IMMANENT BEAUTY

By

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Abstract:

This document defends a creative process that is driven by emotion and faith, within which the impulsive, improvisational, and expressive act exists. It is a spiritual act because of the belief that I am creating through the work something honest and therefore important. This defense will be supported by analysis of me and my work, evaluation of artists and artwork created throughout history that have inspired me, as well as philosophical, theological, and critical thoughts towards creative experiences inspired by beauty defending truth.
I dedicate this defense to Abba who knew me before I came to be and who knows me more than myself.
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I. Introduction:

Concept Title and Proposal: **Immanent Beauty**

I will create a body of work that explores the concept of immanent or unexpected beauty. Alan A. Stone wrote about the discovery of beauty in unexpected places in an article titled “Beauty and Redemption”, in the February/March 2000 issue of the Boston Review. In the article, Stone introduces Elaine Scarry, a Harvard Literature Professor who best describes what my concept is about:

Scarry describes, as the centerpiece of her own “sentient” experience, discovering the beauty of a palm tree, a possibility she had mistakenly "ruled out" before.....She goes on, "I gradually realized it was looking back down at me." The careful reader knows she is now describing an illusion, almost an hallucination: "woven into" the fronds "was a large owl." Still the concept is unmistakable--look at beauty and something looks back: perhaps an owl, perhaps God Himself.

Immanent beauty is the motivation and inspiration for my work because it exists in both the physical and spiritual realms. These realms are vital to my creative process, but the reason why they are vital is because of the truths that I discover about myself, my faith, and my art through the creation process. This beauty is both visible and invisible, revealing and concealing, new and historical, an essence and presence of Life. Subjective, personal experience that is learned through human relationships is also related to this concept of immanent beauty because of the process that is involved in two people learning to know each other; these relationships can be obscure or clearly defined. It is this that ignites my creative spirit and guides my intuitive, random, chance-like painting experience, my "dance" on both canvas and paper. I may fold and unfold my work by making what was two dimensional into three dimensions, or I will create a similar effect by hiding and exposing certain elements on my two dimensional works.

Early in my career, I connected to the artwork of Helen Frankenthaler and her aesthetic, sense of color, and the sense of motion she created across her huge canvases. The transcendent art of Leonardo da Vinci and James Milord William Turner both used a push-pull effect in their artwork that both experimented with their art and ideas. I admire their fearlessness in trying new techniques and
how they both were catalysts for innovation within their respective art communities. Agnes Martin and Richard Tuttle are examples of artists who take images that people do not traditionally see as beautiful, but make them pleasing to look at. These artists are a few of the many examples and references to what I aim to emulate with my concept. Immanent beauty will also be further explored with the use of symbolism in the manner of Max Ernst, whose persistent usage of birds as well as random human and animal elements created interesting surreal stories. Cursive and scripted text communicating private thoughts, personal history and ideas will be included in my work as well, serving as another layer to the complexity and simplicity of my concept.
Additional statements:

The Problem of Concept and Others

PLATO: But the unknown – isn’t that the end of the way?

SOCRATES: There is no way, we are here now at the end, we have to do the nearest thing. We are not gods, we are absurd limited beings, we live with affliction and chance. The most important things are close to us, the truth is close, in front of our noses, like the faces of our friends, we need no expert to tell us. Religion is our love of virtue lightening the present moment. It is respect for what we know, and reverence for what we don’t know, what we can only approach, where our not-knowing must be our mode of knowing, where we make symbols and images, and then destroy them, and make other ones, as we see now in our own time. Images are natural, art is natural, sacraments and pictures and holy things are natural, the inner and the outer reflect each other, there is reverence which finds what is spiritual everywhere in the world, he is right (pointing to the servant), God is everywhere. If we love whatever God we know and speak to Him truthfully we shall be answered. Out at the very edge of our imagination the spirit is eternally active. Respect the pure visions which speak to the heart, find there what is absolute. That is why we go to a holy place and kneel down. There is nothing more ultimate than that (Murdoch 525).

In the making of my thesis I was confounded with the question: “what is your concept?” I was confronted with the challenge of trying to formulate a concept that would not restrict the nature of my creative discovery, which depends on the response and experience of my being and the unknown.

Making art is an intuitive and personal process for me and, therefore, cannot easily be spoken for with concept, a word that requires an explanation for what I am going to make and why. Brendan Sweetman, in an essay he wrote regarding an existentialist philosopher Gabriel Marcel and the problem of knowledge, explains an idea, which I will deem “the problem of concept”. Marcel says that when we take an experience that has been personal to us and try to conceptualize it, something gets lost in the process. The experience is filtered down and conditioned in a way that, to borrow a term, globalizes it. We can no longer fly to another country and experience its culture to its fullness. In the process of man standardizing something to be everywhere, authenticity dies. So it is with the artist, and in my case, my creative experience. When asked what my concept was, it left me questioning if my work could have no authenticity or validity if it does not have a concept to precede it. My creative process is an experience that is submissive to surprise. Surprise cannot have a scope of concept and needs to be left free to
whatever situation it wills to have in order for me to reach to some point in which I can say: “that is beautiful” (Sweetman 157-58).

Richard Moran takes this a little further in his paper about another philosopher Immanuel Kant and his appeal for beauty. Personally experiencing beauty can sometimes contradict or even exceed one’s expectations of beauty. He states, “For recall that a judgment of the beautiful is free in the dual sense of not being determined by a concept of the thing (as is a judgment of something as good) and also not determined by any interest, desire, or need (as is a judgment of something as agreeable)” (14).

If I harbor any interest, desire, or need, (which I do) it is simply to create in hopes of finding something beautiful and free that, in turn, in its own mysterious way, speaks to me and any other viewer without any empirical demand to conform to each other. Thus, if I am to defend the idea of the beautiful, how do I do it with a concept that presupposes my work before its creation and, thereafter, could be influenced by preconceived thoughts?

Finally, a major enlightening experience that defines immanent beauty is realizing, in private revelation, that nature is abstract. When I saw originals of Andrew Wyeth’s work (fig. 1), I wondered if that is what Wyeth figured out too. The styles of abstraction are not always just a style or emotion, but something realistic about our everyday exposure to life, to people or microscopic images of skin cells, to trees or strange forms of micro-organism that exist. Abstraction is realism towards humanity.

1. Andrew Newell Wyeth
   *Edge of the Field, 1956*
   Watercolor on paper
II. Context:

Past to Presence

“...something, or someone, gave rise to their creation and remains silently present in the newborn object” (Scarry 10).

The exercise of paradox builds up an energy within my soul that needs expression, a birthing, in order to come to a state of peace. Peacefulness is obtained by the vulnerability within a human soul. When I realize I cannot, with my own power, change my circumstances and lay my hard heart down, it is then I am open to receive a position of grace. This is a true form of beauty because it cannot be defined by anything else but as an act of love. This experience is a basic need I have; whether expressed by painting, writing, playing music or dancing; in order to realize that which is beyond my own self. It is, as Scarry has called, “the newborn object.” Paradox, being mysterious yet intimate, involves my past. Then, in the act of pressing my past on paper or into form, the face of the present reveals itself.

Personal experiences can evolve into a work of art by becoming colors or forms or gentle or harsh strokes; they can emerge or dissolve by peeling or layering. I will briefly expand on some of the paradoxes that influence my art.

