2013

Into the hinterland

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Toward the hinterland

by

Kara Marie Weyand

A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

Major: Integrated Visual Arts

Program of Study Committee:
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DEDICATION

For Alex
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ABSTRACT

This document accompanies the exhibition *Toward the hinterland*. Cyanotypes, ceramic forms, monotypes, and paintings investigate the relationships between realms of existence, such as the subconscious and conscious or the physical and mental. The necessity of accepting the constantly changing nature of human existence in the search for a higher consciousness is discussed. Major influences on the body of artwork are identified and analyzed, including my personal experiences with varied topographies, the work of other artists, narrative sources emphasizing dual existence, and Jungian psychology. The overarching themes and processes used to create the work in this exhibition are described. Archaic symbols, representing the archetypal content of dreams, interact with vast landscapes and horizon lines, denoting the hazy intersection of physical existence with a higher mental or spiritual consciousness.
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

My body of work is an investigation of the planes of consciousness and unconsciousness, both collective and personal. Of particular interest is a higher level of consciousness or spiritual realm that I believe exists in all humans. This realm is given a variety of names, each with a set of specific connotations, such as heaven, Nirvana, enlightenment, or oneness with God. It is eloquently described by Gautama Buddha in the third chapter of the Udāna:

There is, O Bhikkus, a state where there is neither earth, nor water, nor heat nor air, neither infinity of space, nor infinity of consciousness, nor nothingness, nor perception, nor non-perception, neither this world nor that world, both sun and moon. That, O Bhikkus, I term neither coming nor going, nor standing, neither death nor birth. It is without stability, without procession, without a basis: that is the end of sorrow. (111)

For me, however, this higher spiritual plane is most simply defined as a difficult-to-reach place of peace, contentment, and understanding. Different planes of existence are represented by corresponding sets of symbols that I have developed over my lifetime. The primitive subconscious is frequently portrayed in my work with organic or primal symbols: wild animals, bones, water, corporeal forms, and stones. The spiritual realm is represented by elements of dreamscapes: skies, clouds, landscapes, and space. These themes have been deeply influenced by Carl Jung’s theories of the human psyche and conscious experience, which he divided into four realms: the personal consciousness,
personal unconscious, collective unconscious, and the collective consciousness.

The Hinterland

The main focus of this body of work is the symbolic representation of the meeting place between two opposites, and specifically between the opposing realms of the physical and spiritual. Obstacles crop up that prevent us from reaching the higher realm. In reality, these obstacles take countless forms (daily responsibilities, relationships, stressors, mental blocks, etc.), but all perform the same function in obstructing the attempt to reach that quiet, peaceful place. It feels impossible to push through the obstacles cluttering the mind. They clamor for our attention, infiltrating even the quietest moments of attempted meditation or prayer. Even personal archetypes and symbols can serve as obstacles to reaching that mental horizon. Therefore, these obstructions form important topographical elements in the landscape shaped by the convergence of the earthly and spiritual planes.

In my efforts to reach a higher consciousness, I have become aware of the importance of accepting the human condition of existing in multiple realms simultaneously, even when one realm seems to oppose the other. This body of work concentrates on the middle ground between bodily and spiritual existence. This meeting place is represented by the hazy horizon line where earth meets sky. As it is approached, it seems to shift and pull back with an ambiguity that acts as a fitting illustration for human existence—the line between body and mind is a fuzzy one.

Accepting ambiguity is a difficult but important process I need to accomplish in order to obtain a deeper and more elevated existence. The contradictions of existence are
endless. In daily life, one is constantly suspended between states. We live between the physical and the mental, between the dreaming and waking, remembering and experiencing, ignorance and enlightenment, emptiness and fullness, birth and death. We exist at the junction of physical sensations and emotions, between land and sky, light and dark, speech and the inexpressible. I experience the frustration of somewhat knowing those people I love, but recognizing that I will never truly be able to fully know them because I cannot exist as them. I exist amid climatic seasons that never pause. Each day of the year sees a different amount of sunlight from the days preceding and following it. I cannot completely grasp the definitive, nor can I fathom infinity. I am torn between knowing I am an organic being, part of the natural environment, and living as a modern human who ultimately alters and destroys the environment that gave me life and sustains me.

Our society is not comfortable with ambiguity. Impatient with uncertainty, we prefer boundaries to blurry edges. We love to identify, label, and categorize everything we experience. This includes personality types, genetic ancestral heritage, taxonomic systems, religious denominations, political beliefs, and weather. Snowstorms are now named and there are twelve distinct classes of tornado intensity. Curly hair has been split into nine service-marked categories so consumers can select from a myriad of styling gels specifically marketed to their types. Our society seeks tidy classifications and definitive answers. Unfortunately, we still live in a world teeming with gray areas, unknowns, and mystery. Ambiguity should not elicit fear.

The German word “hinterland” means “the land behind” or “behind land.” It is often used to describe backcountry or the land that lies beyond a developed coastal
region. The word implies a wilderness beyond, a far-off, vague place beyond the busyness of a cultural district. This term best describes the ambiguity of existence and my reach for a spiritual plane. My personal hinterland is the quiet mental or spiritual realm that lies out of my reach. It is blocked by obstacles created by both the culture I live in, my bodily ties to the physical world, and my own mind. As I approach, the distant shadowy line will fall back, threatening to remain forever out of reach. My existence can never be organized into perfect categories, nor can the elements of my psyche be tightly fenced. There will always be gaps and blurred lines, like the pockets of space and air that are hidden by caves, enclosed lairs, and dens. The process of understanding and living in ambiguity during my search for the horizon of a spiritual realm becomes as important as the horizon itself.

As this document is a companion to the thesis exhibition, it is intended to provide background information and context for the artwork. I outline the personal, artistic, and narrative influences that have shaped this body of work, discuss the creative process, and offer insight into the symbolism used. In addition, the impact that the psychological writings of Carl Jung have had on the work will be explained, as well as the intent of the pieces and body of work as a whole.

Artist Statement

My work investigates intersections of the realms of human existence. It is the visual exploration of a universal inner landscape, a collective mental or spiritual space shared by all of us. This spiritual realm is intuitive and ambiguous, simultaneously imagined and real. It is embodied in my work as a stark vast landscape formed by the
influence of dreams, memories, and place. The conscious environment coexists with the subconscious, and I examine this relationship through archetypal symbols including stones, bones, and animal forms.

