

EXPLORATIONS IN CONSCIOUSNESS



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EXPLORATIONS IN CONSCIOUSNESS

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ABSTRACT

This series of artwork, *Explorations in Consciousness*, is a visual account of my experiences and realizations that have occurred over the last twenty years within, or as a result of, out-of-body experiences, lucid dreams, sensory deprivation, meditative states, sleep paralysis, and paranormal events. Many of these experiences have forever changed my life and how I view existence and reality. Because these events tend to raise more questions than they answer, I frequently research a variety of topics including quantum mechanics, metaphysics, religion, and philosophy. This research informs my paintings as I attempt to translate and share my subjective experiences through a more objective view.

My paintings are designed to gently encourage viewers to turn, or return, to the fundamental questions related to our existence and the nature of reality. My hope is to spark an interest, relight an old flame, or perhaps stoke an already existing fire. I rely on intuition and moments of synchronicity to create work that is both mysteriously familiar and enticingly foreign. Ideally, the work will resonate with viewers and gently nudge them toward, or along, their own path of questioning and self discovery.

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It is because of the amazing teachers, staff, and students at LCAD that my experience there has been so amazing and fruitful. I would specifically like to thank Betty Shelton and Peter Zokosky. You have both provided a level of mentorship and guidance that has far exceeded the requirements of your job. I am deeply grateful for your genuine kindness and generosity. Thank you.

DEDICATION

To Amy, Hanna, and Noah. You are the only journey that matters.

EPIGRAPH

I wonder if I've been changed in the night? Let me think: was I the same when I got up this morning? I almost think I can remember feeling a little different. But if I'm not the same, the next question is, Who in the world am I? Ah, THAT'S the great puzzle!

~Lewis Carroll, *Alice in Wonderland*

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DESCRIPTION

In the Beginning... There was a UFO?

Los Alamos, New Mexico, 1992

I pulled my seventy-seven chevy pickup truck into the dirt parking lot of the little-league fields. I shut off the engine and headlights. The hearty 350 cubic-inch engine sputtered and then stopped. I carefully surveyed the surroundings. The coast was clear. The only sign of life was the settling dust and the sounds of the crickets. Michael and I had just stolen a case of beer from the storage room of the local bowling alley. At eighteen years old, it seemed like a valid and logical solution to counter the warm summer air. Michael cracked open a can and passed it to me. We sat in the truck and enjoyed the stillness of our small town.

Halfway into my beer, I caught a glimpse of a blue hue inside the cab of the truck. I looked around for cars. The parking lot was empty. A few moments later, the inside of the truck took on a red hue. It was subtle, but noticeable. Fully expecting to see the lights of a police car, I turned to look out the rear window. There was nothing—no car, no people, no light source. The blue hue came again, then the red. The brightness of the colors increased with each change. There was no notable source—just a sudden, inexplicable change of hue inside the truck. By the look on Michael's face, I could tell that he was as perplexed as I was. "What is that?" I asked, knowing full well that he had no answer. We both took inventory of our surroundings. The night was calm and still. The parking lot was empty. We were alone. I leaned forward and looked up at the sky through the front windshield. "Holy shit!" I exclaimed. Michael looked up and, in a stunned silence, said nothing. A massive row of

bright, white lights filled the sky directly above us. There were roughly twelve lights across in a straight row, each one evenly spaced from the other. The lights were too bright to make out any underlying structure. They flashed in a seemingly random order along the row for ten seconds, and then vanished. Moments later, the row of lights reappeared in a completely different area of the sky. “What *is* that?” I said, this time with a unique blend of fear and excitement. Michael didn’t know. The span of lights continued in this pattern. They would remain in one location of the sky for ten or fifteen seconds and run through a pattern of flashing and blinking. Then, they would vanish and reappear moments later in a completely different area of the sky. Sometimes it was directly over us. Other times it was much further away. The lights continued appearing at different locations in the sky for three or four minutes until they eventually moved further away and then vanished for good. Our silent daze was broken a few minutes later by the approaching hum of a single-engine plane. The little plane seemed like a clumsy ant trudging noisily through molasses in comparison to the enormous lights that had been able to instantaneously transverse miles of sky in complete silence. It was a cold bucket of water in the face that screamed, “Take note! Reality is much bigger than you think.”

San Diego, California, 1994

I was climbing into the hollow trunk of a very large tree with a beautiful woman. *Why am I climbing into a tree?* I thought. A flash of awareness flooded over me. *I’m dreaming right now.* In an explosion of excitement, I jumped out of the tree and took off in flight across the sky. “This is a dream!” I yelled. The scene shifted and I found myself flying over a

vibrant expanse of rolling, green hills. The sky was a crisp blue that I had never seen before. I could not get over what was happening. I eventually woke up and feverishly wrote down the experience. I had never even imagined that such a thing was possible. Surely others had experienced it as well. Why on earth weren't they talking about it?

Pacific Ocean, 1994

I woke up unable to breathe. I tried to get up out of my Navy bunk, but, to my dismay, my body would not move. Swarms of intense noises and sensations engulfed me. My entire being screamed at me to get up, but I simply could not move. I knew exactly where I was, including the position in which I was laying, but my body would not work. A menacing voice whispered and chattered inches from my ear. My body vibrated and stung as if it was being violently electrocuted. I was terrified. I tried with all of my might to call out to my friend Joe in his bunk a few yards away. Slowly, I was able to yell out his name. "Joe!" There was no response. *How long can I go without breathing?* I worried. I was able to get his name out a second time, "Joe!" Again, no response. I had no idea what was happening. Finally, I was able to start wiggling my index finger. Then, the sensations broke and I was able to move. I opened my eyes expecting to see Joe and my other shipmates standing over me to help. To my surprise, the sleeping area was completely calm and still. I could hear Joe snoring peacefully in his bunk nearby. The fifteen or so other people sleeping in the same room appeared to have heard nothing. All conditions were "normal." The peacefulness of the room in contrast to what I had just experienced made my stomach turn.

San Diego, California, 1995

I was getting into the passenger side of Pete's car. "Damn it. I can't find my military ID," he grumbled. Knowing that he couldn't get back onto the base without it, we began carefully searching the car. After an hour of checking and rechecking the interior of the car, we had come up empty. "It must have fallen out of my pocket somewhere," Pete said in despair. I sighed and sat back into the passenger seat. A very sudden and strange idea struck me. I could find the ID with my mind. I wasn't sure where the notion came from, but I had little to lose by trying. I closed my eyes and quieted my thoughts. A clear image of the ID and its location came into my mind's eye.

"I know exactly where it is," I said. I had no doubts. I reached along the side of my seat (where we had already searched multiple times) and pulled out the ID card. Pete's face was a blend of surprise and skepticism.

Persian Gulf, 1995

I woke up in the middle of the night. My mind was awake and aware, but I was unable to move. Once again, I was literally trapped inside of my own paralyzed body. A loud buzzing sound rumbled inside of my head. Fierce vibrations shook my body. I had been waking up like this for months. I dreaded going to bed at night. I was exhausted and simply could not take it anymore. *Fine. I give up*, I thought to myself. I stopped fighting and just completely surrendered to the experience. The vibrations increased. The buzzing grew louder. It felt as though every neuron inside of my brain was firing simultaneously. Just when the intensity grew to a point where I thought that I might literally explode, everything

stopped and was replaced by a peaceful and calm silence. At that moment, I had the clear sensation of separating from my body. I began floating above my Navy bunk and through the various pipes and ducts that ran along the overhead of the ship. After rising for some time, I began shooting through a tunnel made of wispy, white strands of tangible light. It was absolutely exhilarating. I was shocked and at the same time elated at how real and crisp the experience felt. It all seemed strangely familiar. The tunnel faded and I gently slowed to a stop. Around me, in every direction, was a thick, vast, three-dimensional void of absolute nothingness. I waited with anticipation of what would occur next. I began to seriously wonder if I had died in my sleep. Then, without warning, I was shot at rocket speed back into my body. After some effort, I was able to begin moving my fingers and sit up in my bunk. The only thought that I could muster was, “What was *that!*”

Explorations in Consciousness

This series of artwork, *Explorations in Consciousness*, is a visual account of my experiences and realizations that have occurred over the last 20 years. The works are essentially illustrations and visual musings of my experiences, personal experiments, research, and resultant findings. The bulk of the experiences have occurred within (or as a result of) lucid dreams, out-of-body experiences, sleep paralysis, meditative states, sensory deprivation, and paranormal events. Many of these experiences have profoundly altered how I view existence and reality.

The experiences described previously highlight a few of the key moments that set the stage for events that were to come. Around the time of these first experiences, I also began to

encounter synchronistic events on a regular basis that were so far beyond chance that, to this day, I am astounded even recalling them. It became very clear that I was being guided along a particular path. I did not understand why or how it was all happening. I only knew that it was happening and that I could trust the various nudges to lead me to something that was useful and that would provide more understanding. My intuition became, and remains, the driving force in my decision making process.

By the time that my enlistment in the Navy ended in 1996, it was clear to me that there was much more to my existence and reality than I had been previously led to believe. Because these events raised more questions than they answered, I began researching a variety of topics that related to the nature of reality and our existence. I knew that there had to be some over-arching understanding that could make sense of it all. I began reading a variety of books searching for some scientific model, religious view, philosophical stance, or spiritual understanding that fit my experiences. I found bits and pieces of truth in various texts and teachings, but none of them seemed to explain the full story or provide a big-picture view of the events. I continued to have similar nighttime experiences throughout the following twelve years. However, with no real context in which to place them, I primarily considered them to be strange—sometimes frightening—trips into my own psyche.

A Little Dreaming Goes a Long Way

One night in 2008, I was working on the computer and happened to hear something on the television about lucid dreaming. Though I had never heard the term before, I was quite sure it was somehow related to what I had experienced over the years. The show was focused

on psychophysicologist Stephen LaBerg and his research into conscious dreaming. A lucid dream (or conscious dream) is a dream in which the experiencer becomes fully aware that she is dreaming. The experiences described by LaBerg sounded a great deal like my own. I immediately ordered LaBerg's book *Exploring the World of Lucid Dreaming*. Before I knew it, I was an active oneironaut (explorer of the dream state). I began practicing all of the tricks and techniques and was soon having as many as three lucid dreams a week. Over the next two years, I spent many nights flying over various settings, conversing with dream characters, and exploring what I assumed to be the depths of my own subconscious.

