Prime Movers
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Prime Movers

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Abstract

*Prime Movers*, exhibited from April 1-15 2016, at Bevier Gallery, Rochester Institute of Technology (R.I.T), explores the motivations behind human actions, and the inner workings of the self, through introspection, metacognition, research and experimentation. Inspiration for this work comes from a desire to gain better self-awareness and understanding. Social and personal mythologies are employed to investigate the contemporary human condition. Glass, porcelain, metal, wood, acrylic, soap, light and sound are the elements used to translate the concepts into tangible forms.
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Thesis proposal

In my art, I explore the continuum between ephemeral actions and eternal values. I am intrigued by actors/individuals who compromise both their personal as well as communal security to fulfill their own insatiable desires leading to self-destruction. I am drawn to earlier visual narratives, including those inspired by the Bible and Greek mythology. I revisit both religious and secular stories I heard during my youth, and couple these with contemporary social issues. I place myself conceptually in the situations I set up, to better understand both the motivations of the stories’ characters and the repercussions of the actors’ actions. My images re-contextualize historical events by placing these within our current socio-political climate and offering commentary on the human experience and its moral dilemmas. I am interested in the tensions between the emotions of the heart and the thoughts of the mind, and the role these play in metacognition.

Self-reflection and automatism often result in different outcomes. Our internal struggles manifest themselves outwardly through the façades we erect in order to mask our vulnerabilities and present new identities to the world. Internal tensions are driven by moral and social constraints, which influences the development of character.

Through the lens of behavioral science, and the visual externalization of character, I explore both the components of self and its primary movers. This includes looking behind the mask, while examining social interactions with the aid of literal and metaphorical mirrors. The masks we wear, provides not only fortification and shelter, but also facilitates the exploration of introspection and human experience.
SECTION I: CONTENT

My background provides insight into my work. I am a Transatlantic artist, born in England and raised in Trinidad and Long Island by conservative Christian parents. My formal art education began when I studied stained glass under master glass artist Fred Leuchs while at Eckerd College in Florida. There, I earned a degree in Art, Human Development, and Philosophy. These three fields cross-pollinate in the work featured in *Prime Movers*. After completing my undergraduate degree, I pursued further studies in art, returning across the Atlantic to study Design and Applied Arts at Edinburgh College of Art in Scotland, and Conservation and Heritage Management at the University of York in England.

Some of the techniques and concepts employed in *Prime Movers* have been used in previous works of mine. When creating faces in my undergraduate work, I took a Synthetic Cubist approach, by emphasizing outlines, planes and localized colors in the rendering of faces. Sharp lines and planes dominate in the masks that were displayed in *Prime Movers* (Figure 1).

{[The captions for 1 and 2 should be placed under the respective images]}. Another recurring element in my work is the use of mirrored eyes. As I have long aimed to draw the viewers into the work, I have used mirrors as the eyes in works such as *Casting Stones* (2001) (Figure 2). In this stained glass window, the viewer sees his or her reflection in the eyes of a woman who is being abused. The woman has a bruised face, and an intimidating figure looms over her. Instead of passively witnessing the

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**Figure 1.** Garvin Sealy. *Casting Stones*. 2001. Stained Glass. 27 in. x 18.5 in.

**Figure 2.** Garvin Sealy. *Hubris*. 2016. Steel and One Way Mirror. 90 in. x 72 in. x 48 in.

**Figure 3.** Garvin Sealy. *Satan paints Another Portrait of Jesus*. 2006. Stained Glass. 21 in. x 28 in.

**Figure 4.** Norman Rockwell. *Triple Self Portrait*. 1960. Oil on Canvas. 27 in. x 18 ½ in.
situation, the viewer becomes part of this scenario.

In my postgraduate work, I transitioned from Cubism to realism, and screen-printed photographs I had taken, onto glass. I continued to work with self-reflective imagery, seen in *Satan Paints another Portrait of Jesus* (2006) (Figure 3), which was inspired by Norman Rockwell’s Triple-Self-Portrait (1960) (Figure 4). Screen printing can be seen in Prime Movers on the steel of *On the Surface* (Figure 5).