My work has been influenced by creators who manipulate a wide range of materials, including Ann Hamilton, Max Ernst, Ingmar Bergman, Henry Fuseli, Terrence Malick, Andrew Wyeth, and Kiki Smith. The use of a variety of media allows specific examinations of different psychological realms. While two-dimensional media can be ideal for conveying the intangible concept of the psyche, the friction between the conscious and subconscious is sometimes best represented with more tactile, three-dimensional materials. The relationship between the mental and physical is also emphasized by the tension between two- and three-dimensional components and a mixture of media.

Through the combination of these elements, I have sought to investigate and catalogue my personal quest to discover and explore the converging realms of human existence. Focusing on union, transition, and transformation, this work is the physical manifestation of my attempt to understand and accept the constantly evolving nature of being.
CHAPTER TWO
INFLUENCES

A combination of personal, artistic, narrative, and psychological sources have influenced this body of work. My primary personal influence has been my experience of living in three different types of natural environments that have each shaped my imagination and sense of self. Artistic inspirations include the nightmarish paintings of Henry Fuseli, Andrew Wyeth’s barren landscapes, Kiki Smith’s visceral sculptures, and the dreamscapes of Surrealist artists such as Max Ernst and Frida Kahlo. My work has also been molded by the narrative influence of novels, film, and mythology. Finally, the psychological theories of Carl Jung, including his analysis of the unconscious/conscious split, archetypes, and dreams, have both inspired and shaped the work in this exhibition.

Personal Influences

The landscape of my natural surroundings deeply influences my work. Having lived in three distinct geographical areas, I have observed topography’s effect on my mood and imagination. I spent my childhood in a mountainous, wooded part of Missouri. This shaped my portrayal of the primitive subconscious by providing natural physical reminders of a prehistoric time. For a few years of my early adulthood, I lived in Wyoming. The vast open skies helped evoke the representation of the spiritual realm in my mind and in my work. Since then, I have lived in the open but domesticated landscape of Iowa, which serves as an appropriate metaphor for living between two worlds. The landscape itself plays a key role in my work, signifying obstacles,
primordial and physical memories, dreamed spaces, the collective unconsciousness, and finally, my hinterland.

I grew up in the Saint Francois Mountains of southeastern Missouri. Madison County has a rocky, hilly terrain crisscrossed by numerous streams and rivers. Forests are interspersed with pasture, and the hilly hayfields are often interrupted by the dark shadows of a tree-line. Brush and trees crowd against the barbed wire fences that mark the fields’ boundaries. The combination of thick vegetation, wildlife, changeable weather, and falling branches often causes the fences to collapse inward, blurring the lines between wild and tame, as well as lines between properties.

The area’s geography boasts an abundance of minerals and metals, including lead, cobalt, copper, iron, nickel, zinc, silver, and tungsten. The presence of these natural resources brought miners to the area in the eighteenth century, and by the time I was playing there as a child, numerous abandoned mines could be found nearby. Interesting geographical elements included Elephant Rocks State Park in a neighboring county, which features a granite tor, huge boulders, and two abandoned quarries. Local highways pass between cliffs of excavated rock, and the area also contains many caves. The county’s terrain is scattered with ancient rocks dating from the Paleozoic Cambrian and Pre-Cambrian geological periods (Division of Geology and Land Survey Home Page).

My memories of this area are of nooks, crannies, and cool, dark hiding places. As a twin, I had a built-in “buddy system,” which gave us more explorative freedom than we would have had individually. My brother and I spent a great deal of time finding or building shelters, dens, and hiding places in the woods and among rocks. The community is located in an area called the Lead Belt. For several years we lived within
walking distance of the Harmony Lake tailings area of the abandoned Mine La Motte mines. My brother and I were fascinated by this place, and secretly spent many afternoons playing on chat piles and digging out strange, twisted lengths of rusted metal rebar. I have memories of playing around an open, water-filled mine shaft that was home to a large alligator snapping turtle, and collecting piles of waste rock. Much of the area was covered in chat and gravel, and few plants grew there.

This was a dangerous playground for children, but in my mind, we had access to a hidden desert, complete with the equivalent of skeletons: the forms of defunct equipment rising from the sandy chat. When I look back on it now, scenes from surrealist landscapes with their geological forms and mechanical structures have been superimposed on my visual memories of the place. We played with turtles, frogs, snakes, toads, insects, sticks, stones, and mud. I remember taking skinks to Sunday school in my shirt pocket and watching globs of salamander eggs hatch in a glass jar. My brother and I found feathers, eggshells, pseudo-fossils, fossils, bones, decaying animals, and occasionally arrowheads.

My fascination with these objects would later influence my representations of the primitive subconscious. It is appropriate, therefore, that the creatures with whom we had the most contact—reptiles, amphibians, birds, and insects—are living reminders of their prehistoric ancestors. I can recall the alligator snapping turtle slowly emerging from the murky water of the mine shaft, then sinking back into the cold depths. The memories of these animals and objects have become intertwined with my memories of childhood and my awareness of the subconscious, defining them as something primordial and magical, far-off but intimate, hidden in a dark, decaying environment until I am ready to pull
them out.

In 2005 I moved to Laramie, Wyoming. From my first crossing of Nebraska’s plains, I was deeply affected by the change in landscape. With such a low population, Wyoming’s geography has a stark emptiness that is emphasized along the highways by the scarcity of billboards and gas stations. An immense sky spans the bare rolling plains, the view unobstructed by trees and buildings. The light is strong, and it is rare to find locations that aren’t brilliantly lit by the sun. Clouds create moving patterns of shadows on the ground. The land’s emptiness results in a greater reliance on the sky for visual interest, turning clouds into heavy, but always shifting, monuments. They can seem dense and sublime, often outshining even the mountains that rise above the plains. At first the openness of the land was claustrophobic. The enormous sky felt oppressive without a multitude of power lines and trees to hold it at a safe distance above my head.