I was born with one ear deaf, the other almost hearing. This created a divide within myself between the deaf experience and the hearing experience. For many who are born this way, we find ourselves in another world that places itself between the other two. We are labeled “hard-of-hearing,” not deaf or hearing, and contrary to the culture I grew up in; I do, at times, accept my hearing loss as a disability because it prevents me from functioning the same way as others in this rather aural world. My reality is that I get to hear the ethereal sounds of the wind blowing among a gull’s call, and yet I struggle to piece together complete sets of information in a classroom; or when in a group discussion where everyone is talking, I laugh too late because I learned the joke in delay.
That “culture” that I was raised in established a difference between the big “D” and little “d.” I was born into a “D” family, whose identity and way of life heavily revolved around the Deaf culture (American Sign Language – a.k.a. ASL, deaf schools, table banging to get one’s attention, shoulder tapping, hand waves instead of clapping, etc.) There were also the paradoxes inherent in relationships, including heartbreak and reconciliation, forgiveness and anger, marriage and divorce, responsibilities and soul ties, love and loss, trust and betrayal. The complex nature of being an only child growing up with three parents and three separate families brought about deep thought and questions, experiences of loneliness when things were difficult and comfort when things were good.

Faith’s paradox is the conflicting experience of doubt and fear. There are days when I suddenly question God’s existence and it baffles me. Even as a little girl, I felt like I always believed in God. Now, as an adult, I still am encapsulated by God, but I cannot understand his ways and battle with doubt. The paradox of mortal and immortal experiences is ever-unfolding. It is by using creative outlets that I am able to place myself in a situation of presence, to take whatever conflict is there - whether obvious or vague - and “talk” about it in the eye of my mind. I think of Frieda Kahlo and the paintings she created in reflection of, or relationship to, her life experiences, such as What the Water Gave Me (fig.2). In my own interpretation, as she bathes, she is removing all the things that have weighed on her by processing them. She sits there acknowledging them before she drains it all away.

2. Frida Kahlo
What the Water Gave Me, 1938
Oil/canvas
The understanding of how my past works itself into my creations may explain the nature of how art is influenced by the issues and/or paradoxes of the artists and their day; however, I find from personal experience that my past doesn’t necessarily limit me from discovering new truths about life. Old habits may still linger, such as lack of patience and the need for immediate results. This is why I may not be much for working with hard materials; they require patience and are not immediate to my vision, if there is one. Still, this thesis work shows to me a new understanding about the interchange between truth and beauty. It is an experience that is hard to explain; it is a state of knowing, or perhaps really only a state of taste, of subjectivity towards what is beautiful and what is not. To a younger me, a California poppy was beautiful. Now it still is, but so is my boys’ splatter of blueberry juice on a kitchen table under the morning sun.

The last paradox I am going to explore, that of process and progress, came to me while I was attending a “Deafhood” lecture where I learned about the dismantling of Deaf culture due to progress versus our need to preserve it through the nature of process. Progress has had little interest in allowing Deaf culture to process its own nature. In the lecture, the speaker pointed out that there are those who seek to fix people they deem disabled, while there are, in fact, deaf people who are completely content being deaf. Process, in the instance of this thesis, follows the same idea. It involves “natural” experiences, such as expressing one’s emotion with body and hands as usually seen in American Sign Language or letting paint spill on canvas as one dances about flinging her paint filled brush; through play, as in being captivated in the learning process of exploring and finding; and acceptance of nature’s course. Progress is the polar opposite, taking matters into our own hands. They can be imposed by expectations, pre-suppositions, assumptions or even consciousness; something Kant might call “empirical.” However, progress does not have to be negative. Progress has enabled hearts to be transplanted and lives saved, languages like American Sign Language to be accepted and thrive, and oil paints that can dry in a shortened amount of time. It’s more the taking the time to soak it all in versus
rushing through it all. This is a daily struggle within myself, it is a continual pendulum moving back and forth and sometimes lingering in between when I am creating. Yet, both process and progress are my modern reality.

While I am wishing to create new works of art as I place myself in place of emotional and creative vulnerability, sometimes I find myself feeling like I am conforming to art that I know, in order to remain in the safe house of “approvals.” Yet to conform, in the progress sense of the word, would have me deny the very gift of process, of a quiet idea waiting to be born. A good friend of mine shared how her son, Noah, did not want to paint the trees green and brown, as the teacher had asked the students in her class to do. He believed that trees were many other colors: orange, red, and purple. However, his grade depended on him creating a tree that fit the standard his teacher had established; trees are green and brown. Green and brown trees do exist and are true, but so are trees of many other colors if we take the time to look closely and long enough at changes of seasons, whether spiritual or physical, like Noah. Paradox is ultimately a struggle of will, but a necessary one in order to search for what is ultimately real. Madeleine L’Engle wrote a beloved poem called “Testament” that expresses this experience (Appendix A).
**Ideas, Movements, & Influences**

Within this chapter, focusing on Ideas, Movements & Influences, I will discuss a philosopher, a theologian, and an artist who have all written in critical theory about beauty and/or truth and explore several categories in art history that are evident and supportive of my thesis process. I will also specify artists interrelated to those movements.

Beginning with Ideas, Elaine Scarry has a way of hitting home what I have tried with great difficulty to express to others about the driving force behind my work. In her 1999 book, *On Beauty and Being Just*, she talks about and defends beauty in many ways. One of the things she points out is that beauty is connected to truth and truth lives within the immortal (30-31). This cycle of beauty connecting (or leading) one to truth and the immortal has been something that has been going on in mankind throughout the centuries and clearly still does today, for I am another to follow after this trail blazer (Appendix B).

When I think of something immortal, I think of God. My experience with beauty turns it into a catalyst that leads me to faith in the truth, which leads me to God since I believe God is Truth. Because this is the driving inspiration for my process, this union of beauty and truth thrives within the nature of my work.

What about holiness? Can the experience of the beautiful be an experience of something holy? Theologian Rudolf Otto in his book *The Idea of the Holy* seems to parallel, to some extent, the experience of the beautiful to the experience of holiness, in which he calls, “inexpressible—... or ineffable—in the sense that it completely eludes apprehension in terms of concepts” (5). I agree that the inebriating experience of the holy and the beautiful are indeed concept-less and it is this concept-less experience that drives my human spirit towards something greater than myself. I cannot claim that when I am painting something beautiful I am also painting something holy, but I do hope it, in some
way, emits holiness of something right, good, and worthy. My work, indeed, “eludes apprehension in terms of concepts.” I have created a concept-less concept for the sake of maintaining justice to that which one cannot quite define. There is something about art in which holiness is experienced; in which beauty and truth are felt because the immortal lies within it.

Abstract Expressionist Mark Rothko’s book titled *The Artist’s Reality* argued various topics about art with one of them addressing the value of aiming to create work that signifies or reveals what he called “the greatest truth.” He uses the prehistoric work of cave art as an example of perfection of accuracy. Cave drawings (fig. 3) were not necessarily realistic representations of their subjects, but they captured the essence of the experience that they were trying to document. It is usually that experience of accuracy in art that attracts me to it. I will reveal throughout this thesis examples of some of the many works of art that, in my judgment, reveal such truth.

