

Draw of Light



Samantha Nickey
Fall SMP 2011

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This document book is organized roughly chronologically with three main components marking my “Grounding,” “Taking Off,” and “In Flight” stages of development with an appendix included for extra information. The “Grounding” section addresses overall themes, such as spirituality, that interested me from the start. It is in the “Taking Off” section that the moth becomes specifically important to me as a symbol through Ying Li’s visit. Finally, the “In Flight” section solidifies my ideas by relating them to the works of others and other’s critiques.

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Fight fire with fire, but the fire won't fight;
we just fly these circles like tired kites.

-- Dessa, *Matches to Paper Dolls*

Introduction

When I see a moth, I am oddly afraid because of the haphazard way it flutters about or the way it lurks in one spot. This is key to the moth's power, that I fear these creatures in an irrational manner despite their extreme fragility. Their ambiguous shape and camouflage represents the unknown to me – it represents the parts of ourselves we are not always willing to readily show. Painting moths then becomes my own exploration of the unknown, and like the moth, I become exposed on this journey. Though originally I aimed to paint people to get at the heart of human nature, this small creature allows me to blow up the intensity of emotions and drama within life through mirroring the moth's qualities with my own qualities, and the qualities of humans on the whole.

With its' elegant wings, the moth takes flight and therefore also has associations of freedom, but there is a tug of war happening between freedom with the moth's desires for light. The light and dark in my work are as much characters as the moths themselves; because of the moth's fatal attraction to light, lightness and darkness are more complex than their usually assigned positive and negative connotations. My work shows the glory, beauty, and yet tragedy of the moth's flirtation with light in various circumstances with my last work showing multiple moths safely taking refuge in darkness and in each other's presence. It is particularly important for me to show the work *Refuge* amongst the others as a sort of calm and still optimism among the chaos and destruction of the other images.

In my most recent paintings I have made some important choices regarding size, paint type, and my decision to stick to working in black and white. With each of the four images measuring at least five feet in both height and width, I wanted the image to impose on the viewer's personal space; for the viewer to feel small in comparison to the images like the moth itself may feel. I chose to work in a combination of acrylic and oil paint to play up the lightness and heaviness of each medium, and to contrast a drier look with a more luscious look, respectively. Working in black and white allows me to play up the contrast or shading in each piece and concentrate on the idea of darkness and lightness.

Grounding

Spirituality Reading Response

Many times a scene in my life has been composed like a work of art, novel, or movie, where everything and everyone involved in the moment seems to be significantly placed and timing becomes important. These scenes can be as simple as thinking of an old friend I have not seen in years before running into the friend at the store. Because these moments are like a work of art, nothing should be taken for granted and meaning seems open to interpretation based on how the moment plays out. Spirituality can encompass a sense of yearning to know more about the world and the self through means of intuition. As a result, a mystical feeling of wonder may ensue; a feeling that often leaves me bewildered but interested in my place in my environment. In the sense I use the word spirituality I do not mean religious or formally structured in an established way by society. My definition of spirituality is loose and though I hope it will become more defined as I explore the idea through my St. Mary's Project, for the time being I look toward the symbols, such as "suspicious" lighting or an interestingly timed visit from a stranger, and bits of intuition that have hinted spirituality in my personal life in the past as inspiration for my work in the future.

Both ritual and spontaneity are the leading elements in my construct of spirituality. Ritual provides a steadiness to life that allows one to examine changes in life day-by-day – similar to Andy Goldsworthy's comment that staying in one place allows one to measure change more accurately (Time). Meanwhile spontaneity allows energetic forces to free flow through a person and it creates exploration without knowing where a person will end up on a specific journey, artistically or otherwise. On page 286, the text mentions "approach(ing) painting as an awareness practice" by not trying to control the content of the painting but letting it flow as much as possible from the artist in the moment. I feel most spiritually connected with art when I ritualistically participate in the act of painting to prove my devotion to myself, but do not have too strict of a preconceived idea of where I wish a specific painting to go. Not knowing where a painting is going to end up brings a feeling of magic, especially when there is a definite sense of resolve at the end of creating the piece.

Painting to make myself become more aware of my thoughts has a psychological aspect to it as well, as if diving into my subconscious. For example, when painting figures out of my head I have a tendency to make them extremely thin and wonder if this sheds light on my concept of the idealized figure. The text mentions the sixteenth century Christian mystic who composed poetry while being tortured, which I take to be further evidence of spontaneity producing psychological art.

As far as spiritual content in a piece goes, light and temperature generally resonate with me. In my first work of art I created for my St. Mary's Project over the summer, I painted a girl reaching for a large ice glass in the forefront of the canvas

and tried to capture the warm temperature of the light beating on the glass and the cool temperature of the ice in the glass melting. The light reflecting off the glass gave it a glowing, telling look. It is well considered that light represents the sacred and divine; as the text goes on to say “the contrast of light and darkness expresses the ideas of polarity, paradox, and mystery as it has throughout human history” (Robertson 284). Darkness generally has a universal negative association, while light is more universally positive, but paring these associations together can establish an interesting and unique mood in an art piece.

Temperature may be more personally representative to me of spirituality, with an emphasis on neither warm or cool in particular, but a focus on the connection of the feeling of temperature accessed through the painting to the viewer. In one of Andrew Wyeth’s painting of Christina Olsen, she sits on a ledge outside in a landscape that overall feels a bit chilly, like early spring time of year, but there seems to be a warmer wind blowing back her hair by the poised way she sits. It is through contrast of temperature that this painting becomes so accessible and relatable to me; I feel as though I have been in the same setting as Christina Olsen and therefore can start relating to her as an individual more as well.

Artist Bill Viola produces installations that through natural elements such as fire and water poured on the artist also produce a direct sense of temperature on the figure in the piece, and as a result impacts the viewer to feel the sense of temperature as well. “Viola’s concern,” the text says, “is not principally with the figure (the actor) in the imagery, but with our (the audience’s) relationship to the imagery” (Robertson 302). Using fire and water help Viola achieve not only a sense of destruction but overall awe. These natural elements also have the ephemeral qualities I have associated to be of value, and when slowed on film make watching a man endure them even more intense to the viewer. With such natural elements and intenseness duplicated in my work, and through content focusing on temperature and light, and additionally through an approach of ritual and spontaneity, I aim to achieve a sense of spirituality in my work.

Images of Work



Samantha Nickey, Reach
Oil Paint, July 2011



Samantha Nickey, Buck
Oil Paint, July 2011

Influential Artist: Andy Goldsworthy

Over the summer, I was talking to an older woman who asked me to come up with a phrase to use as my own personal mantra. Soon the phrase written by the transcendentalist Thoreau, “simplify, simplify, simplify”, popped into my head and became something to meditate on, to breathe to, and to replace the jumbled thoughts otherwise floating around my mind. The phrase is appropriately simple in itself and easy to digest for me. My first reaction looking at images of Andy Goldsworthy’s work is a sense of beauty in the simplicity of his sculptures, so inevitably I am attracted to them in a positive way. His sculptures simultaneously distinguish themselves from nature (the audience can recognize that something in nature has been altered) yet his sculptures also merge with nature. Part of the positive simplicity of his work comes from a strong grounding in the art elements, such as a bridge of rocks that highlight shape and or an arrangement of leaves the highlight color. Arranging these elements in a noticeable way is how Goldsworthy

communicates purpose; it is the subtle suggestion that the work was composed.