With time I started to find the landscape more exhilarating than oppressive. I attribute this to the ceaseless wind that continually molds the billowing layers of clouds into countless strange but familiar shapes. I felt as if the winds pushed the sky back and up, giving me room to breathe and observe. The wind sculpted snow into surreal drifts and kept tumbleweeds forever rolling across fields and highways. I watched it rush dark clouds across the sky, then down into the Laramie valley on summer afternoons. The landscape that had initially seemed empty and motionless was subtly, but constantly, undulating. The Snowy Range, always visible on the horizon when facing west in Laramie, became both a familiar friend and a siren that beckoned. The haziness of the horizon line appealed to me, just as the darkness of the forest line had appealed to me in Missouri. Wyoming’s open landscape taught me that I am very small, part of something
enormous and incomprehensible. It also taught me that even the most stable things are constantly stirring and changing. Wyoming had a great impact on the use of landscapes in my artwork. The open skies and magnificent clouds pervaded my visual vocabulary, and it is there I began to actively suspect that a bigger, higher realm existed.

Relocating from Wyoming to the landscape of Iowa was another abrupt change that affected my mood and artwork. I found myself deeply mourning the loss of the western topography. Wyoming’s browns, grays, and green-grays were traded for grassy greens and brassy yellows, and wind-blown sagebrush was replaced with Iowa’s endless rows of corn. When I compare it to southern Missouri and Wyoming, the upper-Midwest’s heavily domesticated landscape seems to lack both the archaic marks of a primordial past, and the wild, vast reminders of a shifting universe. However, certain qualities allow it to serve as a study of the in-between.

The land here is flatter than Missouri’s and the sky feels bigger, but the vegetation, farmhouses, and silos prevent the open fields from conveying the same wild starkness of Wyoming. In Iowa it is possible to find both the empty horizon lines of the West and the shadowy, over-grown horizons of southern Missouri. Rocky geological formations are fewer and modern agriculture makes fields less inviting, but often the colors are startlingly vivid or peaceful. Therefore, it is an appropriate landscape for discovering and accepting the role of ambiguity and transition. Now that I have a more specific awareness of the spiritual realm I wish to attain, I am able to concentrate on the duality and ambiguity within the planes of human existence. This is illustrated in my surroundings in the flat cultivated land stretching toward the unpredictable sky and the never-ceasing cycle of sowing, growth, and harvest. My attention is drawn to the
horizons here more than ever, craving what is just beyond my ability to see or reach.

I’ve always had a sense that the ground is alive. When I was a child, hills were the backs of enormous sleeping creatures and ridges were spines. When I placed the palm of my hand flat against a boulder, tingles radiated up my arm as I wondered what the ancient rock had experienced and witnessed. Seeing hayfields made me feel as if I could stretch out upon the ground and become the land. My body would conform to the curvature of the earth. I would sink down and disintegrate, becoming part of the living, breathing terrain. When I moved west, my daydreams about the plains of Wyoming were the same. I imagined stretching out on my belly and fading away until I became a part of the hazy smeared line that divided earth from sky.

These daydreams about integration into living earth have returned as I address the idea of existing between two realms. My body is composed of the same elements that make the earth and sky. The soil exists between two planes: the rocky and shifting tectonic plates below and the whirling atmosphere of air above. It is simultaneously dead and alive. It contains lifeless minerals but is crawling with microbial organisms. While many would not consider the soil alive, it largely consists of decaying organisms and is rich in life-sustaining nutrients. It shifts and changes, caught between stone and sky, inorganic existence and life.

Artistic Influences

Although the diverse group of artists that have influenced my work is constantly evolving, the following have had especially deep impacts on this specific body of work. Henry Fuseli’s paintings provide dark examples of the use of dreams and mood. Andrew
Wyeth’s wintery Pennsylvania scenes inspire me with their stark beauty, references to transition, and use of the landscape as character. Kiki Smith demonstrates how the use of space and a variety of media can impact the viewer experience. Finally, surrealists such as Max Ernst and Frida Kahlo have affected me with their use of bones, landscapes, and dreamscapes. The combination of real and imagined objects and settings in their imagery has greatly influenced my work.

One of my earliest artistic influences that inspired work in this exhibition is the Swiss painter Henry Fuseli. *The Nightmare* (1781) and *Horseman attacked by a giant snake* (c. 1800) authentically depict the experience of having a frightening dream. Both pieces communicate the oppressive, suffocating fear of the unknown by portraying horrific creatures emerging from the dark, threatening to consume the human form. These pieces also represent the ability to be in two states simultaneously. In *The Nightmare*, dream creatures have entered the physical world. Rather than staying trapped inside the dreamer’s mind, a goblin perches atop her chest while a ghoulish horse peers through parted bed curtains. Subconscious material has emerged into the external world. *Horseman* shows a giant serpent’s writhing form enveloping a horse and rider. The snake attacks from above, referring to the progression of fear: having grown to giant proportions in the mind, it devours its host. Slowly being consumed, the horse is fighting in the open air while trapped within the dark tunnel of the snake’s throat. Caught between life and death, it experiences both simultaneously as it is swallowed. Fuseli’s powerful symbolism resonates with my childhood memories of investigating dark crannies in the hopes of finding snakes, lizards, or fossils. The symbols I use to represent the subconscious self are present in the snake of *Horseman* and the almost skeletal form
of the horse in *The Nightmare*. My representation of the subconscious inherits a long historical tradition of artistic symbols.

Another influence is American artist Andrew Wyeth, who often painted scenes around Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania (Wilmerding 11). His compositions are notable for their earthy colors, emptiness, simplicity, and strong horizons. They illustrate the changeable nature of even seemingly stable structures like ground and sky. *Snow Flurries* (1953) and *Spring* (1978) are strong examples of these themes.

*Snow Flurries* depicts a rolling field that rises up before the viewer. The wintery day is painted in somber colors, and the viewer’s eye is drawn along a faint road from the bottom right corner of the composition to the center of the horizon line. Grayish-brown earth meets a sky that transitions from white to gray. This piece demonstrates the importance of the horizon line, which is accented by the road that pulls the viewer’s eye from the foreground up to the line between ground and sky. Although the piece portrays no moving objects, a sense of movement is created with the diagonal lines of the road and the active crisscrossing lines of the two hills’ horizons. Movement conveys a passage of time and thus a transition, which is evident in the scene itself. The flecks of snow and clouds remind the viewer of the fluctuation in weather and the rotation of seasons. The view would not be the same on any other day because of changes in the vegetation, lighting, colors, and sky. The scene feels solid and fragile simultaneously, pulled between dark and light.