3. Lascaux Cave in Dordogne, France

There are a number of art movements that invoke a relationship to my thesis. All in some way influence my work in light of the “accuracy” of which Rothko spoke. You may not see a horse or a bull intently made in my paintings or intaglio types as in cave art; rather what will be found is the essence of making something real not via trompe l’oeil, but rather of something involving that honest spirit in its wonderful free form. Beginning with the Renaissance and Leonardo da Vinci, I will share the following relevant movements that support my process: Romanticism, Symbolism, Dada/Surrealism, Abstract Expressionism, Figurist, Abstract Romanticism and finally Post-Minimalism. I will also mention briefly a work by Gabriel Orozco, who hasn’t been classified as a part of any movement, but whose works focus
on intimacy with the world around him. The conclusion of this segment will be that of children’s art and Outsider art.

In *Gardner’s Art Through the Ages*, a chapter is dedicated to the early and high Renaissance (mid 1400-1600s) titled “Beauty, Science, and Spirit in Italian Art.” Of the work made during this period, it is written: “These exemplary artistic creations further elevated the prestige of artists. Artists could claim divine inspiration, thereby raising visual art to a status formerly only given to poetry” (636). Leonardo da Vinci, born in this time frame, and his thirst for knowledge of nature and the manifestation of his ideas through music, writing, drawings, sketches, works of art (among his many other talents) claimed a mark of reference for many artists to come. His acceptance of the innovative and his adoption of Masaccio’s idea of chiaroscuro – the play of light and dark – are important in providing understanding to my works’ process and results. The innovative quality of da Vinci makes its mark in that my thesis body is an innovative process. Innovation is an act of playfulness, playfulness as an act of total surrender to the thing(s) that bring us to unself-consciousness. And finally, I use the chiaroscuro technique (fig. 4), for the ethereal, harmonious and emotive push/pull quality it gives towards the whole of an artwork (Appendix C).

4. Leonardo da Vinci
*Madonna of the Rocks*, 1483
Oil on canvas

The movement of Romanticism is also critical for its quest to hold the spirit/spiritual as dominant over the traditional, logical approaches to painting. Its need for paradox and holding the Spiritual in the highest esteem (as well as exploration and investigation) go in line with my own statement of paradox and faith earlier. In the post-Renaissance era, one focus of
Romanticism highlighted the struggle in Christian culture between Godly purity and innate human flaws.

The harmonic struggle of Joseph Mallord William Turner’s interplay between the celestial and present situation is an example of a romanticism explained above that I find evident in my own process.

5. Joseph Mallord William Turner
The Lake of Zug, 1843
Watercolor over graphite

Slave Ship (Slavers Throwing Overboard the Dead and Dying, Typhoon Coming, 1840
Oil on canvas

Symbolism has influenced me for its ability to give me a place of security in expressing experiences that I prefer not to represent literally but metaphorically; though some of the symbolism in my work appears by itself, it is not something I intended to put in the work of art. This makes for analysis of the self, of what the painting might be trying to reveal or tell. Marc Chagall is an excellent example of one whose works of art emit metaphoric tales of a self. In his Paysage bleu (fig.7), I see a maternal sphere holding her relationships in the midst of a place and space where time is fleeting, which is a hard truth to accept. That may not be Chagall’s story but because it is painted symbolically, it allows each viewer to create his or her own narrative of the work of art.

7. Marc Chagall
Paysage bleu, 1958
Color lithograph
Dada and Surrealism attempted to remove colonial ideas of art and place art as a servant for life, contrary to Aestheticism, which saw life as a servant for art. This movement appeals to me for the evidence of the chaotic, destructive, social and political conditions and influences of their day shown in their work. In a similar way, in line with Marcel’s idea of being-in-a-situation (Sweetman 151), the unspoken influences of our day affect in some subconscious way the direction and/or result of my own work. Max Ernst and his play with collage, forms, layouts, and alterations of the figure reflect this dis-figurative movement (fig. 8). It is not so much the violence portrayed in such destruction of the human figure (in body and soul) that interests me, but rather the significance their time had on the process and its results. My work is a subconscious attempt to bridge Aestheticism and Dada/Surrealist ideals within the same work. While Surrealism does not aim to be aesthetically pleasing (Hopkins 2-3), I am trying to create work that serves their idea of art-serving-life and still have an authentic beauty at the same time.

In addition, there is an iconic repetition of birds, or sense of birdlike forms in many of Dada artist Max Ernst’s works (figs. 9 & 10). For Ernst, it is said that the birdlike forms were an alter-ego of his, which he dubbed “Loplop” (a.k.a. Hornebom, his pet bird from youth); the interpretation of this alter-ego is left open and endless, never absolutely defined (Homage to Max Ernst, 38). The importance of this species in my own work to that of Ernst’s is twofold: first, his approach to creating that sense of birdlikeness (in stillness or flight) and second, the repetitive presence of birds in his work. My forms of birds are not always clearly realistic but they somehow faithfully express to some extent the characteristics of the creature.

Also, Ernst was a part of a movement willed towards de-constructing, and yet for Ernst, in the process of deconstructing, he reconstructed new images and forms. Thus in such a process, an infusion
of beauty is discovered. In the same way, I often must de-construct in order to discover my work’s beauty and finally, possible story.

Abstract Expressionism, with its action, lyrical and color field paintings, presses emotive qualities of bodily line and color over a large plane of canvas. They incubate an emotional relationship with their viewers. Jackson Pollock, Lee Krasner, Wols, Helen Frankenthaler, Joan Mitchell, and Mark Rothko (figs. 11-13) are those I find worth noting for their approach to Abstract Expressionist painting. The unconsciousness of the direction of their work as well as the bold strokes, polar colors, and spontaneous nature remain in line with my own creative tendencies. Expressive figurism, in the sense of Willem de Kooning’s emotive woman figures and Chagall’s paintings of nuptials or people floating among other symbolized icons or figures, also play a role in my work. Whether by brushstroke, the imprint of my hands, or a piece of twisted plastic wrap that suggests an unknown figure sitting; these influences appear somehow, even though obscurely. In some, my figures appear quiet and still, while others are high strung and extremely active, or the work can have both, becoming an orchestra that plays all kinds of instruments.
12. Lee Krasner
_Courtship_, 1966
Oil on canvas

13. Wols (A. O. Wolfgang Schulze)
_Painting_, 1946-47
Oil on canvas

14. Helen Frankenthaler
_Jacob’s Ladder_, 1957
Oil on unprimed canvas

15. Mark Rothko
_Untitled_, 1949
Oil on canvas

16. Joan Mitchell
_Grandes Carrières_, 1961-62
Oil on canvas
The movement, Abstract Romanticism, was not known to me until recently, when I stumbled across it during a search for books on the subject of romanticism. The significance of this movement is the marriage of abstraction to romanticism. Both play leading roles in the composition of my work. In his book, *The Birth of Abstract Romanticism*, the author Albert Boime mentions an artist named Kamran Khavarani, an architect and artist, who is making “art for a new humanity” inspired by the poetry and philosophy of the 13th century figure Jalaluddin Rumi (fig. 17). In the prologue, one finds a diary of intense, surreal drawings made during Khavarani’s secret escape to America in 1981. There, one understands how this body of work led to Khavarani’s conviction of art’s capability to restore the struggling self, and thence, a struggling society. This conviction goes hand in hand with Dada’s revelation that art is for life, to change lives. Though, to the contrary, Dada revealed acts of violence that were in line with what war was doing to their time whereas for Khavarani, his work is a catalyst towards positive consciousness. Still, Dada’s behavior reflected an honest state of their day (but a hopeless one). Khavarani’s work follows the ideas of Dada but he takes hope and meaning with it. There is a chapter dedicated to Rumi’s influence upon Khavarani’s work, in which there is a series of artworks titled *Rumi Says….* One such thing Rumi said is this: “Think not but of beauty: it is the energy from the beautiful thought that creates every beautiful reality” (Boime 87). In line with immanent beauty, I find the experience of the beautiful is the derivative of truth because it leads me to a place I will to be. Truth simply appeals.
Also, another point of interest to Khavarani’s paintings is that he paints with his hands. So, as he transcends into states of love and joy, the source of his being leads his hands to make what is calling to be birthed. This mirrors for me a relationship with my primary language (ASL) for its visual dramatic nature as well as my recurrent need to touch or imprint my works of art directly with my hands.