Goldsworthy uses the properties of nature and works with these properties by involving himself. For instance, he makes impressions of his shadow in frost by standing in a single position in a field for a long time during a cold morning. Although his work focuses on natural aspects, he never tries to disguise that his work is made by a human.



Andy Goldsworthy, Rowan Leaves around a Hole, 1987

He occasionally makes works in museums or using tools, because he believes that, after all, human nature is still nature (Time 22). The incorporation of these “man-made” characteristics in his work make Goldsworthy even more attractive to me, as his work seems to fit into the world instead of permitting an escapist fantasy and idealized view of nature. The use of tools in a basic manner is also demonstrated by Goldsworthy’s documentation of his work with a camera that has standard film and no filters (Hand 11). The key word to his use of technology being that he “documents”; he aims to portray his content as unbiased as possible, again, to show the actual instead of fantastical. Though because of the temporary nature of his work, the long-lasting photograph can change the essence of his work overall.

Goldsworthy is “transfixed with the magical effect of natural light” and “obsessed with the way sunlight falls and flickers, especially on stone, water, and leaves” (Lubow). As mentioned in the frost shadows, he actually incorporates light into the *function* of his work. He has even been compared to Impressionists painters because of his preoccupation with light and work habits revolving around the time of day. Goldsworthy has been known to stay out late and work at night just so that it is cold enough he can attach objects together. The way in which the Impressionists

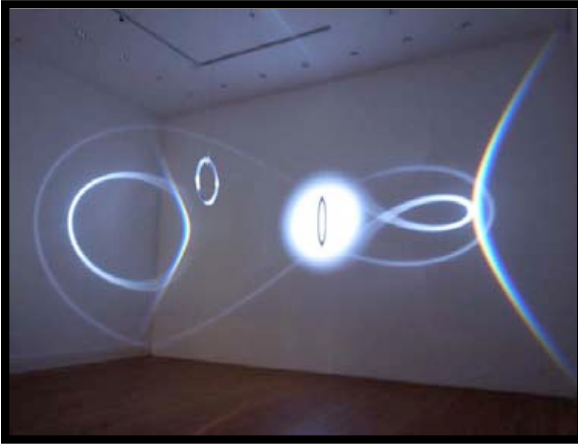
painters relate to Goldsworthy, will be similar to the way Goldsworthy relates back to my work – conceptually relating but working in different mediums and with slightly different subject matter. I have questioned myself as to why I am not adamant about painting nature all the time or even directly working from it like Goldsworthy, because I am enthusiastic about being in nature in my daily life, but I would rather take the qualities of nature I appreciate, such as the varying senses of calm and wildness it produces, and apply that to the human figure. The human figure is interesting to me because we sometimes have the tendency to think of our species as separate from nature because of our technology; but really our technology is just our natural tool for survival. Even our houses are no different from a beaver's dam overall. I would prefer to paint people in nature settings, but like Goldsworthy, would not want to exclude other settings because everything is ultimately nature. Goldsworthy shows that “we as humans have some ability of controlling nature, but eventually, in the end, nature controls us” (Andy).

I also hope to paint in a way that is influenced by Goldsworthy because he makes his art in the moment and uses the energy of the land and season he is in to make art (Andy). I work off opportunity in the sense that when I paint I watch what forms emerge by accident, and then accentuate them. Although currently links between my work and Goldsworthy's may seem like a stretch, I admire him in the way I would admire a musician, with a respect for the approach to art itself.

Influential Artist: Olafur Eliasson

Last semester when browsing the art of the Hirshhorn, down in a basement room I stumbled upon a unique installation by Olafur Eliasson. In the installation called Round Rainbow, a spotlight was secured on a tripod and a circle of acrylic glass rotated around in front of the light causing rainbows, lights, and shadows to dance across the room in a graceful and captivating manner. I was pleased to see Eliasson's name reappear in the Places section of the textbook, which spoke of another, more popular installation he created at Tate Modern mimicking the sun with mirrors and lights. His work calls attention to natural, ephemeral elements such as light and water. Eliasson says, “this [he finds] really interesting because it means that objects always shift or mutate over time, and, if we become aware of this constant movement, we may be able to understand the world as a much more open, negotiable space than we usually think it is” (Ideas 2). Similar to another artist I am fond of, explosive artist Cao Gui Qiang, Eliasson is interested using the environment and architecture of the museums or spaces he works in as a part of his work to the extent that the “context of the artwork is as central to the exhibition as the works themselves” (Blau 1). Although I did not choose “place” as one of the most important factors in my artwork, context has always been important to my understanding of art. I first became aware of this through Qiang's work as he filled the empty, high cylinder space of the Guggenheim museum with dangling cars from the ceiling. Qiang also filled the ascending spiral ramp of the Guggenheim with statues or wolves or clay workers crumbling, making the viewer journey up to the climax of his sculpture and have to weave in and out of his sculpture along the way.

The importance of using space is that it makes the art more participatory and therefore leaves a stronger impression. Eliasson, using less tangible objects in his sculptures and playing more directly with the natural elements mentioned, gives an overall sense of spirituality within the places he creates through the fragility of the elements. At the Hirshhorn, the entire room was utilized and lighting was adjusted to affect the room so that the viewer felt the sense of awe of the space. My personal experience was a mystical one; the science of light and design in art merged together in the installation.



Olafur Eliasson,, Round Rainbow Glass, Light, 2010

Museum space is the most important space to Eliasson because it is a place for people to gather and talk about art, to take for granted to some degree that what is inside is constituted as art and can be evaluated as such. The unique architecture of each building inspires the work he creates inside, hoping that the viewer will not so much distinguish the art from the place, but find their attention somewhere in between and that the viewer

would be inspired to relate to other people and the building itself (Blau 3). For this reason, Eliasson's art is considered non-narrative and aims to be without a beginning or end. Eliasson believes a work of art can be viewed with interest multiple times because the viewer or "user" (as he calls the audience of a piece of art) comes to view the art in variable conditions (Models 1). He finds humor in his interest in the museum being as most museums do not welcome elements such as water or mist on the "fifth floor, right above a Picasso show" (Hefland 1). He also "refuses to be confined to the museums designated exhibition spaces" making his working conditions even more specified (Blau 4). Eliasson does not leave out any details; even the museum's catalogue he treats as a work of art. His pieces are primarily experimental because he does not plan a work and then submit it for a museum show, but rather accepts invitations to create art in specific places that he then becomes inspired by.

In preparing for my first museum exhibition through my St. Mary's Project, I am left to consider the relatively simple space my artwork will be exhibited in. I have also begun to think about canvas shape and artwork overflowing the canvas to create more interesting spaces, such as artist Ally Moore did in her first SMP show last year. Eliasson's work varies greatly from my work at present, but to me his work is about composition both within and outside of the piece and I hope to make that relevant in my own work.

Interview One

1. What was your first memorable art experience and how is it relevant to what you are doing now?

In Elementary School I had a close connection with an art teacher who encouraged me, not only in class but through private lessons over the summer. She taught me about painters like Van Gogh and Monet and prompted me in learning more about other artists. We even did an assignment in school where we painted on T-shirts, and I gave her mine and she let me keep her T-shirt of the Starry Night painting, which I still have. I later switched schools, but we would write letters back and forth. Besides my parents, she was the adult I was closest with as a kid, and she was probably largely responsible for my dream of becoming an artist as an adult.