My painting *Roy's* is a compilation of various lucid dream experiences that occurred in the years following my discovery of LaBerg's book (see fig. 1). In *Roy's*, the dreamer is floating up from his chair. The threatening clouds and gusting wind that surround him suggest that he is at the brink of becoming lucid. Soon, he will be free to explore the expansive dreamscape that surrounds him. The small buildings in the background are missing any doors or windows. Are they simply incomplete elements of the dream setting, or do they represent hidden aspects of the dreamer's subconscious? The large sign points at the buildings and encourages the dreamer to find out. Who is doing the leading? Is it the dreamer or something (or someone) else?

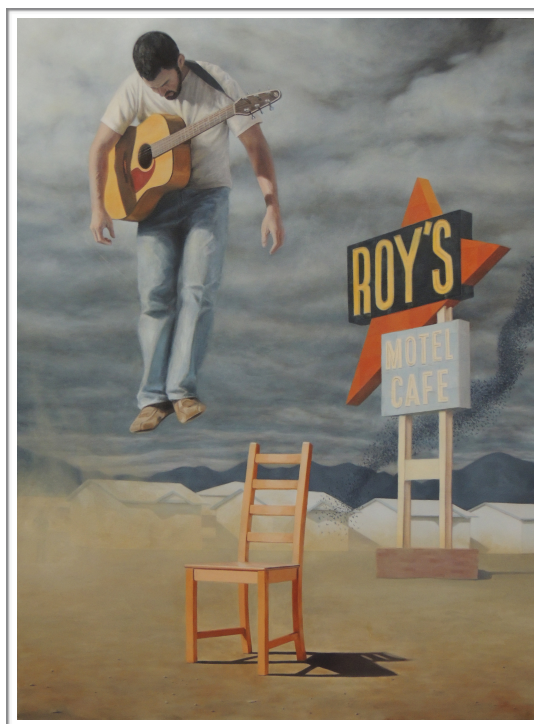


Fig. 1. Justin Snodgrass, *Roy's*, 2012, oil on canvas, 48" x 36"

My experience with lucid dreaming is that the settings and sensations tend to be hyperreal. Oftentimes, the colors and crispness of the dreamscape extend beyond anything that I have experienced in waking reality. This is also true with much of the emotional content. For example, a sense of appreciation can easily slip into a feeling of deep love. Happiness can transition toward joy and ecstasy. Fear can slide into terror. *Roy's* is intended to reflect this volatile nature. The sky is both pleasant and threatening. The chair is clearly rendered, but completely isolated and seemingly staged. The murmuration of starlings is intriguing, but also eerily similar to a tornado. The man gently ascends, but into a potential storm.

In LaBerg's book, I finally found a name for that often terrifying, paralyzed state with which I had become so familiar: sleep paralysis. The body puts itself into a state of complete muscle atonia during REM sleep as a means to prevent injury from physically acting out our dreams. So, the amazing Kung Fu kick that we perform in our dream might result in a light twitch as we lay in our bed, as opposed to a pulled hamstring and a tumble to the floor. Because we are fully engaged in a dream (or are otherwise unaware of our physical body), we are not normally aware of this inability to move. However, during sleep paralysis, the mind becomes (or remains) awake and aware while the body is technically still asleep. The resulting sensation is that of being awake inside of an immobile body. Along with the paralysis, people commonly report an inability to breathe, vivid imagery, a menacing voice or figure in the room, loud noises, and extreme fear (Cheyne and Pennycook 135-148; Buhlman 214-227).

As frightening as sleep paralysis is to most, LaBerg actually recommends seeking it out as a gateway to the lucid dream state: “Sleep paralysis is not only nothing to be frightened of, it can be something to be sought after and cultivated” (LaBerg 109). At the time, I wasn’t convinced. I had experienced it on many occasions and I definitely was not looking to instigate it. As it turned out, I would have no choice. Sleep paralysis became a regular part of my life. I despised it. It seemed to be a natural side effect of lucid dreaming. On several occasions, I found myself stuck in a perpetual cycle of sleep paralysis and what is known in the lucid dreaming community as false awakenings. I would wake up to sleep paralysis and immediately begin trying to fight my way out of it by moving a finger or wiggling a toe. After several minutes of struggle, I would finally break free. I would get up to use the restroom or get some water only to discover that I was still dreaming and had not woken up at all. I would wake myself up from the dream and find myself back in sleep paralysis once again. This cycle often continued five or more times until I would finally find myself in waking reality.

My painting *Old Hag* addresses my experiences with sleep paralysis (often called “old hag syndrome”) and encourages viewers to consider their own nighttime experiences more deeply (see fig. 2). At first glance, the painting seems to present a party or celebration of sorts. A woman in the shadows of the foreground elegantly holds a wine glass in the air and acknowledges the guests. Another woman sings joyfully in the background while the man next to her casually plays a guitar. Several of the guests seem to be wearing costumes. Though slightly strange, everything appears to be pleasant and festive. However, with further inspection, the seemingly lighthearted event begins to take on an eerie feel. Something is



Fig. 2. Justin Snodgrass, *Old Hag*, 2014, oil on polyester, 48'' x 65''

amiss. We soon discover that the woman in the foreground is sitting on the chest of a blindfolded man. His legs are in a state of struggle and suggest internal discomfort, yet his limp hand and arm hint at unconsciousness, submission, or death. A mysterious cat looks on—possibly the only being present that feels the slightest bit of compassion toward the man. The Buddha statue in the foreground awkwardly laughs in delight. A man in the background covers his face with a mask and whispers a secret to the woman next to him. What is the secret? Is everybody in on the “joke” except for the man on the couch? The open mouth of the tribal mask mimics the mouth of the Buddha, the singer, and the horse. The menacing stare of the mask forces us to question the intent behind the other seemingly joyous expressions.

The pose of the arm and hand of the blindfolded man is a reference to Jacques-Louis David’s painting *The Death of Marat* (see fig. 3). In David’s painting, the arm hangs limp

and lifeless from the dead body of Marat. *The Death of Marat* has always struck me as being simultaneously beautiful and unsettling. I considered this well balanced duality when arranging the various elements of *Old Hag*.

The references to sound in *Old Hag* relate to the common experience of hearing various noises and audible phenomenon during sleep paralysis. These sounds can include voices, whispers, wind, music, footsteps, laughter, buzzing, humming, and the experiencer's name being called (Buhlman 214-227).

The sensation is such that the noises seem very real and local. On a handful of occasions, I have instigated brief conversations with the various voices by expressing my thoughts mentally. The conversations were interesting to say the least. In all of my experiences, an intense buzzing sound and tactile vibration have been present. The distinct sound of the didgeridoo being played by the man in *Old Hag* is intended to illicit this sense of buzzing and vibration in the viewer.

In folklore, sleep paralysis is often associated with some evil or menacing type of character such as a witch, demon, shadow figure, or succubus. Often, the person experiencing sleep paralysis will see the intruder sitting on, and crushing, their chest. Though I have never encountered this myself, I wanted to reference this common occurrence as well as reference *The Nightmare* by Henry Fuseli (see fig. 4). In *The Nightmare*, a demonic looking troll sits atop a seemingly unresponsive woman. Meanwhile, a black horse peers around a curtain with



Fig. 3. Jacques-Louis David 1748-1825, *The Death of Marat*, 1793, oil on canvas, 65" x 50", Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium.



Fig. 4. Henry Fuseli, 1741-1825, *The Nightmare*, 1781, oil on canvas, 40" x 50", Detroit Institute of Arts.

suspicious anticipation. The horse costume in *Old Hag* with its inappropriate joy is a reference to Fuseli's horse. As with *The Death of Marat*, the gesture of the woman's arm and hand in *The Nightmare* becomes a critical element of the piece and supports the notion of submission, unconsciousness, or death.

I intentionally designed *Old Hag* so that it might balance at the edge of visual and content overload. However, I did not want the viewer to feel overwhelmed. Ideally, the various elements will serve as puzzle pieces for the viewer to arrange into some form of personal meaning. Though I have aimed to leave the painting open for individual interpretation, I also want to lead the viewer toward a potential question or solution that might remind them of an unusual dream or nighttime event that they have experienced. For viewers that have experienced sleep paralysis first hand, they will likely recognize the various references. In many ways, *Old Hag* is saying to the viewer, "Hey, remember that strange thing that happened to you that one night? Weird, right?"

After several years of experiencing sleep paralysis on a regular basis, I had had enough. I was tired of struggling against it. I vowed that the next time I woke up to it, I would completely surrender to the process. If I died or was swept away into some dark nowhere of my psyche, that was fine—I accepted it. I was tired of the fear. The next time it occurred, I figuratively gritted my teeth and braced for impact. The various noises and sensations built to a point that seemed unbearable. I refused to stand down. Like the

experience many years before in the Navy, the intensity built to a peak and then, in an instant, the chaos was replaced with a gentle silence. I lifted up out of my body and floated into a dark void of nothingness. I was again perplexed by the event. I floated there for some time in the darkness. The fear and sense of terror from the sleep paralysis were gone. I just floated in the void as a single point of awareness. *Where am I?* I thought to myself. Bam! I was instantly shot back into my body. I lay in bed for several minutes absorbing what had just happened. What was this other state—this other place? *Where* was it? I began to seriously wonder if too much lucid dreaming was somehow unraveling the fabric of my mind.

I continued to gut my way through sleep paralysis during subsequent occurrences. As LaBerg had suggested, I began to use sleep paralysis as a tool to enter the lucid dream state. On most occasions, I would float out of my body and into the dark void. Then, a setting would gradually form around me. The amazement of the experiences simply outweighed the discomfort of sleep paralysis. I was continually stunned by the realness of these events. I felt no discontinuity between the “I” in waking life and the “I” in these other settings. A hint of an idea began to bubble up in the back of my mind: the experiences didn’t feel like dreams at all—they felt completely real.

Out of the Body, Into the Mind

I do not recall exactly what it was that caused the next chain of events to occur. It was no doubt analogous to having begun an internet search on a specific brand of car tires only to find oneself, four hours later, ordering a deluxe set of battery-powered candles. It just happened. I somehow ended up with Bob Monroe’s book *Journeys Out of the Body* in my

hand. It was the first time that I had come across (or paid attention to) the term “out-of-body.” As I read the pages of Monroe’s book, it became clear to me that many of my experiences fit the description of a classic out-of-body experience. The typical view of an out-of-body experience is that the consciousness (soul, spirit, or mind) leaves the body and is free to explore other realms of reality. The lucid dreaming view tends to suppose that the experiences all take place in the mind (or brain) of the experiencer. When I considered my own experiences, the distinction between lucid dreams and out-of-body experiences seemed blurred. Was I exploring my subconscious or other realities? The notion that I had been (unknowingly) stumbling around in other realities amongst other beings rattled me at the core. Had I been like a toddler playing in a bustling machine shop—completely unaware of the potential dangers around me? I wasn’t sure.

