg

Kat: When was the last time you stopped to look at nature?

Michael: Probably earlier today. Although I feel as if I do not really take in nature all that much. It's always around me to the point where sometimes I probably do not appreciate it as much as I should. On the other hand though I have been noticing light lately – like when the sun comes through windows and when that holds my attention.

Kat: Do you think the weather affects your art making?

Michael: Only to the extent that I feel that I can more easily work when it is cloudy outside. There are less distractions and I feel calmer working on a rainy day. When the sun is out in full force I feel rushed.

Kat: When you are making your marks, what is going through your head?

Michael: I am still trying to figure that out. Right now I think my marks are my way of claiming that piece of paper, or whatever surface it might be, as something that is entirely my own. I am trying to let people know that I was there and this is what I left behind.

Kat: Do you sign your works? Why or why not? Does it matter if anyone sees your name?

Michael: So far this year I have not signed any of my works. Now that might be myself feeling embarrassed about signing them because to me that is something that professionals do. I think I should start signing them, but just in very small ways, I would never want my signature to feel out of place in regards to the work, even though the works are connected to my person.

Kat: How would you feel if someone installed your work upside-down/ or the wrong way?

Michael: I would probably have a problem with it. I work on my pieces in such a manner that when they are completed I can only see them in a certain way, be it horizontal or vertical or in a certain order. It would be amusing if someone installed them the wrong way, and I would probably ask them about it, but then ask them to fix the work.

Kat: Do you think a photograph can speak for your work?

## Interview Part Two, Continued

Michael: Probably in the sense that you could then see the evidence that a work was done. But seeing it in person would add another layer as you would see all the details of where the charcoal touched the paper or where the paper was buckling. You would see how much energy went onto and into that piece in person; a photograph is just the Spark-Notes version of that.

Kat: What was the last book you read?

Michael: I have been reading Carl Jung's *Man and His Symbols*, which is such a great read. It really made me feel as if the work I am doing now is the best way for me to exist as an artist, and as a person in this world right now. He basically says that people should pay more attention to their dreams and ideas of the unconscious, because, often times, those ideas or thoughts are telling you things that are so critical to your personal well being, but are often cast aside in our society.

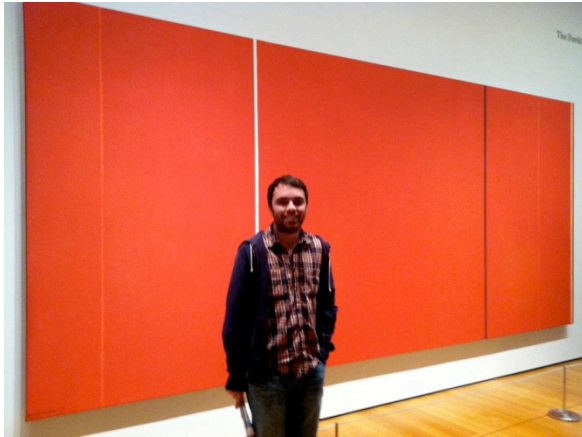
Kat: When was the last time you showed your work to someone who had never seen it before?

Michael: Some of my close friends saw my earlier work during the Marathon; I think they were interested in it just because they had never really seen any results from anything I had been talking about. If they liked it or not I am not so sure, but they probably thought it was interesting nonetheless.

Kat: What is your favorite tool to work with?

Michael: Lately I have been having a sort of equal liking for all my materials; I think they all serve a purpose to the overall work. But I have begun to think a lot about a house paint sample I bought a while ago and I am very excited to use it more excessively and more as a way to make my marks, not as an accent to them.

## Visit to the Museum of Modern Art



In front of Newman's  
*Vir Hericus Sublimis*



Twombly's *Academy*



Miró's *The Birth of the World*



Clyfford Still's 1944 *N No. 2*

Over the Thanksgiving break I had a chance to visit the Museum of Modern Art for the very first time. It was an incredible experience, which these cell phone pictures only begin to suggest. Throughout the whole visit I was surrounded by works from artists that I consider to be my primary inspirations and seeing them in person has absolutely made an impact on myself that will carry on in SMP.

## Haiku

Existence is now  
witnessed by how these hands move  
to the impulse of thought.