2. Who is your favorite artist and why?

Although not much like my work on the surface, the Chinese explosive and installation artist Cai Guo-Qiang, whose work I saw at the Guggenheim a few years back, really intrigues me because I immediately had a distinct emotional reaction to his work – it was like there was no “wall” between the work itself and, me, the viewer. Also, he beautifully composed and integrated his work in the space of the environment, like hanging cars from the ceiling. His work is powerful, meaningful, and genuine.

3. What artist or type of art do you dislike the most and why?

In general, I dislike most conceptual art, because by definition it places importance on the concept of the piece over the materials and aesthetics within a piece, while I find one cannot truly escape their materials – materials are what feed the meaning. There is a Buddhist quote that I think is applicable: “to be free from convention is not to spurn it, but to use it as a tool”. Sol Lewitt’s Wall Drawing’s in particular get under my skin – he distantly gives instructions to others to carry out his works which have an arbitrary nature, such as “drawing 50 random points and connecting them with straight lines.” This process seems to zoom in on his thoughts in a way I personally perceive as cocky and elite because of their lack of relevance and the fact that he has others tediously actually do the work.

4. What inspires you? What are some of the sources, both within art and outside of art that you turn to?

My first thought is my dreams. I don’t mean that in a surrealist dream imagery kind of way, either, but sometimes I have dreams that I’m drawing and actually can feel, say, the grain of the paper and I wake up itching to draw. Sometimes I have dreams that are like sketches for a drawing; I’ll envision the paper and how things are laid out on it. It is a good excuse to take naps.

But also, definitely other artwork, especially student artwork in my classes or around my age because we have so much in common. It also really helps me to take a walk and clear my head if I am having trouble developing images.

5. What draws you to the medium and materials you work in?

I started painting in high school with oils; I did very little fiddling around with acrylics originally. I'm grateful for that because oil paint is more permanent, slower drying, and messier – it made me take paint seriously from the start. I still get covered in it when I paint, and even though it can be a little high maintenance, I respect oils for it. Oil paint is luscious and sensuous. It has a distinct smell, as does paint thinner, which is embedded with associations of work and play for me. I like scrapping old paint off a palette and putting it on a new palette. I like shaping it on a canvas. I've experimented with many mediums, but none feel as personally satisfying as oil paint.

6. What, in your mind, makes a work of art successful?

Overall, a sense of balance. For example, a degree of subtlety and accessibility is present appropriate to the concept of the piece. The sense of balance can greatly vary from piece to piece but I feel like when achieved, the piece resonates like a guitar being correctly tuned – there is a sense of intuition about its rightness.

7. What motivates you to make art?

For better or worse, I put a lot of pressure on myself to make art, because it is important to me as a way of life. I feel like the things I've learned about art, like that it's a lot about risk taking and originality and expressing oneself and being honest, inform how I want to live too. Making art then becomes this action and expression of spirituality that I keep talking about in my SMP. Also, when I make a tangible work of art, I feel like I have a piece of me that I can both hold on to and get out of me. In that sense, I am motivated to make art to almost to keep records for myself.

8. How is your art a response to the world you live in?

My work is a response to the world I live in because gradually more and more people are saying that they are spiritual and not religious. I think, with this new idea, these people are trying to figure out what exactly they mean by that in their daily lives... and I'm there too, working out my own ideas. My mom, glancing at my images, said they aren't at all what she would have conceptualized as spirituality, so there are a lot of questions running through my mind about how personal to become in my work, and how vague of a notion of spirituality to pursue.

9. Ideally, where do you see yourself in five years? How is art part of that?

Sometime by then I would like to join the Peace Corps – I have this vision in my head of being in a foreign country seeking out artists and working along side them, and even teaching art or organizing art programs. The idea of eventually selling my work or it being in a museum show is enchanting – that would definitely also be ideal.

First Intention Statement

I am not sure if it is superstitious, spiritual, or possibly in my overcompensating imagination, but I feel like when I really look and listen to my environment — letting my mind relax and meditating almost to the point of, ironically, detachment from my environment — the world floods me with reoccurring symbols or maybe even signs and I am stuck trying to make sense of them all.

My guess is most people have had similar experiences at some point; such an experience may be like dreaming of an old acquaintance one has not thought of in a long time, only to run into them the next day! Not only does this seem logically odd or unsettling, but the most intriguing part of these experiences, I find, is the mystical sense that accompanies them and compels me to wonder if there is inherent meaning behind the experiences.

I have a strong sense of being on a twisting pathway in life; I am very aware that the smallest decisions I make (such as waving with my right hand instead of my left) cause a chain reaction and a significant influence. As my friend once said, “even the smallest angles open to millions of miles.” I hope to develop spiritually congruently with developing artistically on this “pathway”.

My interest with painting is growing toward these themes of chance, intuition, spontaneity, and especially spirituality. Although at this point I am not exactly sure how I want to execute my work to reflect these themes, I know that doing so through the human form interests me because the fleshy and sculptural qualities of muscle and bone ground the painting. Such mystical and unseen forces that I wish to express seem more real and powerful to my often skeptical self when tied back to humanity. Also within the painting, temperature and light are important to me as I get a sense they alluding and also ground the painting in the physical world.

Taking Off

Journal: Musing on the Human Mind, Body, and Soul

Foremost, I am interested in the idea of being a living, breathing, thinking, and feeling human and what that means for the obvious reason that I actually am a human – that my source is my self and my experiences (and even in studying other sources, they are still taken through the lenses of my perspective). I use the word human here because I am more interested in my experiences as they relate to theoretical thoughts on my existence of humans as a whole, throughout all of time and in all possibilities, than using the word “person” to distinguish between the individual differences between myself and other people. Whenever people have asked in the past if my paintings of a girl in them somewhat resembling myself are self portraits, my answer has always been “I use myself as a reference”. This girl is me, but in the way a stranger may look at me on the street and know a piece of me. This girl is the way that I know me at any given moment in time, just that perspective and piece, so in this way work is still a narrative of my experiences.

The necessity of a figure within my work will be left to the needs/content/meaning of the individual piece. When the figure is not needed, it will be because the human-like essence of the non-human content overrides the depiction of the figure. I have a hunch that I both will and will not use the figure at times to suggest different things, and in total will represent different aspects of the human such as the tangible body and the spirit in aura.

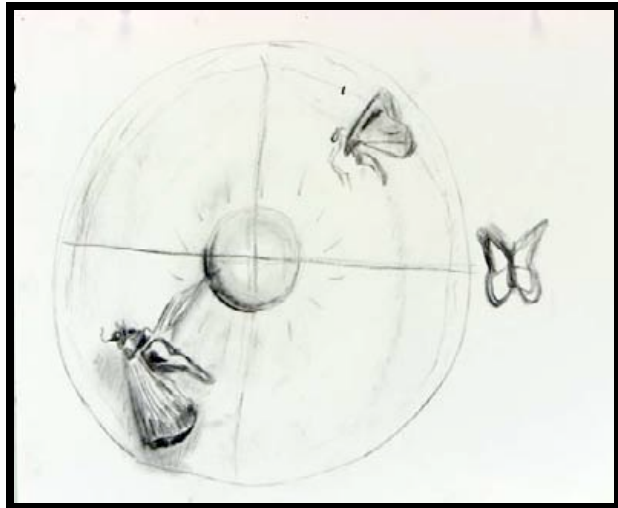
To zoom in on perspectives and pieces, as I mentioned, a lot of my past work has naturally shown a breaking up or rearrangement of space, spaces within spaces, and a disappearing of an object/figure into space. This has been one way to create juxtapositions and tensions, which are congruent with, for example, the human struggle between the mundane and extraordinary. Another way to convey juxtapositions is through symbols I choose to implement in the narrative scenes I will paint, most of which I desire to have a subtle “weird” or “off” feel. Subtle weirdness, such as a person who in real life or a painting distinctly avoids all eye contact, tests the boundaries of what people are comfortable with and what they know – applicable to human nature itself.