In *Journeys Out of the Body*, Monroe presents his journal entries detailing his out-of-body experiences. He makes only brief comments regarding each entry to fill in various details surrounding the events. Monroe simply presents each event with limited comments as if to say, “this is what has been happening to me. I don’t really get it either.” Monroe had gathered some objective evidence while in the out-of-body state which led him to feel that the experiences might be real. In one example, Monroe reported having visited a friend in her home while he was in the out-of-body state. He pinched her side trying to assess if she might be able to see him. The next day, he found out that not only did she feel a mysterious pinch the previous evening, but she also had a bruise to show for it (57). I eagerly read Monroe’s subsequent books and any other book that I could find related to the topic of out-of-body

experiences and astral projection. I found myself swimming in uncertainty. Were the experiences real (taking place in other realities) or were they simply a result of brain activity?

In my search to unravel the mystery of these experiences, I stumbled upon a book entitled *My Big TOE* (My Big Theory of Everything) written by nuclear physicist and consciousness researcher Tom Campbell. I first opened the pages of *My Big TOE* in 2010. I feel as though I have lived an entire lifetime since then. Within the pages of *My Big TOE*, I found a theory and model that easily explained all of my experiences and resonated with my own ideas related to “all-that-is.” One of the key points that Campbell makes in *My Big TOE* is that we should not just believe him and his theory, but instead go find out the truth for ourselves. It is good advice. No matter how many videos I watched or books I read, there was only one definitive way to sort it all out. It had to be through my own direct experience. I needed to put in the work of exploring these other states for myself.

The decision to jump back into the experiences in spite of my new-found fear and uncertainty influenced the concept for *Data Streams* (see fig. 5). The figure is switching from a “normal,” waking reality to an out-of-body experience. Which experience is real? What is real? The figure jitters between different states—hung like the static between FM radio stations. The



Fig. 5. Justin Snodgrass, *Data Streams*, 2013, oil on canvas, 48" x 30"

repeated forms of the man's face and hands suggests a breaking apart of his perspective. Part of him reaches out to grasp a new reality, but there are also signs of terror and confusion in the eyes of the other faces and in the gestures of the hands. The optical illusion printed on the sheets pulls the viewer into the man's unstable and confused state. The illusion causes the painting to slightly undulate, yet nothing is actually moving. Are we sure we can trust our senses to define what is real? The figure reaches out into the unknown.

In a recorded lecture, Tom Campbell notes that those seeking to access the out-of-body state are sometimes met with “fear tests” by what he calls “the larger consciousness system.” He explains that the system can provide these tests as a means to protect us from getting in over heads or “wandering around in places that [we] are not ready to be in” (“Calgary” 1:02:30). Campbell points out that the “system will sometimes test your fear to see whether or not you're ready; and if you're not ready, they'll just chase you back out” (“Calgary” 1:03:20). The reasoning behind this protective measure, according to Campbell, is that our fears can quickly manifest in the out-of-body state—putting us face-to-face with them. The concern is that our fear will manifest itself as some creature or fearful experience, which will in turn create more fear, which will also manifest into something, which will create more fear, and so on. These “fear tests” then are designed as a sort of guardian at the gates.

This idea of “fear tests” is something that I am also referencing in *Data Streams* and *Old Hag*. I have had several experiences that would seem to fit Campbell's description of “fear tests.” The most intense of these experiences has occurred while transitioning from sleep paralysis to the out-of-body state. In one instance, a voice literally yelled, “Boo!” and

caused me to instantly pop back into my body. On another occasion, the same voice made a playful sounding growl. Again, I panicked and shot back into my body. In *Data Streams*, the man has pressed beyond the fear and is blindly reaching out into the unknown.

After much experience and research in the matter, I have come to realize that the terms *lucid dreaming* and *out-of-body experience* (also known as astral projection) are synonymous. In either case, the person is fully lucid and aware while seemingly without (or unaware of) the physical body. The literature related to lucid dreaming is interchangeable with the literature related to out-of-body experiences. The techniques and personal accounts overlap greatly. The key distinction that people tend to make when labeling an experience as a lucid dream or an out-of-body experience is related to how the transition took place—how they got from “here” (normal waking reality) to “there.” Of course, what experience a person *thinks* they are having plays a role as well.

I now only distinguish between two primary states of being. The first state is when our consciousness is functioning while paired with our physical body. The second state is when our consciousness is functioning without, and/or seemingly separate from, the physical body. The same adventures and experiences are possible regardless of whether we become fully aware in a dream or if we consciously transition to the out-of-body state from sleep paralysis or meditation. For the sake of efficiency and clarity, I will, from now on, use the term “out-of-body” to describe all conscious experiences that take place without the physical body present.

Navigating the out-of-body state has involved a very broad learning curve for me. It has taken much trial and error to understand some of the basic functionalities of the state.

While some experiences are extremely vivid and crisp, others can be groggy and sluggish. In the case of the latter, it is often difficult to control movement or to gain any visual clarity. The environment in these cases is typically dark and drab in color. On many occasions, I have transitioned through sleep paralysis, had the sensation of leaving my body, and then landed in an other-worldly and dreary version of my bedroom. I have spent much time trying to sort out ways to improve the clarity of the experience and to navigate my way down the hallway to the living room. It is no doubt analogous to a baby learning to walk by trial and error.

My painting *I Think, I See* relates to my efforts in learning to navigate these experiences (see fig. 6). A woman sits at the threshold of a doorway that leads to a hallway. Her body and face vibrate and appear out of focus. She touches the hardwood floor with her hand as if to stabilize the vibrations.

There is nobody at the end of the hall,

yet there is a reflection of a woman in the mirror. A lamp is overturned and is spilling light into the hallway—suggesting some struggle that may have taken place earlier. Is the woman in the reflection the same woman that is in the foreground? What was it that occurred or is occurring? The viewer is left to decide. Like *Old Hag* and *Data Streams*, I am referencing specific experiences in *I Think, I See*, but am also providing elements that will allow for



Fig. 6. Justin Snodgrass, *I Think, I See*, 2013, oil on polyester, 24" x 28"

varying interpretations. The title relates to my eventual realization that trying to “see” or physically move in these states is often counterproductive. The primary driving force in these states is thought. Thus, to see clearly or to move, one has to simply *think* it as opposed to trying to *do* it.

After working through some of the fears related to the notion that the out-of-body state might be real, I wanted to somehow *test* the realness for myself. I set my intent to perform these tests during my next experiences. This, of course, raised the question: How does one determine what is real? I decided that I would begin by just closely examining something within the environment itself. The following excerpts are taken from my journal. I have made minor adjustments for the sake of clarity.

October 10, 2010: I was following an Asian man. He kept leading me through tunnels and stairwells. I was trying to get him to explain what he was going to show me or tell me, but he just grinned and kept motioning for me to follow him. I remembered my intent to test the realness of the experience. I stopped in one of the hallways. There was a random piece of foam hanging from the wall. I walked over to it to focus all of my attention on it. I looked at it, touched it, and deeply thought about the fact that I was touching it. Then I thought about the fact that I was even doing this test and it hit me. I'm not exactly sure of what I said or thought, but it went something like, "Holy shit! This is all real! Oh, wow..."

I was truly shocked. It was the fact that "I" (consciousness) was thinking about it and experiencing it that made it feel real. Something came to life inside of me. It was distant but familiar. It was big.

October 12, 2010: I was driving down a winding road. I was fully lucid, but withholding my excitement and just going along with the experience. After a while, the road turned into a hallway. I was no longer in a car, but was just floating along. Four walls closed in around me. Then, it all stopped and I found myself in an empty room with no windows or doors. The only notable element within the room was the green shag carpet. I had the sense that I was to be shown something—a lesson of sorts perhaps. I waited a bit, but nothing occurred. I took this chance to test the realness. I bent down and ran my fingers through the carpet. I focused on how the carpet looked and felt. Again, I stopped to ponder the notion that I was present at that moment in a state that felt perfectly real. Like before, I was completely amazed. I became lost in looking at the texture of the carpet. I got closer and closer, until I felt like I was a speck of dust floating through the fibers. I began to feel vibrations. From past experiences, I knew that this meant that I was either waking up in sleep paralysis, or changing states. I tried to hold on to the experience, but it slowly slipped away and I found myself back in my bed.

Like the first test, I woke up in absolute amazement at the level of realness that I had experienced. “Where” had I been?

October 15, 2010: The Asian man was back. This time he was in a car. We were racing. I was fully lucid and remembered my intent to test the realness. I was flying in a seated position with my legs out in front of me (no car, just me). I looked down at my legs. They did not look like my normal legs, but they were real—they were mine. The road zipped by underneath me. I proceeded very calmly with my thoughts. I did

not want any over-excitement to stop the experience. I looked up and to the side of the road. I was passing a house. I looked at each detail of the setting very carefully. There was a truck parked in front, gravel in the yard, and a chain link fence. I took it all in with great purpose, almost daring it not to be real. Again the shock and excitement hit me.

These experiences profoundly changed my definition of the word “real.” I had no choice but to consider the possibility that these other “places” might *actually* be real. This, of course, raised further questions. Who was the Asian man? Was he simply a manifestation or projection of my own thoughts, or is he perhaps an individual entity that was helping me—something akin to a guide?

In sharing these experiences with my wife, she pointed out that there is not really any way to be certain that these “places” were real. It is a good point. However, the experiences *felt* as real as any experience I have had in normal, waking reality. In addition, they were peak experiences that forced me to fully reconsider my perspective. Because these experiences felt equally (or more) real than my typical waking life, I must also question—with equal skepticism—the realness of any of my daily experiences. As will be discussed later, the question of what is real is not just a topic for mystics. It is a topic for physicists as well. As it turns out, the common understanding and definition of *real* might be due for some adjustments.

My painting *Conscious* is an attempt to capture these realness tests, their impact on me, and the questions they raised (see fig. 7). My mind was blown and I was in a daze for several weeks after these tests. Such things are not always easily expressed in words.

Creating *Conscious* allowed me the opportunity to share my own amazement toward what I had found without needing to provide the full details. In this way, I can simply suggest the core of the experiences and concepts in a way that might connect with a wider range of people than if I were to be more explicit.



Fig. 7. Justin Snodgrass, *Conscious*, 2012, oil on canvas, 72" x 48"

The figure in the painting lifts a heavy and solid brick. His finger extends to poke at it and challenge its realness. The caution tape hints at the risk of venturing into the unknown. What will he find if he touches the brick? What will happen? The brick seems solid and real. However, the elements surrounding the figure imply some sort of designed or staged environment. The strange feel of the mop bucket, flooded floor, and stacked bricks hints at a dream-like setting. If a brick feels real in a dream, is the dream real? Does an object

determine what is real or is it our experience of the object that makes it real? The canvas in the background shows a simple design drawing that mimics the neatly stacked bricks in the foreground. Are the bricks nothing more than information—a result of some background computation? Perhaps the canvas represents a projection of the man's thoughts. Is the concept of a brick more real than the brick itself? The facial expression of the lone figure shows his internal contemplation of these ideas. The viewer is left to wonder.