The Minimalist-labeled artist Agnes Martin created graph-like, subtle, gentle works that invite intimacy and human presence (Interestingly, she saw herself as an abstract expressionist) (fig. 18). Her friend, post-minimalism artist Richard Tuttle and his childlike, spiritual, inclusive works also intrigue me. Both works require the viewer to look very closely. One will see, especially in the intaglio types of my thesis body of work, the influence of post-minimalism but further the need to look intimately at the work. When I am gazing at my paintings, the greatest delight is found in studying the parts filled with colors, layers, pastels and the mark of hand or pencil as well as taking note of the changes in the work when the light upon the work is moved. Below, in Tuttle’s 10th Wire Piece (fig. 19), there is a subtle interplay of two authentic representations, which depend on one another yet appear differently: the wire and its shadow. Depending on where the light hits, they appear as individual lines that are interconnected though not of the same material nor image entirely. Another artist I wish to mention is Ana Mendieta, who, though not labeled as a minimalist, has minimalist qualities that invite the spectator into a state of pure intimacy. Her Silueta and Body Tracks series (figs. 20 & 21) reveal a hint of minimal romanticism and presence in a simple, prehistoric paleolithic way, a quality I try to capture in my work.
Gabriel Orozco’s art is a varied series of work born from ideas revolving around intimacy and perspective within this world, much like my work. There is a sense, in his photographic work (fig. 22) of “happenings” (not the performance based work this term is known for), that he stumbled across
something enlightening and compelling which could have been easily overlooked as trash. He embraces the act of creating relationships with whatever appears around him and he does so with elegance, humor, and startling “accuracy”.

22. Gabriel Orozco
_Melted Popsicle_, 1993
Cibachrome

Last of all, I hold in reverence the art of children and Outsider art for the value of their unconsciousness. A certain level of pure aesthetics is revealed, though these works can be guided under an instructor, because they present themselves honestly without preconception. One such artist named Judith Scott, diagnosed with Down syndrome and deafness, was a member of the Creative Growth Art Center, a creative center dedicated to people with disabilities in Oakland, California. Her materials consisted of yarn and found objects, with which she created an art that expressed a kind of emotional intimacy. In her work, she created form while simultaneously concealing form. Many of her sculptures are covered so completely that we do not know what is inside unless they are x-rayed (figs. 23& 24). Thus, the work appears to present itself as both a body and a soul, one not without the other. Further, is the fascination I have towards the constant layering she was driven to, the quality of the textile texture, and the surprising unity of many colors. Interpretations of her work can be many (She could not nor would not say what she meant) and this increases the importance and interest her work has to me.
Finally, in the work of children, Antje Tesche-Mentzen asserts that happiness is found in children’s art because of the unconscious (fig. 25 & 26). She explains the experience of wholeness that is achieved through art, especially in children living in uncritical environments (10). Children have a given ability to imagine without any limits on the possibilities. Such truths enable happiness to exist and thrive (Appendix D). I know that experience of wholeness because I do feel weightlessly complete at times when I create. The paradox of this experience is the outgrowing of the unconscious and the struggle in the aftermath with the realization of such reality. Then one must venture on, while conscious, how to reset the self back into unconsciousness. This may be an almost impossible thing to do, but pursued nevertheless. When I paint, I do face the reality of logistics but I desire to present something true, not constructed or instructed for that matter. I try to achieve the unconscious by immersing myself in the impulsive, improvisational, playful approach. Picasso sought after this childlike nature and concluded that he could not achieve this. He said in a conversation with Brassai on November 17, 1943 comparing his art to that of a child artist:
My very first drawings could never have appeared in an exhibition of children’s drawings. The child’s awkwardness and naïveté were almost completely absent from them. I was very quickly moved beyond the stage of that marvelous vision. When I was that kid’s age, I was doing academic drawings. The attention to detail, the precision in them frighten me. My father was a drawing teacher, and it was probably he who pushed me prematurely in that direction (114-15).

To conclude, one can see in obvious or subtle ways how the ideas, movements, and the works and ways of artists infiltrated my creative process. I cannot say that I was entirely exposed to them all prior to my thesis work. In a way, it seems like the work that has come forth is a given. It just had to be. In other ways, I accept and admit the exposure such influences have in my art because in many cases they have only inspired me rather than deterred me. Creative people inspire creative people, whether child or elder, there is a flux of shared innovation among human beings. This gives rise to works of art that become memories of times past and present or of things unbound by time that ultimately unite mankind.
III. Evolution

Changes & Developments

If anything has evolved or changed concerning my thesis concept, it is not obvious. The only clear thing that has changed is the evolution of the paintings or forms themselves. Once a painting was set in one form, a month later it has been layered into a new but reminiscent one. The work of art may be flipped or changed from horizontal to vertical position. Mediums may change the flow or makeup of the work. Cursive lyrical texts may be woven through. Layers may conceal or reveal.

Also, in realizing part of the thesis work was created in the basement of an institution, I have come to wonder if a work of art is influenced by the space in which it is created. The following questions I ask are: can studio architecture affect the plasticity artists produce? How does having our studios in the RIT basement affect the work I create there, if at all? How does the space condition or influence our state of being? What might we create had we been surrounded with light from windows? Are we better off, creatively, in the quiet hidden place of our campus, like turtles in their shells? Or, will there be some shift to our creative body of work if we are moved to a higher plane or level, architecturally and spiritually speaking? I perceive basements as representative of negative or neglected things within the soul since basements can be used as a place to put things we don’t want or need around the house (in other words, our body). It’s dark and rarely is there much natural light, creating a sense of burdensome weight. On the contrary, a balcony overseeing a bay or standing on the top of a precipice is a different experience. Since it is literally higher, standing in that position or space can feel very spiritual since we are literally elevated to a higher plane with a perspective on the world and our place in it. Thus, I question if my body of work might have a different experience or result had I painted on a rooftop somewhere. And I wonder if, because I often create in basements, they affect my tendency to write, draw, or paint the “baggage” of my soul through the colors, line, and splashes of random materials.
Finally, I have come to question if really the thesis work is a product of my soul, rather than spirit or a duality of both. Immanent beauty first began as a concept of enlightenment when stumbling across something beautiful and/or truthful. This is still evident in the creative process of my work, but as I lay myself down at the end of the day, I ask if the work is a picture of my soul since I am still a human being. I think it is. Then again perhaps it is a body of work that is about the soul’s pursuit of spirit, of purity. In discovering truth about myself through painting, I am perhaps, in faith, experiencing the healing touch of the spirit, of transcendence.
IV. The Body of Work

In the following paragraphs I will lay out images of the thesis work and share personal thoughts in regard to them. The techniques, styles, and processes mentioned in the section of ideas, movements and influences will be recognizable, though I will inform in each work, if needed, the relationship it has with some artists, history and/or thought. Some selected works that were not included in the thesis exhibition will also be included for the aesthetic support it gives to the thesis work. In order to know which work was used for the thesis exhibition, I will size the image larger than the ones that were not and highlight in bold the work’s title.

