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Preconciousness

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Preconsciousness

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Conceptual Statement

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... Explores the topographical model of the mind through the deconstruction of accepted realities. Blurring the boundaries of consciousness and unconsciousness. Embracing and accepting the abstract view of the mind as "realms" independent of each other. Surreal, yet familiar spaces and environments become a gateway to the preconscious and a deeper awareness.

These unique spaces become a catalyst for a physiological journey to the unconscious. Complex views and interpretations of oneself and ones experiences come to the surface. Engaging memories and emotions such as anxiety ... joy… tranquility………manifesting as physical space as spaces become representations of unconscious.

Minds are freed to step back into a dreamlike state as emotions and memories come to life and transcend logical thinking. Unique experiences are immersed as the conscious becomes free to journey to the 'in-between' and the journey becomes one into oneself.

Introduction/Background

Photography and the visual arts have always been of an interest to me. I remember examining photographs from great photographers growing up and just being emotionally moved and in awe from certain works. I became amazed that a single image could create so much emotion and thought, and in many cases tell an entire story through one image. How could this be? I wanted to know how an image can affect me so greatly. Be it just the wonder of a visually beautiful work or the emotional connection that one can feel. I would say that that one internal question really sparked my true fascination and the pursuit to understand the visual arts. I have always been a very visual person and tend to express myself that way as well and the idea of reaching out to people and talking to them through imagery would become a pursuit of passion.

From my earliest memories I knew I saw the world different. Visuals became the most important thing that always stood out to me. Everything else seemingly took a back seat. I was a very curious child. I was the child you would see continually looking around and examining everything. Growing up in the south Suburbs of Chicago, I gravitated too and was continually fascinated by art and imagery. At the time of course not really understanding why but I wanted to draw everything around me. I wanted create the world that I saw. I began to become engulfed and aware of my environment and surroundings creating compositions on paper of the world around me. A pad of paper and a pencil seemed to never leave my side which became my outlet of expression. It became

a part of me. Light, shadow, and detail became very important as I would spend hours on certain parts until I felt it was right and too this day that quality still resides inside me. I didn't have access to other forms of artistic media at that time. Drawing was really my only creative outlet in the fine arts sense when I was a child. Aside from my Uncle who studied painting as well as teaching at Columbia College in Chicago for a brief stint in the 60's, my family was never as interested in the arts as I was. As a child I don't really remember anything specifically art related coming up besides the occasional trip to a museum. I didn't have artists in my family around to look up to (as my uncle lived in Texas) or take inspiration from during my developing years. However, my talents were always praised and my interests always encouraged. I still remember seeing my drawings over my parents and grandparents refrigerators and the feeling of accomplishment and pride. I can still hear my parents and grandparents saying "Did you draw that? This is so wonderful". I know I was just a kid, but something about that stuck with me and drove my passion to create more. Now I felt the creative drive not only from myself within but also in part to feel that sense of praise and accomplishment again.

As I grew older, continuing the passion and pursuit of the visual arts slowed down a little in my adolescent and teen years. Social norms and peer pressures became the primary focus, as not too many of my friends were into the arts. Sports and social gatherings took precedent over artistic pursuits. Drawing, as was my primary artistic outlet, became a once and a while thing as compared to an obsession. Photography at this time was still not part of my life besides the occasional point and shoot camera being used on vacation or at a party.

Although, this was the time when I started to really look into and study different artists and broaden my outlook in different mediums. I didn't look at photography yet as an artistic medium that would work well with me and my visions. It felt to me as if it didn't have the same freedom that drawing brought to the table. Photography at this time felt limited in its creativity but my interest in the field began to grow significantly.

After graduating high school I attended a community college. Going in, my primary focus was to figure out what it was I wanted to do for the rest of my life. That became a scary phrase for me: "The rest of my life". Others around me seemed to know exactly what they wanted to do and went right into it. I never understood that looking back on that time. We were all so young and making decisions so freely that could affect us so greatly. So my education took the route of a wonderer and I began to take different classes in different fields to really figure out where I fit in. At the same time, I knew that I had a love of the arts and wanted to incorporate that somehow into my future....I just didn't know how.

I was about 20 at the time and I enrolled in my first legitimate photography/computer art class. I can say that this is the moment when I realized and discovered what the photographic medium meant to me. This was during the time of what I refer to as the 'digital boom' and all this new technology and software was coming on the market becoming more main-stream. This is when I truly discovered my love of the hybrid of art and technology. Discovering Photoshop and all the designer software and unique possibilities that can be achieved through computer art and digital imaging.

These digital programs allowed me to fully tap into my abilities and express my creative ideas as I saw them as an artist. Before my visions were limited to paper and pencil and my drawing talents. At the same time, I began to fall in love with not only contemporary photography and methods but also traditional as well. This class was the start of a renaissance of my love for the visual arts which was long needed.

As mentioned before, my unique perception of the world and my surroundings began to come to life through this new medium. Learning everything that I could both technically and conceptually. I continued to sign up for more art/photography classes and I knew now the direction which life was taking me…the direction of photography and the graphic arts. I became enthralled with all the designer software available to me now. I quickly became proficient in a verity of photographic/designer programs and continued to push myself to learn everything that I could. This drive would continue to higher education as I then enrolled at Governors State University in the art/photography program as an undergrad. This was about the time when my concentration would shift to include developing my artistic outlook and philosophy. Broadening my take on art and studying numerous photographers and their styles, philosophies, and methodologies. My own identity as an artist was beginning to take shape as well. The important word to take from that is 'beginning'. I say that because right at the time I graduated with a Bachelors of Arts in 2007, an event happened that not only shaped myself as a person but also the way is saw the world as an artist.