Have You Heard This!

The book *Flatland* by Edwin A. Abbott takes place in the two-dimensional world of Flatland. The main character of the story, A. Square, through a series of strange events, finds himself exploring the three-dimensional world of Spaceland. In trying to share the amazing news about Spaceland and three-dimensionality to the people of Flatland, A. Square is met with contempt and is eventually imprisoned. What is A. Square to do? What could he have done to convince the good people of Flatland that there were actually three-dimensions? The answer, in my estimation, is nothing. As Tom Campbell points out in an interview, “It can’t be your personal truth unless it is your personal experience” (“Science and the ‘Paranormal’” 12:48:00).

At the Beyond Belief Conference in 2006, Physicist Neil deGrasse Tyson gave a lecture in which he was discussing the astonishing notion that we—the “we” that can even think this—are made up of the same material as the rest of the universe. We are “stardust.” In describing his own excitement in knowing that the iron in a meteorite and the iron in our blood have a “common origin in the core of a star,” he, with excited gesture and tone, said, “That makes me want to grab people on the street and say, ‘Have you heard this!’” (World Pantheism 1:20). That statement accurately summarizes the internal feeling that I have toward my own experiences and findings. However, I have learned through direct experience that sharing my adventures and findings in their entirety often begets blank stares or sympathetic smiles. It is perhaps something similar to how the person on the street might have reacted if Neil deGrasse Tyson would have actually grabbed them and exclaimed, “Have you heard this!” That approach simply does not work. I have come to realize that the

best I can do is to make a light suggestion or present a gentle nudge. Artwork is a great tool for accomplishing this. Art allows me to suggest some topic or question to the viewers without having to directly say it. This process allows some wiggle room for the viewers to settle into any suggested ideas or questions at their own pace and from their own unique angle.

In a video interview, William Buhlman used the analogy of a train ride to describe how we tend to approach our own existence:

We are all—all of humanity, all six and a half billion of us—on this train, and we're all heading to this unknown destination. We're on this 75 year journey. Think how insane this is. We're all collectively on this journey for 75 years and we don't have a clue where we are going. I mean, would that be acceptable in any aspect of our life now? Would you leave the house and not have a destination? We wouldn't accept that on a day-to-day basis, and yet we're accepting that for our entire life journey.

(Patheleven)

Using Buhlman's analogy, the goal with *Explorations in Consciousness* is to encourage people to lift their head up a bit and look out the windows of the train. My hope is that my paintings will in some way tug at that (often hidden) inner drive to ask life's big questions. I want to remind people of the absolute amazement and mystery that is around and within us. Maintaining some level of humility about what we actually know and also some level of curiosity toward finding out more is, as out-of-body explorer Robert Bruce once said, "to stay in the question" (Tsakiris). Similarly, Albert Einstein noted:

The important thing is not to stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reasons for existence. One cannot help but be in awe when he contemplates the mysteries of eternity, of life, of the marvelous structure of reality. It is enough if one tries merely to comprehend a little of this mystery every day. Never lose a holy curiosity. (Miller 64)

If I can, even in some small way, encourage people to return to (or remain in) that state of questioning and curiosity, then I have succeeded. That state is one in which substantial growth and personal evolution are likely to occur. In my own experiences and observations, it is a state that promotes long-term, positive change. A world in which the majority are fully embracing their own unique path of evolution and growth is a world that is awake and alive.

In my estimation, love is at the heart of the mystery of our existence. If we consider the life of somebody such as Gandhi as opposed to the life of a hardened gangster in prison, we can see that one path leads to greater understanding, wisdom, and joy, while the other path leads to suffering, limitation, and potential self-destruction. Things such as compassion, selflessness, and caring tend to lead to *positive* long-term outcomes, while things such as ego, fear, greed, and selfishness tend to lead to *negative* long-term outcomes. In taking an honest look at my own life, I can pick out how these phenomena have factored into my own happiness and suffering as well as the happiness and suffering of those around me. The feedback suggests that working to become better—working to evolve the quality of our being—is somewhere at the root of “all-that-is.” We might also consider our own thought process as we prepare to take our last breath. What will we be focused on in that moment? Will our thoughts be occupied with the jobs we had, the house in which we lived, or the cars we

drove? It seems more likely that we will be concerned with the type of person we were, how we treated others, and how well we managed our various relationships.

According to Tom Campbell, we are each pieces of a larger system of consciousness. The “larger consciousness system” is comprised of data—non-physical, digital information. As an information system, the larger consciousness system is continually evolving and growing toward states of lower entropy (more order, organization, structure, and potential). Campbell explains that “Within a large digital consciousness system, the most profitable internal arrangement is achieved when the various groupings of bits (subsystems and inner structure) interact cooperatively for long-term mutual profitability” (*My Big TOE* 128). As pieces, or “chunks,” of the larger consciousness system, we are here in this reality to experience, learn, grow, and evolve. According to Campbell, as we grow and evolve (reduce our entropy), the whole system grows and evolves. Campbell notes that “Love is the natural state of a low entropy consciousness” (*My Big TOE* 128). In an interview, Campbell explains the purpose of our lives according to his model:

What’s the purpose of life? Well, the purpose of existence is to grow up, to become love—get rid of your fear and ego. That’s the purpose. That’s why we’re here and this is our schoolhouse. How do you go about doing that? You do it with your intent. You make choices. You have 1,000 choices to make every day, and particularly I’m talking about the choices you have with interactions with other people. You can make those choices in a way that helps you evolve, moves you toward love, lowers your entropy, increases the value of your information; or you can make choices that can go in the other way, de-evolve—they go the way of fear, go the way of self-centeredness, ego.

Those things de-evolve you and increase your entropy. So, we get these choices and we get feedback immediately. If we have a fear based life, we generally get kind of unhappy, we're not too pleased, life is difficult and unpleasant. That's the feedback trying to tell you to wake up and go the other direction. (Deep Truth Radio 32:02)

The works in *Explorations in Consciousness* attempt to remind people of the mystery of their own existence. However, my intention extends beyond simply introducing topics such as out-of-body experiences, lucid dreaming, and quantum mechanics. My drive to point people toward the mystery is fed by the fact that I find it highly probable that they will eventually find love at the core. In this case, love equates to compassion, to cooperation, to selflessness, to greater states of being, and to letting go of fear and ego. If love is, in fact, at the core of the mystery, any path of self-discovery or unraveling of the fundamental nature of existence will eventually lead to it.

The notion that I am here to become more and to grow toward lower states of entropy (toward love) has completely changed my approach to everything. Many things that once seemed complex and stressful have fallen away as mostly unimportant. Daily struggles have become immensely easier to navigate. As an analogy, it is as though I was sitting in front of a game board with the game pieces, dice, and cards while having no solid concept of how to play the game. Then, I found the instructions and realized that the rules are actually very simple. In a personal interview, Tom Campbell summed up the “rules” nicely: “It’s a very simple thing that we have to do here. Stuff happens and we get to deal with it. The stuff that happens isn’t what’s important. What’s important is how we deal with it.” In this regard, *Explorations in Consciousness* is an attempt to lead others along their own venture to finding

the instructions of life—the “rules” of the game. My paintings attempt to point to the mysteries, the mysteries (by default) point to the solution, and the solution—as best as I can tell—appears to be love.

RESEARCH

Reality and TOEs

Reality Check

It amazes me to consider the major paradigm shifts that have occurred within history. We have transitioned from a flat earth, to a round earth, to an earth at the center of the heavenly bodies, to an earth rotating around the sun, to the sun being just another star in a galaxy with 100 to 400 billion other stars, to a galaxy that is among 100 to 200 billion other galaxies. It was obvious to most flat-earth inhabitants that the earth was flat; if it were round, everything would fall off the bottom. Of course, such ideas seem silly from our current perspective. The common view today seems to be that we are not so easily fooled by such naivety and that science has sorted out most of the fundamental questions. However, I am not so sure that we are any different than those who lived on a flat earth. There are simply too many unexplained mysteries and phenomenon that remain. In *My Big TOE*, Tom Campbell points out that our current understanding is likely just as skewed and limited as it was for those who preceded us:

Our beliefs set the boundaries and define the limits of our science—they always have and any reasonably accurate history of science will verify that fact. Most scientists, from pre-history to the present day, feel that though belief obviously blinded their

forbearers, it does not seriously inhibit their own clear vision. As time passes, the belief-blindness of those who came before appears more and more ridiculous yet current belief-blindness remains as invisible as ever. If you think that we of the modern world—we who have come so far in our understanding and knowledge—are no longer seriously and dramatically limited by our beliefs, you are mistaken. (149)

Having been at the receiving end of some perplexing experiences that are not easily explained by any mainstream scientific theories or beliefs, I am faced with one of two potential possibilities. The first is that I (along with many others) have some unusual condition that allows me to have sporadic, hyperreal hallucinations and yet still function normally (as far as I can tell) within society. The second possibility is that there is much, much more to uncover about the nature of reality. I suppose that it is also possible that my entire life is a hallucination or delusion. If that is the case, I am still enjoying it immensely and don't seem to be harming anybody along the way. Of course, how are any of us sure that we are not living in a hallucination? Perhaps the obvious "fact" that reality is objective and causal is similar to how it was once obvious that the earth was flat.

The paintings in *Explorations in Consciousness* stem from my own personal experiences. However, the paintings are not primarily about the experiences themselves, but instead, about the mysteries and questions surrounding the experiences. These events bring into question how we define what is real. Many of us (perhaps most) tend to regard something as "real" when we are able to receive information about it via one or more of our five senses. If we can touch a brick with our hands and see it with our eyes, for example, we tend to assume that it is, in fact, real. Similarly, when we experience something without our

five senses, such as in a dream, we tend to assume that it is not real. *Explorations in Consciousness* suggests that “real” is not so much relative to the object or setting that is being experienced, but instead relative to the experiencer. The figure in *Conscious* reaches out to touch a brick. What should he do if the brick is not solid? Is it reasonable for him to deny his own experience based on the properties of the brick? Should the male figure in *Old Hag* who is being crushed by the seated woman deny the reality of his experience and classify it as “just a dream”? Are such determinations based on our preconceived notions and beliefs about reality? All of the figures in this series are in the midst of profound experiences, yet the experiences are not taking place in typical, physical reality. Are the experiences then not real? How should we define what *is* real? The sinking masts of ships on the horizon and the circular shadow of the earth on the moon were clues that the earth might be round. In the same way, experiments within quantum mechanics provide some clues that our reality might not be as solid and real as we tend to think. The findings suggest that consciousness itself might be more real than any objects or settings.