The first piece I’ll discuss here is “Finding Polly” (fig. 28). Before I say any further, the “before” image (fig. 27) of the same work is included to show the evolution of the work itself as mentioned in the previous chapter. This piece began without a title, with a fish like form in a bowl of red. After turning it upside down and painting again, “Finding Polly” emerged. The title given to this work was decided more on a whim. It came to my mind and so in faith, I believed it had something to say about the work of art. The name Polly is the name of a young girl who was kidnapped from her own home in Petaluma, California not far from where I lived. She was killed soon after. My parents and I went to the site where she was found and there a shrine was kept. After visiting this site, we went into the office of the Polly Klaas Foundation and saw a Christmas tree covered with ornaments of angels that belonged to her, for it was said that she loved angels. The redemption in this piece is in the word “Finding”. After giving the work its name, I came to terms that perhaps the work is about her being moved to a heavenly place with an angelic birdlike presence. As mentioned before, birds are frequently, in form or essence, used in my art. Ever since I was young, I’d collect bird feathers in part as a reminder of a memory and then, my admiration towards freedom, of the desire thereof and grace.

Perhaps the experience of seeing pictures of Polly and the places related to this tragedy stayed in my subconscious and in due time came out at the time the work was completed. The poetic
applications of line are reminiscent of the lyrical, expressive work of Joan Mitchell (Molesworth 11). Born to a poetic mother and artistic father, Mitchell admitted that “this cross between the linguistic and perceptual, a kind of profound synaesthesia, existed for her even as a child” (9). It is as if she wrote her poems by painting it on her blank raw canvases.

Last, in looking at the before and after piece you can see a handprint marked by the mouth of the fish in the first image, then in the latter, behind the celestial creature. This is not the only work in which the mark of my hand is left. I speculate that it has to do with markings, to mark the work as mine (as the cave people did to their works in cave art) and possibly to recognize or validate a time, to mark Marcel’s idea, in my being-in-a-situation experience. In placing my hand there, it expresses a feeling of empathy, of recognition, and/or need for healing within myself and others.

27. Jenamarie Bacot
Finding Polly, 2006-7 (Before)
Mixed media
22 ½ x 30 ¼ inches

28. Jenamarie Bacot
Finding Polly, 2007 (After)
Mixed Media
22 ½ x 30 ¼ inches
The creation of “Creator’s Essence” (fig. 29) has been built in the same way most of my art is built, spontaneously and unknowing of what is to come. The interpretation of the work as it began to take form brought me to a time past I do not remember but happened. As the bean like shape in the work came into being, it reminded me of a fetus inside a placenta. This brought me to think about the time I was gestating in my mother’s womb. Evident is the push and pull of the chiaroscuro effect found in da Vinci as well as the energy of the abstract expressionist movement. The red spot injected a symbolist effect, as if symbolizing the emotion of pain from rejection when my father left my mother as I was evolving from that little bean into a baby. It had me question, explore and confront the issue of abandonment and the need to forgive. Karol Truman, in her book Feelings Buried Alive Never Die..., discusses the origin of feelings, mentioning the ability of infants to experience feelings when they are in the gestational stage or newborn. One client of hers realized that her premature birth experience created a frustrating cause and effect result growing up. She was not aware of it until counseled back into that time of her life. Truman writes: “During our very earliest moments of life, whatever the situation was, our perception of life began. Our natural drive, however, was and is to return to the place of comfort and peace…..whether that realm was before the womb or in the womb” (39).

In the “After” piece (fig. 30), the dominant colors of blue and purple give the painting a “blues” feeling. The work carries a mysterious introspective melancholy to it, perhaps marked by the previous interpretation of the piece. But a hint of enlightenment seems to be rising in the subtle ivory white and yellows. This surfaces into my mind as a sign of hope rising through reconciliation. The “After” piece hides the fetus, adding, with ink and other mediums, a deeper atmosphere or covering for that matter; almost a sense of something moving, like a vortex of stars circulating in the galaxy. I concluded that the works’ feeling was of God himself in the act of making the cosmos, of life. He started with a “void” as said in the book of Genesis and made, in seven days, a world of great beauty out of chaos. The sense of several things moving in the work gives the idea of the process of making something from an idea and
making it concrete, as if something began dispersed but is then, in its nature, composed together in some kind of orderliness. Rabbi Harold Kushner mentions this relationship between God and the idea of chaos creating order:

“Consider the growth of a human fetus, my correspondent wrote. It starts out as a cluster of undifferentiated cells, and over the course of a few months, by a process that should never cease to astonish us no matter how many million times it happens, some of those cells become eyes, some become lungs, some become fingers. Randomness gives way to order (52).

An American Artist magazine dated June 1977 mentions Turner and his creative ways. He would begin his work in total disorder but end it with surprising orderly unity. Such a way is quite similar to my own when I created this piece; “He began by pouring wet paint on the paper ‘til it was saturated; he tore, he scratched, he scrubbed at it in a kind of frenzy, and the whole thing was a chaos. But gradually and as if by magic, the lovely ship with all its exquisite minutiae came into being” (Luffman 82). Turner’s success in transporting his viewers from one state to another by creating such power and beauty between reality and the supernatural is, in this case, manifested, through visual imagination, a reverence towards the creative power and beauty of God.

29. Jenamarie Bacot
Creator’s Essence, 2006-07 (Before)
Mixed Media
30 ¼ x 22 ½ inches
The final painting exhibited in the thesis show is called “Observer’s Viewer” (fig. 31). In this piece is a vertical flux of large linear strands overlapping one after another with strokes of red as a semblance of bodily flesh or perhaps a capturing of blood moving throughout the body and through the heart. Brushes of blue give the work a sense of the presence of wind. The white horizon with bird-like forms flying above it impresses upon me the many memories of visiting the Pacific Ocean. When I go there, I feel like I am exposed and tender against the great big waters while in a bubble of awe and wonder towards my Creator. Beside this horizon is a figurative shape of a watchful or looking eye. The eye is threefold in personal and emotive meaning: God/loving, Father/angry or me/vulnerable. The same effect is seen in an intaglio type called “Realm’s Eye” (fig. 32). Both works are paradoxical and purely improvisational. Layers that make the light and dark effect, the romanticism of the colors and
strokes or the breaking of film overlapping film evoke a sentimental quality. Both titles are meant to ask the viewer the question, who is looking at who: God to me, me to God or both in a quiet standstill?

Worth noting, in all the paintings the scrappy edgy nature of the paper is left exposed. I find that in painting on paper that is not so clean cut, there is a journalistic, intimate quality to it; in the scrapping or adding, in the organic feeling of the material and its denial for the mechanical hard edge. On the contrary, for the intaglio type, the edge of the paper is not the same but is the natural quality of the print’s indented border. Finally, if you change “Realm’s Eye” from vertical to horizontal (fig. 32), the eye transforms into a symbolic figurative form crouched and resting in that same environment juxtaposing order and chaos. The figure’s “skin” is transparent to the world around her. They are in some way akin to one another.