Like *Snow Flurries*, *Spring* also depicts a rising field and a sharp contrast between ground and sky. Movement is again implied with the use of a diagonal track leading to the upper right skyline and the sharp angle of the horizon line. Stretched
across the foreground, a man lies prostrate, partially buried in a melting drift of snow. The passage of time is conveyed through the uneven melting around the man’s limbs and face. The dirty, ridged edges of the snow pile reveal alternating periods of snowmelt and snowfall. Despite his covering of snow, the man’s exposed flesh is warm in tone. The partially frozen body refers to a fragile stasis between states: covered and naked, frozen and thawed, dead and alive. The spring season, signified by melting snow and hints of green, is further proof of an ambiguous existence—not quite winter, not quite summer. The man’s body may be melting with the snow, disintegrating into the thawing earth. Wyeth’s pieces serve as reminders of my bodily and spiritual connection to the land and of the human existence between opposing realms.

I have also been heavily influenced by artists who use a variety of materials, appreciating the combination of two- and three-dimensional media. This flux appeals to me, and Kiki Smith’s work provides excellent blends of dimensions and states of being. Organic symbols convey powerful messages, as illustrated in the sculpture *Blood Pool* (1992), which depicts bones in a manner that simultaneously feels medical, archaeological, and supernatural. Tension between realms is conveyed through the emergence of the spinal column from the figure’s back. My childhood mental image of the connection of body to land, in which hills and cliffs were the backbones of giant creatures living in the earth, is reinforced with this spinal surfacing.

Finally, one of the strongest artistic influences is the surrealist work of Max Ernst and Frida Kahlo. Surrealism has deeply affected my use of horizon, landscape, and archaic symbols. Dreamlike scenes illustrate the experience of being caught between planes of reality: naturalistic objects are arranged in unnatural compositions that pay
little attention to our world’s laws of gravity and physics.

Max Ernst’s paintings *The Angels of Hearth and Home* (1937) and *Europe After the Rain II* (1940-1942) showcase the surrealist imagery that shaped my decision to use landscape forms as elements of the psyche. *The Angels of Hearth and Home* portrays two strange, giant creatures bounding over a plain. While the large-scale figures looming over the land are unworldly, the landscape itself is treated naturalistically. Mountains are visible on the horizon line, which lies close to the bottom of the picture plane below an immense hazy sky. The landscape appears peaceful and quiet, but the atmospheric blurriness between sky and mountains introduces a premonitory element. This painting shows a far-off, peaceful realm obstructed by haze, distance, and monsters.

Ernst’s *Europe After the Rain II* presents what appears to be a palatial structure after a destructive battle. Mysterious architectural forms rise from the bottom of the composition. From a distance, these forms appear to be constructed of intricate, twisting stones, but a closer look reveals masses of figures, faces, and animals. The structures take on the ghastly appearance of tendons and rotting flesh, but an intensely blue sky shines behind the clouds. While the painting undoubtedly refers to battle-torn Europe during the Second World War, it also conjures the prehistoric organic material secreted away in stones, caves, and under the ground. The foreground shows the archaic components of the primitive subconscious, whose towers and cliffs pierce the serene realm of the sky.

Similar motifs are found in Frida Kahlo’s 1944 painting *The Broken Column*. The subject matter refers to Kahlo’s suffering after an accident that left her seriously injured, but also illustrates the tension between a painful physical existence and the
promise of serenity found in an afterlife. The figure’s body is split open, revealing a cracked and crumbling column, and is held in place by a brace. The torso, arms, and face are pierced by several pins or nails. This image of discomfort and immobility conflicts sharply with the landscape behind it, which is both quiet and colorful. Again, the horizon line is hazy, behind an open, sculpted field. This type of visual discord, revealing a juxtaposition of physical suffering and spiritual peace, has greatly impacted the forms and meanings of my landscapes.

Narrative Influences

My artistic influences, while diverse, depict simultaneous existence within two realms. The narrative works of literature and film that have shaped this body of work share that trait with my artistic influences. For this exhibition, the three primary narrative sources of inspiration are The Death of a Beekeeper, a novel by Lars Gustaffson, Ingmar Bergman’s film The Seventh Seal, and mythology, especially European myths of the Wild Hunt and black dogs. These three narrative sources all tell stories about walking the line between life and death, providing rich illustrations of the ambiguity of human existence. In addition, the landscape, and often the horizon itself, is an important element in each of them.

In Gustaffson’s The Death of a Beekeeper, a retired teacher lives alone in the Swedish countryside with his dog and beehives. After a divorce and an early retirement, he has moved deeper into the landscape he loves while, unbeknownst to him, he rapidly approaches death. After back pain prompts him to visit a doctor, he is tested for cancer. When the man receives the test results in a letter, he goes for a long walk along the
perimeter of the peninsula on which he lives. After this journey across the countryside, he returns home but opts to burn the unopened letter, believing that if he doesn’t know the contents he can retain hope (20-21). The story documents the following weeks he spends, primarily in solitude, experiencing growing waves of pain and the changes of the thawing winter landscape. The beekeeper begins to suspect that he won’t live to see the summer. His sense of self changes as his pain evolves, and he realizes that pain has altered the way he experiences the landscape around him. At one point he notes that “the foundation of the entire concept of the self is that it will continue to exist tomorrow” (79). While noticing the tension between winter and spring, he comes to an awareness of the similarity to human existence: “The human being, this strange creature, hovering between animal existence and hope” (133). The book’s setting and sensitive treatment of a character caught in flux has been an important influence on the formation of the themes of this exhibition. In my mark-making and sculpting, I seek to emulate the type of sensitivity and thoughtfulness found in its pages.