“I regard consciousness as fundamental. I regard matter as derivative from consciousness” (Plank 17). Though the previous statement might sound like the playful musings of a mystic, those are the words of theoretical physicist Max Plank, who is often regarded as the father of quantum theory. Theoretical-physicist and mathematician Eugene Wigner wrote, “it will remain remarkable, in whatever way our future concepts may develop, that the very study of the external world led to the conclusion that the content of the consciousness is an ultimate reality” (169). Why were these two nobel prize winning

quantum physicists talking about consciousness? Like Plank and Wigner, quantum physicist David Bohm suspected that consciousness and matter were somehow directly related:

If matter and consciousness could in this way be understood together, in terms of the same general notion of order, the way would be opened to comprehending their relationship on the basis of some common ground. Thus we could come to the germ of a new notion of unbroken wholeness, in which consciousness is no longer to be fundamentally separated from matter. (250)

These types of comments stemmed from the strange and paradoxical findings that arose within the field of quantum mechanics in the first half of the twentieth century.

At the heart of the quantum-mechanics mystery is the double-slit experiment (Feynman, Leighton, Sands ch. 1-1). This experiment has been carried out many times and in many different ways (Al-Khalili 13). The strange results remain consistent and continue to amaze and perplex experts and lay-persons alike. In a lecture at the California Institute of Technology, quantum physicist and nobel laureate Richard Feynman discussed the peculiar nature of the double slit experiment:

We choose to examine a phenomenon which is impossible, absolutely impossible, to explain in any classical way, and which has in it the heart of quantum mechanics. In reality, it contains the only mystery. We cannot make the mystery go away by “explaining” how it works. We will just tell you how it works. In telling you how it works, we will have told you about the basic peculiarities of all quantum mechanics. (Feynman, Leighton, Sands ch. 1-1)

Prior to the acceptance of the wave-particle nature of light, there was some disagreement regarding whether light consisted of waves or particles. In 1801, British physicist and physician Thomas Young performed the now-famous double slit experiment which demonstrated the wave like nature of light (Hewitt 253). If light was strictly made up of particles, we might expect it to pass through two slits and hit a detection

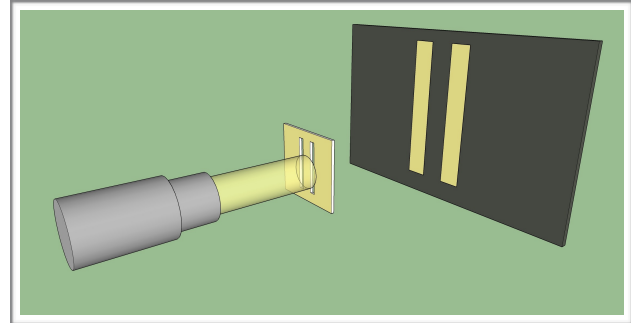


Fig. 8. Expected pattern on detection screen. Light arrives at the detection screen directly behind each slit. This is how we might *expect* light to behave if it were made up of particles. Justin Snodgrass, 2015.

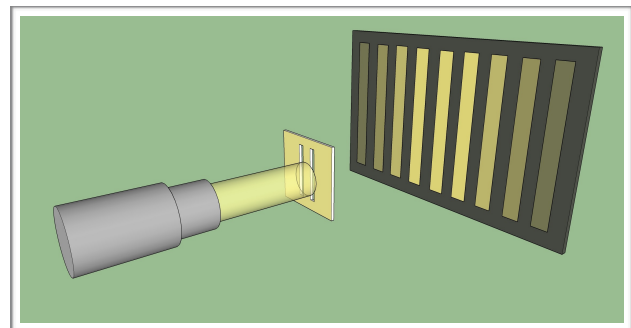


Fig. 9. Actual wave-like interference pattern. Thomas Young's experiment showed that light actually created a wave-like interference pattern after passing through the two slits, suggesting that light was made up of waves. Justin Snodgrass, 2015.

screen directly behind each of the slits (see fig. 8). However, Young's experiment showed that light passing through two slits actually created a wave-like interference pattern on the detection screen (see fig. 9). This interference pattern is consistent with how waves of water would arrive at the screen after having passed through two slits. This seemed to provide solid evidence that light was made up of waves. However, subsequent work by Einstein with the photoelectric effect provided evidence that light was made up of particles (Al-Khalili 13-17; Hewitt 519-25; Feynman, Leighton, Sands ch. 1-1). So, is light a wave, a particle, or both?

It was later discovered that a very weak light source could emit one photon (one particle of light) at a time. When this dim light was aimed at the two slits, something quite

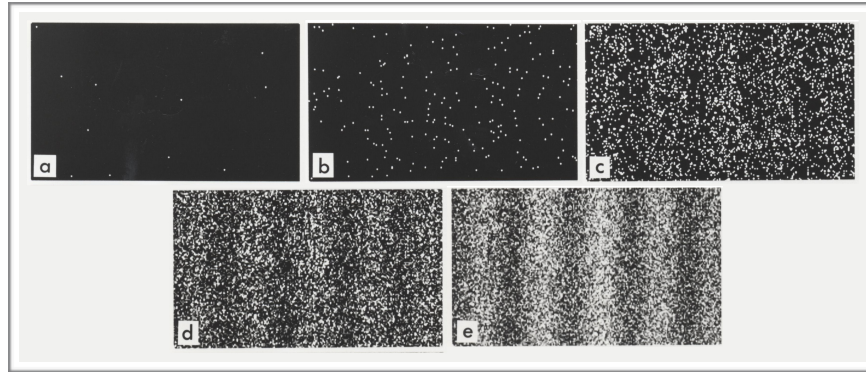


Fig. 10. Results of a double-slit-experiment performed by Dr. Tonomura showing the build-up of an interference pattern of single electrons. Numbers of electrons: 11 (a), 200 (b), 6000 (c), 40000 (d), 140000 (e).

unexpected happened. One by one, the photons passed through the slits and arrived at the detection screen and eventually created an interference pattern, the pattern consistent with waves (Ford 195-6). In subsequent experiments, it was found that electrons also behaved in this way. Figure 10 shows the gradual buildup of electrons over time at a detection screen after having passed through the two slits. Notice that the particles land on the screen in such a way that they eventually create a wave-like interference pattern even though they are arriving one at a time (Hewitt 30). How does each electron “know” where to land? How is it that individual particles cumulatively create a wave-like interference pattern? This result is analogous to 10,000 tennis balls falling, one at a time, through two gaps and eventually creating a wavelike interference pattern on the ground below (instead of piling up directly under each gap). What exactly is happening at the two slits? Is the particle going through one slit, both slits, or neither? This phenomenon has been observed with photons, electrons, neutrons, atoms, and matter as large as carbon molecules (Al-Khalili 26-7, Arndt et al.).

It is possible to measure which of the two slits a particle is passing through. However, when this measurement is made, something very strange occurs. When the particle is

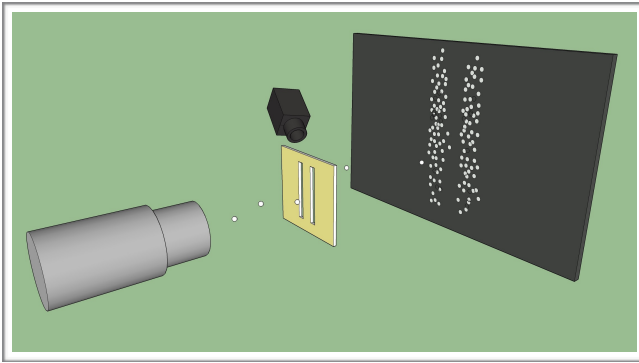


Fig. 11. When a measurement is made to determine which slit a particle passes through, the particles arrive at the screen directly behind the given slit. Justin Snodgrass, 2015.

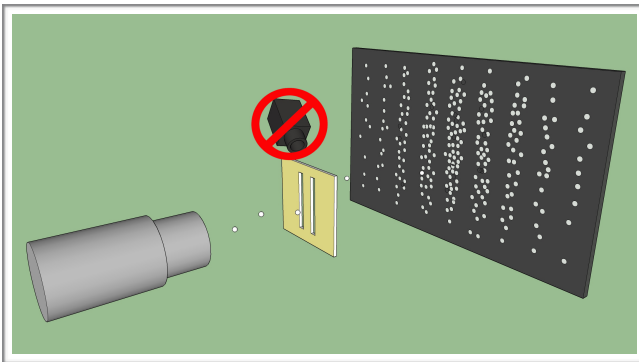


Fig. 12. When no measurement is made at the slits, the particles cumulatively produce the wave-like interference pattern. Justin Snodgrass, 2015.

detected at a given slit, it no longer hits the screen in the wave-like interference pattern. Instead, it arrives at the screen directly behind the slit through which it passed, as we might expect a particle of matter to do (see fig. 11). Yet, when *no measurement* is made at the slits, the particle goes back to forming the wave-like interference pattern (see fig. 12). From this, it seemed as though the particle somehow “chose” to behave differently depending on whether or not it was detected at the slits.

Some postulated that it was the presence of a “conscious observer” that caused the “wave-function to collapse” into a particle (T. Campbell, “Calgary” Sat. 1/3; Feynman, Leighton, Sands ch. 1-1). Others reasoned that it was, more simply, the act of measuring, and thus “disturbing” the particle, that caused it to behave differently (T. Campbell, “Calgary” Sat. 1/3; Feynman, Leighton, Sands ch. 1-1, 1-6). This issue of disturbing the particle by measuring it is comparable to the fact that when we place a thermometer in a cup of hot water to measure the temperature, we disturb the temperature of the water to a slight degree. Of course, the change in water temperature is minute. However, because quantum particles are so immensely small, measuring them is perhaps more akin to measuring the temperature

of a very small beaker of water. In that case, the temperature of the thermometer would have a more substantial effect on the temperature of the water. So, to some scientists, the fact that the particles behaved differently when measured was simply an effect of it having been “disturbed” through the process of measurement (Feynman, Leighton, Sands ch. 1-6).