![Figure 3](image1.jpg)  
*Figure 3. Garvin Sealy. Satan Paints another Portrait of Jesus. 2006. Stained Glass. 21 in. x 28 in.*

![Figure 4](image2.jpg)  
*Figure 4. Garvin Sealy. On the Surface. (Detail) 2016. Steel. 14 in. x 12 in. x 9 in.*

Before I transitioned into the Fine Arts program at R.I.T, I developed printmaking techniques for porcelain in the Ceramics program in the School for American Crafts (Figure 6). The Fine Arts program allowed me greater freedom with materials and processes. I believe that materials and ideas should not have to fight for supremacy, but work together to provide a natural synthesis.

The full title of my exhibition is “Prime Movers in the Search for Character and Self.”

![Figure 6](image3.jpg)  
*Figure 6. Garvin Sealy. Young love: Baby Pictures of Adam and Eve. 2014. Porcelain. 15 in. x 10in. x 10 in.*
While addressing many of the themes that were embodied in my earlier work—including moral compromise, salvation, race and self-destruction—my thesis work shifts towards the self. I use behavioral constructs, such as drive, to explore the components of self and the elements that influence it. This includes the fear responses of fight, flight and freezing, as well as socio-religious concepts of family and faith, which all serve as prime movers.

My art work has always explored the potential dichotomies between religious and secular issues. Christianity has been an important influence throughout my life and my artwork. In the past, my figurative art work featured an overt use of Christian imagery and themes. When approaching Prime Movers, I made a deliberate decision to exercise greater subtlety and nuance in my handling of Christian themes. Throughout the process of working on my thesis, I have listened to an audio reading of the English Standard Version of the Bible for many months, primarily the Psalms, Proverbs, and the Gospels. In my search for self, I revisited the place where I once found security and meaning.

How do we become who we are? When thinking about self-reflection and developmental psychology, the recurring phrase in my mind was, ‘By beholding we become changed.’ Although I have seen this “self,” for over three decades, it often seems to be a stranger; someone with whom I have a vague familiarity and of whom I have an incomplete understanding. There are struggles between the heart and the brain, emotion and reason, mind and body. My vacillatory nature implies that, at best, I adapt and at worst, I have a weak character. The Apostle Paul refers to these conflicts in, “For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.” These struggles are explored throughout Prime Movers.

Introspection and metacognition are tools I use in an effort to make more personal work. I re-evaluate the elements, influences and abstractions that compose individuals (what does this mean?). Introspection improves self-awareness, which can lead to acknowledgement and acceptance of self. It requires bravery to continually stimulate the sense of enquiry, especially when it can lead to unpleasant discoveries.

I remember a conversation I had with my father during my final year of undergraduate

1 Romans 7:15 (English Standard Version)
studies. He asked, “Who do people say that you are?” I replied, “It depends on who you ask.” During that busy time, I overcommitted and was pulled in too many different directions; I finished three degree programs while leading my college debate team into the national finals and serving as president of the student government. Often I felt, “thin, sort of stretched, like butter scraped over too much bread.”2 In my struggle to become multi-faceted I experienced the feeling of being fractured and existing on multiple planes. This is reflected in the use of glass and steel in the masks of *Prime Movers*.

After wearing a mask for so long one no longer recognizes oneself. Transitioning between roles while moving back and forth across cultures and the oceans, has left me feeling ungrounded. There are moments when I feel adaptable and multi-faceted like some of my masks. At other times, change and compromise melt and mold a once-firm character -like the wax used for the heads in *I wish I was like You*.

How does character develop? If character is who you are when no one is looking, do surveillance and self-reflection keep us in check when we are out amongst the public? Where do we find ourselves without the gaze of society or the deity? With these constructs removed, whom do we discover when we are all alone?

External and self-imposed constraints often do not afford us the freedom to be exposed and vulnerable. Divorcing ourselves from the reflections of society and our own self-reflective gaze, all we are left with is the person behind the mask, the child-like apparition that can be equally naive and calculating. The mask is what you wear not only to hide, but also to become who you have always wanted to be. It is our façade and fortress. Like our character, the façade can be multifaceted, complex and deceptive.