Ingmar Bergman’s films show the director’s interest in the uneasy relationships between realms, even naming one film *Hour of the Wolf*, after the term for the dark hour between night and dawn. However, it is his film *The Seventh Seal*, which contains some of the same themes, that most deeply affected my work. The mood of the film is heavily influenced by the Swedish landscape. The protagonist, Antonius Block, is making a journey home while walking the line between life and death. Followed by a personification of Death, Block attempts to gain time by engaging Death in a chess game. The film follows Block from a rocky beach across the Swedish countryside, through a forest and finally to his castle. The final scene shows Block hand-in-hand with
a group being pulled by the spectre in a “dance of death,” their bodies silhouetted between the expanse of a rolling field and open sky. The imagery of the film, particularly its sharply contrasted landscapes, rocky scenes, and dramatic use of the horizon line, has served as an inspiration for my current body of work. This imagery, combined with the story’s themes, establishes a strong sense of transition and entrapment between two existences.

Finally, mythology that addresses dual realities played a strong role in the creation of this exhibition, especially stories that deal with existence between planes that are actualized on a real physical landscape. Carl Jung wrote, “Myth is the natural and indispensable intermediate stage between unconscious and conscious cognition” (Memories 311). Many of the myths that have influenced my work involve black dog spirits (sometimes called hellhounds, barghest, etc.) who at times roam the physical world, such as Norfolk’s Black Shuck who haunts churchyards or Lancashire’s death-foreboding Gytrash (Leach 151-2). One of the most well-known of these myths is the Wild Hunt, which refers to a fearsome pack of spectral hunters astride horses and accompanied by dogs. Different versions of the myth can be found in the British Isles, Scandinavia, Germany, and France (Leach 64). The hunters are said to herald winter, cold, stormy weather, or death. The phenomenon occurs at night, and the group, which has left the spirit world to hunt, thunders across the land or across the sky. In England, it has been said that anyone who sees one of the dogs of the Wild Hunt is condemned to die (Leach 64-66). The imagery this tale evokes in my imagination is powerful: skeletal animals, dark windy skies, and the passage of time symbolized by the pack thundering across the skyline. The theme of transitions and intersection of realms, along with the
symbols of sky, land, and ancestral forms, have motivated me and are all embodied in this exhibition.

**Jungian Psychology**

Aside from personal, artistic, and narrative influences, the psychological work of Carl Jung has had the strongest impact on the ideological themes of my work. His explorations of the human psyche, dreams, and archetypes have resonated with me deeply, bringing clarity and direction to my subject matter. Jung investigated many of the sources that compel me artistically, including mythology, dreams, and the natural world. He argues that levels of consciousness can be raised only on earth, where the conscious and unconscious collide within the human. Much of Jung’s definition of the psyche depends on our ability to be in two places, or to be two things, concurrently. In *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* he proposes that the world as humans know it relates to “another order of things lying behind or beneath it, in which neither ‘here and there’ nor ‘earlier and later’ are of importance” (305). According to him, part of man’s psychic existence relies on a time and space relativity, which decreases “in proportion to the distance from consciousness, to an absolute condition of timelessness and spacelessness” (305). As you delve further into the subconscious, concepts of time and space are lost.

In *Man and his Symbols* Jung argues that the human individual is split into two divided “personalities”: the conscious and unconscious mind (23). Additionally, he asserts that the psyche may be linked to other psyches and realms. For instance, a human individual can associate his or her unconscious identity with an object, animal, or another person (24). He believed the unconscious corresponds to the “mythic land of the
dead,” or the collective dead, able to act as a sort of medium between the conscious and our ancestors (Memories 191). Jung posits that the superficial layer of the unconscious is personal, resting on the deeper level of a universal and inborn collective unconscious (The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious 3). The concept of a collective unconsciousness or identity did not originate with Jung. In The Primal Mind, Jamake Highwater describes how some North American tribes possess “communal souls” that emphasize a tribal, rather than individual, psychology (169). Jung’s interpretation of the collective unconsciousness differs in that it functions within the psyche, relating to the consciousness instead of serving as a communication with gods.

He describes a dream in Memories, Dreams, Reflections that led him to the idea of the collective unconscious, which illustrates these concepts. In the dream, he explores a house at length and finally descends into its ancient cellar. Its floor is covered in stone slabs. Pulling one up, he discovers a staircase descending into a cave. In the dust on the cave floor Jung finds broken pieces of pottery, stones, and two old, half-decayed human skulls (158-159). Jung interprets the house as a representation of his psyche. The upper levels portray his consciousness, while the lower levels represented deeper, less accessible levels of the unconscious. He equates finding primitive remains in the cave with self-discovery of the unconscious, which is the psyche’s hidden world of primitive man, which “borders on the life of the animal soul, just as the caves of prehistoric times were usually inhabited by animals before men lay claim to them” (160). Later, Jung would call the symbols of his dream “archetypes” (161), suggesting that the personal unconscious contains the personal psychic life, while the collective unconscious contains these universal symbols (The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious 4).
Archetypes, as Jung defines them, are symbols for ideas used by the collective unconscious. They have also been referred to as mythological motifs and primordial thoughts (*The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious* 42-43). Many types exist, including individualized archetypes and in-born archetypes shared by large cultural groups. Jung posits that the pre-existing forms of archetypes allow the unconscious to relate its psychic “contents” to the conscious (43). In describing how archetypes appear as pre-existing psychic images in dreams and fantasies of children, he emphasizes that it is not “a question of inherited ideas but of inherited possibilities of ideas” (*The Archetypes* 66). He advised paying attention when these prehistoric symbols emerge, because

> Everything fits into the economy of the whole, relates to the whole. That is to say, it is all purposeful and has meaning. But because consciousness never has a view of the whole, it usually cannot understand this meaning. We must therefore content ourselves for the time being with noting the phenomenon and hoping that the future, or further investigation, will reveal the significance of the class with the shadows of the self.

(*Memories* 246)

In *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, Jung describes a personal experience that illustrates the unconscious communicating with the conscious through archetypal symbols. As a child, he carved a rough wooden man to whom he bestowed an oblong, painted stone. Jung hid these objects away, viewing them occasionally with reverence and secrecy. Later in life, he learned of the tjurungas used by an indigenous Australian people. Tjurungas are small sacred wooden or stone objects, usually oblong and
polished, that serve as totems or a housing of the owner’s mythic being (“Tjurunga”). Jung also learned of the similar painted soul-stones near Arlesheim, Switzerland. This experience led him to believe that archaic psychic elements are able to pervade the individual psyche, even without a “direct line of tradition” (*Memories* 22-23).