I know its cliché to say, but the events in our lives make us who we are. I am a firm believer in this philosophy and I'm no stranger to it as well. My views as an artist, as many peoples are, is continually developing and changing. Event after event and experience after experience shapes and shifts my photographic eye and artistic thoughts continually. Well, no event shaped me as much as the one in November of 2007. That is the day I received the news that a very close friend of mine, someone I knew my entire life and who I considered a brother to me, committed suicide. A day that I can say with complete confidence changed my life forever. I have no blood siblings so I always viewed my close friends as family, as brothers and no one closer to me than him. I will never forget, it was a Friday morning on November 30th 2007 when I woke up to a phone call at around 9 in the morning telling me that he has committed suicide. I remember having no initial reaction to the news. It was just too unbelievable to believe. It actually took some time for the news to really kick in but when it did, my life felt like it was flipped upside down. I fell into a pretty deep depression for a while and my goals and aspirations just didn't seem to matter that much anymore. My passion for photography, art, and design seemingly disappeared. I was in a dark tunnel with the light at the end of it so far in the distance it seemed forever out of reach. Eventually, that light started to grow brighter and brighter with every passing day. One day, and the exact day is unclear, I woke up and started to look at life differently. I already viewed life differently after the tragedy, but this time, the view was positive. Starting to look up. The sky started to look blue and the grass green again. This event started a transformation of who I am today as an artist and a person.

During this time, I was working as a freelance photographer, designer, and web designer/developer. I was happy in what I was doing in my field but I came out of this tragedy wanting more out of life. What that meant to me at the time I wasn't sure of but really wanting to make everyday a day that mattered and was meaningful. My passion for photography came completely back, although it was never really gone, just covered by a dark blanket. A few years after the tragedy, I decided to slow down with the freelance work/clients and return to Governors State University to pursue my MFA degree. While continuing to freelance as well as working as a graduate/teaching assistant, my work continued to evolve through my studies as well as under the guidance of the Governors State Faculty.

My artistic philosophy emerged as one that cannot be defined…and that's the way I like it. At least at this moment. I continue to never stop developing my visual craft and I feel that if I was to label myself that I would miss out on just who I am as a photographer and what I want to strive to become. Every day new events and experiences, as I said earlier, shift and alter my artistic inspiration and outlook and I never know what tomorrow holds.

Preconsciousness

Exploring the deep intricacies of the human unconscious and my continued interest and fascination with the human mind has led me to create my most recent body of work titled "Preconsciousness."

Preconscious *: Thoughts which are unconscious at the particular moment in question, but which are not repressed and are therefore available for recall and easily capable of becoming conscious.*(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Preconscious).

The term Preconscious comes from the Freudian school of thought relating to the conscious mind and the unconscious mind in a topographical model. The preconscious refers to the state of emotions and memories that are not consciously active as well as not repressed into ones unconscious. It's able to be recalled at any time as is not repressed. (Smith, 23).

Although the absolute idea of the mind having these primarily separations responsible for unique functions of thought and areas dictating certain functions of human interaction and perception has been debated for a number of years from various philosophers and psychoanalysts such as Franz Brentano and Jean-Paul Sartre, I have come to personally identify with the topographical model introduced by Sigmund Freud as related to this photographic series. His primary idea is that the mind is divided into the conscious, preconscious, and the unconscious. All responsible for different

functions related to the mind. The intricacy of this is much deeper than that through the research of Freud, however the main idea behind it is that the conscious is responsible for processing, relating, and being aware of our physical world and surroundings. The senses taking in information and processing in the majority in the conscious and is generally abolished when we sleep. Preconscious having the state of mind as previously mentioned earlier and the unconscious, simply put, include repressed memories, feelings, emotions, phobias, and desires. (Archard, 12).

Through my continued research on this topic, one quote stuck out to me and began to push my vision for this series in a more abstract direction. A quote from "Conscious and the Unconscious" stated: *"The topographical hypothesis conceives the unconscious and consciousness as 2 places or sites in the mind."*(Archard, 88). Two places?...This began to make me think more abstractly of the idea of the mind as 2 separate realms independent of each other. Instead of thinking of the mind as one thing that is separated by different functions, I began seeing it as 2 unique 'universes' independent of one another. This also began a more in depth philosophical direction as I began to identify more with the writings of the philosopher Gaston Bachelard as he acquainted the idea of physical spaces to areas of the mind in the writings of "The Poetics of Space."

"The Poetics of Space" became a very influential resource in further developing my ideas and imagery. Bachelard's writings and ideas of spaces were able to force my mind to reach deep into my own thoughts and understanding of unconsciousness as well as altered the way I began to perceive the world and my

own environment. The ideas behind space and the correlation of the mind that he addresses continually throughout the book became an alternate view on more than just examining the topographical model of the mind in a psychoanalyst fashion like Freud. The combination of these two is what pushed the photographic series in its final direction.

The term "preconsciousness" itself I refer it to as the 'act' of existing in the preconscious. A state of mind that is theoretically unattainable. My work attempts to push the viewer to identifying and being self-aware of the transition of self to that state of mind. Existing in an 'in-between' state and that we are able to unconsciously journey back and forth through surreal imagery and visual spaces. Bachelard's writings and ideas go beyond the physical analysis and are very similar to the ideas behind my photographic series.

Bachelard dives deep into the examination of the surroundings and spaces we live in. A connection that I saw and felt was between his examinations of the house structure and the levels of a vertical home. The key is to separate the personal images of what a house is and to view it beyond just as an object that is described. Even though a majority of my pieces don't deal with an actual physical 'home' or enclosed 'space'. The connection comes when Bachelard takes a more psychological examination of the house. A simple quote:

"…the unconscious is housed." (Stilgoe, 10).