## Artist Talk Responses



## A. Matthew Fishel Response

Perhaps the one thing that I most appreciated, or identified with, from Matthew Fishel's Artist Talk was how he explained how much he has changed in terms of what medium he identifies with. He explained that as an undergrad, at SMCM, he was working exclusively as a painter, however, after graduating he found that he had "fallen out of love" with the medium. When he said this I immediately felt a connection with his statement as I had experienced the same thing with Photography after graduating from high school.

After graduating, Fishel detailed how he began to become interested in making films and had one in the Maryland Film Festival. However, after several years of being involved with making films in a group setting, Fishel moved on to using models and digital stills/animation. This portion of the talk was another part where I felt that I could identify with what he was describing. Specifically, when Fishel was talking about how at some point you could tell that his installations were fake, or fabricated, he stated that despite that knowledge, "the feeling" of the piece would stay with you; this connected to his belief's about the "lizard" part of your brain which connects to the primitive. When Fishel was describing this belief I became very interested by the idea of, "knowing something is 'not real' yet not being able to shake the idea of what that 'thing' stands for." What does it mean to make a representation or an idol for a larger ideal or entity?

Finally, although I am not necessarily interested in working with the field of animation, I could not help but be very impressed by Fishel's ideas of film or animation. Specifically, in relation to his piece Station North, which he saw as a "film" without the constraints of a plot. With the revolving imagery one could sit with piece just as one would with a painting – there is no confusion about having "missed" part of the piece – I thought this was a very impressive way to view film and animation.

## B. Catherine O'Connell Response

Right from the start of O'Connell's talk I was immediately interested by what she was showing the crowd. Not only did I find her paintings and ink "blowings" incredibly interesting to look at, it was how the artist described the process of making them that most caught my attention. O'Connell stated that in making her early paintings she wanted to feel a "physical connection to the act of painting"; she would almost attack her canvases by pouring and splattering the paint across them before reworking them with a "gentler" touch. I thought her "all or nothing" attitude towards painting was very inspiring, especially her notion that she wanted, "To see what paint could do," and at the same time this tendency to work up these huge canvases of shape and color, in my opinion, really adds to their confrontational ability, while at the same time allows for moments of rest for the viewer.

One main thing that I thought was interesting in seeing the wide evolution of O'Connell's work was in seeing how her ink drawings, which she referred to as "floating masses," evolved from image to image. Specifically I am referring to the change from the works containing only one mass, to becoming crowded clusters that really absorb the viewer's eye, but not in a way that concentrates your vision on one specific area. Instead the softness and variety of color and shape allows for a total immersion in the works (similar to the 'all-overness' of her earlier paintings).

Finally, I think seeing the current whole span of O'Connell's work (paintings, sculptures, and collages) was very refreshing. Normally I am so rigid in my thinking of what kind of artist I consider myself to be that I may lock out possibilities of branching into new mediums. I think that looking at the career of Catherine O'Connell, with her overwhelming paintings and seemingly industrial sculptures, is helpful because it clearly illustrates how a body of work in one medium can easily shift into another medium, I just now have to be open and aware of the possibility.

### C. Jae Jennifer Rossman Response

I think the thing that most impressed me throughout Rossman's lecture was the sheer amount of detail and knowledge that went into her presentation. I think this initially impressed me due to the fact that this talk was more along the lines of an art history type lecture, as opposed to the other visiting artist talks that we have had so far this semester. But in terms of the actual content that was discussed in her lecture (which was based around contemporary book artists being inspired and creating works around color theory) there were several points that grabbed my interest. Firstly, the artist book titled, *Temperamental Rose*, which was based around ideas and knowledge of corresponding certain colors to particular temperaments – such as shades of blue corresponding to “poets”; I found this idea to be somewhat similar to my own work in that I often ascribe emotions or feelings to marks or colors that I use.