This has been a lot to swallow for me, so I think it is worthwhile remembering that the most important aspect of all of this to me is this “being a... human and [discovering] what that means”. The human has a body, mind, and spirit, of which the mind acts as a mediator and is my primary concern. Whatever individual conclusions change throughout my work, I am fairly sure that my work will link up somehow on this basis. The concepts that I think “discovering what it means to be human” encompasses can be seen in a comparative light with other forms of life, such as the differences between humans and animals, through the ideas of “love” and empathy, the ideas of the mundane and order verses the extraordinary and chaos, and the idea of impulses verses control and consciousness. Everything I have done and am interested in seems to reflect a survey of human parts as they add up to a whole.

Images of Work



Samantha Nickey, Broken Egg
Oil Paint, September 2011



Samantha Nickey, Moth Sketches
Acrylic Paint, Gouache, and Charcoal, October 2011

Ying Li Studio Visit

In my art studio, I had several images laid out to show Ying – the images from critique, images I had printed out of my previous artwork, and a sketch for my next drawing. She asked me to explain the sketch for my next artwork and then promptly responded, “I like these better,” pointing to the moth images. She asked me why I didn’t pursue the idea and I told her that the moth paintings seemed more obvious to me. At this point she looked at my previous work and said that she’s seen things like them over and over again and that the moth paintings were “not pretentious and poetic”. From there we preceded to talk a bit about poetry and zooming in on the simple things and noticing how beautiful and sometimes tragic they can be. She said the moth paintings were more human to her than my other drawings which had figures in them, and that when I paint the figure I have a tendency to tighten up on painting it as if to suggest the figure is most important. Ying suggested I do at least 50 more drawings of insects.

After she said all this I noticed that my sketch for my next image seemed a bit contrived. The symbols straightforwardly explained a situation. Although I felt an emotional connection with the moth images before, now I started opening myself up to the idea of them and being a little more comfortable with their simplicity. I’ve started thinking about bugs (and animals) a lot in relationship to what it means to be human. Like, for instance, if animals/bugs can love and/or have consciousness and what this says about humans either way. And I’ve also been observing and thinking about the peculiar behavior of bugs – such as the moths in the light or how worms come out of the ground when it rains and so on. Although I am still having trouble articulating some of this into a composition, I think I’d like to take on Ying’s challenge of eventually doing 50 sketches of insects and seeing where that takes me. Overall, Ying’s visit was very refreshing because she helped me see that demonstrating skill and cramming every little idea into one piece is less strong than running with one idea.

Images of Work



Samantha Nickey, Death of the Cricket, Acrylic Paint, October 2011

In Flight



Samantha Nickey, Large Moth Sketch Two, Acrylic Paint, October 2011



Samantha Nickey, Large Moth Sketch One, Acrylic Paint, October 2011

Susan Rothenberg to Self

Susan Rothenberg creates symbolic images that are richly personal in her application of paint, and somewhat in her symbols themselves. She is most known for her paintings of horses since around 1970, which she relates to, but loosely, painting them in a human-like way, with little regard for actual anatomy but instead essence. Many of her greatest influences, De Kooning and Bacon for example, paint figuratively, and specifically focus on distortions in the body. Extremely interested in parts and wholes of subject matter within her art, Rothenberg feels that distortions in her work are largely responsible for its emotional resonance (Karen 28). Although Rothenberg has been labeled everything from New Image, to Neo Expressionist, to Neo Impressionist, to Surrealist, to Futurist, she describes her own work best by saying she paints “exactly the way things can’t be” (Simon 9).

Her process often starts with doodling, and she makes a distinction between drawing and painting, with drawing being a work on paper, regardless of medium, and often taken more playfully. Drawing, for Rothenberg, is about instincts and not thinking, which she intriguingly, *especially with its implication of spirituality*, compares to a moving hand on an Ouiji board (Moving 123). She does not bring intention to her original works, but rather sees where the works go, and believes in the magical power of paint. Rothenberg usually uses drawings as preliminary work but sometimes the drawings becomes the works themselves. She is aware of the energy and physical nature behind painting, and warms up by walking or running.

Easily I find myself relating to all of this, having compared my preliminary work as a desire to do with paint a sort of “speaking in tongues”. In the image below from before SMP, I had no idea what even my subject matter would start out to be, until I started to see a human face naturally in the way the paint occurred, and later accentuated the form to bring it more distinctly into focus. In fact, the only major difference I can find between Rothenberg’s process and mine, is that she always seems to have a clear and confident idea of what makes a work a completed work and what makes a work a sketch. In my work below, for example, I do not think I could replicate the washy highlights of the paint to reform the face the same way in another piece, but as I am struggling with even now, the edges in the piece below seem also left to chance, but in a less positive way than is the application of paint. So my question to myself becomes where the place for this piece is – where to go with it from here.

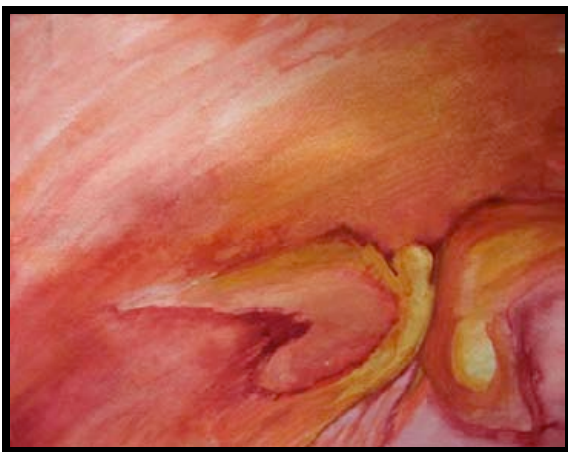
One major difference between Rothenberg and I is that she seems to have a love affair with flatness, and in the past I have, even if not always able to achieve it myself, a love affair with form. In fact, though I can appreciate the formalistic flatness of Rothenberg’s paintings to some degree, as it is used to emphasize the physicality of the canvas, I am much more interested in her paintings that do show some form (Moving 12). Even in the primarily flat image below where lines are added to emphasize this, I am most interested in the areas where dimension starts to happen, like the smudges around the horse.

The paintings of Rothenberg are usually large, about human size to add that psychological dimension, and also large to emphasize lack of form (Karen 29). In my larger moth works, I like the psychological dimension Rothenberg mentions; a sense that

the viewer is on the same level with what he or she is viewing. I am struggling with the degree of which to emphasize flatness or form because flatness seems to allow more ambiguity, but form can also offer a sort of clarity and poignancy.

Another relevant topic in Rothenberg's work is her painting technique. Despite our possible differences on feelings of form, Rothenberg's painting techniques themselves help achieve a sense of lusciousness of paint, which is particularly helpful because most of her early, well known work is done in acrylic paint. She achieves a "subtle inner glow, from light working through layers" and one can see the "ghost of one layer behind another, so there is a sense of buildup" (Karen 33). She uses a combination of flashe and matte medium to create tension between feelings of warm and cool, and thickness and transparency, with the flashe also creating blues, greys, and reds (Karen 25). She would gesso certain areas, but not the entire surface, and would then work the entire surface, sometimes leaving drips (Moving 95). It is helpful to see the minimal, but present way that Rothenberg uses color in her works, as I hope to start including subtle variations in my black and white works to create a sense of temperature.