This stood out to me as the examination of the mind and its layers. Just like a home has layers, so does the mind and unconscious.

A piece that I feel extends nicely to this analysis is my piece with the lake inside the abandoned room and lights rising from it (see Untitled 11 in appendix

of works). A metaphor for the levels of the house can be seen in conjunction with other symbolic imagery. The lake is a dark and cloudy place that a few objects are barely visible through the mist. In contrast, the top of the image, which is brighter, the viewer is able to see the stars and more of the room. Moving vertical through the image gives a viewer a gradual feeling from unconscious to conscious or vice versa. Looking, in a way, into unconscious manifested. Even though there is no concrete, tangible borders (not looking at the room walls or windows), the contrast of the light and dark that the lights bring add to the unconscious journey and relation to the space. This idea is incorporated in numerous pieces in the series where there are light to dark or dark to light areas.

The stairway is another analyzed space by Bachelard in the chapter *House and Universe*. Identifying it as a neutral part of the home with the ability for feelings and memories to travel vertical up or down. This analysis inspired the piece with the subject sitting on the stairs (see Untitled 12 in appendix of works). Creating the piece to visually represent the stairs perspective to travel downward and upward in the image. Seeing the subject sitting on the staircase as the piece offers a choice of upward and/or downward movement. (Stilgoe, 38). This surreal perspective helps invite the viewer to make a choice as the subject. It is important that in my series that the viewer is able to move from conscious thought to unconscious thought within the pieces and feel the intimate spaces and environments.

The chapter, *Corners*, sparked ideas of how the corners of our mind can correlate with the spaces we live in. All of my works don't have physical corners

in them but I still draw from the philosophical ideas that a corner can represent. Bachelard examines how every house and space has corners, which can be looked at as sort of a half box. You can become stuck there or free there. You can be at peace there or tormented there. Psychologically examining the introvert and the extrovert. My series relies heavily on the concept of borders, be they physical or psychological. Outside and inside, up and down, etc. A point that is bridging the gap between one and another. Door elements, among others such as windows, become a part of some of the works in the series. These additions were inspired by the readings in the chapter *the dialectics of outside and inside.* Doors themselves inspire the imagination and daydreaming.

"But how many daydreams we should have to analyze under the simple heading of doors! For the door is the entire cosmos of the half-open." (Stilgoe, 222).

A quote that intellectually inspired me to now think of doors as an entity in itself as well as an idea of transition. A door can be closed, open, or ajar, or open into a different state of understanding and solitude. Half open and half closed at the same time. The way it is viewed is a psychological look into the psyche of the mind of the individual. The door also represents a metaphorical in and out point as Bachelard goes on to discuss. That is how I primarily view the doors and windows in my pieces.

"For our home is our corner of the world. As has often been said, it is our first universe, a real cosmos in every sense of the word." (Stilgoe, 4).

A 'universe' is a subjective word in my opinion. We use 'universe' primarily when referring to the cosmos, when really it changes based on your own perspective and reality. Just as the quote says, our home really is our first universe as that is

all we know. That extends to other aspects as well. For example, for a fish that lives in the ocean, the ocean is its entire universe. The fish will have all of its experiences in its universe and have no greater thought about what man's universe will bring as well as never experience. In developing my concept further, I decided to visually represent this idea with contrasting elements in our physical world. I viewed water and air (or clouds) as such with the intention of metaphorically representing them as two unique universes. Visually representing the two areas of the mind…conscious and unconscious. This idea is seen all over this photographic series and became a major idea in my works. The contrasty nature of them also helps reiterate the notion of mental borders. This idea of subjective universes is very apparent in this piece (see Untitled 5 in appendix of works). Two worlds coming together and at the same time still the two universes are separate. Slightly interacting with each other, intertwining, and the subject in the center of the two bridging the borders of the two universes.

As for the style of this photographic series, I knew to achieve the idea that I have conceptualized, I knew that the only way I could visually portray this abstract idea/notion was that through the style of surrealism.

"Surrealism is destructive, but it destroys only what it considers to be shackles limiting our vision."(http://thinkexist.com/quotation/surrealism-is-destructive-but-it-destroys-only/403045.html).

This quote by the master painter Salvador Dali really speaks to the idea of surrealism itself as well as my body of work. It's a quote that increased my fascination in this artistic style. Surrealism by definition is: *"A movement in art and*

literature in the 1920's, which developed esp from dada, characterized by the evocative juxtaposition of incongruous images in order to include unconscious and dream elements." (http://www.thefreedictionary.com/surrealism). In other terms, it's really an art form of the unconscious.

The works of surrealism became a big influence on my own development in my photographic series. Dali, one of the original members of the surrealist group alongside Andre Breton, the founder, pioneered the art form and began to reshape the artistic world. As was expected, the bizarre use of subjects, the deformation of reality, and along with sometimes shocking symbolic imagery…this art form would not be accepted right away. (Matthews, 9).

The symbolic nature of the elements in the works of Dali act in a way to send specific messages to the viewer. In his paintings, he doesn't care about the realistic look of our reality. Not to say that he didn't paint 'realistically' but rather the composing of subjects didn't make the eye say "that's real". He doesn't try to trick the viewer into thinking this could be actually happening. A lot of his works involve the use of numerous subjects occupying the space in very random ways. For example, his piece titled "The Apotheosis of Homer" depicts a landscape with numerous symbolic imagery all over the piece, seemingly to include as much information as possible. There is so much going on, that to me; it becomes more of a "blast to the face" of symbolism. The focus becomes more on the symbolic nature of the elements and what each one means in the works themselves. I refer to this style of surrealism as more traditional or rather abstract surrealism. (Neret, 63-65).