Another project that Rossman discussed that I initially thought I would be uninterested in, but upon hearing an explanation I was much more intrigued by, was the piece called *Pink Story (Dextral)*. In this work there are multiple different pink color-strips (similar to those found in paint sections of hardware stores) and on each one is a word that corresponds to an emotion or experience in a year of a woman's life. I find this piece interesting on two levels: Firstly, it was interesting to see how this piece corresponds to the structure of a book, but then breaks that mold by being a piece that must be unfolded, and thereby taking up much more space and being slightly interactive; and secondly I think this piece is interesting in the way that it defines an entire lifetime through variations in one single color, and the multitude of associations that come with the color pink. The piece really made me think of what could really constitute a biographical work of art.

## D. Colby Caldwell Response

Having known Professor Caldwell for several years now I found his talk very interesting because it was my first real insight into any of his own artwork. One thing that stuck out to me from this talk was how Caldwell seemed to cover so much ground through his career as an artist, while still be tied to a similar focus or idea. Namely, I am referring to his interest in “The Hunt” – which started back when he was a young boy watching his grandfather’s Super 8 hunting videos. Caldwell’s work was initially directly based off of these home videos (he would source out interesting images/landscapes from the footage), before moving into making his own entirely original imagery using a variety of photographic mediums – ranging from film cameras to flat-bed scanners. The later works include images of spent shotgun shells and hunting blinds found on or near the property he lives on.

Another thing that I thought was very central to Caldwell’s work, and one that I found interesting to myself, was his statement that a change in location will lead to a change in the look of the work that you produce. To this end he refers to how one pays attention to the natural world that is around them and engages their senses in different ways in these new locations. Paying attention to your surroundings and be present both physically and mentally is what lead Caldwell to become connected to the land in which he lives and lead to the creation of his recent bodies of work. Personally, I think this idea of being affected by your landscape/surroundings is very interesting as I find the work that I make tends to be based more off of my own person as opposed to anything that is around me, but I have probably changed my work because of my surroundings and not even realized it. Or perhaps, the surroundings that change your work do not necessarily have to be “landscapes,” perhaps the people around you can affect the work you make. Caldwell’s lecture was informative in how he described how an artist’s work changes in regards to personal, technological, and environmental factors.

## Working Bibliography

### I. Artists of Interest

Barthes, Roland. "Non Multa Sed Mutum." *Cy Twombly: Fifty Years of Works on Paper*. Ed. Julie Sylvester. Munich: Schirmer/Mosel, 2008. 19-36. Print.

In this essay, Roland Barthes works to describe the look and actions that one should use to accurately describe or talk about a work by Twombly. Barthes describes the work of Twombly as work that requires the viewers to, "...Displace the words of culture... and see them in a different light." Perhaps one of the main points that Barthes gives off in his essay is that Twombly's "written" work is one that is based more on an activity than a concept, and this activity of "writing" or "tracing" create these works of repeating forms and almost-calligraphic marks. The essay provides a mindset for the reader to enter into before looking through the following images of Twombly's life's work; that the works are not in the past or the present, but still provide a sense that Twombly's hand is about to touch there or already has. The essay opened up the included works for a more in depth analysis and appreciation.

Kline, Franz. "Franz Kline." Interview by David Sylvester. *Interviews with American Artists*. By David Sylvester. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001. 61-71. Print.

In this interview with David Sylvester, the painter Franz Kline talks on many issues as they personally relate to his own painting practice. Kline talks about how it is important for his own work to not be concentrating on a "balance" of black marks on a white surface, but instead looking for an "awkwardness" in a feeling of unbalanced forms. Kline also mentions how in many situations it is important for himself to rid his mind of any preconceived thoughts about a work, in order to operate on a piece more successfully. Perhaps what I found to be most interesting or most personally relevant to myself in this interview was Kline's statement that there always seem to be some certain forms that always carry an excitement for yourself and, on a different note, that he may make a series of very small works at first, but then months later these small images are the beginnings for much larger works.

Leja, Michael. "Jackson Pollock: Representing the Unconscious." *Reading American Art*. Ed. Marianne Doezema and Elizabeth Milroy. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998. 440-64. Print.