For Rothenberg, the symbol of the horse was primitive and therefore immediate, while also having a connection to the past (Simon 49). Rothenberg mentions fears in painting as a positive thing, to keep one on the edge. For me, painting moths and naturally having a dumbly fearful reaction to them, makes me feel like my subject matter is loaded with personal power. Rothenberg and I seem to have more similarities than differences, so it becomes a challenge to figure out what makes my work mine, and I think the answer is in bridging the gap that Sue Johnson pointed out to me in our personal meeting – the gap between the idea of the moths and myself. Horses are big, strong creatures, while moths are small, and fragile, and in the most personal sense, perhaps even past the metaphorical sense, I need to continue questioning why the moth seems so intuitively appealing to me and let that feed my specific painting techniques.



Samantha Nickey, Butterfly, Gouache, 2011



Susan Rothenberg, Untitled Horse, Acrylic Paint, 1976

Odilon Redon to Self

Odilon Redon's name has been recommended to me by nearly every person who has looked at my art this semester, and I find that his similarities to my work are as important as his differences to my work, especially related to how we approach the idea of the symbol. The symbols that enter both Redon's work and my own work often have spiritual tones with the theme of solitude. Redon incorporates solitude by featuring individual figures, or creatures, and further by placing these odd creatures in an environment that creates their own narrative (Prince 61). My paintings depict more realistic scenes in that moths are actually attracted to light, but the theme of solitude is also sometimes evident such as in my large moth painting individually being absorbed into light or my sketches of an individual moth pinned down. This is distinct because moths are usually flocking in groups, and because individually they seem small and insignificant. Solitude was important to Redon's life because it made him "feel like he was living" and boldly declaring a life separate from the path of others (Selz 24). Redon's symbols are more animated, with a human-like face embodied in a creature in nearly every piece. This allows him to focus on the concept of the gaze and create a sense that the viewer is a spectator of his imagination, further separating him on his path (Selz 24).

"The logic of the visible at the surface of the invisible" is what Redon said he was going for in his art (Selz 5). Redon used his subjective experiences as a starting point for his symbols, often drawing from his dreams, and then conveyed more objective feelings through the choices within his medium. Preferring to work in black and white as I also do now, Redon's work would often use black and white suggestively to actually correspond to areas that should be seen as light or dark and hopeful or despairing (Prince 49). To create tension in this way, many of his pieces are high contrast. In *The Reader* from 1892, a man sits in a chair reading a book with his face and the tip of the book illuminated with everything else in darkness. This is an unlikely situation, for a man to be reading in the dark, and subtly suggests there is a positive experience in searching for knowledge, with the book and brain being sources of knowledge. In the painting a window is illuminating the light, as if all of this knowledge is a key to the outside world.

To be able to achieve the logic of the visible, part of Redon's process is working directly from life, to the extent that he studied structures at museums and then distorted them (Hobbs 18). Despite this Redon would say, "people are wrong in supposing that I have intentions" and would claim that he would organize as he worked (Hobbs 6). His balance of imagination with realistic study merged through his teacher Corot's advice to "place an unknown next to a known" (Myself 30). Redon implemented this both by getting tighter and looser with paint in specific areas of a given painting, and in his subject matter which often featured "creatures" with human faces in a natural landscape. Although I have been primarily "tight" or "loose" entirely within a given painting, I think incorporating the two styles together with could help achieve more mystery.

The readings on Redon are less straightforward than those on more contemporary artists like Rothenberg; the language Redon uses in his text and quotes within other books is a vague poetry, reminiscent of the dream-like qualities in his artwork itself, and could potentially even be said to stand alone on its own as art. This makes sense because Redon is not only greatly inspired by literary sources and over and over again stresses the

value of reading, but he distinctly emphasizes language in some of his titles and captions, such as “Is there not an invisible world” or “And the searcher was engaged in an infinite search”. He says the point of a title is to be ambiguous enough that it “inspires not defines” (Prince 22). The relevance of all this to my work may seem like a stretch, but because the ideas of language in general as poetic device over expressing the literal, because I often start my process by sketching with words or revisiting novels like *Steppenwolf*, and because I have not yet addressed this aspect of my working process at all, I am choosing to acknowledge this aspect of Redon’s work as an exploration.

While making images of moths attracted to light, I find myself relating to this metaphor of being trapped in very personal ways that do not come through specifically in the work, but do when I journal about it. Redon noted that one should not be concerned with making the art they want to make, but to make art observed of nature and transform it (Myself 18). This idea suggests to me that there is a spiritual intuitiveness about the art a person makes, intuitiveness about finding the balance between the personal and the open ended. After sketching this weekend by spontaneously writing and drawing, adding and subtracting images and words on my wall from confessional to ambiguous, I began to understand that at least in my sketches, my starting place, it is important for me to be slightly more specific than I have been though not entirely confessional. And although I do not think I want actual words in my work past my sketches, I am left to consider what goes on outside my art, such as titling and in my SMP final speech, possibly as a means to the personal. Redon says that titling should “inspire not define,” but I think edging at a more definite idea, whether through titling or conceptually in general, does not have to be limiting and can inspire in itself. Through symbols, the use of black and white, process, and somewhat language, I find the work of Redon from the past relevant to my work today.

Critique Response

“It’s like you want me to have the idea of this, and that you’re just moving through it, and you’re just saying to me ‘**don’t** look at the surface, just understand that I’m interested in this image, or this idea’ because they’re really pushing me out, most of them, with the materiality.” – Sue Johnson

Of all the comments made during the critique, this remark by Sue Johnson resonated with me the most. Although not directly related to the work I’m doing now, a few years back I saw Cao Guo Qiang’s work in the Guggenheim museum, where for the first time I felt a really direct connection with art, an immediacy, like there was no wall between me and Qiang’s art, and I found a profound sense of beauty in that. From Sue’s comment I began to think about my process for developing images and even the aim of my recent sketches seem to be to map out content and composition in a rather dry and also effortless way, rather than experimenting with the material to find the heart of it.

One personal thing that, if being completely honest with myself, I think I need to just “get over” is this feeling of not fully committing to putting my energy and emotion in an image that might not be a “final piece” and instead be a tool to get me there.

The consensus in the critique seemed to be that oils would be a good medium for me to work with. I definitely intend to create images in oil paints as of now to see where

that leads me, and I'm very curious to see what my own impression is of a similar image to my acrylic paintings. I also intend to experiment with incorporating various temperatures of white and black, or other colors added to my paint. As for my edges, given the input that the edge on them makes them look more like a photograph, I think I would like to take my work to the edge of the paper.

Billy and, previously, Ying Li both commented on the energy in the pieces which I seem to be "looser" or "freer" in – both saw this as a positive thing and encouraged me to go in this direction. From my perspective, I like both an overall looseness, but also, as I mentioned, "moments of clarity" where the image gets a little bit more crisp.

Process Assessment

I feel that overall I am investing a lot of time in the studio and my scheduling is working out. I keep track of when I need to come into the studio, but still allow myself a little flexibility so I don't feel stiffened up by it. I do, however, have a tendency to jump around from idea to idea and it sometimes makes me antsy about, as I mentioned above, committing myself to any given piece. My biggest area of improvement probably needs to be the amount of attention to my sketches, and the steps I take from mapping out ideas to creating finished works, although I constantly have the sensation of being pressed for time and it makes it feel difficult to do so adequately.