Analyst Aniela Jaffé explores similar recurring prehistoric motifs in her essay “Symbolism in the Visual Arts.” She discusses the archetypes of stones and animals, referring to cave paintings in Spain and France. Occasionally ancient images of figures that are part human and part animal are discovered on cave walls, perhaps denoting mediator spirits between animal and human. Stones were psychologically and symbolically significant to some ancient societies, who believed they were inhabited by spirits and gods (232). Jaffé recounts the story of Jacob in the Old Testament. While sleeping with his head on a stone that he had selected for use as a pillow, he dreamed of a message from God. When he woke, he venerated the stone as a mediator between man and God (233). Jung also refers to the archetypal importance of caves and use of stones as mediators. In his essay “Concerning Rebirth,” Jung describes caves as symbols of rebirth, places where one can be “incubated and renewed” (*The Archetypes* 135). He also relates the cave to a place where the conscious can penetrate the unconscious. Thus, “the darkness that lies behind consciousness” is where transformation occurs (135-136). In *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* he describes carving his ancestors’ names onto stone tablets for a building project. While carving, he felt himself becoming aware of his links to his forefathers, and the unfinished tasks and questions of dead family members. He speculates that this could be a collective experience (233).

Jung wrote in *Man and his Symbols* that dreams are “symbolic images” of
unconscious aspects of conscious psychic events, maintaining that unconscious psychic events are revealed through moments of intuition or a “process of profound thought that leads to a later realization that they must have happened,” which is often in the form of a dream (23). He believed dreams give glimpses of our truer selves:

The dream is a little hidden door in the innermost and most secret recesses of the soul, opening into that cosmic night which was psyche long before there was any ego-consciousness, and which will remain psyche no matter how far our ego-consciousness may extend. . . . All consciousness separates; but in dreams we put on the likeness of that more universal, truer, more eternal man dwelling in the darkness of primordial night. There he is still the whole, and the whole is in him, indistinguishable from pure nature and bare of all egohood. It is from these all-uniting depths that the dream arises, be it never so childish, grotesque, and immoral. (qtd. in Globus 7)

Dreams about the archetypal symbol of landscape are frequently thought to refer to the psyche itself. In the individual’s dream life, M.-L. von Franz believes landscapes can denote an “inexpressible mood” or landscape of the soul (215). In *Jungian Dream Interpretation*, Dr. James A. Hall interprets the meaning of natural disasters, including earthquakes, as a “background shift of the ego” (49). Therefore, a shift in land could represent change in the collective situation. These dreams may indicate a sudden, dramatic shift in the structure of the ego-image. Hall notes that this type of change, if treated appropriately, can be transformative (50). Changes to the dreamed landscape may symbolize renewal of the psyche.
Jung writes about his experiences with landscape elements in dreams. In “Conscious, Unconscious, and Individuation,” he interprets a patient’s vision, in which the patient was buried up to her waist on a boulder-strewn beach. He equates being stuck in the landscape of a dream as being caught in the unconscious (The Archetypes 291-2).

The night before Jung’s mother’s death he dreamed that he was in an “heroic, primeval landscape,” surrounded by boulders. He witnessed the wolfhound of the Wild Huntsman, who “gathered. . . [his] mother to her ancestors,” and for days afterward the dream would simultaneously fill him with devastation and a warm joy (Memories 314-315). As a vivid dreamer, I have always been aware of living in a subconscious, concurrent reality within the dream world, and have frequently explored my dreams through art-making. At times I have been an active sleepwalker, caught between the realms of mind and body. One such incident involved the collection of pebbles, an archetypal symbol. My dreams feature a rotation of recurring places and animals. One setting contains islands surrounded by a rocky ocean, with stacked boulders rising above the waves to form dens and caves. I have included elements of these archetypal dream symbols in this exhibition, such as shifting horizons and rock formations.

One of Jung’s most important contributions to the field of analytical psychology was his concept of individuation, the psychological lifework of an individual, in which he or she must synthesize the unconscious realm with the conscious. Individuation is attainment of the “life in which the individual becomes what he always was” (The Archetypes 40), linking the human “consciousness, our most recent acquisition” with “the oldest, the unconscious, which has lagged behind” (350). Archetypes require a process of dialogue and acceptance for integration into the consciousness (40).
Before starting this body of work, I had a dream about exploring a large building, much like Jung’s house dream. Though it was unclear whether the building was a church, house, or school, I instinctively knew it was a place of learning. I explored a tower classroom, then meeting rooms on the ground floor. Eventually I returned to the narrow staircase that had led up to the steeple classroom and discovered another staircase leading down. As I descended, the air grew cooler while the wood paneling was replaced with damp bricks. The stairs lost their carpeting, transitioning from bare wood to packed earth and stone. At the bottom was a room filled with dark, deep water that lapped against the stone step on which I stood. I peered into the opaque water, feeling that something important lurked there, beckoning to me. I knew I needed to step into the water, dive down to grope at the stone floor, disturbing the silt and creating clouds of mud. My fingers knew the surface already: I could feel the grittiness of sand against wet stone. The urge to dive was strong, but fear was stronger. I announced, “I’m not ready yet; I’m just not ready yet.” Then I woke. This summarizes the object of my art-making, in which I visually explore the synthesizing process of individuation. The work in this exhibition shows the link between the archetypal symbols of my subconscious with the part of my psyche that yearns for higher consciousness.
CHAPTER THREE
THE WORK

The work in this exhibition refers to the experience of living between states or places. Some of the components explore my subconscious and employ archetypal symbols. Others portray the higher spiritual realm. All of the pieces embody the process of existence between the physical and spiritual, and the conscious and unconscious. By showing the convergence of and interaction between realms, the work represents the human condition of living betwixt and between.