**SECTION II: ARTISTIC INFLUENCES**

I have always had an interest in the self and how it applies to social interaction. *Prime Movers* gave me the opportunity to explore many of those interests while discovering new

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ones. In an effort to rediscover myself, with the intent of making authentic work, I conceptually employed symbols of Sankofa (Figure 7) and Uroboros (Figure 8).

Sankofa is usually depicted as a bird in profile, with its head turned around, to retrieve an egg off of its back. It is a Ghanaian symbol of wisdom that can be translated as “Go back and fetch it.”³ It epitomizes learning from the past to build for the future. Uroboros, is an ancient symbol found across all cultures. It depicts a serpent or dragon eating its own tail. Through self-devouring/destruction, it becomes its own sustenance. Only through retracing its steps does it finds the path forwards. Although its movements are cyclical, it still makes progress. Both Sankofa and Uroboros address the circularity of introspection and human experience, where the finding of answers leads to more questions. To make Prime Movers, I retraced my steps in a cultural, religious, and artistic sense.

The masks and cast heads used in Prime Movers take their inspiration from African masks and sculptures, including the bronzes from Benin. This past summer I had the

opportunity to examine the collection of bronzes and brasses from Benin at the British Museum (Figure 9).

As a sculptor, I was particularly interested in handling these objects. I investigated evidence of the casting processes and looked for the application of patinas. Because I worked both as a conservator of stained glass, since 2006, and a trainee in museum conservation at the Burrell Collection in Glasgow, I know how to handle fragile, valuable and culturally sensitive objects. I was intrigued by the light and thin nature of the sculptures, particularly the heads, some of which were cast at less than 2mm thick. The bulbous nature of the cheeks in some of the Benin Bronzes (Figure 10), gave an appearance of youth that is mirrored in the cast heads of Insight (Figure 11) and I wish I was Just like You (Figure 12).

Like an archeologist, I dug through time and cultures. I was introduced to the nomenclature of the artifacts as ‘objects,’ while working at the Burrell Collection. This dispassionate way of referring to valued treasures played a role in my approach to Prime Movers. This counterbalanced my conservative Christian upbringing, which led me to believe that sculpture consisted in the production of idols. Thus, in creating my art, I was going against my nature.
One of the artists who continues to influence me is Grayson Perry, the 2003 Turner Prize winner. He regularly speaks about the ‘Rubbish Dump test,’ which served as a conceptual reference point in my work. One of Perry’s professors taught him that when you see art, you should imagine seeing it in a garbage bin when walking past it. Would something cause you to pause and pull it out, knowing that it is a piece of art, or would you ignore it, easily mistaking it for trash? This concept is particularly pertinent for me in regards to sculpture, where neither the concept, intentionality, nor execution of many artist’s work warrant the label of “art.” Additional artists whose subject matter and approach inspire me include the painter, printmaker, and draughtsman William Blake (Figure 13), the printmaker Bob Hodgell (Figure 14), and the sculptor June Kaneko (Figure 15).

Because of the disparate sources informing Prime Movers, many dualities are brought together in my work. Mixed media are used in some pieces, while only one medium is deployed in others. Works in 2D and 3D co-exist in harmony. Youth and age, life and death, text and imagery all find a home in this exhibition.

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SECTION III: EVOLUTION AND THE BODY OF WORK

The masks in Prime Movers do not display either an ethnic or temporal origin. Although five masks are featured in the exhibition, I wanted to ensure that the viewer would have a different experience with each one of these. Each work is imbued with utility and value and each surface is treated differently in such a way that each mask mirrors the skin of humans. Each mask has its own identity. Some conceal the true self while others reveal it. The narrative qualities of historicity achieved by way of the patinas reinforce the intention of each piece. My desire to create a sense of antiquity and wear comes from my experiences working in art conservation.

Introspection is the first steel mask made in this series and the most diminutive in scale (Figure 16). As a result both of its size and of the fact that the steel was cut by hand, Introspection has a strong organic feeling. Although its external surface is the austere, the heat patina breathes life into this piece. The eyes of this mask are 20X magnification makeup mirrors. These mirrors help animate this work as the viewer moves in front of it; the abstract reflections in the eyes morph like images in a funhouse mirror. To see a clear reflection of his or her face, the viewer has to be within a few inches of the eyes of the mask. The mirrored eyes of Introspection and Hubris reference James 1:22 (ESV), “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like.”