Intention Statement

I have been primarily painting moths for the idea of their attraction to artificial light. There is a couple theories on that which include that moths naturally navigate by the moon's light, or because they are really searching for the darkest point behind the light to hide in. So metaphorically speaking, I am interested in this idea of being distracted by and caught up in man's creation or being exposed in light. The moth's journey to the light seems rather glorious and magnetic – but ultimately results in harm to them.

When moths make an appearance in my own life and recently my dreams, I am oddly afraid of them because of the haphazard way they flutter about, not with a sense of reason, or the way they lurk in one spot and it is hard to tell if they are dead or alive. I fear these creatures with their sometimes ambiguous shape and camouflage and they represent the unknown to me in this sense. Their nocturnal nature, regardless of their attraction to light, also adds to this sense of the unknown.

The moth is an extremely fragile and tactile creature, I have heard that when touched they nearly dissolve immediately. There are very large numbers of them and yet they are quiet looked over and mundane seeming, despite their beauty, especially in comparison to the much more favored butterfly. I hope to communicate a sense of the moth's lightness and fragility, while also using light as source to add to the elements of fear and desire.

I am finding more and more personal connections between myself and the moth, and the idea of the moth searching for light, however, what I hope carries over to my audience is my emotional and not tangible connection. I hope to achieve images that resonate with immediacy, and to develop a human like empathy for this non-human creature.

Interview Two

1. What does the moth symbolize? Does the moth symbolize you personally, or people in general, or a certain type of person?

The quality of the moth I have been focusing on is its attraction to light, and because the moth is attracted to light either because it is searching for the darkest point behind the light or because it naturally navigates by the moon's light, the moth is symbolic of a person searching for a place of refuge but capable of being distracted or misguided on this journey. The tragedy of the moth's death from the light is possibly a result of innocence or possibly a result of ignorance but either way it is self destructive. The moth, completely compelled toward light, represents our urges in this context. Because of the way the moth lurks and is camouflage, the moth itself can also be a symbol of mystery. Ultimately, the nocturnal moth's place of refuge is darkness, with darkness usually being associated with danger and the unknown; the refuge place of the moth is safe in that it is a place where a "moth can be a moth". The moth symbolizes the part of ourselves we are not always willing to readily show, that is vulnerable if exposed – the fragile, intricate parts of ourselves. Moths flock in groups toward the light and therefore the experience is representative of all people, however, often I paint the moths as individuals, as the moth also correlates to an individual's specific experiences.

Behind the scenes, the moth specifically relates to me in a number of ways that are not necessarily important to me to communicate in the actual work. As a child, I was obsessed with the idea of flying and had some near-injuries in attempts to fly; this is sort of parallel to the metaphor of the moth with "good intentions" seeking the light but getting hurt in the process. I think that the metaphor of the moth in the light relates directly to my preoccupation with carving out a place for myself where "I can just be me" – finding both a physical place I see myself fitting in the world and a state of mind in which I feel comfortable to express myself.

2. How would you define spirituality? What does it mean to be spiritual? Would you call yourself a spiritual person?

I think of spirituality as energy passing through life, which is never created or destroyed. Energy reformats and manifests itself in so many ways, so we are always changing. I think that coming to understand that the world works in complicated parts, cells and systems, that are always changing, but that the parts always make up the same whole of energy, is important. To be spiritual is as simple and as complicated as taking each moment as its' own and realizing that each moment has its own needs unique to any other moment. In this way I am spiritual, and even "spiritually superstitious" in that I am very aware of irony and often take ironic moments to be "signs" or some sort of nudge of

guidance through life. As I mentioned, my work often has to do with feeling misguided on life's journey – I try to figure out what life requires of me on my own journey and what the symbols or “signs” that appear in my own life mean, though I frequently mistake them. When I find myself misguided I think, if I am not getting anywhere in this tangible world, if spirituality starts to look like something other than everything that is around me, I am not applying myself in the best way.

3. You mentioned that Redon uses black and white to create tension, areas of high contrast in his work. Are you using black and white in the same way?

Redon uses black and white in a highly symbolical way, so that light usually correlates with good, hope, and so on, and black with bad, despair, and so on. My work uses white to communicate a sense of light, but the idea of the light is less straightforward as a positive force than in Redon's work because moths die in light. In fact, my works question typical positive and negative associations with light and darkness on the whole – as the typical associations become reversed with this nocturnal insect. To me, it is interesting to play with these notions because it is less straightforward than the way Redon uses black and white. But because my focus is on the differing nature behind dark and light, it does make sense for me to create high contrast between the two. Some of my works have an overall contrast but also include grey scales, while some of the work, such as the large moth reaching toward the light, is more blatantly and harshly contrasted to communicate the idea of the moth being exposed in light.

4. You've mentioned the importance of making sketches, but also said that you want your works to be spontaneous or have instinctual aspects? How do you balance the planned and unplanned in your work?

Dealing with the planned and unplanned is something I frequently think about and deal with not only in my art but in my life. What is interesting is that in my life the times I become most spontaneous (or at least qualitatively and productively spontaneous) is when I have the most routine going on around me. For instance, if I have a lot of free time I am less likely to go outside and free read a book of my choice or go for a drive to no where than if I have so much work to do it overwhelms me, because I need a release from routine. So my sketches operate to give me some overall boundaries that I can get lost within in a final piece. I make the sketches using acrylic paint, so I can work faster and go back over areas more quickly, but ultimately bring back planning to add some oil painting to my finished work to make the images pop. Sketching and spontaneity brings the “soul” of the piece – it is raw and emotional – but finally defining works in a more planned way shows time, effort, and care and really brings the works home.

5. What size work do you want to make? How do you think the size adds to the meaning of the painting?

I have begun making work on a large scale, with my newest paintings approximately five feet six inches tall and five feet high. Each new painting is unified to each other new painting through the paper size among other aspects, but in each painting I use scale a bit differently. In two of the paintings there are a plethora of somewhat small moths which show both abundance (a high number of moths at once), and in other paintings the scale

of the actual moth is larger and blown up to an iconic level. The juxtaposition of the magnified moth to the multiple moths shows the moth as both an individual and collectively. The moth pinned with the dart is only slightly larger than life size, to show it as an individual but fragile in comparison with the large dart and bulls-eye. The bulls-eye is so large that it becomes overwhelming. Overwhelming – that’s how the large size functions overall.

Carrie Patterson Studio Visit

Carrie visited my studio shortly before the final show with advice on hanging the large images up and viewing them as a whole from a distance as I make decisions about trimming the edges and the ordering of the images in a narrative way. She also offered critique on the application of my paint and made suggestions such as adding dirt to my paint to make it thicker, tinting with transparent oil colors such as Indian Yellow, using PVA, and overall including a test strip next to my work as I experiment. The actual application of paint is still my biggest issue.

Because the images for the show are almost in completion, Carrie also helped me brainstorm ways of generating content for the next semester. For instance, she recommended using literature as a source of inspiration similar to how Anselm Kiefer develops whole series of works from literature. During this semester I have frequently used the novel *Steppenwolf* as inspiration of a human yet animal creature, and in the past referenced other poems in my work, so this idea may have some weight to it and is intriguing to me. Carrie also said that much of my work projects religious tones and that this could work to my advantage or disadvantage regarding what meaning I want it to convey. Never the less, she suggested looking up information on the romantic era to figure out why my work channels those associations. Additionally, she recommended artists like Franz Kline and Michelle Rover. The meeting with Carrie helped me further understand painting techniques and gave me a heads up on the upcoming critique and a jumping off point for next semester.