Because of the ambiguity of the work’s subject matter, the viewing experience is left fairly open to interpretation. Becoming aware of the constantly evolving nature of existence has affected my attitude toward artistic control over the viewer’s experience. In past works, I have struggled to discover ways to guide the viewer’s interaction with my art in order to create a specific experience. However, as I become accepting of a spiritually messy, less categorical existence, I find myself able to relinquish some control. I am curious about releasing my art to a range of interpretations and types of viewer experience. To me, one of the most fulfilling aspects of art is satisfying the compulsion to analyze my life experience visually. One of the most fascinating aspects of art depends on other people: the countless ways a work is experienced during a brief encounter. Interpretation depends on innumerable conditions: the viewer’s culture, age, personality, education, memories, health, and even on the state of ever-changing human moods. Therefore, while I intend the viewing experience to be calm and reflective, it is my desire to let each viewer explore the individual, personal associations evoked by the
The exhibition’s work can be split into four media categories: cyanotypes, ceramic sculptural forms, monotypes, and paintings. Though the media are varied, all of the pieces are linked by influence, subject matter, and artistic voice. References to primitive symbols of the past are seen in the imagery of bones and the den-like crannies within the ceramic forms. The concept of a vast and peaceful higher realm is represented by open landscapes with towering skies. Finally, the notion of existence between realms, the acceptance of never-ending change and movement, and the embracing of ambiguity, are present in the colors shifting between landscape prints, the allusion to erosion in the ceramic forms, and the uncertainty of the horizon lines in the prints and paintings.

Cyanotypes

The set of cyanotypes in this exhibition are representations of archetypes, primitive symbols, changes brought about through decay and chemical processes, and evidence of the hinterland in the natural world. Taken in Webster County, Iowa, Missouri’s St. Francois State Park, and Madison County, Missouri, these photographs depict natural objects as I found them. The cyanotypes Retrieval and A Surfacing feature weathered bones found in a field. These skeletal remains represent the archaic or primitive archetypal symbolism of the subconscious, as explained by Jung. Excavation, a view of stone cut away for a highway passage, and Cairn, which shows a stack of granite rocks, also allude to archaic symbolism and the beginnings of my experience with the natural world. Kenning and Wold, close-range photos of snowdrifts, suggest the far-off horizon line that denotes a meeting of realms. Simultaneously, these images are
manifestations of ambiguity in their resemblance to mountainous landscapes.

The imagery of these cyanotypes symbolizes the transitional and uncertain nature of existence. The rocks and bones have been shaped by weather and living things. Reminders of the constant passage of hours, they are eroded, stained, and speckled with lichens (Fig. 1). Kenning and Wold also convey the concept of time and transitions. The snow has accumulated, been sculpted into fantastic forms by the wind, melted, refrozen, and striated with the grime created by the continual passage of traffic (Fig. 2). Just as the stones, snowdrifts, and bones in these photos have been shaped by the sun, cyanotypes depend on ultraviolet light for development. This historic photographic process, sensitive to (but dependent on) natural elements, lends itself well to images depicting decomposition, erosion, and change. The slightly murky nature of
the photographs emphasizes the archaic and submerged quality of the archetypal symbols they portray, accentuating the concept of ancient, buried memories.

Sculptural Forms

The sculptural work in this exhibition symbolizes the presence of the psyche’s archaic unconscious contents as it strives for a higher consciousness. The forms themselves, as well as the process and materials used in their construction, refer to transition. A manifestation of dreamed stone archetypes, the forms are also suggestive of my physical and emotional relationship with the landscape.

In shaping these pieces, I recalled my childhood history with stony terrain, as well as strange geological forms found in dreamy surrealist landscapes. Keeping in mind that rock formations can be fantastically sculpted by geological forces and the erosion of wind and water, in molding the ceramic forms I worked to maintain a sense of naturalism, letting intuition guide my hands in a type of sculptural erosion. I was also mindful of the way stones have been used by other artists. Though sometimes carved into shapes, they are also used as a drawing surface that allows the natural shape of the stone itself to contribute to the message. Max Ernst alluded to this in a 1953 letter:

Alberto [Giacometti] and I are afflicted with sculpturitis. We work on granite boulders, large and small, from the moraine of the Forno glacier. Wonderfully polished by time, frost, and weather, they are in themselves fantastically beautiful. So why not leave the spadework to the elements, and confine ourselves to scratching on them the runes of our own mystery? (qtd. in Jaffè 234)
In the sculptural piece *Outcropping* multiple ceramic pieces mimic rock formations. I stacked forms to create nooks and cave-like crannies. Symbolizing rebirth and transformation, caves are eerie places of transition, where water and air currents slowly create beautiful sculptural forms of stalagmites and stalactites in complete darkness. The forms’ shapes allude both to a span of wind-shaped terrain and the domestic setting of the forms’ dreamed origins. *Monadnocks* is a collection of flat, undulating forms in curving shapes that are reminiscent of clouds or hills. These shapes also refer to my sense of the living landscape, mimicking the arched spines of creatures emerging from below the earth. In addition to representing the themes above, *Outcropping* and *Monadnocks* both signify the obstacles that prevent me from fully reaching a place of higher consciousness. Obstructions can consist of the physical elements of daily life and psychological, archetypal stumbling blocks.

Clay was a natural choice in creating these pieces. In ceramics, elements of earth are manipulated with water and fire to produce forms, and glazing is a transformative process that occurs within the heat of the kiln. The lithium, low-fire glaze is somewhat unpredictable and results in rich earthy reds, ochers, and lichen-like green splotches. The unpredictability of this glaze appealed to me because much of the final result depended upon natural elements and processes. Pit-firing was used for similar reasons, as well as for the smoky, archaic results it can produce.

**Monotypes**

The exhibition features three series of monotypes, all of which depict flat landscapes with horizons influenced by varying degrees of haziness. These monotypes
visually represent my search for a spiritual realm or higher consciousness. Their two-dimensional flatness refers to the abstract nature of this plane, while their simplicity signifies its peace. The blurred horizon line points to the ambiguity of living between categories and realms. The foreground, suggesting physical existence, must be traversed to reach the place where it intersects with the sky that implies a higher consciousness. Variation in the placement of the horizon line hints at the shifting nature of the higher consciousness, which at various stages seems closer or further away.