This is when my symbiosis with the style takes a turn. In my work, I don't use symbols to send exact messages. My imagery includes the use of symbolism, however without the exact specificity attached to them. Each element may be repeated through an entire series and not have the same meaning in each or retain their original more ambiguous meaning. Also, I try to always incorporate elements into my pieces to look photographic so the realism of the work is not immediately dismissed. The realistic aspect with the use of surrealism I feel engages the viewer in different unconscious ways. So in contrast, I look at this style as photographic surrealism. Which is the style the body of work 'Preconsciousness' is in. However you want to approach it, the way this art form affects the viewer is what's important. Accessing areas of the mind and thought processes to achieve something that is otherwise not there… Creating a pathway to the unconscious and a deeper awareness.

Technique/Workflow

A lot of the visual appeal of my work not only comes from the work itself but also in the techniques applied. The technique I used for this series, as well as for the majority of my work, is photomontage. Often times photomontage is confused with or used interchangeably with photocollage, which would be incorrect as they are inherently different. They are two different techniques, and actually photocollage is viewed as less of a photographic process. The word "collage" is a French word that means "gluing". So the act of pasting objects and materials together is collage. Photocollage then refers to the act of cutting up photographic prints to then reassemble another piece. The main thing to remember is that they are cut *after* the photographic process has already happened. There is no photographic means to the final piece. Also with this style, the use of various mediums can be implemented with the photography sense there is no photographic process at the conclusion. Even more so, if you were to take a photograph then of the final piece and print it, it still generally has seams that are more visible and not able to challenge the eye to represent a true photograph. (Coleman, viii).

Now with photomontage, the term "montage" is French for "assembling" or "putting together". *"Strictly speaking, photomontage is the superimposition of one image on another; this can be achieved in such a way that both are simultaneously present and visible – that is, they show through each other – or so that the added*

images appear integral to the depicted scene."(Coleman, viii). This can be achieved in a number of ways including multiple exposures or darkroom techniques (when referring to traditional methods) or the manipulation of digital files. Unlike collage, the montage technique implores the photographic process *before* and *after* to produce the final work. Outputted with photographic means and an important aspect of this technique is that when the image is first viewed, it appears seamless like un-manipulated imagery. (Coleman, ix). In my work, I use this technique with digital files to create seamless imagery. Instead of using multiple negatives and using darkroom methods, I use numerous images and create them into layers using digital imaging software. Either way you chose, it's considered photomontage.

The photomontage technique became a big part of the creation of my works. So it became obvious that the photographer Jerry Uelsmann was to become a huge inspiration on my development. Uelsmann is a pioneer of the surrealistic photographic art form. His work began to start gaining attention in the 1960's, however not good attention as there was controversy over the images. Even so, his powerful imagery stood the test of time and his works are now in numerous museums including the Art Institute of Chicago, and the Museum of Modern Art in New York, as well as part of numerous permanent collections around the world. (Coleman, vii).

Over the years, Uelsmann had mastered the art of his medium. Mastering the manipulation of negatives with darkroom techniques to create beautiful and mysterious photographic works. Studying Uelsmann has led my mind and

developed my work to analyze each piece visually and psychologically. The way he uses the placement of imagery in his compositions as to suggest a new reality. Contrasting from Uelsmann, my work also relies on the usage of color to drive meaning as Uelsmann works in contrasty black and white photography. A quote from an author referring to Uelsmann: *"I do not believe he could ever satisfy himself with what is termed straight photography, because for him straight photography is not the resolution of the vision, but the beginning of a process."*(Bunnell, 5). I view my photography this way as well when it comes to certain works. Always pre-visualizing compositions. Uelsmann would use old images from negatives taken years in the past and reuse them to create a new image. (Bunnell, 6). I have been known to do this myself except for this body of work, Preconsciousness, as just about all the photography was taken at the moment of creation.

Gregory Crewdson also became a major influence in the way I identified with his methodology and pre-process for creating his imagery. In my work, as well as Crewdson's, I place a large emphasis on pre planning and the pre-production stages of the pieces. It seem weird to say 'pre-production' when related to photography as that is a more common term in referring to cinema, however, very accurate in how I approach the creative process. Crewdson was very influenced by movies and his work reflects that. He puts an enormous amount of time and effort into the concept, composition, and lighting before any images are ever taken. (Berg, 11). He creates huge and elaborate sets (like a movie studio) by hand with the help of an entire crew and the lighting is meticulously placed as every light in the composition is purposeful and directed.

Even he has said that he sometimes feels more like a director than a photographer. (Berg, 11). This is very much the way I go about creating my own work (not to that scale of course as I don't have a crew). The works are always planned and thought out from where the subject will be in the composition to the lighting of the scene. It mirrors Crewdson's methodology with the exception that Crewdson incorporates elements, subjects, etc. into the entire scene for one photo at one time, whereas I often shoot locations, elements, and subjects at different times that are then composited together later, much like the previously mentioned Jerry Uelsmann.

Color is another aspect that draws me to Crewdson's work as well as relating to it in my own work. His choice of colors, in a way, acts as a separate subject in each piece. The way the subtle tones of color travel through each piece really add a surrealistic quality. The color is not to overpowering as the little there is goes a long way. This is especially noticeable in his series "Twilight" (1998 – 2002). This is my favorite series to date and I relate to the subject matter and style of the works. Crewdson uses color in a subtle way as I do with the overall desaturation and darkness of the images. The color also really brings out the moods and tones of the environments, which are important in telling the story. My work attempts to achieve the same visual style through desaturation, surrealistic color, and key placement of specific color with some similar success.