Images of Work



Samantha Nickey, *Refuge*
Acrylic Paint, Oil Paint, November 2011

Appendix

Art Events Artist Talk: Ying Li

Having painted a variety of images from moody self portraits to writing in calligraphy, composing some images in a day and some over years, Ying Li hit a point later in her career where she distinctly “[knew] what [she] did not want to paint,” continuing, “sweet paintings”. Perhaps her desire to not paint sweetly came from her experiences of being born under the stiffening Communist regime in China and even the spark of light and affection she felt for the old masters when she first saw their works in New York City after thirty years of learning about them as a student in school. When Li became a teacher at Haverford College, she then moved in the direction of landscape

painting in a way that often referenced recognizable objects in the environment such as a boat or tree, while also gracefully abstracting the images as a whole so that the images gave off only a loose impression of the place being painted – or a loose impression of them being a landscape in general. Perhaps influenced by Eastern philosophy, Li hopes to create a sense of people merging with their environment as “one”. Ying Li has a fascination with the energy involved through rhythm in her pieces, she hopes the viewer gets the sense that they are excitedly traveling through the landscape, rather than idling viewing it.

There is definitely an energetic aura to the works Li creates, as seen through the bold color choices of bright yellows and reds paired next to darker purples and greens. The energy is mostly seen, however, in the liveliness of the brush strokes themselves, which appear to be rushed (and sometimes actually are) as if to get down the idea before it flees away. Sometimes Li even leaves the canvas bare in an area which creates an even greater sense of being in a specific moment in time. She hopes to leave the paint appearing wet and heavy, so that there is a weight to the air in her pieces, more so than in architecture even. Although her work is impulsive and loose, she still holds on to the ideals of calligraphy and the “Six Principles of Painting” associated with calligraphy in traditional Chinese culture. It is the degree of balance in Ying Li’s works that make them so compelling, they push and pull you from reality into abstraction, and from order into chaos.

Artist Talk: Steele Exhibition

Last Wednesday’s Boyden Gallery talk contrasted the usual lectures and presentations of actual artists conveying the ideas and techniques behind their work, and instead shed light on an art pursuit not frequently discussed with or among college students – collecting art. I found the most interesting aspect of the lecture the part about collecting art because, it was not only a topic I have not put much thought into beforehand that is a big part of the art world, but it was interesting to learn the psychology behind collecting art, because in a small way, even if just online print outs, I collect images that are important to me and especially because I hope that some day someone will want to acquire my work.

The talk started off by a brief announcing of the presence of one of the gallery founders, Ms. Ingersoll, on the occasion of the gallery’s 40-year anniversary, and proceeded with an overview of the gallery itself. Ms. Ingersoll talked about how she and her husband started the gallery as an opportunity for student learning, and they even provided internships. The most intriguing part of Ms. Ingersoll’s speech was when she mentioned that to build her own collection of work, in the past she would let an artist display their work in the gallery in exchange for allowing her to keep one piece of work. This is an extremely clever way to build a collection that seems fun and personal, and also serves all involved.

The talk about the gallery itself lead into the talk by Jean and Robert Steele on their collection of African American printmaking’s from 1750-1950, presently hanging on the gallery walls. Because the artwork was from multiple generations, the exhibit was called Successions, and the title was painted on the wall several times fading out, to look

like an echo of the generations passing through time and to call attention to the step-by-step process in printmaking. The gallery was set up so that it was spaciouly open, and had two insoles along the back wall. Ironically, one of the most talked about pieces that was actually taken off the wall so that audience could see was facing away on the insole, making me wonder if the choices of where to put the pieces were according to size more than content or meaning. This also caused me to wonder who was arranging the pieces on the wall – the Steele’s or the workers in the gallery, or if they collaborated.

The Steele’s hope to challenge stereotypes of African Americans through their collections, and I was pleased to find one way this happened was with a sense of humor. Robert Steele being a Psychology professor brings up the idea that anyone, not just people specifically with careers in art, can collect art. Because he collects art alongside his wife, together their tastes and budgets help inform the decision making. Furthermore, Steele says that money is not the most important element in collecting art, but instead a good eye and good timing are important. Although money may still be somewhat important, Steele speaks of collecting art in a way that is accessible and reasonable.

Artist Talk: Hannah Piper Burns

Hannah Piper Burns’s work was especially interesting to see because of her having been a student at St. Mary’s College; it made the work more relatable and made me question what kind of path I want to take after college. Although film is not my favorite of the art forms, it was intriguing to see how she developed her ideas of narrative through them – especially because the footage she used was appropriated and collaged together, instead of running straight through in a traditionally narrative sequence. She seemed to accomplish the sense of narrative through the medium of dance over direct story telling. I have seen clips of the Wizard of Oz linked up with music before and questioned if it was a coincidence and how that worked, and Hannah Piper Burns began to dissect the idea that there are only so many mathematical musical arrangements, so it’s not so hard to find ones that fit. She also seemed to have an intuitive sense about which music fits with which appropriated piece of dance.

Overall, I was less captivated by the short films of other’s she showed than the WAR film about women in art. The film got varying reactions out of me at different points. On one hand, seeing things like people on the street not being able to name 3 women artists was quite awakening and made me really empathize with the movie’s cause. Also, in general I think the movie had a nice “spirit” to it. On the other hand, I have always felt like artwork such as Caroline Scheenman’s Scroll Piece to be a bit over-the-top in a way that is more concerned with shock value than anything else. Overall though, I found the film to be pretty factual and eye opening.

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Anselm Kiefer: The Seven Heavenly Palaces

Anselm Kiefer: The Seven Heavenly Palaces 1973-2001. N.p.: Hatje Cantz Publishers, n.d. Print.

This book divides Kiefer's works into five categories by year and description: Attic Paintings 1973, Stone Halls 1983, Archaic Architectures 1997, Cosmos and Star Paintings 1995-2001, and Seven Heavenly Palaces: Gouaches 2001. The book aims to see his early paintings referencing the Holocaust in the larger context of his paintings on the whole. In a narrative and descriptive voice, Kiefer is described as an idiosyncratic poet moved by natural forces, such as snow and water, and interested in human behavior, such as the hypocrisy of people when it comes to killing and war.

Bill Viola: The Passions, John Walsh

John, Walsh, ed. *Bill Viola: The Passions*. London: The National Gallery, 2003. Print

Although video cannot be shown in this context, there are quality pictures in this book laid out alongside text, and a great variety of formats and first and second hand sources are given in this book. There are essays by others, interviews with Viola, and even a personal look into Viola's sketch books. The essays give good accounts of Viola's relationship with the theme of spirituality, describing some of his work as "psychological based [and] spiritually suffocated". There are specific studies on how the human form communicates different forms of expression, which I find particularly intriguing as I am becoming more interested in the idea of the human. Also, Viola talks a lot about "art into life" which I find relatable and would be interested in reading further into to see how he directly communicates this into his work.

Fire on the Earth, John C. Gilmour

Gilmour, John C. *Fire on the Earth*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990. Print.

This book on Anselm Kiefer is primarily academic text and discusses Kiefer's position in the Post Modern world. Although this book is a bit theoretical to dig into, I am particularly interested in Chapter Six: Cosmological and Mythical Narratives which touches on several concepts directly related to my moth paintings such as the negative effects of human desires. More generally, this book discusses Kiefer's materiality in his works in relation to his supposed "primitive" outlook.