In 1999, *Physical Review Letters* published a paper entitled “A Delayed Choice Quantum Erasure.” This peer-reviewed and highly technical paper discusses the results of an experiment conducted at the Department of Physics at the University of Maryland. The experiment was designed so that the which-slit measurement could be made without “disturbing” the particle (Kim 1). This experiment refutes the “common ‘wisdom’” that measuring the particle disturbs it or alters its behavior (Kim 1). The results tell us that it is not a “conscious observer” or a “measurement problem” that directly causes the particles to behave differently (T. Campbell, "Calgary" Sat. 1/3). The experiment was also designed in such a way that the which-slit data was either erased or maintained *after* the particle arrived at the detection screen. The way in which the particles arrived at the screen seemingly determined the probabilities of what data would later be either erased or maintained. The finding suggests the existence of retrocausal effects in which the effect precedes the cause, or in which the effect *causes* the cause (T. Campbell, "Calgary" Sat 1/3; Rhodes, “Delayed Choice”). “Fundamentally, what it [the delayed choice quantum erasure experiment] tells us is that reality is not objective—period” (T. Campbell, "Calgary" Sat. 1/3 1:03:45).

“I think I can safely say that nobody understands quantum mechanics” (Feynman 129). Though Feynman said those words in 1964, the realm of quantum mechanics remains just as mysterious and unsettled today. In his 1995 book, *Hyperspace*, Michio Kaku wrote

that “it is often stated that of all the theories proposed in this century, the silliest is quantum theory. In fact, some say that the only thing that quantum theory has going for it is that it is unquestionably correct” (262). It should be noted that the double slit experiment is only part of the quantum conundrum. In quantum tunneling, particles suddenly appear on the other side of barriers, appearing to have teleported (Al-Khalili 176). With quantum entanglement, when one particle is altered, the twin particle reacts instantly, even if it is miles away (Al-Khalili 94). All of the things that we know to physically exist—my chair, a cloud, a cold slice of pizza, the universe, and our brains—are made of those strange particles. Yet, scientists remain undecided regarding exactly how those particles work, why they behave so strangely, and why or how consciousness relates to them.

The mystery of our reality extends beyond tiny particles. Gravity causes time to slow down and space to curve. An increase in speed also causes time to slow down and for mass to increase. According to special relativity, the speed of light is a constant, yet, no one is exactly sure why. The universe appears to be expanding; expanding *into* what? If consciousness exists in the brain, where *exactly* in the brain is it? We must not forget that our objective and causal universe—the entirety of space and time—is said to have banged into existence from nothing and from within nowhere. Frankly, it all sounds a bit suspicious to me. Could it be that it is not just that the universe is strange and mysterious, but, more simply, that our limited view makes it appear that way? There is an idea emerging at the fringe of scientific and philosophical inquiry that may shed new light on these matters.

In 2003, Brian Whitworth, a senior lecturer at the Institute of Information and Mathematical Sciences at Massey University in New Zealand, published the paper “The

Emergence of the Physical World from Information Processing.” The paper presents and explores the idea that the universe appears to be a virtual reality created by information processing. Whitworth carefully lays out why a virtual reality model answers the current mysteries and paradoxes within science more clearly and with far fewer assumptions than the current, objective reality model. In 2003, *Philosophical Quarterly* published a paper by Nick Bostrom entitled “Are you Living in a Computer Simulation?” In the paper, Bostrom logically derives why it is fully possible (and even likely) that we are currently living within some form of simulation. The obvious question that arises from this is: who is the programmer and where is the “computer?” Edward Fredkin, a pioneer of digital physics, comments that the computer is in “other” and that “it’s not in this universe” (World Science Fair 40:10). A simulation cannot logically simulate itself. Nuclear physicists and consciousness researcher, Tom Campbell, points out that consciousness is the “computer”; “consciousness is Fredkin’s ‘other’” (“Calgary” Sat. 1/3). According to Campbell, consciousness is the only fundamentally real “thing” and our universe is a virtual reality taking place in the non-physical, information-space of the “larger consciousness system” (“Calgary” Sat. 2/3).

Campbell points out that our reality (our universe) is actually only one of multiple other types and varieties of virtual realities within the larger consciousness system (*My Big TOE* 653-4, 787). That is a big idea to grasp and is perhaps similar to telling an inhabitant of flat-earth that they are actually standing on a round planet in a galaxy filled with over 100 billion other planets, which is surrounded by a vast expanse of empty space littered with billions of other galaxies. However, a core theme that arises throughout the various major

paradigm shifts in human history is that we are less central and important than we had previously thought. Would it be such a big surprise to eventually learn that our universe is only one of various other virtual realities that exists within the spaceless realm of consciousness? Campbell recommends that we remain open because “history repeatedly demonstrates that the appearance of impossibility is most often the result of limited vision” (*My Big TOE* 22).

Hey Pal, Nice TOE

Though many physicists, including Einstein, have struggled to come up with a TOE (theory of everything), no such theory has been definitively realized. Tom Campbell points out that most scientists are searching for a “little TOE,” a way to unify quantum mechanics and relativity under the umbrella of one basic understanding, while what is actually needed is a “big TOE” (“Virtual Reality” 7:50). Campbell presents his own big theory of everything in his 900 page book entitled *My Big TOE*. Attempting to summarize Campbell’s work is akin to a seven year old describing her first day at Disneyland with a single vowel. Though also seemingly inadequate, the text on the back cover of the book does provide a broad sense of what Campbell’s model entails:

My Big TOE, written by a nuclear physicist in the language of contemporary Western culture, unifies science and philosophy, physics and metaphysics, mind and matter, purpose and meaning, the normal and the paranormal. The entirety of human experience (mind, body, and spirit), including both our objective and subjective worlds, is brought together under one seamless scientific understanding ... This

trilogy delivers the next major scientific conceptual breakthrough since relativity and quantum mechanics raised scientific eyebrows in the first half of the twentieth century. No catch, no megalomania, no hypothetical wackiness, no goofy beliefs, no unusual assumptions—just straightforward science that better describes the totality of our experience and provides a wealth of practical results and new understanding that can be applied personally and professionally by scientists and nonscientists alike.

This is the real thing. (back cover)

In piecing together the various elements of my personal experiences and research, I had, over the years, begun to form several probable-truths. From these probable-truths, I was able to arrive at three very basic (and no doubt temporary) fundamental ideas about my existence and reality: one, reality is much larger than it appears; two, there is something real that exists outside of our “normal” reality; and three, love is somehow related to, or interwoven with, our purpose and existence. These findings fit effortlessly into Campbell’s model. Where I had gaps, his TOE easily filled them. His theory answered all of my remaining questions, resolved the paradoxes in science, easily explained my strange experiences, made accurate predictions, and, most importantly, created a real, positive change in my life. I had no choice but to seriously consider Campbell’s big TOE as a viable model of reality and existence. After spending several years studying and applying Campbell’s theory, I am beginning to think that he is onto something very big. My painting *TC Physicist* is a compilation of frame grabs of Campbell from a YouTube interview (see fig. 13). The portrait is intended to touch on Campbell’s mystical side as well as his scientific and logical side as he speaks excitedly about his theory of everything.



Fig. 13. Justin Snodgrass, *TC Physicist*, 2012, oil on polyester, 20" x 42"

Campbell notes that "for the first time in history, all the pieces of the puzzle are in place for a major paradigm shift" ("Spokane" 2:19:43). According to Campbell, the first portion of this shift is the realization that reality is not objective, but virtual. The second portion of the shift will be the realization that consciousness is the "computer" ("Spokane"). He also notes that this particular paradigm shift will be unlike any other that has come before:

As far as paradigm shifts go, this is going to be like a paradigm earthquake. Think of the paradigm shifts from flat earth to where we are today. That's going to be a bump in the road compared to this paradigm shift ... it's going to be a major, gut-wrenching, culture twisting, mind-bending shift. And it isn't going to happen fast. (T. Campbell, "Calgary" 3/3 2:12)

The potentially paradigm-shattering concept that consciousness is fundamental and that reality is virtual is the topic of my large-scale wall sculpture *The Virtual Fall of Objective Reality*. This work is currently in progress. Figure 14 shows the initial studies for this piece. In the final piece, toasters (the particles) are crashing into a large billboard (the

detection screen). Most of the toasters have smashed holes into the wooden sign, leaving the remnants of a wave-like interference pattern. The chaotic and destructive feel of the interaction between the toasters and the sign hints at the struggle that could result from Campbell's "paradigm earthquake." However, the entire display is a fabricated model—an illusion. The very things that we consider to be solid and real (toasters and billboards) interact before the viewer in such a way that the objects deny their own objective existence. Are toasters made up of particles or waves? Does a toaster remain in a wave-like state of probability when we are not observing it? The remnants of the billboard's advertisement leaves the viewer searching for some meaning amongst the chaos.

The use of toasters is a nod to Ross Rhodes and Tom Campbell who have both used toaster ovens as examples in discussing the double-slit experiment in relation to macroscopic objects. Rhodes writes that "there is no essential difference between the electron and, say, the toaster oven in your kitchen. Each can be described in terms of a 'wave function' which will make predictions just as successfully for the toaster oven as for the electron" ("Reality Program" ch. 2). Instead of using toaster ovens, I opted to use standard toasters because of the two slit reference associated with the two openings for bread. There is also an unintended reference to a

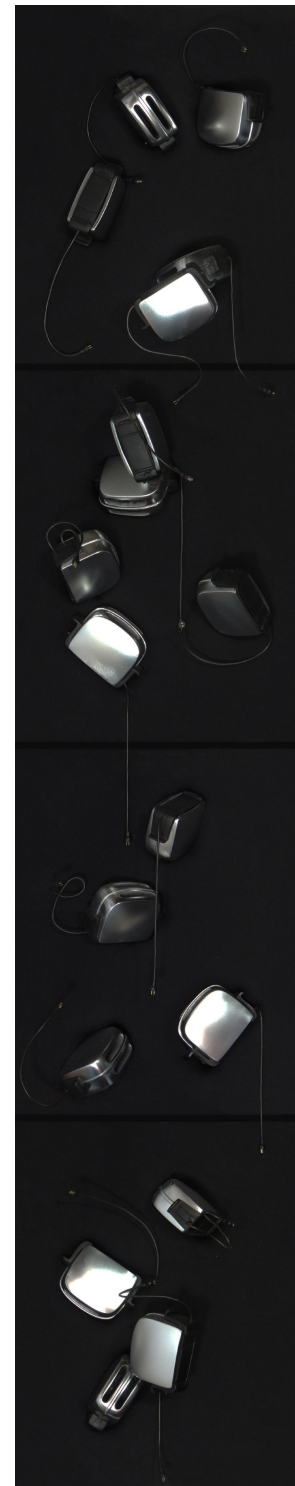


Fig. 14. Justin Snodgrass, *Toaster Study*, 2015, mixed media, 44" x 8" x 3"

screen-saver that was popular in the early nineties which involved flying, chrome toasters.

This is a fortunate accident in that it directly references computers and the idea of simulated, virtual toasters.