The three series investigate different qualities of this existential quest. The *Flux* series is the most naturalistic, depicting light transitions experienced by one location at five separate times of day. This series intentionally notes the passage of time and constant change. The *Covenant* series contains a more subtle exploration of this theme in its depiction of varied seasons. The largest series, *Horizons*, is the most abstract, instinctive, and ambiguous. It is uncertain whether some of the images portray land or water, and the mark-making is more stylized than representational (Fig. 3). The location itself is unclear, as is whether or not the location moves. While the overall structure of each image is the same, the colors and marks vary, pointing to the shifting nature of existence (Figs. 4 and 5). I am not the same person from day to day, nor even from minute to minute. My body is undergoing perpetual changes on a cellular level as I breathe, metabolize, and age. These monotypes serve as reminders of this ceaseless renewal and transformations.
During the intuitive creation of this series, I felt closer to pure existence or being than I have making any other piece. I sat down with the printing plate again and again, let my mind and body quietly push the oil paint around on the smooth surface of the plate, and stopped when I felt ready. I ran a print, then smeared the image off the plate to start over. This repetitive, quiet process was calm and contemplative, and by avoiding active analytical thinking I felt that I drew closer to a place of mental peace.

![Fig. 5. Kara Weyand. Horizons-Maroon. 2012. Monotype.](image1)

![Fig. 4. Kara Weyand. Horizons-Ochre. 2012. Monotype.](image2)

**Painting**

The final piece in this exhibition is a large mixed-media diptych painting titled *Beyond*. It is a continuation of the intuitive investigation started with the monotypes and ceramic forms. The diptych allows a physical, in addition to mental, separation between the earth and sky. Empty space serves as the horizon line, which symbolically refers to the difficulty in achieving higher consciousness and individuation. Mimicking the nature of mirages, dreams, and memories, the horizon line in this landscape cannot be touched. It must be supplied by the mind, fashioned by the brain’s ability to merge and unify images. This invisible space contains the hinterland, a place beyond, an outlier. The
dependence on the imagination to complete the landscape symbolizes my faith that a higher realm exists. It signifies the embrace of ambiguity and uncertainty that I experience as I search for it.

The warm colors, layered clouds, and range of textures refer to the possibility of enjoying this process: delving into the subconscious, synthesizing its contents with the conscious, and learning over the course of the journey. Jung suggested that painting with bright colors attracts the subconscious (*The Archetypes* 294). Keeping this in mind, I sought to create visual interest that draws the eye in, metaphorically pulling it toward the imagined merging of planes. I employed earthy reds and golds in the sky and used towering clouds to serve as reminders of the existence of a higher consciousness. The ground, though dark and more somber, is covered in a variety of textures and marks.

I developed this surface in an intuitive, automatic way. I hoped to recreate the reflective, peaceful experience of creating the *Horizons* monotypes on a larger scale, with more complex visual components and use of dimensional texture. The scratching, sanding, and painting process, both additive and subtractive, relates to the flux of existence. The use of progression and regression simulates the pull between physical and mental environments, as well as the interaction between the conscious and subconscious elements of the psyche. Gouges, marks, and raised ridges of paper allude to the obstacles that prevent attainment of a higher peaceful realm. In *Beyond*, I attempted to depict a space that would invoke my urge to spread out on the ground and disintegrate, becoming at once both earth and sky.
CHAPTER FOUR
CONCLUSION

Summary and Analysis

The work displayed in this exhibition reflects both the culmination of my learning experience in this program and one step of a life-long artistic journey. It is the physical manifestation of an ongoing psychological quest to understand and reconcile my personal experience of human existence. Because a large part of attempting to reach my hinterland is contingent on accepting and embracing dualities and ambiguity, the work in this exhibition exemplifies concepts of union, transition, and transformation. The variety of media used allowed emphasis on different aspects of these concepts and the investigation of multiple merging realms.

These pieces are the result of a myriad of influences. My memories and interactions with the landscape have produced the range of archetypal symbolism used, including horizon lines, sky, caves, stones, and geological formations. The work of other artists has informed and inspired the visual ways I depict the interaction of realms, including the interaction of physical and mental realms and the relationship between the subconscious and conscious. Narrative sources, such as film, novels, and myth, have raised my awareness of the ambiguous aspects of human existence while reinforcing the powerful imagery of horizons and landscape. Many components of Jungian psychology have had a deep influence on my interpretation of dreams, use of symbols, and interpretation of psychological events within my psyche. These influences have helped me develop a visual representation of the blurred, converging planes of existence.
Over the course of my studies and artistic practice, I have become aware of a tension developing between the analytical and intuitive sides of my brain, particularly during the conceptualization of artworks. The analytical side focuses heavily on planning, problem solving, depth of concept, and control, while the intuitive side craves the playful, expressive, and healing experience of actually making art. I have developed a tendency to encourage the analytical side while suppressing my intuition, imagining that my artwork would be more intellectually valid if it was created in an organized, scientific process—the more complex, the more valid. However, in the initial phases of producing monotypes and ceramic forms, I became aware of my negligence of artistic intuition. As I continued to explore a more instinctive creation process, I was better able to investigate and understand the relationships between psychological realms. I also felt a stronger connection to the physicality of creating art by allowing my movements greater freedom, and thus assigning them a more autonomous role, in determining compositions and mark-making.

Looking Forward

This investigation serves as a significant turning point in my artistic career. I have gained the ability to begin understanding the archetypal symbols that play such a large role in my artwork and personal life. I have built courage to delve further into the subconscious as part of the individuation process. Cognizance of the multiple meanings that memories and symbols hold will allow me to utilize them more effectively in my work. By accepting the messy and evolving state of existence, I hope to strengthen my ability to strive for balance and harmony. The search for the hinterland, that hazy line
where my physical existence merges with a higher, peaceful realm of higher consciousness, will continue as long as it hovers on the horizon. Pursuing that place will allow a lifetime of creating work that investigates and catalogues my journey.
APPENDIX

Cyanotype series
2013
Tea-toned cyanotypes
7.5” x 10” (each)

Retrieval

Excavation

Cairn

Wold

A Surfacing

Kenning
Monadnocks series
2012-2013
Ceramics
Each piece between 2.5”-7.5” tall and 8”-24” wide

Outcropping
2012-2013
Ceramic
Each piece between 1”-16” tall and 3”-17.5” wide
Flux series
2012
Monotypes
4” x 6” (each)
Covenant series
2012
Monotypes
8” x 10” (each)

November

August

July

February

January

April
Horizons series
2012-2013
Monotypes
8” x 10” (each)
Beyond  
2013  
Acrylic and paper on panels  
62” x 80”
Works Cited