Figure 16. Garvin Sealy. Introspection. 2016, Steel and Mirrors. 12 in. x 12 in. x 12 in.

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5 James 1:22 (ESV)
The mask is strengthened through the use of three additional mirrors which heighten the viewer’s experience. With four reflective glass surfaces, in addition to the reflective planes of the mask itself, the viewer is confronted with images of himself or herself coming from all directions. (Figure 17).

The mask is backed with wax and graphite. This provides the only non-reflective surface to the piece. Slowing the transmission of light is a metaphor for the internal contemplation of the viewer.

*Insight* was the second mask in the series and my first foray into welding at a larger scale. When held or transported *Insight* feels like shield (Figure 18). My working technique with the steel was similar to working with paper; perforations were placed in the steel to facilitate bending. Because the perforations were left unfilled, they provided the added bonus of allowing light to penetrate the piece. This made the planning stage more challenging, but the fabrication stage and the end result was more uniform. My initial plan for the series of masks was to have figurines behind the masks, engaged in the tasks of its operation. I conceptually and physically distilled my approach by having the cast baby doll heads fulfill the function of eyes the mask. The softness of the youthful eyes is juxtaposed by the firm, aged appearance of the mask. Translucent soap was used to cast the infant heads, as it provided the optical properties of glass with improved working characteristics. *Insight* was placed facing away from the window in Bevier Gallery. This allowed the eyes to respond to the changes in natural light throughout the course of the day (Figure 19). In bright
light, the translucent orbs glowed with life. As the sun set, the eyes looked more like cold blue jade and took on an eerie visage (Figure 20).

Sound was added to the sensory experience of *Insight* through the use of a speaker discretely placed in the nose. A vintage brass table clock, with two layers of wrinkled glass replacing the clockworks, fills the mouth. The illumination of *Insight*’s eyes and mouth make reference to my earlier stained glass art work. Intuition played a successful role while creating *Prime Movers*. *Insight* allows for changeable mouths where *Constraint* can fit in the mouth-space, and the cage of *Constraint* juxtaposes the openness of *Insight*.

*Constraint* is the third mask in the series (Figure 21). The eyes of the mask are tiny video cameras. *Constraint* was strategically placed in my exhibition space so that its video cameras had a clear line of sight all the way to the front of the gallery. The mouth resembles the bars of a jail cell. Behind the mouth, inside the cell, is a small bronze sculpture of the Incredible Hulk. Like Samson in the Bible, the Hulk is overcome with his circumstances and resorts to rage to
change his environment. Despite his immense power, he seems trapped in his circumstances. He does not realize that if he turned around, he would be free. The bronze sculpture serves as a distraction to the viewer, drawing their attention long enough for the video camera eyes to view them up close.

*On the Surface* is the fourth mask in the series (Figure 22). The eyes in the mask are video displays which receive their live signal from *Constraint*. Thus, within the installation of *Prime Movers*, the viewer is able to covertly see other areas of the gallery. The live feed, without the element of recording, questions the validity of surveillance. Where do the images go? Did they ever really exist?

*On The Surface* encapsulates a description found in Bill Viola’s description, “…. this perpetual observer has no stories to tell, no store of wisdom, no knowledge of the grant patterns. Locked within a great immutable Now, it has no sense of past or future. Without memory to give it a life. Events flicker across its image surface, with only a split second to linger as afterimages, disappearing without a trace.”

The concept of obsolescence and the inescapable passage of time in the monitors, mirror the mouth clock in *Insight* and rust found on *Constraint*.

*On the Surface* was originally titled *Fractured and Forgotten* referring to my religious life and the sense of being pulled in multiple directions. On the Surface also refers to the printing on the steel, which is overlooked, due to the video monitor eyes.

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**Hubris** is my most ambitious sculpture to date and the largest sculpture in *Prime Movers* (Figure 23). A single structure 7’ 6” tall, 6” wide, 4’ deep, made of 16-gauge welded steel, Hubris as a structure reflects the concepts of excessive pride and self-confidence. The skin of *Hubris* is made from steel and the eyes are made from a special glass referred to as one-way mirrored glass.

One of the driving forces behind this piece was the defiance towards individuals who said it could not be made. My original intention was to make a mask over nine feet tall, as I saw myself in the Biblical story as David and the mask as Goliath. Due to the size limitations of the apertures in the building, I had to adjust my plans. In keeping with the original concept, many scale models were trialed to ensure that I could build as large as possible to accommodate the elevators and doorways. I wanted the eyes of the finished sculpture to approximate the median 57” of the gallery’s hanging height. Once behind the mask individuals could look out of the eyes and thus the viewer’s head fulfills the function of the eye, mirroring the cast heads of *Insight* (Figure 24). The depth of Hubris allows the viewer to walk inside and feel enveloped, physically experiencing the expansive, yet claustrophobic space found inside one’s head. Hubris works as a stand-alone,
monolithic sculpture. In grouping with the other four steel masks in the series, it is the crux of the installation, serving as the giant head, and all the other pieces in the show as physical manifestations of self behind the giant mask.

In reference to Christianity, the Calvinistic predilection of self-imposed suffering influenced my desire to build on a grand and heavy scale. I could have built Hubris modularly, but chose to deal with the limitations of a large, single unit. There is a history and tradition to working with modular, collapsible forms in art. I did not want to compromise the physicality of the piece by building it in parts.

Due to the scale, and materials of Hubris, comparisons can be drawn to architectural steel and glass skyscrapers of modern cities. The scale also encourages the audience to experience being physically inside of a head-space. Because of the one-way mirror in the eyes, the outside of the mask allows for narcissism and the inside of the mask promotes voyeurism.

To produce the lustrous surface, a copper solution was applied to the polished steel on the outside of Hubris. Heat patina was applied in select locations to further embellish the surface and texture. This variety allowed Hubris to be appreciated for its scale at a distance, and for the painterly quality of its surface at close inspection. The inside of the mask was painted with hammered black enamel paint to replicate the darkness inside our minds. A supplemental benefit was the further absorption of light on the inside of the mask, which increased the effectiveness of the one-way mirror, the glass traditionally seen in police interrogations. Concepts such as being watched by “Big Brother” and The Man behind the Mask/(Iron) Curtain all come to the fore.

The initial reaction by most viewers upon seeing Hubris included various permutations of expletives. These autonomic, unfiltered responses led me to see the true impact art could have on an individual. The placement of Hubris within the gallery setting was vital to its appreciation. I wanted the piece to have sightlines so the viewer would be able to see it from a great distance. This included the hallway outside Bevier gallery and viewing Hubris from the third floor balcony. These vantage points allow the sense of scale to override the viewer’s sense of distance.
The imposing scale of Hubris is reminiscent of Olmec heads and Easter Island heads. It alludes to the concept of the Deity. Coupled with the concept of surveillance, the belief in a deity and the sense that God was watching your activities, the ancient surveillance of a deity is replaced by the constant surveillance of society.

*In the Beginning* is a sculpture of bronze hand with a copper bracelet balancing a porcelain egg (Figure 25). The surface of the egg makes the static sculpture appear to be bursting with life. Gold is rupturing the eggshell cream color of the thin surface. What appears to be the creation of life may also be the moment of its destruction. *In the Beginning* alludes to the Hand of God creating the world. Because the bronze hands in *Prime Movers* are casts of my hand, it alludes to my role in the creation of the art work.

*In the Beginning* also alludes to my graduate studies at RIT beginning in the Ceramics program.

*Unafraid* features an iron hand presenting my bronze sculpture of *The Annunciation* (Figure 26). It depicts a cherub trumpeting in Mary’s ear the conception of The Christ, while two Holy Spirit doves crash-land into her head. The cacophonic scene is juxtaposed by Mary’s tranquil and serene countenance. This piece reminds me that I am not always in control of every aspect of my life.
*Justice and the coming of Progress* is a digital print that amalgamates a series of my photographs into one image (Figure 27).