In this essay author Michael Leja provides details in how the work of Jackson Pollock was explicitly affected and impacted by Jungian beliefs and models of the unconscious. The article provides evidence in example works of Pollock that provide visual examples of how he was very interested in Jungian symbols and Leja points out how these symbols make appearances in Pollock's earlier work such as *Guardians of the Secret* (1943). However, Leja also shows how Pollock's views and representation of the unconscious shifted during his career and moved away from being based around symbols, to being more concerned with energy, motion and "inner forces." The author also provides commentary on how Jungian beliefs on the unconscious in relation to the outside world of society - namely its connection to society's ideas on science and rationalism. This essay was helpful because it acted like a case study of a particular artist who was very involved with material that has been studied

for my own ongoing project and how his own ideas changed.

Motherwell, Robert. "Robert Motherwell." Interview by David Sylvester. *Interviews with American Artists*. By David Sylvester. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001. 73-83. Print.

In this interview, Robert Motherwell touches on the ideas that surround his own art-making practice. Motherwell describes how in certain situations he begins painting entirely from an impulse in order to find out exactly how he feels on a specific subject. He also describes how in order to feel that a work is now complete, he (as the artist) must feel that that "the feeling that started the painting" is now also complete, and through this process the work becomes a "clarification" of one's attitudes. This interview was helpful because it details the artist's own thoughts on how he is at times aware of or unaware of references that the work is making and at the same time it illuminated the concept that just because the work of Abstract Expressionism is abstract, it is not necessarily about abstract things. Instead, as Motherwell says, "...It refuses to spell everything out."

Phillips, Lisa. "The Self Similar." Preface. *Terry Winters*. New York City: Whitney Museum of Art, 1991. 13-25. Print.

This introduction by Phillips provides an excellent first-look and a wide range of details as they relate to the thoughts behind and the appearance of a variety of works by the artist Terry Winters. The reading ranges over the majority of Winters' (then) up-to-date career and gives particular details to how his work continually works with plays of opposites - inner and out, clarity and obscurity, among others. The essay highlights how Winters was very interested in the gesture and "traces of the hand" and how that led him to becoming involved with creating works filled with biomorphic forms as a way to oppose "literalist abstraction." In addition to this, the essay details how despite Winters being intent on extending the range of emotions in his works, he was still uncomfortable with anything too literal in his works. This essay was helpful in that it added a new artist to the list of people whose work and ideas behind their work I identify with and gravitate towards, while also opening up the possibilities for different types of subjects in the future.

Schama, Simon. "Cy Twombly." *Cy Twombly: Fifty Years of Works on Paper*. Ed. Julie Sylvester. Munich: Schirmer/Mosel, 2008. 11-18. Print.

In this essay, author Simon Schama writes on the nature of what really lies behind the power and look of Twombly's work. Schama describes how the word "Twombly" should in actuality be a term that describes the process of "...Thoughtfully hovering over a surface" of a "Line with a mind of its own." The essay provides suggestions as to what sorts of materials lend themselves to being essential to Twombly's work, those being crayons, house paint, and ball-point pens, among others. This writing takes on a somewhat narrative tone, describing changes in Twombly's work throughout his career and how no one could have been "...More of an Abstract Expressionist" than Twombly. This reading provided details and thoughts on what the nature behind the artist's drawn/scribbled lines and masses and helped to establish Twombly's work as something that is entirely its own.

Walker, John. *James Abbott McNeill Whistler*. New York City: Harry N. Abrams, 1987. Print.

Author John Walker provides a thoroughly illustrated description of the life and artistic career of James Whistler. The work, which covers all aspects of Whistler's life, from his birth in Massachusetts to his lawsuit against critic John Ruskin, provides examples of Whistler's work (with explanations) that he was working on at that same time. The information that was most useful from the work was the description of Whistler's Nocturne paintings; how Whistler arranged his foregrounds so the canvas seemed even flatter and appeared solely as an arrangement of shapes and patterns. Whistler emphasized, "...the infinite tones and variations of a limited number of colors" (52). Walker's biography was also useful in its explanation of Whistler's Ten o' Clock Lecture, in which he asserted the dominance of the artist over nature and the idea that the artist was not responsible to society but to himself through the art that he makes.

## II. Artist's Writings

Ashton, Dore, and Joan Banach, eds. *The Writings of Robert Motherwell*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007. Print.