31. Jenamarie Bacot
Observer’s Viewer, 2007
Mixed Media
30 ¼ x 22 ½ inches
The background of this next work (fig. 33) rests in a recitation of the 91st psalm in the Holy Bible; a beautiful psalm about resting under the wings of God in bird-like form. This sentimental passage came to me in a time of prayer with some friends. And so, in this work you see a profile of a bird-like head looking outward in the midst of something else present, of something about and around her private thoughts. The effect of carborundum and screen filler gives the print its contrast and grey areas. The distortion of the ImagOn, a light-sensitive film used in the process, (as if making a linear, crinkled or drape like effect) was a happy accident, unifying the work. The bridge-like stroke on the bird’s head, looks as if a hat, is interconnected to my attachment to rainbows. Rainbows, as do bridges, hold an intimate meaning to me and, therefore, somehow come into my work. This may not be expressed in the nature of rainbows’ multi-faceted colors, but rather in the presence of its form. This form interplays with the form of a bird wing covering, which connects it to the psalm’s story.
The three “Untitled” intaglio types to follow (figs. 34-36) remind me of the primitive, minimalistic, naturalist movements in art as well as the Dada approach to abrupt, spontaneous and simple making. They appear as if a document or imprint of experience in sight and/or the presence, of something authentic. The process of making these prints used single or multiple materials on a plate that is then inked and rolled onto a clean sheet of paper through a press. We do not so much see the image on the plate itself, for it is, in some ways, still ambiguous and abstract. Rather, the result of the plate’s image is on something separate from it, a naked sheet of paper. Painting is different; the result is ever-present and changing and the entire process that created that image is within the work itself, instead of obscured by a plate. Though the art of printmaking is a different avenue of creating, I find it can still evoke the same emotional, expressive qualities painting gives to me. The suspense of only partially knowing the result when rolling the plate and paper through the press is just as exciting an
adventure of questing for the unknown, for possibilities. And, sometimes in the making of a duplicate, the image slowly changes through the removal or shift of tired film on the plate, thus showing a form evolving from one thing to another.

Interestingly, in observing these “Untitled” prints, when they are turned around, the form changes into another form that appears familiar. I gave these forms dual names: fish/walrus, mole/doghead, and dragon/seahorse, though they are not actually included in the title in order to encourage the imagination/investigation of my audience. I question if these dual forms somehow are interrelated to the play of who’s watching whom in “Realm’s Eye” and “Observer’s Viewer”. I wonder if there is some kind of subjective interest towards the multi-folding perspective of emotion and experience, of awareness. Fish/walrus and dragon/seahorse appear empathic to me; there is something loving about them, perhaps because the lyrical effect of the film when crumpled on the plate resembles flowing textile. For mole/doghead, it appears violent in stroke and form, reminding me of a time, not long ago, of trying to save a dying mole from my dog’s capture. The interrelationship of the form’s morphing between mole and dog to that of my experience of saving a mole from a dog is really interesting, especially when it was made without consciousness. It also reminds me of the continual concern I have towards the loss of value towards living creatures in our society. Of course, it is an assumption in which I base that call; an assumption based on the negative effect of negative events such as road kill, for example. Road kill reminds me daily how disoriented and desensitized we’ve become towards life (human and animal). Instead of thinking that these animals don’t know their way, I think about what we’ve taken away from them, and ultimately ourselves. This effect of the negative experience is quite at home with the birth of the Dada movement.

This experience is once more reflected in “The Unknown Soldier” (fig. 37), which without any political opinion except compassion towards those lost, is about men who have sacrificed their lives for our freedom. I used the worm-like form to portray those rainy days when worms attempt to escape
drowning by exposing themselves on sidewalks or roads, but in exposure they are crushed. We walk on them like they are insignificant and, after a few days, they disappear and are forgotten. These works, in a way, represent a spiritual reaction towards particular experiences not always quite clear, nor always positive to me but they are honest.

34. Jenamarie Bacot
*Untitled* (fish/walrus), 2007
Intaglio Type
23 7/8 x 17 3/4 inches

35. Jenamarie Bacot
*Untitled* (dragon/seahorse), 2007
Intaglio Type
10 1/8 x 12 13/16 inches
36. Jenamarie Bacot
*Untitled (mole/doghead)*, 2007
Intaglio Type
24 x 17 ¾ inches

37. Jenamarie Bacot
*The Unknown Soldier*, 2007
Intaglio Type
18 x 11 inches
Additional Thoughts towards the Body of Work:

Windows & “Window to the Soul”

The human soul carries within it a depth that is hard to measure. Its form is invisible but we formulate it somehow through metaphors; but sometimes even metaphors leave us lost to that which we will ourselves to understand. Thinking about and observing windows for some time, I found a relationship between the rectangular shape of the paper of my work to common windows. Usually windows are shaped in vertical rectangles. Studying them, especially at nighttime, I observed interplay between the inside and outside world. The interior décor was reflected in the glass and thus overlapped transparently with whatever was outside. The transparent mix of body (whatever is reflected in the glass) and soul (a person walking outside, a moving tree, rainfall, a house) began to take place; as if an inaudible dialogue between two living beings were taking place.

Further, since these works of art are framed, they are now placed, in essence, in a window within a window. Now, not only do the viewers see the work of art itself but also their own bodily form reflected in the work of art. This brings me to ask: how does the work reflect not only my own soul but also that of others? This is important, in that one quality in art is its ability to connect to people while still retaining its independence. Though it can be hung differently within a different space or the kind of lighting cast can change the work, somehow people give art ever-unfolding meaning, which gives the work a kind of immortality. I appreciate immensely the insights of others about my work, which is why I don’t always wish to tell my version of the story behind it. Their stories, if I am allowed to hear them, give me a deeper understanding of what the work of art could be and/or mean.
V. Conclusion:

The Question of Conformity

During the installation process of the thesis work, the paradox of aesthetics and conformity came into play. Did I want to layout my works of art in a standard display for a gallery exhibition? Or did I want to do a decorative approach to the whole body of work? Did I want to place works of art in surprising places, like Tuttle, so that people would be tempted to kneel down or tip toe to see it? Hopkins mentioned “exhibition design” in reference to how the Dada, and then the Surrealists, experimented with exhibiting their work (Hopkins 38), and this became an appealing matter of thought.

My decisions in placing specific pieces in various places throughout the space ultimately was determined by the traditional sense of exhibition and, yet, the untraditional as well. Tuttle would put small intimate collage-like works of art close to the floor of a gallery space. This required a change of perspective that I find valuable. So, some of the paintings and some of the intaglio types were hung traditionally. However, small paper/multi-media bird-like sculptures that I made spontaneously for the exhibit (unfortunately undocumented) were placed above eye level or below. I wanted to capture a feeling of a bird-like presence around the space assigned to me. I thought the result was a successful merge of different exhibition approaches (or “design” in Hopkins’ words) and a silent welcome to viewers to engage the space in a gentle, non-demanding way.
Aims & Accomplishments

Altogether the goal of this thesis was to experience the state of ultimate being-ness through truth in the beautiful. To say it has been fully achieved in the thesis work might not be entirely accurate, but the process of aiming towards it, largely subconsciously, is true. Or, it has been somewhat achieved through the bits and pieces of enlightenment during the mode of making. I expect that any works of art I make in the future will continue to address this love for beautiful truth. Further, perhaps it is the icon of beauty in which I am trying to situate myself. L’Engle mentions her iconic experience that sheds light on the experience of the beautiful, both that which I happen upon or seek: “Whatever is an open door to God is, for me, an icon. It may be that small picture pasted on wood with which I travel. The icon of the three angels, the Holy Trinity, does not prove to me anything about God, but it opens the doors and windows of my heart” (Penguins and Golden Calves... 16-17).