On an associative level, the print seems to depict a courtroom scene. Lady Justice is the gold statue in the center surmounted by a frieze. The tiny characters in the frieze depict the jury. Clockwise in the bottom left is my contemplative face, which has been featured in my stained glass and in other prints (Figure 28). It looks with distrust upon the whole scene. Above is a photograph of Abraham Lincoln who appears to be seated as a judge over the proceedings. To the upper right appears the verdict; the image from my stained glass window *The Noose* (2001). It is the third window in a triptych depicting the life of Judas. Here we see him hanging himself, with a view of the crosses of...
Golgotha in the distance. This section also makes reference to lynching, with the crosses in the background. In the bottom left there is a manipulated photograph of a tractor crossing a bridge in Perth, Scotland. The wheels echo the arches in the bridge, and the exaggerated scale of the tractor foreshadows the destruction that it brings. This piece echoes the overwhelming experience that Mary has in Unafraid, and references the criminal justice system in the United States of America.

*The Garden of Earthly Delights* is a laser-cut, Baltic birch woodblock. It explores many themes, including the interaction between text and imagery (Figure 29).

*Figure 29. Garvin Sealy. Garden of Earthly Delights. 2016. Baltic Birch and Maple. 26 in x 39 ½ in. x 1 ½ in.*

Ink was rolled onto the surface of the wood and then several prints were made. This allowed the surface of the wood to take on an aged appearance while further defining the text and the image a female figure reclining on rocks. The two diagonal, graphic lines which dissect her body, are from the flag of Trinidad and Tobago, my cultural homeland. The text is from Proverbs 7. In it, Solomon warns his son to avoid the woman who will lead him to ruin.
Additional text is from Psalms 23, written by Solomon’s father David. He refers to God as his shepherd who keeps him safe and secure as he travels through the shadow of death. This low relief woodblock investigates the tension that occurs between the proximal and distal viewing of the same piece. To read the words you have to get close to the piece, only then to realize that the text warns you to keep your distance. Attraction and repulsion vie for supremacy. Because the reclining figure can appear dead, I wanted to have text overlaid and carved into the image to allow the text to appear as an epitaph. The title of this piece comes from the triptych of the same name painted by the Early Netherlandish master Hieronymus Bosch. This wood-cut makes reference to the Garden of Eden, with the woman as Eve, and its traditional elements of temptation, sacrifice, and redemption.

I wish I was just like you, is composed of two figures (Figure 30). I carved a walnut torso from which I cast the aluminum torso. Both torsos were capped by wax heads. One wax was left in a raw unfinished state, and the other is finished with graphite. While developing my thesis, this piece went through many iterations. The final change was the name of the piece. The penultimate name was Scopophilia, the Greek Scopophilia (from Greek skopeō, "look to, examine" and philia, "tendency toward"), deriving pleasure from looking. In regards to sexuality it refers to sexual pleasure derived from looking at erotic objects. Voyeurism and the ecstasy of viewing has been an element in art for millennia. In the floor plan of my exhibition these I wish I was just like You are

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placed directly across The Garden of Earthly Delights. Thus it appears that these two male figures, are gazing at Eve, entranced by the image of the figure. The mentality of a child is seen in a man’s body. It is clear that their focus is on the woman and not the words, as their infantile, illiterate, impressionable wax minds cannot benefit from the warning of the text.

_I wish I was just like you,_ has multiple meanings. There are racial undertones in the piece, as both the color of their bodies and heads are different, even though the same mold was used for both heads, and one body was molded from the other. Research from child phycologists such as Dr. Emanuel Frederick Hammer (August 15, 1926 – May 18, 2005) have shown that when you ask black and white children to draw themselves, differences arise. Dr. Hammer founded the Institute for Projective Drawings and studied connections between creativity and criminality via projective tests and art therapy. He posits that no matter what a child draws, he is really picturing himself. In a white child, the mood of the drawing is happy, the child feels capable, the drawings are complete, with the arms fully developed to emphasize strength. When most black children draw themselves they leave out arms, and hands. They may sense that a situation in life is so powerless that they themselves are equivalent to an armless man. Studies revealed that armless people appeared with three times the frequency in the drawings of black children than that of white children⁸ (Wooney 1968). _I wish I was just like you_ also refers to the hubris of Lucifer in the Bible, who sought to be as God⁹, as depicted in Figure 3.