The editors of this book have compiled the writings of the New York School painter, Robert Motherwell, into one volume for easy reference. A reader is easily able to look through the collection and see Motherwell's writings on a range of topics ranging from his ideas on aesthetics and the Sublime, to his own ideas on what Abstract Art means to him. The essays show Motherwell's commitment to the ideas that what occurs between the painter and the canvas is central to the artwork (154) and interestingly, that Abstract Art represents the acceptances and rejections of men, "living under the conditions of modern times" (158). This source provides a direct link to the ideas and beliefs of the group of artists that I find are most influencing my current artwork; also by studying these essays I can see how my thinking on Art becomes more in-tune with or differentiates from the beliefs of the New York School.

Horodner, Stuart. *The Art Life: On Creativity and Career*. Ed. Stuart Horodner and Stacie Lindner. Atlanta: Atlanta Contemporary Art Center, 2012. Print.

This book features a wide variety of interviews, anecdotes and quotes from an array of people in the art and literary world and in popular culture at large. Each chapter is devoted to a particular topic, ranging from Motivation and Process to Criticism and Success, and within each chapter Horodner has compiled quotes that add to the discussion on that particular chapter's topic. Individuals referenced in the book include: Allan Kaprow, Robert Henri, Luc Tuymans, Mira Schor, Charles Baudelaire, and many others. The book allows for the reader to be exposed to a wide variety of people and ideas on all sides of the topics addressed and the book allowed myself to be exposed to many intellectuals who view and practice art in a way similar or related to the way in which I practice it.

Kandinsky, Wassily. *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*. Trans. Michael T.H. Sadler. New York: Dover, 1977. Print.

In this book, the artist Wassily Kandinsky provides his own insights to the nature of art and the artist. Topics that are touched on include: to whom the artist is responsible, the nature and differences between "representational" and the "abstract," the concept of "form," and his many notes and thoughts on color. Kandinsky is incredibly detailed in his explanations as to how certain colors affect a viewer's eye (such as the key differences in the relationship between yellow and blue, of white and black) and Kandinsky even goes to lengths to ascribe certain musical ideas and imagery that are at work when a color is seen. Also, throughout the work Kandinsky provides many insights into the "spiritual" side of art, such as his belief in the "Inner Need," which is an artist's desire for both spiritual and physical expression.

### III. Other Works

Campbell, Joseph. *Pathways to Bliss*. Novato: New World Library, 2004. Print.

In this book author Joseph Campbell provides details into the functioning of mythology in everyday life and how it has evolved and changed in relation to the individual. The book is broken into two parts, the first focuses on myth as more of a concept, while the second half focuses more on myth as an active part of daily life. Campbell describes the origins of myths in "primitive" societies and how they differ depending on the society you might be in (such as a Western or Eastern society). The book also describes in detail the ideas of the Myth relating to the Self and how this was impacted by ideas brought up by Carl Jung. Campbell provides examples of Jung's many different elements of personality, such as differences between "Extroverts" and "Introverts" and how one must balance these competing elements to become whole, or achieve "individuation."

Jung, Carl G. "Approaching the Unconsciousness." *Man and His Symbols*. Ed. Carl G.

Jung and M.-L von Franz. London: Dell, 1964. 1-94. Print.

In this first section of the work, prominent psychologist Carl G. Jung provides a wide sweeping overview of his studies and beliefs in relation to the world of dreams, symbols, and archetypes, and explains how these are incredibly important and valuable when studying the unconscious. The essay itself provides the reader with an look at how the modern man does not really ever fully perceive what is around him as our senses have become conditioned (through advances in science, etc.) to immediately rule out specific phenomena. In this chapter, Jung focuses on how by giving unbiased attention to both the form and content of dreams, it becomes apparent that dreams are a form of "primitive" and "instinctive" forces that can have an incredibly powerful impact on an individual (or society) if they are taken seriously and properly studied. Jung also provides many comments on the belief of man having "conquered nature" and how the nature and trust in "Reason" has lead society into a dangerous current position.



McCarthy, Cormac. *Blood Meridian or The Evening Redness in the West*. New York: Vintage International, 1992. Print.

McCarthy's novel that depicts an unnamed protagonist, known only as "The Kid," as he joins a gang of Indian scalp-hunters in the Old West. The novel differs from most portrayals of the West in the time of its development by portraying it as a land of intense violence and a land that is, if anything, misinterpreted in its physical appearance and the people who inhabit it. The work is partially based on actual events that are connected to the Glanton Gang, who hunted Native American scalps in the U.S.-Mexico border area in the 1850s. McCarthy's characters range from the comedic Todavine, to the violent and mysterious Judge Holden. The chapters range from describing the gang's actions as they move from one town to another - often coming into conflict with the people they come across - to describing beliefs of the nature of Man, God, and War. Reading the novel acted as a base level of inspiration for the cryptic marks and gestures that my work began to take on and McCarthy's beautiful, yet desolate descriptions of the West's landscapes added to my interest in being inspired by natural forms and occurrences.

Melville, Herman. "Moby Dick." *Redburn, White-Jacket, Moby Dick*. Ed. Harrison Hayford, Hershel Parker, and G. Thomas Tanselle. New York City: The Library of America, 1983. 771-1408. Print.

Author Herman Melville's classic novel about one man's unending desire for revenge against the great whale that physically maimed him, and how that revenge destroys his ship and his crew, with the exception of the narrator. The book was read after being recommended in a reading list found in Horodner's *The Art Life*. Throughout the novel Melville presents passages that detail perverse attacks against nature, the power people wield over others and many sections of direct nautical-scientific information. The writing style of the novel varies throughout; some chapters read as a standard first-person narration, while others read as monologues or stage directions for a play. The sections of the novel that were most closely read were passages that detailed "omens" foretelling character's fates and sections providing background or details to the mystery surrounding Moby Dick himself. Also, it is interesting to note that despite the novel's length, the whale is only seen in the final three chapters, despite hardly being seen this character drives the entire story, this fact added to exploring the idea of "presence."

Von Franz, M. L. "The Process of Individuation." *Man and His Symbols*. Ed. Carl G. Jung and M. L. Von Franz. London: Dell, 1964. 157-254. Print.

In this section, author von Franz provides details as to how an individual can truly come to terms with their unconscious and "Inner Self." The chapter details how in the process of creating an inner identity, childhood forms the basis of one of the most vivid and emotionally intense portions of life, which leads to the process of Individuation. The author delves even deeper into the motives behind an individual's actions and dreams by explaining the concepts of the Animus and Anima and how they relate to the growth, development, and knowledge of self of both men and women. This reading was interesting in that it again provided details to emphasize the importance of subconscious forces of personality that, while they may be misunderstood or suppressed, often times are essential in understanding how a person sees themself and their world.

## Looking Ahead

As this semester comes to an end, I find myself beginning to think about what the next semester will bring in terms of the development of my work. Having just visited the Museum of Modern Art, I have finally seen the massive scale that works can be done at and I have seen just how powerful marks and gestures made at this scale can become; the works that I saw are still present in my mind and will, without a doubt, influence me in ways I am not yet aware of. With that said, I am interested in beginning the next semester of SMP in a similar fashion to how this one began – by making many works. The fast pace and multitude of pieces produced was a really helpful and effective way to get myself ready, both mentally and physically, for the later works that were produced. However, now that I am more comfortable with the scale that I am working at, I think these early drawings could really help to set up compositions (marks, gestures, colors used, etc) that would be even more powerful at a grander scale.

In terms of reading and preparation for the next semester of SMP, I have again been influenced by what I saw at the MoMA. After that visit I have become interested in the works of Miro and the sculptures and drawings of Richard Serra, both of whom are artists that I have always liked, but have never considered as influences on my current work. Looking at these artists in more depth could really be constructive in forming ideas of composition and subject matter. Also, I have begun reading an in depth biography on de Kooning, which will provide insight into one of the Abstract Expressionists that I have always appreciated, but have yet to study more seriously. I also plan to spend more time with the Joseph Campbell book *Pathways to Bliss*, in order to have a better grasp on his ideas of myth as they pertain to culture at large.

### Future Readings (A formulating list):

Campbell, Joseph. *Pathways to Bliss*. Novato: New World Library, 2004. Print.

Stevens, Mark, and Annalyn Swan. *de Kooning*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011. Print.

Information and readings on Juan Miro and Richard Serra