I hope my artistic experience is an upward spiral of coming to terms, piece by piece, with myself and the physical and spiritual world. It is also an experience where trust is not tangible, I can’t touch it but I believe it exists and in turn absorbs everything that seems lost into a purposeful whole. Iris Murdoch wrote a “re-reading” of Plato, titled “Art and Eros: A Dialogue about Art”, between six characters: Callistos, Acastos, Mantias, Deximenes, Plato and Socrates. Their conversation (Appendix A) takes place in Athens in the late fifth century BC. Plato is speaking of the experience of enlightenment and a perfect love that is in line with my concept in his dialogue with his fellow thinkers (488-89).

I also aim to demonstrate or express some form of real beauty in art that evokes emotion in my audience. Rabbi Kushner, in using Michelangelo’s “Pieta” (fig. 38) as an example of art that has accomplished both beauty and truth, tells well the emotive influence I hope to achieve:
One of the greatest artistic creations ever fashioned by human hands is the *Pieta* of Michelangelo, a sculpture done in 1498 when the artist was only twenty-three. It shows Mary the mother of Jesus holding the broken body of her son on her lap, looking at him with such tenderness and sorrow that one does not have to share Christian belief in the theological significance of the Crucifixion to be moved by it. The combination of love and sorrow on Mary’s face, the sense of her longing to take onto herself some of her son’s pain that she might lessen it, speaks to anyone who has loved another person (25).

Michelangelo somehow accomplished representing the emotional situation of loss even though he did not live during the times people say Jesus lived. Perhaps he experienced loss himself and extracted from that experience to make this piece. He never saw a crucified Christ or weeping Mary but he, in his own best way, worked towards making something that would emit the *emotional* reality of paternal/maternal love. Because he successfully did this, people of many decades past can look at this sculpture and feel feelings that make them all humanly one. This accomplishment credits the work as a work of honest beauty. In being vulnerable towards the creative process, vulnerability will come in its purest form. This is born from a willingness to *believe*, by faith, that something is unfolding before me that has meaning worth looking at; even if I cannot readily translate it immediately but only over time; or that the meaning will be found through my beholders.
I will always be creating. I *must* create in order to restore myself and then, hopefully, my audience. By obeying this need within, I find myself resting in a realm of love, which leads me to a place of peace and ultimately to that wonderful state I have named immanent beauty.
Closing Statements

The experience of immanent beauty brings me ultimately to the experience of love. In encountering the beautiful, because it is encountered, makes it a gift to me. In seeking and finding it, the same is true. There is letter written by the Apostle Paul about love, which gives me a portrait of discovery: “When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known” (1 Corinthians 13:11-12).

In my perspective, the position of the child is the position of not knowing the self, where the soul of the human being is vague or in a becoming state. In becoming a man (adult), the person is beginning to understand herself and by understanding, arrive to that place of knowing fully those things she did not know in full. Life is not so simple though I aspire towards simplicity, towards that answer that could satisfy our search for the origins of our humanity. The image below (fig. 39) is in fact a wall in my studio space; a drawing of a figure is cocooned into a fetal position with multiple writings of thoughts surrounding her. She is questioning and wondering, investigating this being she inhabits as well as the world in which she lives. It is a state of knowing in part, aspiring to know in full.

39. Jenamarie Bacot
Photograph of wall in my studio at RIT, 2007
Appendix A – Testament, from The Weather of the Heart By Madeleine L’Engle

O God
I will do thy will,
I will
to do thy will.

How can my will
Will to do thy will?
If I will
to know thy will
then I fall on my own will.
How can I will
to love or to obey?
My very willing bars the way.
Willingness becomes self-will.

O God
if thou will
turn my will to thy will
if thou will
tell me thy will
it will
be in spite of
not because of
my will.

Help me to lose my will.
Each day
let my will die
so will I
be born.
New born will I live
willingly
lovingly
and will
will be no more
will be thine
O God
If thou will.
Appendix B – from *On Beauty and Being Just*, by Elaine Scarry

One can see why beauty—by Homer, by Plato, by Aquinas, by Dante (and the list would go on, name upon name, century by century, page upon page, ...)—has been perceived to be bound up with the immortal, for it prompts a search for a precedent, which in turn prompts a search for a still earlier precedent, and the mind keeps tripping backward until it at last reaches something that has no precedent, which may very well be the immortal. And one can see why beauty—by those same artists, philosophers, theologians of the Old World and the New—has been perceived to be bound up with truth. What is beautiful is in league with what is true because truth abides in the immortal sphere (30-31).
Appendix C – “Beauty, Science, and Spirit in Italian Art” from Gardner’s Art Through the Ages

Modeling with light and shadow and expressing emotional states were, for Leonardo, the heart of painting....Leonardo presented the figures in Virgin of the Rocks in a pyramidal grouping and, more notably, as sharing the same environment. This groundbreaking achievement—the unified representation of objects in an atmospheric setting—was a manifestation of his scientific curiosity about the invisible substance surrounding things. The Madonna, Christ Child, infant John the Baptist, and angel emerge through nuances of light and shade from the half-light of the cavernous visionary landscape. Light simultaneously veils and reveals the forms, immersing them in a layer of atmosphere between them and viewer’s eyes. Leonardo’s effective use of atmospheric perspective is on full view here. The ambiguity of light and shade (familiar in dusk’s optical haziness) serves the psychological ambiguity of perception. The group depicted, wrapped in subtle light and shade, eludes precise definition and interpretation. The figures pray, point, and bless, and these acts and gestures, although their meanings are not certain, visually unite the individuals portrayed. The angel points to the infant John and, through his outward glance, involves spectators in the tableau. John prays to the Christ Child and is blessed in return. The Virgin herself completes the series of interlocking gestures, her left hand reaching toward the Christ Child and her right hand resting protectively on John’s shoulder. The melting mood of tenderness, enhanced by the caressing light, suffuses the entire composition. What the eye sees is fugitive, as are the states of the soul, or, in Leonardo’s term, its “intentions” (638).
Appendix D – from *Children’s Art* by Antje Tesche-Mentzen and Herlinde Koelbl

Painting is a path towards happiness. And happiness is possible only when one is in a state of oneness with oneself. Anyone who has experienced this, either consciously as an adult or unconsciously as a child, knows what I mean. In the process of painting or another creative activity, everything else falls away and one experiences a state of weightlessness. Feeling, understanding, and giving shape to experience merge and become a single, unified whole.