**CONCLUSION**

The conceptual and physical development of my artwork proceeded, hand–in–hand, with the multi-layered process of critical investigations and writing that explored, and refined my ideas. For each of the works in _Prime Movers_, I thought about the idea of the 10:1 ratio in art. When teaching students, I talk about the concept of artwork providing visual interest both

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⁸ Dr. Emanuel Frederick Hammer, _Black History: Lost, Stolen, or strayed_. Narrated by Bill Cosby. 1968. CBS/Phoenix Learning Group, Inc. August 12, 2008. DVD

⁹ Isaiah 14: 13-14 (ESV)
at a distance and close proximity. Thus, when viewed from 10 feet away, art should be interesting enough to draw the viewer’s attention. And invited them for a closer look. At the intimate distance of one foot, the artwork should captivate the viewer and reaffirm their initial appreciation. I wanted to reward the viewer for taking a closer look at all of my pieces. This was seen most profoundly in *On the Surface*.

Every piece in the show evolved throughout the course of the thesis process; some changed in and of themselves while some changed based on the evolution of other art works. Originally I wanted a 16 x 16 space but was given a space of 18 x 12. This change of dimensions and layout altered the relationships between the art works which required certain adjustments. *In the Beginning* was removed from the center of the floor plan and *Unafraid* was subsequently added for visual balance.

When working on my thesis, I had a firm plan that allowed for a modicum of flexibility. Pieces worked together individually and as a group. The works stand alone, but the show became greater than the sum of its parts due, in part, to the successful dialogue and relationships between the pieces. The work has a contemporary installation quality with elements of performance art, as the masks are activated by the viewer. The hands and figures in *Prime Movers* can be put in a variety of positions and lit in such a way that different narratives occur. The art work is capable of multiple narratives and meanings.

Viewing the public’s interaction with *Prime Movers* has reinforced the primordial connection between humans and masks. After the exhibition at Bevier Gallery was complete, I redisplayed *Hubris* outdoors, during the Imagine RIT festival. Thousands of individuals and families had the pleasure of interacting with it over the course of the day (Figure 31).
They enjoyed scale of the piece on the outside and loved seeing their reflection in the eyes. The real surprise was when they went around to the inside. From there they realized that the eyes were one-way mirrors, allowing them to spy on the crowds passing by. The perforated steel mouth allowed young children to peep both ways and give sound and life to the piece. It was enlightening for me to experience how the visceral impact was greater on the audience when Hubris was placed outdoors. Removed from the white wall effect of Bevier into a public setting, individuals felt no constraint in interacting with it. This included touching the piece—banging on the steel and leaving fingerprints on the mirrors. This level of interaction was displayed by all age groups.

The body of work from *Prime Movers* will lead to many directions in the future. I will continue working on many of the ideas that have been stimulated through this investigation. Self-reflection provides a wealth of spheres for indefinite artistic exploration. Conceptual searching will be matched with technical progress as I continue incorporating electronic
technology into my work. I look forward to adding projection videos, holograms and biofeedback sensors to my masks. I want to investigate further opportunities for sound and light in my work and create immersive spaces where I have greater influence over the environment and the viewer’s experience.

There is a universality to masks in *Prime Movers*. Looking at their surfaces, I am inspired by Bridget Riley and Op Art. I will look at how Op Art was used as battleship camouflage during times of war\(^\text{10}\) and will paint and print the masks to reinforce and disguise the steel planes. This would result in an accentuation of the features in some cases, and giving the three dimensional structure a two dimensional appearance, placing masks on the masks.

Through the examination of my artistic practice in making *Prime Movers*, I will continue to be intrepid and industrious. I want to balance my cerebral creativity to physical creativity ratio. During the course of my thesis, the majority of my time was spent planning a well-balanced show with variety, substance, and cohesiveness.

Throughout the process of making this art work, I reflect on why I make art and how that motivation becomes part of the art. My religious upbringing has had a relevant impact on my development as an artist and critical thinker by forcing me to become a more introspective and contemplative human being. Working with various materials has given me the skills to communicate through art. The culmination *Prime Movers* mirrors the complexities and intricacies of self and invites the viewer examine the art work, and most importantly, themselves.

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Figure 31: Garvin Sealy. *Hubris*. 2016. Steel and One Way Mirror. 90 in. x 72 in. x 48 in.
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