The workflow process from start to finish I do for the majority of my works goes through a step by step process that involves photography with digital manipulation. After the initial concept of the series, the first thing I always do is

begin to sketch ideas to paper. Brainstorming is an important way to get the initial creative ideas into a physical form. When dealing with elaborate pieces, it always helps to see the compositions on paper before photographing the subjects actual begins. Drawing allows me to create and change compositions easier and faster which saves time in the long run. This step also helps when inspiration hits and creating your vision right away helps to evolve the concept later. For this photographic series I shot all digital. I am not opposed to shooting film, in fact, I shoot both formats and I actually prefer the fine art quality that black and white medium and large format films provide over digital. There is still a tangible feeling to film has that can't be replicated digitally…as of yet. As I knew that I was going to be shooting color for this series, I decided to go the route of digital photography. With approaching each piece it became very important to keep the lighting and perspective the same as the space. For the majority of the pieces, the subject, as well as many of the elements, had to be shot at different times and different locations. The physical environments and spaces were all shot using natural lighting (excluding the desert landscape as that was created by hand in a studio) while everything else was illuminated using artificial lighting in a studio environment. The lighting equipment used was a range of light modifiers including, soft boxes, reflectors, shoot through umbrellas, and snoots. As I just previously mentioned, getting the perspective right as well as the quality and direction of light became the major challenge. Sketching out lighting setups for each shoot to help remember the lighting angles of the day as well as acting as a visual aid for myself when working in the studio. Working like this, you will be glad you took the time to do so.

All of my imagery is shot and captured in the RAW file format. Doing so ensures that I don't lose information from file compression and that the color depth is as rich as it can possibly be provided by the appropriate color profile attached. RAW is what's known as a 'lossless' file format and is looked at as a digital negative. When it comes time to work on a final piece, the digital manipulation software that I primarily use is Adobe Photoshop. Photoshop is the industry standard and leader in digital imaging software today. Inside the program, the various images are imported and the main steps of extraction begin. Extracting refers to removing the photographic elements you want to remove and compositing them into another composition. My preferred method involves the pen tool to provide precision control of curved sections and the use of a graphic tablet for the detailed areas that requires more finesse as pressure sensitivity. Areas such as hair, trees, or grass. Integrating these elements into the composition seamlessly is the next step. Using layers to control and organize the elements as well as applying adjustment layers to certain parts using levels and curves to adjust the tonality. Then saturating or desaturating parts of the image as well as the use of layer masks to further refine areas. After the final composite has been created, global adjustments such as color correction, saturation, dynamic range tone correction, textures, and sharpening are then applied to the entire image. Cropping (if necessary) and resizing come last before outputting. When printing large (as I did for his series) it is important to resize using Photoshop's resampling feature. If not, the given pixels will become stretched and the image will lose quality and look pixelated. Resampling uses Photoshop's software to interpolate the information and add pixels were needed when

enlarging. All of my final images are then saved in a lossless file format such as PSD or TIFF and are ready for output through giclee or c-print style prints.

It's interesting to notice more and more articles and discussions coming up on the art of photography with the advancement of technology. Recent years have asked the question more: When is photography not photography? This debate would not have been realistically debated 100, or even 50, years ago. The speed in which technology is advancing in this artistic medium and the capabilities we have now are astounding. This is a debate that I continually follow as I generally use a good amount of photo manipulation and post processing techniques to my works. I look at myself as a photographer and I consider my work photography. However, there seems to be two major schools of thought on this topic. The purist, or straight, view which looks at any photography as the capture of a single image at a single moment. Viewing any and all adjustments after the fact as changing the idea itself of photography as its going against the intent of 'realism'. (Barrett, 53) The other view being pictorialist, or manipulated, which I feel is said best by C. Jabez Hughes:

"If a picture cannot be produced by one negative, let him have two or ten; but. . .the picture when finished must stand or fall entirely by the effects produced and not the means employed." (Barrett, 53).

Is there a right and a wrong in with these views? It's hard to say conclusively. Looking at these viewpoints from an outside perspective, I can relate to both sides. Even I look at some 'photographic' works in recent years and struggle to place it into a category of photography.

My works and thought on the topic are in favor of the pictorialist viewpoint. Photography was primarily originally used and thought of as a way of documentation of a point in time. More so looked at as a tool or a way to achieve detailed, realistic information of a person, place, or thing. But as time went on, the creative capabilities of the medium began to take notice and began to get the recognition of an artistic medium. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Photography). And as early as 1917, the ideas of photo realism was beginning to be explored. The Cottingley Fairies is a famous instance in which two young girls captured images with themselves interacting with fairies. Of course they are not real, however, at the time it sparked great debate over the authenticity… while others took it as clear proof of their existence.

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cottingley_Fairies).

Now photography has become more than just a piece of our real world. It has become an avenue for creativity and we need now to view each piece with an open mind, and eye. Many other photographers, namely Jerry Uelsmann, explore the medium beyond its original intentions which gave way to entirely new avenues of thought and to prove one viewpoint is right over the other is tough, but I do like what this photographer states: *"Photography was meant to be an art. If photography was meant to be constrained to only portraying a scene exactly as the eye sees it, it wouldn't be called photography. It would be called something more like "copygraphy" (which, incidentally, is an actual word, which means "to copy a letter with a hectograph"). The argument that photography is no longer photography when an image is altered with HDR, or other digital means, is akin to the days when abstract art was not considered art at all. Picasso created portraits where women's ears were placed where a nose should be. Today, nobody argues*

that Picasso was not an artist. Hopefully, years from now, the same will hold true of the photographers of today and the images they've created." (http://www.studiorosenbaum.com/blog/hdr/when-is-photography-not-photography/)

Whenever there are advancements or changes to an artistic medium, there will almost always be pushback. But this is what artists do. We push the boundaries of definition and, in result, further advance the art form.

The Works

The pieces in this photographic series were not titled as this was a conscious artistic decision. Fighting the urge to label the pieces was an important aspect of my concept. I felt that titling the works would, in a way, steer the thought process more in a given direction which goes against the subjectivity I was after in this series. I wanted no influences besides the images themselves. (See images and untitled numbers in the Appendix of Works section)

Untitled 1

A female figure stands isolated against a white background. Unidentifiable and ambiguous in individual identity. She represents the physical world. The right hand holds a brush with paint as was used to paint a symbolic heart on the chest alluding to the physical conscious world as the heart is visually synonymous with life. A frame is held to the forehead as to represent a boundary and access to the unconscious mind. One world becomes another. The unconscious becoming conscious… literally flowing out of and into existence.

This image was the first one created shortly after my initial concept began taking shape. I knew that I wanted to create an image that was relatively simple and would "say it all" in a manner of speaking. Symbolically identifying the idea of sections of the mind. This pieces intention is very literal in its visual statement and is primarily just to relate the viewer with the concept of the

unconscious and the mind as a whole. Attempting to set the stage of the rest of the pieces in the series and the abstract nature of them.

Process: I shot the model in the studio and used a simple butterfly lighting setup to evenly illuminate her in the front on a white background. Leaving hard shadows on the background to emphasize the isolation and separation. During post, the majority of the time was spent creating the liquefaction of the body. Trying to focus on little details of highlights and shadows to sell the effect.

Untitled 2

A female subject stands in an empty, abandoned room peering through a window into a vast amount of water and the unknown. The water on the other side spills out onto the floor bridging the gap of two separate worlds. The two worlds of course referring to the conscious and unconscious states of mind. On the other side in the water is the same female subject floating under the waters surface. Identifying and coming together within oneself and acknowledging inner self-reflection. Reflections in an altered state.

This image was taken at an abandoned house near University Park. This home became a perfect location for a few of the pieces in this series as the building itself took on an unconscious identity of its own. As I have mentioned before, the philosopher Gaston Bachelard was an influence in helping me abstractly view physical spaces as parts of our mental being. This room, with its centered solo window, really became an influence for this piece. The way the empty room contrasted with the outside world through the window pulling the mind in and out.

Process: I took the model with me to the abandoned location and found the perfect room for this shoot. Using a single artificial light source to help light up the entire inner area in conjunction with the natural lighting from outside to capture my base image. The other image of the subject in the water was captured in the studio and incorporated into the image in post. The water and various fish elements then added through various digital imaging techniques.

Untitled 3

A large, weathered looking, tree stands erect in the distance holding up a giant window seemingly attached to nothing. The windows light shines bright onto the foreground on a female subject floating above the ground as well as pieces of her gradually disappearing into the background. People in the distance seemingly gather around the tree and window in the dense fog.

Again, the idea and integration of boarders and two symbolic worlds interacting is what's seen. The window representing either outside or inside, however you want to perceive it, providing a visual journey point and a place of symbolic transition. The subject floating in the foreground could be looked at as rebirth or a return and is very subjective in the unconscious emotions and memories that can be associated. Some analysis from people see it as a 'rebirth' type image in which the subject is coming together over time in conjunction with the light shining on her from the window being held up by the tree of life. Of course there is no 'right' answer in its interpretation as the visual elements are intended to be vague in their symbolic meaning.

Process: The landscape photo was taken across the street from Governors State University's campus in a dried up corn field in the heart of winter. The lone tree and the desolate grass/corn I knew was the perfect shot for my concept. The lighting of the day was fairly low to the horizon going behind the tree which helped the tree become darker and partly silhouetted…really separating it from the sky. The subject was shot in a studio (she cannot float) paying close attention to the perspective of the shot to seamlessly intergrade into the landscape in post. The window was composited into the piece paying attention to place it in a way that the window and the tree seemed like one image. Globally, the tones and colors were lightly tweaked to implement more surreal color tones into the image…especially the sky.

Untitled 4

A lone figure stands way off into the distance in a field. Silhouetted and isolated except for the one lights illumination. The shadow cast runs down, twisting, to the foreground where it becomes a path inviting the viewer to either journey to the light or away to the foreground, where another subject lays helpless on the path.

It can be looked at as a beacon to travel to or away from. That implication of mental travel represented in conscious/physical space is encouraged with the path through the space. The meadow and path is metaphorical of the mind in which the viewer is invited to travel.....the journey of one. A majority of critiques and interpretations became spiritual in nature. Seeing the foreground subject as death and the far subject as the soul going toward the

light or as the representation of the journey of life. Whatever the interpretation, as in Rorschach tests, there is no "right" answer, there is only "your" answerer.

Process: The field was shot in an open area outside the Governors State Universities campus using all natural lighting. Framing up the shot to have a high horizon line as the concept for this piece was already conceived and sketched out. Knowing that I wanted the eye to travel more upward and fade away. The path, foreground subject, background subject, cloud, and light were all shot separately and composed later into the piece. Using overlays and gradient maps to create the subtle cool color shifts along the piece as well as de-saturating to make the image appear darker. Finishing by adding lightning bugs in the field using exposure adjustments as well as the overall darkening of the piece.

Untitled 5

A female stands in profile with her hair floating forward covering half the face. The back half of her head is submerged in water as we see fish swimming around behind her head. Water drops float in the direction of the hair towards the cloudy sky.