The findings and current paradoxes in quantum mechanics support the idea that “real” may have nothing to do with what we perceive to be solid matter, but instead with our experience as consciousness. We may someday, as Campbell and other physicists suggest, find that consciousness is the only fundamentally real thing. *Explorations in Consciousness* presents moments and experiences that encourage viewers to reconsider their definition of “real” and the potential importance and reality of their own strange experiences.

That Which is Larger

The Other Campbell

In *The Power of Myth*, Joseph Campbell presents the idea that myths are not merely the naive stories created by humankind to resolve the unknowns, but instead exist as a means to make known that which is greater than us (ch. 1). The myths that we create in this life have the potential to take us to, or remind us of, a higher level of being and purpose. Myths express the relationship between humankind and the “universal being” (*Power of Myth*, ch. 1, 30:20). Joseph Campbell also points out that the function of the artist “is the mythologization of the environment and the world” (*Power of Myth*, ch. 1, 30:20). It is the job of the artist then, according to Joseph Campbell, to point humankind toward that which exists beyond the limitations of the intellect.

The paintings in *Explorations in Consciousness* are suggesting a larger story that entails what Joseph Campbell refers to as “the adventure of the hero” (*Hero* 30). He points out that throughout the various myths of the world, the underlying structure of the “hero’s journey” remains essentially the same (*Power of Myth*, ch. 1). In describing the foundation of this common journey, he writes: “A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man” (*Hero* 30). The paintings in *Explorations in Consciousness* depict a hero at some moment along the journey. It is not specified which point we are observing in the adventure; it is only suggested that the journey is taking place. Viewers are offered the opportunity to decide and fill in the remainder of the story based on their own unique perspectives.

The figure in *Conscious* may be moments away from crossing the threshold into the unknown and thus beginning his journey, or perhaps he is reaching a pinnacle moment along the adventure and is seconds away from making a grand discovery that will forever transform him. The figure in *Data Streams* is clearly involved in a critical point in the adventure, but no specifics are provided. In the case of *Old Hag*, the hero is the man laying on the couch. At what point along the journey is he?

Joseph Campbell points out that “What all myths have to deal with is a transformation of consciousness” (J. Campbell, *Power of Myth*, ch. 1, 16:19). The idea of transformation and change is a central theme in *Explorations in Consciousness*. The works are, in essence, myths depicting pivotal moments along a hero’s journey—a journey from which the hero will return

with a greater understanding of that-which-is-larger. The lone explorer in each of the paintings points to the idea that we have to be *our own* instigators of self-change. Regardless of whether we are venturing into the vast expanse of consciousness or if we are working to become better, more loving beings, it is up to us to put in the hard work and “pull ourselves up by the bootstraps one tiny increment at a time” (T. Campbell, *My Big TOE* 349). “The big question is whether [we] are going to be able to say a hearty yes to [our] adventure” (J. Campbell, *Power of Myth* 206). The adventure is what transforms us and expands our view and understanding of all-that-is. At the root of *Explorations in Consciousness* is the idea that we have a larger purpose and that the reality in which we find ourselves is not as important as how we utilize the experiences within that reality. What matters is that we realize that we are the heroes of our own story. Then, the full expanse and amplitude of our journey can be realized, and with it, the rewards.

Resonance

In 2014, I came across a YouTube video of pianist Jin Ju playing Beethoven’s Piano Sonata No. 14 in C-sharp minor. I am not well versed in classical music. However, there was something about the song and the way in which Ju played it that deeply moved me. I listened to it multiple times a day for several weeks. What was it about the song and the way in which Ju played it that struck me so deeply? I listened to other pianists play the same song. I also reviewed other piano pieces written by Beethoven. There were some enjoyable songs, but I just could not achieve the same pleasurable sting. The feeling is perhaps akin to that of taking a sip from an ocean comprised of all of the sorrow, suffering, joy, and love that has ever

existed. It is a recognition of something important, yet indescribable. It is a joyful sadness and a saddening joy blended together and delivered as a sharp sensation of bliss. From where do such feelings arise? The answer, as far as I can tell, is that the song, and the way in which Ju played it, pointed to something larger, something more fundamental than piano keys, sound, or music theory.

In physics, resonance occurs when a given object or system is acted on by an outside force at a frequency that matches the object or system's natural frequency. The result is a large increase in amplitude in the receiving object or system (Hewitt 340-50). I recall my physics professor demonstrating this phenomenon by aiming a pure tone at a glass container and then adjusting the frequency of the tone until it matched the natural frequency of the glass. He increased the volume slightly until the glass began vibrating and then shattered into pieces. He performed a similar demonstration by using two tuning forks. Because the tuning forks were identical and had the same natural frequency, striking only one of the forks caused the twin fork to begin vibrating and ringing. This resonance is what occurs when I hear Ju play Sonata No. 14. There is some underlying, metaphorical thread that connects myself to Ju, Beethoven, and the song. When I hear it, I resonate.

There can, of course, also exist a purely intellectual appreciation for a given work. For example, a painting might have a nice composition or an interesting use of warm and cool colors. Such a painting might look nice or instigate some level of neurological pleasure. However, this type of reaction does not equate to the deep sting to which I am referring. Perhaps the notion of "body and soul" is a good analogy. The body equates to the formal aspects of the work, while the soul of the piece is the unseen force that carries the potential to

create true resonance with the viewer. Without a body, there is no means through which the soul can be expressed. Without the soul, the body is lifeless.

Like Ju's rendition of Beethoven's Sonata No. 14, Arthur Ganson's kinetic sculpture *Cory's Yellow Chair* resonates with me (see fig. 15). It creates a foggy memory of something

bigger than words can fully express. Maybe the idea came to Ganson in a dream or in a sudden flash of insight. Maybe the idea was an accident. Maybe he just thought it was an interesting concept. Regardless, I recognize something big in it. The chair is continually pulled apart and reassembled by a noisy machine that animates its motion. The piece is, on the surface, perhaps somewhat simple. Yet, there is something about it that resonates with me. I see it, and my being says, "Yes! I recognize you." It is not the

yellow color or small scale of the chair. It is also not the speed of the chair as it pulls apart and reforms. Nor is it the contrast of the bulky machine against the delicate nature of the chair. Such things are the body of the work, not the soul. These elements are necessary and intellectually stimulating, but not fundamental to the work's success. They express the soul of the work. It is the soul that resonates with me and reminds me that I am a part of a larger mystery. It is the soul of the work that stirs a powerful, but difficult to grasp, understanding that life—the good, the bad, and the ugly—is absolutely beautiful.

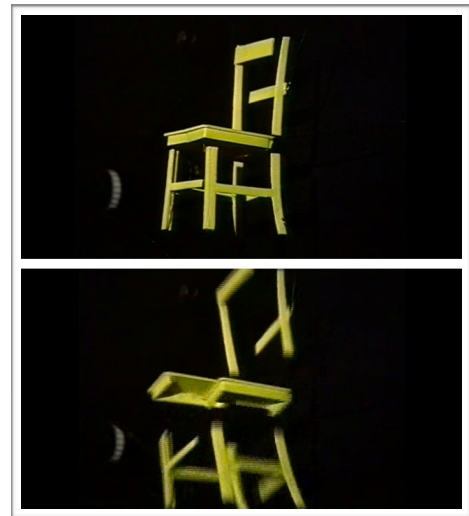


Fig. 15. Video stills of *Cory's Yellow Chair*. Top image shows the chair coming together. Bottom image shows the chair coming apart.; Arthur Ganson; *Cory's Yellow Chair*; kinetic sculpture; MIT Museum, Cambridge.

METHODOLOGY

Instigating resonance within a viewer is always at the forefront of my mind when creating any work. I am constantly searching for something about the piece to say “yes” to me in hopes that it will do the same for the viewer. In a video interview, Peter Zokosky noted:

I don’t expect somebody to have to get [my intentions], but I think that the intent has to be there on my part to sort of push me on to do it and to be fully engaged in the struggle. There’s a huge amount that’s subconscious, subliminal—in that realm where you’re just trying to make it right, and you don’t even know what right means; but it has to feel like something is there. And a huge part of when a painting is satisfying is when it feels right. (Forartssaketv 2:11)

My own experience with viewing and creating art supports this notion that there is some very abstract and intangible realm that eludes language and intellectual analysis. It is a realm that eludes even the field of neuroaesthetics. Recognizing when a work “feels right” is a very large part of my own process. The goal with finding this sense of “rightness” is to connect with the viewer at a deeper level—to touch on some of the hidden and mysterious threads that link us all together.

Zokosky’s approach to his work is very much based on intuition. It is a fluid process in which it seems that he gently guides the painting to grow and evolve as opposed to trying to force the process intellectually. I find myself utilizing the same approach. For example, with the painting *Conscious*, I built several different sets in my backyard, adding and removing objects, adjusting the lighting position and color, altering the point of view of the

camera, and so on until I had an image that intuitively felt right. The flooded floor, bricks, blue tarp, and canvas were instinctive choices that occurred while building the sets. To use Zokosky's words, I just kept working with the elements until the result felt "like something [was] there" (Forartssaketv 2:30). The process of searching for that intuitively right state is then repeated when I go to paint the image. Adjustments in colors, intensity of light and contrast, edge relationships, and various other factors are considered and explored while painting.

While there is (ideally) a sense of rightness about my paintings that might resonate with the viewer and point to a deeper mystery, there is also some confusion and mystery on the surface that prevents any immediate conclusions. This surface mystery is intentional and is used to keep the viewer in a state of questioning. Zokosky discusses the idea of confusion in his own work:

If I were to try and put into words what I would really like the paintings to elicit in the viewer, it would be 'confusion.' I don't try to make them puzzling, to make it hard to figure out what's going on, but I find that the state of confusion is very rich because in that state you are very open—you're able to receive all sorts of information or feelings or emotions . . . because you haven't yet decided what the experience is going to be. (*Under the Skin* 15:40)

This idea of using mystery to encourage a state of openness in the viewer is something that I am working towards as well. The notion that there is some mystery within the painting has the potential to encourage the viewer to be more open to new and complex ideas. It also encourages the viewer to spend more time with the work and engage possible solutions.