Kathe Kollwitz, Elizabeth Prelinger

Prelinger, Elizabeth, Alessandra Comini, and Hildegard Bachert. *Kathe Kollwitz*. Ed. Jane Sweeney. Washington: National Gallery of Art, 1992. Print.

Portraying Kollwitz's art as universally loved and appreciated, this book concentrates on the poetic nature of her work, describing it as "unsentimental but sympathetic" and a sort of "chronicling... [not] illustration". Ever since Ying Li pushed me to explore the poetic nature behind my work, this has become my priority. Kathe Kollwitz not only achieves this but does so while dealing with some of the same specific concerns as myself. Kollwitz works primarily in black and white, but as the book describes, once she started working with a subtle amount of color her feelings about her black and white lithograph process were never the same again, as she felt the color brought her work to a new level. Her use of color intrigues me because it is minimal, and does not scream at the

audience. Kollowitz also deals with being sometimes loose and sometimes tight in the handling of her work – another concern I can presently relate to. It seems there is a time and a place for both for her, and I hope to further study the way she implements both to get a handle on these ideas for myself. The book also goes into extensive detail on the 5 steps of Kollowitz process and her background in relation to other artists during the time of the war. Of all of the artists I am looking at, Kollwitz currently seems to be most directly related to what I am doing.

Kathe Kollwitz, Otto Nagel

Nagel, Otto. *Kathe Kollwitz*. Greenwich: New York Graphic Society Ltd., 1971. Print.

Taking a narrative approach, this book describes Kollowitz life in a novel-like way, full of sensory imagery and a sense of the character of Kollowitz. It describes Kollowitz's life and aims without having to search for themes in her art, but that her art naturally emerged as a product of her environment in the time she lived – relating to the influence of war. There is a short blurb in the text regarding Kollowitz use of light to suggest significance of certain aspects of her work, which is relevant to my interests. However, one aspect of this book makes it difficult to navigate; it is not divided up into chapters or subtitles to make finding specific information easier. For this reason, this book mainly serves to inform a general impression of who Kollowitz was as a person and her goals as an artist, but for specifically desired information I may have to look elsewhere.

Kathe Kollwitz: Life in Art, Mina C. Klein

Klein, Mina C., and H. Arthur Klein. *Kathe Kollwitz: Life in Art*. N.p.: Schocken Books, 1975. Print.

Taking a chronological approach, Kollwitz's art is explored through her life as divided by her childhood, marriage, and significant moments of war. This book depicts Kollowitz as a socialist who was engaged in her time politically through her art. I find this reading interesting because her work is highly empathetic and a raw display of human emotion, and her life is that of an average housewife, so it seems her work should be unbiased while really her strong opinions become evident. Kollwitz's work is also relevant to mine through my original desire to paint people as this is the subject matter of her work.

Kathe Kollwitz: Works in Color, Tom Fecht

Fecht, Tom. *Kathe Kollwitz: Works in Color*. Trans. A. S. Wensinger and R. H. Wood. New York: Schocken Books, 1988. Print.

This book looks at Kollwitz's lesser known works in color. While this may seem contradictory to my black and white works, the subtle way in which Kollwitz uses color is intriguing and is informative on how to derive a sense of temperature in black and white works. Though the book primarily consists of images, the lengthy introduction additionally comments on Kollwitz in the context of her growing up during times of war, matching specific pieces with specific turning points in her life's history.

Olidon Redon, Richard Hobbs

Hobbs, Richard. *Olidon Redon*. Boston: New York Graphic Society, 1977. Print.

Although a decent history is given of Redon's link to Romanticism, my true interest in within this book is the section on symbolism. Even so, I was disappointed that overall the section explained symbolisms from the perspectives of the French and Belgian and described more its relationship to history than Redon's specific imagery itself. Nevertheless, the book described Redon's symbolism as "macabre fantasy and hallucinatory states" which is less subtle than the kind of symbolism I want to pursue. The descriptions of individual symbols, such as a rock with human features representing an idol, are of use in that they elaborate on how the image itself feeds the meaning behind it. This portion of the book becomes particularly intriguing in its portrayal of Redon as so scandalous but also revered in his time.

Shahzia Sikander: Irish Museum of Modern Art, Sean Kissane

Kissane, Sean, ed. *Shahzia Sikander*. New York: Irish Museum of Modern Art, 2007. Print.

This book gives relevant background information on Sikander, such as her studies of miniature painting and how this relates to the tradition of miniature painting in the East. Then the book delves into the concept of language quite thoroughly; it mentions Sikander's use of visual language to form a narrative, and describes the inadequacy of language to describe her painting style. Scale and the technique of layering are noted as important in her work. This part of the book is particularly of use because it is her technique I wish to emulate; the contradiction of tight imagery with loose imagery, and the layering to inform the narrative. The book also mentions the concept of looking "into" not "at" her paintings, which suggests a sort of autobiography in her work that I also wish to pursue. Overall, the book is a great source for images and a good source for exploring particular aspects of her work, but it may be useful to have other sources on the artist for information related to the meaning of Sikander's work.

Susan Rothenberg, Joan Simon

Simon, Joan. *Susan Rothenberg*. Ed. Harriet Whelchel. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1991. Print.

Simon's writing first explores the horse as an important symbol to Rothenberg's work, describing it as primitive with a sense of immediacy and describing the significance of its repetition. Rothenberg is portrayed as an individual who dropped out of school, thinks outside the box, and aims to paint things "exactly the way they can't be," meaning psychologically altering one's perception of, for instance, the horses she paints. The book informatively talks extensively about her technique of using "x"'s to make images flat, mediums used to add warm and cool undertones, and the use of oil and acrylic paint to alter the visuals of a piece.

Susan Rothenberg, Michael Auping

Auping, Michael. *Susan Rothenberg*. Ed. Karen Lee Spaulding. New York: The Buffalo Fine Arts Academy, 1992. Print.

The intuitive nature of Rothenberg is largely emphasized in Auping's book, as he describes her as a figure that "has always retained a feeling of wonder at the magical power of paint, generating images spontaneously, virtually independent of her own intentions". He goes on to say that Rothenberg creates an atmosphere of "accidents waiting to happen" and discusses drawing as a sort of dialogue she has with herself. The book is also useful because it describes Rothenberg's process of literally adding and subtracting to images to build compositions for later pieces, something I have started doing in my recent sketches to generate ideas.

To Myself, Olidon Redon

Redon, Olidon. *To Myself*. New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1986. Print.

The format of this book is actually letters written by Redon to himself. This is useful in that it is a first hand source, however it is mostly Redon's personal philosophy and feelings on the idea of art, rather than elaborations on specific images. On the whole I find this book compelling to read because of its autobiographical nature; Redon portrays himself as a sort of "suffering artist" and speaks of the artist as experiencing much pain. He zooms in on his feelings about pertinent other artists of his time as well.

Future Reading List

Berry, Ian, and Jessica Hough. *Shahzia Sikander: Nemesis*. N.p.: Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery, 2005. Print.

Bleckner, Ross. *Ross Bleckner: Watercolor*. N.p.: Arena Editions, 1988. Print.

Dennison, Lisa, Thomas Crow, and Simon Watney. *Ross Bleckner*. New York: Guggenheim Museum, 1995. Print.

Stomberg, John. *A Theater of Recollection: Paintings and Prints by John Walker*. Boston: Boston University Art Gallery, 1999. Print.

Storr, Robert, and Gerhard Richter. *Gerhard Richter: Forty Years Of Painting*. New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2002. Print.