This image really plays to the idea of 'universes'. As mentioned earlier, I took air and water as elements that I perceive as very opposite in our conscious world. I metaphorically represent them as the two main parts of the mind…consciousness and unconsciousness. The head is in the middle of both as to suggest the bridging of borders and existing in to states at the same time…or in the preconscious. The hair that is floating in front of the face is also intended

to keep the subject from having identity as is in all the pieces to keep the subject ambiguous so the viewer can transfer themselves into the spaces.

Process: The subject was taken in the studio and set up with the head facing downward so the hair was falling in front of the face. Lighting was simple and even throughout the profile. The water element was shot in an aquarium and to get the water drops, stones were dropped in the water and photographed the resulted splashing. In post, the subject was extracted while paying close attention to the hair (that is the most difficult part) and all composed together with the water and the cloudy sky image.

Untitled 6

A female figure is seen standing with one foot on solid ground and the other foot on floating earth. In her hand is a lantern shinning bright and cutting through the darkness she is approaching. Her body is shown splitting the border of light and dark and the for-sure and un-sure. In the distance shines a light from a building floating far in the distance and a number of smaller pieces of earth essentially creating a pathway.

The main focus was to divide the piece visually as well as conceptually. Visually through the hard separation of light and dark and conceptually with the stability variation of the ground. Using a subject to physically see traveling from one state to another. Again, the subject is right in the center of the division to emphasis the abstract idea of the mind as independent realms that are separated. The landscape becomes more of a manifestation of deep thought and

unconsciousness as the viewer is drawn to the mysterious house that is in the distance.

Process: This piece was created from a number of photographic images. The model, grassy field, floating stones, far house, lantern, and hair extensions were all shot independently of each other. The model and the hair extensions were shot first and composited into the shot of the grass field. Creating the floating stones was a process of extracting the stones and adding grass photos to the top. Using dodge and burn techniques to sell the illusion of three-dimensionality. The house was a simple extraction as well as the lantern. The dark division was created using exposure and curves adjustment layers to create that hard division.

Untitled 7

A subject stands partially silhouetted on railroad tracks facing the viewer. In the distance a bright light shines from an approaching train. The light pushes the shadow around to an inverted door on the other side. From the door, clouds spill out onto the path and train tracks covering both sections of the inverted perspectives.

Again, the idea is to invite the viewer to journey and drive the psychological thought process in various directions with the flipping of the perspective bypassing logical perception and thought. The clouds frame the paths as it becomes one way or the other and the elements of the train and tracks, as well and the man standing on them, become a contrast to the seeming safety of what the door will bring, or not, on the other side. All visual elements

intend to help stimulate unconscious memories and emotions to achieve a sense of preconscious awareness.

Process: Both sections of the image were shot during sundown with the intended results becoming darker and more mysterious. The subject was shot on the train tracks with a Speedlight off to the side to add additional three-dimensionality and more edge lighting to separate from the background. The two images were flipped and composed into one document in post. As well as the extraction and integration of the clouds, door, and train light. Various tone and color adjustments were then added as was with all the other pieces as well.

Untitled 8

A figure is seen seemingly confined in a small plain room. A rope is tied to the ankle as the figure passes through walls and ending up in the same room. A hand is seen holding the rope from a hole in the ground as clouds spill outward onto the floor.

Visually traveling into this space can relate to a number of anxiety related thoughts and feelings. This seems to be the consensus through others critiques and analysis. The empty space and the rope, which is confining the subject, as she would normally be able to leave through the wall but ending up in the same room over and over. As usual, elements (such as the clouds from the hole) offer a passage or a psychological 'pull point' as a metaphorical symbol of transition.

Process: The empty room was shot at Governors State University during a transition process of construction in the E-wing. This purely empty room after all the furnishings were removed stood out to me as a great space to start the

next composition I had envisioned. The model was again shot in a studio, being sure to pay attention to match the same lighting that was in the room. The rope elements were shot at the same time as well as the others. Then I extracted and incorporated the various elements into the work paying close attention to light and shadow of the ropes and subject.

Untitled 9

A female subject wraps her arms around her knees and is tucked into a ball as she remains suspended in mid-air. She remains floating above a rural street, flanked by corn fields on both sides, that extends all the way into the horizon. Down the center of the road is a yellow divider line that reaches halfway and shatters apart to pieces.

The bridging of borders representation in this piece is more obviously apparent. The isolation of the subject in the center of the street is intended to engage the viewer into a mental state of isolation. The road traveling into the horizon is representing the path of transition. The yellow line acts as the visual and physical border that the path travels with. Although not exactly symmetric, the close symmetry of the piece is only broken up by the subject floating in the middle. Shattering the line to free oneself to psychologically abolish borders of mental state.

Process: The road image was taken about a few miles away for the GSU campus on a back rural road. I waited until no cars were coming and I had to jump out of my car, set the tripod up, and quickly frame up the shot. Luckily it was at a time without a lot of traffic. The model was shot sitting in a chair in the

designated position in a studio. Making sure the lighting and perspective angle fit into the composition. The yellow line was manipulated by using the clone stamp tool to create the shatter effect into the distance.

Untitled 10

Towering blocks of sky hover over water as thick chains are attached protruding from the water. Doors float and attach to the center of the sky blocks. A figure in a dress lays on the beach with legs partially in the water as she reaches her one arm outward toward the foreground.

The water on the shore really acts as the main visual border in this piece. The flowy dress the subject is wearing is intended to be an extension of the shoreline and the water as she is partly emerging from the water. The sky blocks that float over the water that have doors in each one in a way suggest numerous paths, transitions, or decisions. The symbolic nature of the door itself represents a point of entry or exit which is intended with all visual elements to pull the viewer in and achieve the preconscious state of mind.

Process: The shoreline landscape was taken at a beach in Hawaii while I was on vacation there. I just loved the way the horizon and waterline moved across the image. I knew it would fit in perfectly to my concept for this piece. The model was shot in a studio environment paying close attention to maintaining the right perspective to seamlessly composite in later. The chains and door were all shot independently and extracted into the final composite. In post, the blocks in the sky were created using numerous levels adjustment layers. Darkening or lightening portions of the sky to give the effect of see through

blocks. As with all the others, then global tonal and color adjustments were applied to the piece to achieve a more surreal look.

Untitled 11

A dark, foggy lake merges into a disheveled room becoming one. Lights attached to ropes float upward above the lake illuminating the darker potion of the room. In the distance, a man on a boat sits in the lake. Light shines through the two windows as hands break the border of the window and reach inward to the room.

The main juxtaposition of the skewed size between the lake and the room twists the perspective in relation to accepted reality. Is the lake really small and room normal….is the lake normal and the room really large…..or is everything really small because of the hands entering the room through the window? These are some questions that the viewer would be asking as they mentally transition into the piece. As was talked about before, the verticality of the dark to light (as the lights visually and symbolically illuminate areas) moving vertical through the image gives a viewer a gradual feeling from unconscious to conscious…ether or. The room acts as a mental space, housing if you will, as well with the common usage of familiar surreal elements to immerse into an alternate state of mind.

Process: The destroyed room, which I believe it was an upstairs bedroom, image was again taken at the abandoned home a little ways from GSU. It was about mid-day so the light outside was much brighter than the light inside, thus blowing out the outside image which is what was intended. Creating a pure

bright white window area. The water section was an image captured at a small lake around a forest preserve near my home and the lighting was fairly overcast and even that day. The other elements such as the rope, light bulbs, and hands were all shot using artificial lighting. Then extracted in Photoshop like everything else and composited into one image.

Untitled 12

A bathtub sits out of place in the middle of a vast desert. Legs hang out the side and an arm holding up an umbrella is all that's seen. Under that umbrella is a cloud that is raining on the subject and in the bathtub, essentially filling it up with water. All around the tub lays more umbrellas all over the desert, as well as blowing in the wind out of frame.

Contrast of visual conflicting elements is what we see with the bathtub in the desert. As stated earlier in this paper, water and air (clouds) are metaphorically represented in my work as states of consciousness and unconsciousness…two unique realms. In this piece we see the single cloud under the umbrella filling up the tub with water. One transitioning into another and the subject lays inside both.

Process: The desert landscape was actually created by hand. I purchased sand at a craft store and hand molded the sand and back lit it to simulate the light I knew I wanted in the scene. Once I had the right perspective, the model was shot at the same time to assure the position and lighting stayed the same. With a little help, the umbrellas were tossed into the air by an assistant at different directions, achieving various angles of frozen motion, and the tub was

an image taken at home (no, I didn't bring a bathtub into a studio). The extraction of the elements was fairly straight forward. All the lines were pretty simple and the use of the pen tool was the perfect tool of choice. As always, then adjusting color to fit the surreal atmosphere and adding highlights and shadows to finish the piece off.

Untitled 13

A figure sits on a stairway holding two deflated balloons. The darkened stairway is illuminated only by the doorway that leads out to open sky. Clouds climb inward, around, and up the staircase as a lone chair is suspended in the air by two balloons outside. A second staircase above leads upward to an unknown destination.

The imagery of the staircase has a tendency to not only pull the vision upward or downward from perspective but also psychologically pull the mind in different directions. Again the clouds symbolize the conscious or unconscious interacting with and breaking the borders of the doorway, thus entering the in-between where the subject is. This piece plays heavily to the writings of the Poetics of Space in the terms that the upward and downward movement translates to unconscious thinking as discussed earlier. This surreal image reiterates the idea of the two "realms" coming together and abstractly viewing stairs as a transition point of thought. The chair and balloons act as a reference point to contrast with the subject and encourage unique interpretations from viewer's experiences.

Process: The stairway image was taken in the same abandoned house as was mentioned before. Seeing this dilapidated stairway and remembering the philosophical implications that it can unconsciously hold, I knew it was important to capture that sense of decision and movement upward and downward. The subject was shot at the location and the clouds, chair, and balloons were all composited later. Making sure that the cloud elements were soft but hard edged enough to look as if they were really tangible objects. Also, adding increased contrast from the middle outward to really force the eye to the center of the piece.

Appendix of Works

Image/Title	Year	Size	Medium
Untitled 1	2012	42x62"	Photography/ Digital Manipulation
Untitled 2	2012	22x33"	Photography/ Digital Manipulation
Untitled 3	2012	42x62"	Photography/ Digital Manipulation

Untitled 4   2012   22x33"   Photography/
                                                 Digital Manipulation

Untitled 5   2012   42x62"   Photography/
                                                 Digital Manipulation

Untitled 6   2012   22x33"   Photography/
                                                 Digital Manipulation

Untitled 7   2012   22x33"   Photography/
                                                 Digital Manipulation

| Untitled 8 | 2012 | 22x33" | Photography/ Digital Manipulation |

| Untitled 9 | 2012 | 42x62" | Photography/ Digital Manipulation |

| Untitled 10 | 2012 | 42x62" | Photography/ Digital Manipulation |

| Untitled 11 | 2012 | 42x62" | Photography/ Digital Manipulation |

Untitled 12   2012   22x33"   Photography/
                                                    Digital Manipulation

Untitled 12   2012   22x33"   Photography/
                                                    Digital Manipulation

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