Birth of an Idea

When some idea, topic, or experience resonates with me or intrigues me at a deep level, I hold onto it. Typically, I jot down some messy notes about the idea and file it away in my mind under “potential ideas for later.” At any given time, there may be twenty or thirty dim ideas in that “file.” Some of the ideas, though they still have potential, have begun to collect dust. Their time simply has not yet arrived. At some point, perhaps something like bacteria in a petri dish, a few of the ideas will begin to grow and expand seemingly on their own. Often, two or more of the ideas will coalesce into a new, and more complex idea. Once I get the intuitive sense that a given idea is ready, I typically create a new folder on my computer specifically for the budding idea. I also carry around a notebook or sketchbook to record anything of relevance that I come across. In this part of the process, I keep the idea in the back of my mind, allowing it to constantly turn. In time, I begin to get flashes of images, elements, and concepts to potentially add to the idea. Often, synchronistic events encourage me to consider the addition of some aspect or element that I failed to realize on my own. In many ways, this process is similar to tending a garden. I put things into place so that the garden might begin growing, but the natural processes of the plants, weather, soil, and sunlight must also be present. Without me, that specific garden would not exist. Likewise, without the natural processes of nature, there would be no crop. In this way, it is a back and forth interaction. It is my job to take the garden to its fullest potential. The health of the plants provide feedback as to the success or failure of my attempts.

I continue to work with and cultivate an idea over time. Along the way, I make various notes in my sketchbook and begin collecting relevant images from the internet.

Though it is often a very exciting and energizing process, I do my best not to rush the matter. Some ideas have taken as long as a year to work out. This isn't to suggest that they are overly complicated or deep. Some are just slow growers. Oftentimes, the idea remains in this phase simply because I am busy addressing another project. In many cases, the process of working on an idea provides insights for the others that have yet to be fully addressed. By the time I am finished with a given work, another project is typically ready for more attention.

I feel very comfortable with photography and often take hundreds of photos for a painting. Photographs, at this stage, serve as my compositional sketches. I take pictures of anything that strikes me and seems potentially fitting for the piece. Once I have a good variety of images, I gradually pull out the ones that contain elements that support the original concept. In addition to taking photos, I also browse the internet for any relevant images.

By the time the majority of the initial planning process is done, I have a collection of relevant images from the internet, stills from various movies, the hundred or so photos that I have taken, and ten or twenty pages of notes and sketches. I let all of this sit until I am finished with the previous painting and can dedicate my full attention to the new project. When the time comes, I lay everything out and begin making final decisions in terms of what models and locations will suit the work and are practical and available. Of the entire process, this time of piecing everything together into a harmonious whole is, for me, the peak of the creative process. It is very much like putting together a puzzle or solving a mystery. This is perhaps something like drawing up the plans to build a house. The majority of my efforts go into the planning stages. Once the planning is complete, then it is time to put in the labor and bring the idea into physical existence.

In many cases I build the sets and the elements of the set myself. For *Data Streams*, I built a camera rig that would hold the camera above me so that I could take the photos while at the same time pose for them and review the images on a nearby screen. In this way, I could try several different positions and poses in an efficient manner. Unable to find an appropriate fabric design for the optical illusion on the sheets, I opted to buy plain material and spray paint the pattern of circles on the fabric using a custom stencil. For *Conscious*, I used an oversized tarp to flood my outdoor patio. As I piece together sets, I trust any internal feelings of when something just “feels” right. With *Conscious*, the addition of the bricks and the canvas in the background were results of moments of intuition that came about while building the set. The canvas was originally used to reflect fill light into the shadows of the figure. The bricks were being used to build up the edges of the tarp to hold the water. By the end of the night, the bricks and the canvas became integral parts of the final images.

When deciding on a set or location, I take into account that I will need to conduct multiple photo shoots. I try to use locations that I can easily access and reuse as needed. Typically, when I review the first set of photos from a shoot, I jot down various notes about what to change or adjust for the next shoot. In the case of *Old Hag*, because there were so many figures and different objects involved, I decided to arrange the set in my house. Out of necessity, I took pictures of myself in place of each of the various figures and composited the images together in Photoshop. If one of the poses seemed off or out of place, I would reshoot myself in a different pose. Likewise, I adjusted lighting and placement of props as needed. I did this until I had a rough layout of where each figure and element should be within the frame. Then, I began begging and bribing family and friends to pose for the photo shoot. I

ended up doing a total of two photo shoots with the entire group. I pieced everything together in Photoshop until the image began to resonate with me.

Once I have a preliminary image finished, I typically paint a smaller sized grisaille version of it. In this way, I am able to see the image as it might exist on the canvas as apposed to a computer screen. During this step, I carefully consider each area of the painting and make any necessary adjustments to correct awkward tangents and camera distortion.

Onto Canvas

When it comes to selecting a canvas, I am only particular in that it must have good archival qualities and that it has a smooth or mostly smooth tooth. Outside of those factors, I use whatever is handy. In most cases, I end up building my own canvases to meet the specific size needs of the image. I use clear pine with quarter round molding as the stretcher bars. I have, thus far, used cotton and polyester canvas. I am not partial to any specific materials so long as they suit the work and have good archival qualities. However, for ethical reasons, I avoid any materials that use animal products such as rabbit skin glue, natural hair brushes, and some black pigments. Being somewhat new to oil painting, I am still sorting out many of the technical aspects of the craft. My approach up to this point has been to follow the advice of mentors. I also frequently rely on the trusty (and overwhelming) *Artist's Handbook* by Ralph Mayer.

Once I have enough information in place in the finalized image, I begin a grisaille underpainting. With the underpainting, I am primarily concerned with resolving tangents, figure proportions, and perspective. I refine the underpainting to a moderate degree. If any

major changes need to be made, I carry them out in this stage. In the case of *Old Hag*, after finishing the underpainting, I realized that one of the hands of the didgeridoo player was visually distracting. To resolve this, I took a few reference photos of my own hand and used them to create a new hand for the figure. I try to resolve any such issues before applying color.

When the underpainting is dry, I begin the first color layer. In this stage, I am primarily concerned with the temperature differences between the foreground, middle-ground, and background. For the first layer of color, I use a limited palette consisting of flemish white, yellow ochre, cadmium red medium, grey-blue, and a chromatic black. I sometimes add additional colors if needed, but I maintain this limited palette as the foundation of any color mixtures. With this first layer of color, I try to be as accurate as possible with the forms and local colors. I keep in mind the overall effect that the differences in color temperature will have on the sense of depth in the painting. Likewise, I am careful to pay attention to how soft and hard edges interact to create depth.

The second layer of color is typically a combination of opaque painting, transparent painting, glazing, and scumbling. This layer tends to bring a sense of life to the painting. For example, a thin glaze to suggest reflections on the sheen of a wood floor can breathe some bit of life and atmosphere to the scene. This tends to be a very rewarding part of the painting process because small and subtle changes or additions can equate to substantial results. Increasing the intensity of a highlight in an eye with a small stroke of white, darkening an occlusion shadow with a deep red, or adding slight details to the grain of a wood table can have dramatic effects on the overall painting. Also in this stage, I focus on creating a greater

sense of dimension with the forms of the figure by glazing and scumbling warm and cool colors into the flesh. I add or amplify any reflected color as well.

The final stage of the painting is a matter of making sure that the overall harmony is still intact. At this point, I tend to spend more time viewing the work from a distance than I do actually painting. Again, I let my intuition lead the way. I continue to make small adjustments until the painting seems to be in its peak state. I often use retouch varnish in this final stage to ensure accurate color and value matching between wet and dry areas.

CONCLUSION

Though paint can be a valid and effective means to express and explore the various topics presented previously, I have come to the realization that some of the ideas are better suited for other media. *The Virtual Fall of Objective Reality* is a transitional piece marking this realization. In addition, I have begun working on several different novellas and novels. My primary focus then is not with painting or any one method of expression, but instead with the ideas themselves. In actuality, this body of work—much like my adventure—is not at all complete. I have only begun to scratch the surface. Thus, my thesis work might be analogous to the preface of a much larger story.

I see art as the means by which we can share and discuss that-which-is-larger-than-us. Art allows us to create a dialog about the amazing mystery of life. Art uses the five senses to acknowledge that which is beyond the five senses. Art points to something that can be experienced and observed, but not always fully grasped. I cannot say that I know the truth about our existence and the reality in which we find ourselves. I only know my own current,

probable truths about such matters. From what I can tell, love is deeply intertwined with the final answer. At the core of my understanding is the notion that we are here to experience, to learn, to become more, and to grow toward love. If something that I create can, even slightly, nudge somebody toward *that*, then it has been worthwhile. From a larger perspective, we are all artists and it is up to each of us to make our lives a work of art.

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APPENDIX



Plate 1. Justin Snodgrass, *Roy's*, 2012, oil on canvas, 48" x 36"



Plate 2. Justin Snodgrass, *Old Hag*, 2014, oil on polyester, 48" x 65"



Plate 3. Justin Snodgrass, *Data Streams*, 2013, oil on canvas, 48'' x 30''



Plate 4. Justin Snodgrass, *I Think, I See*, 2013, oil on polyester 24" x 28"



Plate 5. Justin Snodgrass, *Conscious*, 2012, oil on canvas, 72" x 48"



Plate 6. Justin Snodgrass, *TC Physicist*, 2012, oil on polyester, 20" x 42"

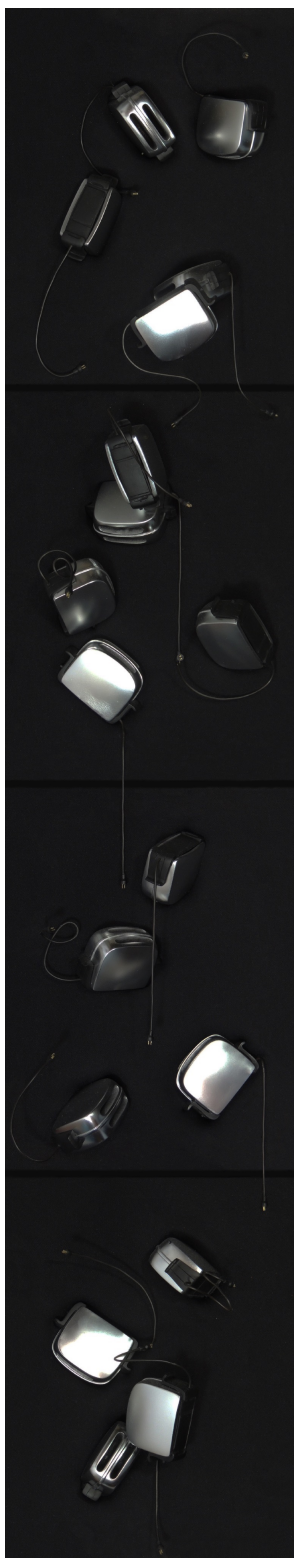


Plate 7. Justin Snodgrass, *Toaster Study*, 2015, mixed media, 44" x 8" x 3"



Plate 8. Justin Snodgrass, *Tunnel*, 2012, oil on canvas, 12" x 16"



Plate 9. Justin Snodgrass, *Night Train*, 2015, oil on canvas, 11" x 14"



Plate 10. Justin Snodgrass, *Fear Test*, 2015, oil on canvas, 16" x 12"

ARTIST'S NOTE

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