Children naturally experience this happiness – if they’re allowed to remain free and if one doesn’t criticize them or try to influence them. A child’s imagination is unlimited. It soars into realms that have long since become inaccessible to us adults. Children link the most incredible things with one another, as though doing so were perfectly natural and logical. There is no “right” or “wrong.” Everything is possible. And above all: there is no such thing as “talented” or “untalented.” These value judgments are made only in adult life. When children, especially preschool children whom no one has “trimmed” or “instructed,” take a brush in hand, it almost seems as though God were painting through them. Their paintings reveal that the inner and outer worlds are indistinguishable (10).
Appendix E – from “Art and Eros: A Dialogue about Art” by Iris Murdoch

“PLATO: When they get out they’re amazed, they see real things in the sunlight, their minds are awakened and they understand – and oh – the world, when you understand it and can see it, even a little – can be so beautiful – and the anxiety and the mean egoism go away and your eyes are unveiled – perhaps it’s only for a short time, because the light of the sun dazzles you – and you begin to know about what Acastos calls the truth, and see the difference between truth and falsehood in the clear light of truth itself –

ACASTOS: Like when you really understand mathematics.

PLATO: Yes, like when you really understand anything – And that’s difficult – I don’t just mean slick cleverness, I mean something which shakes the whole soul and opens it out into some large brightness and this is love too, when we love real things and see them distinctly in a clear light.

MANTIAS: What about the people they’ve left behind in the dark?

PLATO: And when we begin to know and to find out, it’s wonderful, it’s like remembering, as if we were coming home to a spiritual world where we really belong.

MANTIAS: Is this some sort of religious theory?

PLATO: And then the highest thing of all, there’s wisdom, and all the things you understand, the hard things, come together somehow, and you see that they’re connected, and that’s real wisdom, which is goodness and virtue and freedom – real freedom like what most people who talk about freedom can’t conceive of – and this isn’t just intellectual understanding, it’s spiritual, it’s what we really think in our hearts about the gods, like Socrates said – and that’s Eros too, the high, the heavenly Eros, love made perfect and wise and good – and that far far point, that’s truth, seeing everything in the light of the sun – and then – seeing the sun itself – and that’s goodness – and joy.” (488-89).
Illustrations:

1. Andrew Newell Wyeth
   *Edge of the Field*, 1956
   Watercolor on paper
   19 1/2 in. x 26 1/2 in.
   Colby College Museum of Art
   Image from Artstor

2. Frida Kahlo
   *What the Water Gave Me*, 1938
   Private Collection
   Oil/canvas
   90x71cm
   Data from: Digital Library Federation Academic Image Cooperative
   Image from Artstor

3. Lascaux Cave in Dordogne
   France, *Lascaux: Axial Gallery Far End of Gallery general view*
   University of California, San Diego
   Image from Artstor

4. Leonardo da Vinci
   *Madonna of the Rocks*, 1483
   Oil on canvas
   199 x 122 cm
   Musée du Louvre
   Image and original data provided by Erich Lessing Culture and Fine Arts Archives/ART RESOURCE, N.Y.
   Image from Artstor

5. Joseph Mallord William Turner
   *The Lake of Zug*, 1843
   Watercolor over graphite
   11 3/4 x 18 3/8 in.
   The Metropolitan Museum of Art
   Image from Artstor

   *Slave Ship (Slavers Throwing Overboard the Dead and Dying, Typhoon Coming)*, 1840
   Oil on canvas
   35 3/4 x 48 1/4 in.
   Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
   Image from Artstor

7. Marc Chagall
   *Paysage bleu*, 1958
   Color lithograph
   49 x 66 cm (image); 57.5 x 75.4 cm (sheet)
   Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco
   © 2009 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris
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8. Max Ernst
*Papillons (Butterflies)*, 1932
Oil on canvas
25 5/8 x 31 7/8 in.
Yale University Art Gallery, Modern and Contemporary Art
Gift of Collection Société Anonyme
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9. Max Ernst
*Interior of Sight: Egg*, 1929
Oil on canvas
38 3/4x31'
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10. Max Ernst
*Blue and Pink Doves*, 1926
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11. Jackson Pollock
*Working in East Hampton Studio*, 1951
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12. Lee Krasner
*Courtship*, 1966
51x71"
Data from: University of California, San Diego
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13. Wols (A. O. Wolfgang Schulze)
*Painting*, 1946-47
Oil on Canvas
31 7/8 x 32 (81 x 81.1 cm)
The Museum of Modern Art
Gift of D. and J. de Menil Fund
Image from Artstor

14. Helen Frankenthaler
*Jacob's Ladder*, 1957
Oil on unprimed canvas
9' 5 3/8" x 69 7/8"
The Museum of Modern Art
Image from Artstor
15. Mark Rothko
*Untitled*, 1949
Oil on canvas
52 3/8 x 26 3/4 in.
Collection of Christopher Rothko
Image from Artstor

16. Joan Mitchell
*Grandes Carrières*, 1961-62
Oil on canvas
6' 6 3/4" x 9' 10 1/4"
The Museum of Modern Art
Image from Artstor

17. Kamran Khavarani
*Angelic Flowers*, 2003
Oil on paper
Painting #: 009L30GL
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18. Agnes Martin
*Wheat*, 1957
Oil on canvas
49 x49 inches
Image and original data provided by Larry Qualls
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19. Richard Tuttle
*10th Wire Piece*, 1972
Florist wire, nails, and graphite
Dimensions vary with installation
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Image from Artstor

20. Ana Mendieta
*Untitled, from the series Silueta Works in Iowa*, 1978
Gelatin silver print
19 1/2 in. x 15 1/2 in.
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art
Image from Artstor

21. Ana Mendieta
*Body Tracks*, 4/8/1982
Performance
Originally at Franklin Furnace, New York, NY
Slide image of performance (1 of 7)
Source material in Franklin Furnace Archive, Inc., Brooklyn, NY
Image from Artstor
22. Gabriel Orozco  
*Melted Popsicle*, 1993  
Cibachrome  
20 x 16 inches  
Data from: University of California, San Diego  
Image from Artstor

23. Judith Scott  
*Untitled (Multicolored Nest)*, 1988-89  
Yarn and twine with unknown armature  
8 x 36 x 25"  
American Folk Art Museum  
Gift of Creative Growth Art Center  
Image from Artstor

24. Judith Scott  
*Untitled (White Nest)*, 1992  
Yarn and fabric with unknown armature  
12 x 18 x 28"  
American Folk Art Museum  
Gift of Creative Growth Art Center  
Image from Artstor

25. Mona, 3 years old  
*Monkey*  
Watercolor, chalk  
Book: *Children’s Art*  
Munich: Frederking & Thaler

26. Abishai & Micah Bacot  

27. Jenamarie Bacot  
*Finding Polly*, 2006-7 (Before)

28. Jenamarie Bacot  
*Finding Polly*, 2007 (After)

29. Jenamarie Bacot  
*Creator’s Essence*, 2006-7 (Before)

30. Jenamarie Bacot  
*Creator’s Essence*, 2007 (After)

31. Jenamarie Bacot  
*Observer’s Viewer*, 2007

32. Jenamarie Bacot  
*Realm’s Eye*, 2007

33. Jenamarie Bacot  
*The Gift of a Psalm*, 2007
34. Jenamarie Bacot
*Untitled (fish/walrus)*, 2007

35. Jenamarie Bacot
*Untitled (dragon/seahorse)*, 2007

36. Jenamarie Bacot
*Untitled (mole/doghead)*, 2007

37. Jenamarie Bacot
*The Unknown Soldier*, 2007

38. Michelangelo Buonarroti
*Pieta*, 1498-1500
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Image from Artstor

39. Jenamarie Bacot
*Photograph of wall in my studio at RIT*, 2007
Bibliography:


