

A CREATIVE PROJECT (THESIS 698 – 6 SEMESTER HOURS)
HUMAN MOVEMENT: THE TRANSITION OF PEOPLE THROUGH
SPACE AND TIME

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
FOR FULLFILMENT OF REQUIREMENT

FOR THE DEGREE

MASTERS OF ARTS

BY

JONATHAN R. JOHNES

COMMITTEE

DAVID T. HANNON, SCOTT ANDERSON, WILLIAM ZACK

BALL STATE UNIVERISTY

MUNCIE, INDIANA

DECEMBER 2008

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my family, professors, and all who have supported me through my artistic hardships and endeavors.

I also would like to thank Ball State University for providing me with an assistantship and the opportunity to attain a Masters of Arts degree.

Table of contents

Abstract	4
Statement of the Problem	5
Chapter One: Influences	6
Chapter Two: Craft Development and Application	14
Section One: Canvas Construction	14
Section Two: Mounted Paper Construction	15
Section Three: Frame Construction	15
Chapter Three: Methods and Technical Processes	16
Section One: Paint Imbedding	17
Section Two: Paint Carving	20
Section Three: Encasing	22
Chapter Four: Artwork Categorization and Conceptualization	24
Section One: Identity	24
Section Two: Place	28
Section Three: Time	31
Section Four: Identity, Place, and Time	33
Conclusion and Exhibition Statement	36
Bibliography	39
Appendixes	41

Statement of the Problem

Any day at any given time, we as human beings, have a variety of stimuli that affect us regularly. These influences often are so common that our minds selectively ignore them. Most of these stimuli are derived from our environments and the conditions that happen within those environments. To uncover these influences, this body of work will address situations that will focus on figures and how they relate to their environments. The project is broken down into two groups of paintings. One group has a more sinister and mysterious quality that addresses mortality and the darker side of life, and the other group has a more humorous, playful quality. These paintings will address characteristics common to who we are as human beings.

The desired end result resides within the mind of the viewer. Knowing that most of the individuals who will be viewing these paintings are students at Ball State, the environments were selected from locations on the Ball State campus. If the viewer can relate to the depicted environment in which the figure is placed, the viewer can later perceive the real environment differently when they travel through it. This experience will help the viewer to look at other real environments that were not depicted in this thesis and see them from an artistic perspective. The viewer can then address the influences from their environment that were previously ignored.

Chapter One: Influences

The main source of influence that informed this thesis was derived from a select number of artists. Each artist was observed to cultivate the techniques that were created for this body of work. Some artists were referenced for their paint handling techniques, some for their ability to utilize line in their paintings, and others for the way they built up their layers of paint. Some conceptual ideas were influenced by stimuli that were observed from situations that occurred on a daily basis.

Elizabeth Murray is an artist that works on shaped canvases that tend to look like puzzles rather than traditional rectangular canvases. The aesthetic of her shaped canvases was not utilized to inform this thesis, but her layering process was analyzed for its visual



characteristics. For reference purposes we will be analyzing a characteristic of Murray's painting *Her Story*. This painting appears to have a high level of transparent pigment applied to its surface with a dry brush technique. This can be observed around the

edges of the painting where the underlying layers of the work are not concealed by the upper layers of the painting. Dry brush technique often infuses the material with a soft atmospheric quality, as can be observed in this painting. In this technique layers of paint

that are underneath the top layer are allowed to present themselves through the gaps within the brush strokes of the final layers.

A location on the reference painting that demonstrates this is on the bottom left corner of the composition, where the elbow of the figure bends towards the figure's head. Breaking down the layering of this painting into parts, the line work from the first layer was partially covered by a second layer of yellow semi translucent pigment. This layer is then covered by a violet, semi-translucent layer of pigment. This dry brush technique helps to push the sharper forms of the figure forward, composing a relationship between atmospheric and dense shapes. This helped to inform the visual aesthetic between figures and their environments within this thesis, and is the main process informing the paint imbedding technique developed for this project.

One of the interesting things that becomes apparent when researching other artists is the similarities that present themselves between those artists and myself. By recognizing these similarities my development as an artist is validated. This is not to say that my work is any more important than any other artist's work, but their work provides guidance and stability as I try to explore new ideas. Elizabeth Murray is a good source of influence within this comparison, and I have drawn upon her life to help explore why I create art the way I do.

Murray was heavily influenced by the relationship she had with her mother, and the imagery she developed directly corresponds to her mother (Graze and Halbreich 130). In the painting *Her Story* Murray depicts an abstract figure holding a coffee cup while sitting on a chair. This is a reflection on Murray's awareness of her mothers' habitual routines, and depicting this routine makes the painting important. Thinking back on my

childhood, I have become aware that my relationship with my father was just as important to my artistic development as Murray's relationship with her mother was to her.

When I was eight I used to draw in my father's office that was located in the basement floor of my parent's house. In this room there was a small closet where I would do my homework and watch my father perform his art. My father is a patent draftsman whose craft utilizes pen and ink techniques that are highly developed. At that time computers were just being introduced into the field of drafting. Watching and later learning from him how to apply ink to paper began my interest in the use of line. Some of the things I learned were how to hold an ink quill, what motions to use to create a line, and how fast to make them. To create a clear unchanging line, an individual must drag the ink quill down in one fluid motion to prevent deviation within the line.

Another similarity I share with Murray is the influence from comic books. In Murray's youth the comic characters that influenced her were Little Lulu and Donald Duck (Graze and Halbreich 122). I have had some exposure to these comics, as my mother kept the ones she used to read when she was a child. This allowed me to observe first hand what these comics looked like. Thinking back on them now, I can understand how they influenced Murray's work. These comics had very clean lines with very strong bold colors. Most of the colors in these comics were derived from natural colors like yellow, green, violet, red and blue. In Murray's work the colors are very similar in their purity, but do hold some variations within their hue.

As a young child, I too, was drawn to comic books. I never read them, but would purchase comics based on how visually interesting they were. When I would find a

comic with an interesting character I would take the comic home and redraw the image on another piece of paper. I used to amaze other students because it was clear that I would not trace the image, as my drawing was always a tenth larger than the original image.

Film has been a major source of influence on how I perceive my environments and my work. When I was a young child, my family gathered around the television every Friday night to watch old monster movies such as *Creature from the Black Lagoon*, and *The Thing*. Thinking back on how these films depict people, I have a tendency to view my environments with the same kind of contrast and value.

In older movies there is a high level of contrast between the contour of objects and their highlights. A good example can be derived from the movie *The Thing*. In this film, the monster from another planet first presents itself standing in a doorway of a greenhouse. The face of the figure is bright against the darker value of his clothes. Because these films tend to degrade over time the detail of the figure is obscured, which helps make it seem more menacing.



In the movies of the 1950s and 60s the directors produced films that required the viewer to actively think about how they perceive what they see. In the movie *The Haunting* there is a scene that has captured my attention for many years. In this scene, the individuals occupying a mansion all gather in the library when the presence of the house begins to stir. As they listen to the pounding sounds of the presence, it moves closer to

the door of the library where it eventually comes to a halt. At this point, the door begins to crack as the presence presses against the door, causing it to bow dramatically into the room. Through the actions and sounds the viewer can perceive the presence of the entity without ever seeing it directly. People were scared by their own imaginations with these movies, since the characteristics of the entities delved highly into the unknown. In the modern version of this film everything is given away, as the presence has a name, face, and understandable intent.

A more current movie that utilizes this issue of perception is the *The Blair Witch Project*. In this film, the presence of the entity is obscure, and the viewer has to try and comprehend that entity. In other movies, such as

“*Halloween*”, the viewer can see the figure but are still left guessing as to what his intentions are. This is because the subject is lacking in expression, in his stance, and in his face. By obscuring the figure’s features the viewer is left with an awkward reaction. Through abstraction, this characteristic is



developed. The images for the darker paintings in this thesis are influenced by these ideas developed from film.

Two other artists were referenced for how they implied line in their work. First, Vincent Van Gogh was observed because of his unique handling of paint. Each brush stroke is a solid shape, but can also be read as a solid line. This gives the paint the impression of directional movement while depicting shape. Developing an understanding of how paint could

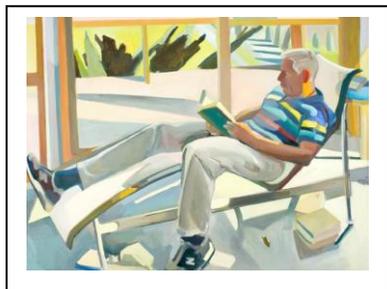


depict both mass and line was very helpful in the creation of this body of work. For example, in my paintings of children, the brush strokes that fell on the edges between figures are perceived as lines, while paint within the forms is perceived less as lines and more as solid masses.

Alberto Giacometti was the second artist observed for his use of line in his drawings. With his ability to use line, the figures in his drawings develop mass through layering marks. The lines that surround the figure begin to project the figure from the picture plane. This movement of line and illusion of space became an important influence in understanding how to control directional movement with the simplicity of a line.



Martha Armstrong was studied because of her ability to cultivate pure color with



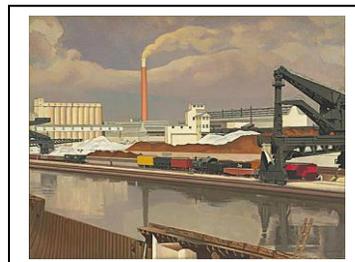
solid shapes. In the paintings within this thesis, there are generally two ways that paint was applied. One way was to build up glazes that gradually manipulate the painting's surface. Another way was to build a highly

textured surface by applying a lot of paint with each brush stroke. Armstrong was observed because of the clarity of the shapes and the assertive colors within her work, in contrast to Murray's atmospheric dry brush technique.

Charles Scheeler was a popular landscape painter who served as an influence on the qualities of the environments within this thesis. His paintings have solid fields of color, but hold sharp angular edges that are in contrast to Martha Armstrong's work. Scheeler's paintings were referenced to help understand the difference between

constructed objects (such as buildings and walkways) and natural objects (like trees and human figures).

Sheeler is important to this thesis because viewing his work altered the way I perceive my environments, and this reaction is what I wanted to create in other people through my work. I am drawn to architectural forms that seem to influence my artistic tendencies towards angular objects.



Sheeler's work addresses these forms; the characteristics of his paintings were utilized to inform architectural objects within each work created for this thesis.

Another artist that helped to inform this thesis comes from an unusual source. Albin Polasek was a sculptor during the early nineteenth century whose approach to creating sculptures was to chisel them completely by hand, without utilizing the conventional processes of that time (Polasek). Polasek would start with a solid piece of stone and chisel into it without drilling. This particular characteristic of his process was adapted to influence how the application of paint is perceived. Oil paint is a solid material that is applied to a solid surface. Through the manipulation of a brush the paint is sculpted into shapes that define the characteristics of the artwork. By perceiving paint as a sculptural substance, an artist can start to grow away from the idea that a painting is a two-dimensional surface that provides the illusion of a three-dimensional space. Once a painting is perceived as a three-dimensional form, the artist can more accurately understand how to manipulate paint, and increase the depth within the composition's surface.

Objects that appear closer should have a higher relief surface, and far away objects should appear thinner with low relief surfaces. The natural tendencies when viewing paintings are to address the variations in contrast and color intensity, and less on surface. When one addresses the differences between surfaces, the painting starts to develop three-dimensional properties. This concept is how the paint carving technique was developed.

Chapter Two: Craft Development and Application

There are three types of art processes that were applied to the constructed foundation of these paintings. The first type of art construction was canvas building and was the most widely used process in painting construction. The second process utilized was the conditioning of paper for paint application. The last process developed was the construction of frames for artwork presentation.

Section One: Canvas Construction

Canvas construction was the most highly utilized form of painting construction in my thesis. A canvas is constructed out of a wooden stretcher that consists of four side bars, braces, and a beveled edge. On this construction, canvas is stretched from each side of the frame and attached to the back of the outside stretcher boards. After being stretched the canvas is gessoed and allowed to dry (Mayer 239).

Section Two: Mounted Paper Construction

A secondary surface that was used for the development of paintings for this thesis was paper. Using traditional paper mounting processes mainly developed for water color painting, the paper was wet down, stretched over a stable surface, and mounted on wood paneling. Upon completion, each piece was then mounted in wooden frames, which constitute the third form of construction used for this thesis.

Section Three: Frame Construction

The frames that were constructed for this thesis were derived from the process of building a stretcher for a canvas. First, four boards are cut at a forty-five degree angle that exceed the exterior dimensions of the artwork. A second set of four boards are then attached to the interior of these boards. Once the frames shape is secured the painting is mounted inside the structure using glue, or in the case of canvases, with dry wall screws.

Chapter Three: Methods and Technical Processes

Along with the different types of artwork created there are three different kinds of approaches to applying the material upon their surfaces. One process is a layering technique that involves imbedding drawings within the surface of the painting materials. This process will be called paint imbedding. A second process will address how the paint was sculpted on the surface of these artworks. This process will be called paint carving. The last process will address the way layers were built up with transparent mediums. This will be called encasing. Each painting was created with a combination of these three processes. Within this section, the technical processes that were used will be broken down by using individual paintings as examples. The first method that will be discussed is the paint imbedding process, and the paintings *Isolation*, *Vessels Through Time*, and *Presence on the Stairs* will be the works discussed. The second method that will be discussed is the paint carving process, and the painting *Little Booger* will be the work viewed for example. The encasing process will be discussed last, and the painting *Self Reflection* will be used as an example for this process.

Section One: Paint Imbedding

The works of art created on paper were strongly influenced by exploring the visual works by Elizabeth Murray. In her work, the surfaces are heavily layered and the paint holds a variety of different characteristics. The paint imbedding process was specifically derived from this example and will be described as follows. These paintings start with a basic line composition that is very simple with basic lines and shapes. After this point, different transparent mediums are added on top of this line work to seal their shape permanently on the surface. This concept is directly derived from part of an encaustic process when an image is suspended between two layers of wax (Mayer).

After a layer of transparent medium is applied, such as clear acrylic paint or oil paint glazes, more line work is added. Depending on what forms were being addressed, different line work would be imbedded in the surface. For example, architectural forms would have sharp thick lines to insinuate directional movement throughout the painted surfaces. Figures and other stable forms would have soft scumbled directional lines that would keep the linear movement encased within the form. Depending on the stability desired within the form, a different level of line concentration and emphasis would be applied. As each translucent layer is added the density within the forms start to increase at a higher rate. This buildup occurs differently within each painting created from paper, so each will need to be addressed individually.



The first painting that explored the paint imbedding aesthetic is *Isolation*. The thing that makes *Isolation* unique to this process is the use of Golden Gel medium. This gel medium has the consistency of Elmer's Glue, and when it dries it will hold the shape it was last conformed to. This material was used as a substitute for traditional glazing mediums. The surface of this artwork started with a basic line structure that is consistent with a contour drawing. Lines were first applied to create consistent directional movement, and later were covered up by a clear acrylic medium to prevent smudging. In some cases, like in the darker areas within the composition, acrylic medium was used to manipulate the charcoal to create multiple lines that followed the directions of the brushstrokes. When the acrylic medium was brushed over the charcoal, the charcoal mixed with the medium. The charcoal then followed the grooves made by the brush, creating multiple lines. After the acrylic medium was allowed to dry, more charcoal lines and acrylic paint were applied. This process was repeated several times until the final layer of translucent oil paint was applied.

In *Vessels Through Time* the substance that was used in the paint imbedding process was a material called cold wax. Cold wax is normally utilized to thicken the

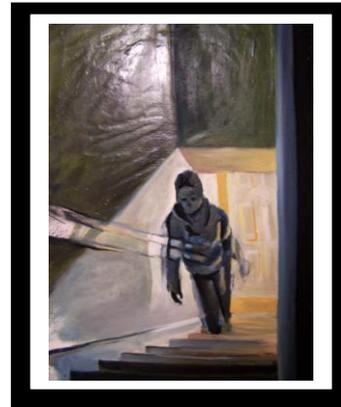


mass of paint to help create texture on a painting's surface. When making glazes for paintings, the traditional way is to use a liquid medium that normally consists of a list of solvents to dilute the oil paint.

Cold wax was used as the diluting medium; and by the nature of the substance, was used differently from glazing mediums. By itself, cold wax has a semi-translucent appearance,

and this translucent characteristic allows colors and forms from underlying layers to refract through its surface. A good example would be to visualize a piece of glass that has been etched so that its surface has a frosted appearance. Certain forms may show through the glass but they appear hazy. Cold wax provides this quality to a painting's surface. The figurative forms have the illusion of density through the transparent mass of the wax rather than having paint built up to create a textured surface.

The one painting that most directly references the observations in Elizabeth Murray's work is *Phantom on the Stairs*. In this painting, the layering process was similar to that of the previously discussed works, except the medium used in the paint imbedding process is oil paint diluted by Gamblins Neo Magilp. Magilp is a unique material that allows stiff oil paint to become more elastic and fluid when it is applied to a work of art. At the beginning of this painting, dense lines were applied to the paper's surface to create what would normally be an under painting. After this, oil paint is applied to thicken the surface of the work and to make the original line



work more permanent. Once this layer is allowed to dry, a glaze is applied to secure the material to the surface. After the glaze solidifies, the following layers of paint glazes and charcoal line work are then added. Following the addition of ten to fifteen layers, a final glaze was applied.

Section Two. Paint Carving

The paint carving process involves applying thick layers of paint that are built up over an extended period of time. This process falls under the category of impasto painting, because the paint holds the shape of brush strokes while having a variation in its form (Mayer). The paintings of children developed for this thesis started by applying a basic line structure with the use of thinned out oil paint. From this stage, oil paint is applied to the surface without thinning the material. Gamblins Magilp was added to make the paint more pliable, but the materials remained thick and opaque to insure a highly textured surface. Instead of applying transparent washes of oil paint to the surface of the artwork, new paint was adjusted in its chroma and hue to the appropriate color and then applied to the surface. The specific characteristic in this impasto process that makes it unique is how the paint is perceived. After the paint is applied to the surface, a brush is used to cut shapes into and around the paint.

One problem that faces a painter is getting used to applying a wet material with a utensil that has an elastic bend when applied to a surface. In order to approach a work with this paint carving method, the artist's paint brushes must have firm bristles that bounce back to a perpendicular position quickly, and the edge of the bristles must keep a solid straight edge so the paint can be properly manipulated.

The first step when applying this impasto process on the surface of the painting is to place approximate colors and shapes in their general locations. This makes the initial forms within the composition very abstract without any well defined edges. After the basic colors are in placed, the brush is used to create a variation in the definition of edges

within the composition by affecting how sharp or hazy those edges are. For example, in *Little Booger* the figures stand out against the white background of the painting. After the colors within the figures were placed, white paint was sculpted around the outside borders of the figures. The white paint is applied to create a sharper contour around the figures with strong value color contrast. This is when the true nature of the process is revealed.

Once the brush touches the surface of the canvas, the paint pushes out from under the brushes bristles. The paint will then pool outward to the edges of the brush. The



outside bristles are the most important parts of the brush because they control what direction the paint travels. Once the edge of the brush is placed on the contour of the subject, it is positioned at a thirty five degree angle that

forces the paint towards the edges of the figures. When running the brush along the edge of the figures, it is more important to watch where the paint is pooling rather than where the brush bristles lay. The paint will be at least one sixteenth of an inch away from the end of the brush. If the brush travels all the way to the edge of the figure, the paint will breach the figure's contour. If this happens, the process will be reversed with the paint on the interior of the figure being pushed towards the contour of the figure.

This process was repeated along every edge of each figure, but the interior forms vary in the clarity of their edges. The variations of edges are created on the inside of the painting by changing the angle of the brush as it is dragged along the painting's surface. Instead of keeping the brush at a constant thirty-five degree angle, the brush gradually

rotates until the brush bristles are parallel to the bottom edge of the canvas. As this happens, the edge becomes more obscure. Depending on which form within the figure is closer to the viewer, the edge is either sharpened or faded. This concept can be observed in the composition *Little Booger*. In a three dimensional environment, the feature that most causes a person's head to visually project forward is the jaw line. In the figure on the far right side of *Little Booger*, the edge of the jaw line is well defined. In contrast, the edges of the brush strokes within the coat fade and sharpen with greater variation due to the fabric's rate of change with human movement. This control of the different angles of the brush is repeated until the painting is completed.

Section Three: Encasing

The Encasing process is tricky to understand in how it varies from Paint Imbedding, or traditional glazing processes. To explain this process, we will look at the painting *Self Reflection*. In this work, there is an environment that is viewed through a window. In that window there are reflections of individual figures projecting off the window's surface. The



painting started with an impasto rendering of the environment that was to be the background. The buildings, sky, and ground utilized the paint carving process to ensure that the environment would have a complex textured surface. After this part of the painting was allowed to dry, Magilp was used to extend the painting materials that were

used to make the figures. After the figures were completed the Embedding process begins. A material called Galkyd was applied to the paintings surface to create a laminated layer that would resemble the surface of a window. This material, when applied, creates a highly reflective surface and enriches the colors it is applied upon.

First, the painting is placed face up on a flat surface, and a layer of Galkyd is placed on the painting's surface. After the Galkyd dries ,the process is repeated at least ten times. What makes this application considered an Encasing process is the excess of material that was applied to encase the textured surface of the background. Galkyd was used to make a surface that resembles a vitreous enamel on top of the painting's surface (Mayer).

Chapter Four: Artwork Categorization and Conceptualization

Before discussing the individual characteristics of this thesis work, it is important to discuss the underlying themes that were the driving point for its creation. Through this discussion, we will be addressing identity, space, and time which are all important in the understanding of each work of art.

Section One: Identity

Identity is important to any culture. Throughout history different ethnic groups have fought to stabilize their identity in a society. The civil rights movement is a prime example of the United States' culture redefining itself. With social movements, it is easier to recognize the significance of identity within a society. In the United States our culture has been struggling to define its identity because of the multitude of ethnicities and clashing cultural values that inhabit it.

The importance of identity is something I had not previously considered in my art. The paintings *Little Booger*, *Boo Bag*, *Bow*, *Big Wheel*, *Yo-Yo*, and *Presence* depict someone who I have come to know well. By omitting most of the environment around the child, the identity becomes the center of focus.

Little Booger is the first of six paintings that focus on the identity of children. This painting is produced by using the paint carving process. The image is of my nephew, dressed in his winter coat while picking his nose. There are four figures demonstrating a sequence of actions that create the event. In this case, the event is a young child picking his nose.

Before I started this piece, there were a couple of critiques that I had been a part of that were very critical of my work. I thought that trying to criticize a painting of a child picking his nose was very hard, so it became the perfect subject. In my following critiques, this painting became a favorite with many of my fellow students.

Beyond the conceptual attempt to create a painting that would be hard to criticize, there are very important motivations behind this piece. On a weekly basis the daily activities of working, stressing about finances, and dealing with other conflicts at home caused a lot of strain on me physically and psychologically. Every weekend would serve as a release, since on those days I usually got to see my nephew. With his humor, my stress would be lifted, and it served as a balance to my daily worries. Considering how much this child influenced me in this way, I decided to make him my subject for this painting. The other paintings of children depict individuals that I also share a similar relationship with.

At an early age, children hold the fundamental expressions that make them unique. In these paintings of children, there is an attempt to capture their expressions in order to discover what will define them visually later in life. Each of these paintings was designed to focus on the uniqueness of character in each child, and this is why there is

little constructed background behind the figures. To try and accurately depict an individual's character, there must be a subtraction of the environment.

Trying to address the most unique attributes that make us unique as individuals, I decided to go back to images of my childhood. Every child is a combination of two



individuals' characteristics, and by exploring that child's expression, we search for the characteristics that make the child unique. As the child grows to adulthood, there is usually one feature that remains the same while other features

change. There are a few features within my brother's expressions in the painting *Big Wheel* and *Night Walk* that helped me in understanding locations on the human face that define how we look different from one another. In this case, my brother's eyebrow line and eye shape are unique to his expression.

When addressing the transitioning of characters through environments, it is crucial to truly understand the qualities of the character's identity that is being developed. It is also important to address the characteristics of the environment as well, so that the environment would cohabitate accurately with the figure. This artwork is designed to address half of this problem. Through natural tendencies, students either focus on the environments of their compositions, leaving little to be desired of the subjects within the work, or they focus mostly on the figures and generalize the environment. Knowing this tendency, I chose to focus mainly on the characteristics of the figure.

Presence is the last painting that addresses children. The hope was by attaching the same name to this painting and the darker painting, the viewer would have to explore the idea of how they are related. For one, the painting of a young boy at the bottom of the composition is trying to focus on the individual character of the figure like the previously discussed painting. This painting, if being correlated to the other work labeled *Presence*, suggests that the figures in each piece may have evolved from the same thing.



We all start as children, but through cultivation by our environments we become who we are.

The child that is being depicted in the painting *Presence* is me. I remember when I was growing up, I was a bit turbulent in my behaviors. Because I constantly struggled in school, I felt that I had to fight for everything I had. When most kids were trying to focus on getting A's and B's, I was just trying to pass. Every night I would sit down with my parents with books and memory cards. Each night we would go over what I needed to learn. This image is a reflection of my demeanor as a child and how I expressed this conflict.

Each of these paintings addresses the expressive qualities of these children. Thinking back to my childhood, I remember how ignorant I was to the real world. By being in the presence of a child, we join them in that ignorance, if only for a little while.

Section Two: Place

There are three different questions I ask myself about my environments that turn their mundane characteristics into something of interest. How has my environment affected me? How do I affect my environment, and what does this relationship mean? To understand these questions, you have to look at them individually, and then see how they correlate.

We create our environments out of purpose by producing structures that provide a function to our society. A school is designed to educate people. The building itself is not a school until it is utilized for its intended use. After many years of use by different people, the school will gain an identity that will be unique to itself. This is why I am attracted to older buildings, and why the old Ball State Museum building is unique in comparison to the Arts and Journalism building. When walking through a building with a lot of history, that building holds a certain presence that is unique to that building alone. The Arts and Journalism building has yet to attain the same presence, since it is a younger building and has not been used enough to gain all its unique characteristics.

Isolation was the first work that was completed for this thesis and depicts a hallway at Herron School of Art and Design in downtown Indianapolis, Indiana, where I obtained my Bachelors Degree. This piece is constructed from paper, acrylic paint, oil paint, charcoal, and clear acrylic medium. It is approximately 40 inches by 60 inches and is mounted on a wooden panel attached to a wooden frame. This piece was the first attempt to address movement by applying repetitious marks upon the surface of the

composition. Indianapolis is a very active place and trying to capture motion is vital in depicting the environmental qualities of the city.

The transparent figures stand against the environment and are over-shadowed by its presence. Each figure lacks individual identity for a couple of reasons. A student's final development as an artist does not end with the completion of a degree program, but when he or she applies his or her experiences to the real world. The other reason is that presence of a student in contrast to a college will mostly resemble the shadow of a memory. *Isolation* was designed to address this event.

Colleges are good examples of the ever changing variables between people and their environments. Every year students enter into college and graduate at a yearly rate, while the buildings remain constant. Through the passage of students, these environments gain the character that makes these places unique. In the end however, the college institution will long outlast the student. Knowing this, a student may experience the feeling of insignificance or significance.

At the end of a college program, there is the daunting feeling of being released into the world. College was a very enlightening experience that gave me energy that I applied towards my work. When I completed my Bachelor Degree, I knew that I was no longer going to be a student, and there was an overwhelming feeling of not knowing what direction to take my art. I thought back to my years at school and how they would seem empty if I were to fail as an artist. This social experience is the basis for the artwork *Isolation*.

Our environments play a major role in creating us, and how we perceive ourselves. This development starts with the home where we grew up, and later extends to

other environments such as schools, stores, and parks. Each institution molds us in a unique way, and this develops our individual characteristics that make us unique.

Presence in the Hall is the final artwork within this group of paintings. The painting is 20 inches by 45 inches and consists of a hallway lined with lockers and figures



hidden within the environment. This painting was an attempt to explore the relationship between cool light sources and warm light sources, while addressing figures in an environment. The far end of the hallway shows soft daylight, while the

closest part of the hallway is lit with interior lighting. A combination of encasing and paint imbedding was used in this work. At the time this work was being created, a very tragic event occurred at the Virginia Tech College campus. A student at that school used fire arms to shoot his fellow students and teachers. Being a college student, I was affected by this, and in previous years, I was also influenced by the student shootings in Columbine, Colorado. To help cope with the thoughts of why these students committed these acts, I put those emotions into this piece. The figure is totally without color, while the environment reflects the total opposite. The colors are pure in nature because I wanted to reflect how an unstable mind might perceive things. If one wants to depict something as appearing abnormal, he or she can simply modify its color away from its natural representation. Along with abstracting the figure, this manipulation of color allows for a more sinister presentation.

This painting also addresses some tension my wife and I experienced in Anderson, Indiana. On the same day the Virginia Tech shootings occurred, one of our neighbors decided to carry a hand gun around the apartment complex. This situation enhanced the tension we felt in our environment.

After exploring the relationship between people and places, there is a specific event that can be addressed that directly correlates with this relationship. When the Twin Towers in New York City were destroyed, it permanently changed the use and purpose of that environment. What once was a powerful environment of commerce is now a memorial of man's ability to dominate his environment, and man's ability to permanently scar that environment.

Section Three: Time

There are three ways of depicting time that are common in art. One way is to depict a sequence of images that suggest the progression of events. This format is used mostly in comic books and story boards (Robertson and McDaniels). *Demo* is an example of a way of depicting time by producing a singular image that captures the motion of an action (Robertson and McDaniels). The most contemporary way of depicting time is through film, which captures the motion between visual images. The final concept of depicting time that is discussed in this thesis was derived from these three ideas.

At any given location, there are an array of phenomena that change at different rates. For example, we will visualize an individual walking down a busy street sidewalk.

The greatest rate of change resides within the vehicles that pass by. Second to this, the individual transitions at a slower rate than the passing vehicles, but still has a higher rate of change in comparison to the sidewalk he or she is walking on. The sky changes at a varying rate that is dictated by weather. Film is the main medium that most accurately depicts the visual passage of time, and the paintings in this thesis are an attempt to address these different rates.

The first painting to address the progression of events is *Vessels Through Time*. The painting is made out of paper, oil paint, and charcoal. The design is a composite image of three photos that represent the transition of traveling to the Atrium Gallery in the Arts and Journalism building at Ball State. The far left side of the image focuses on



the appearance of the Arts and Journalism building as you enter from the parking lot, the middle of the painting addresses the appearance of the gallery from out in the food court, and the far right side depicts the

visual appearance of the gallery on the inside. The viewer can directly address the work by using the recent experience of traveling to the gallery, while the painting is being presented in the gallery. This is an attempt to have the viewer become an active participant in the aesthetic experience of the subject.

A painting that holds a conceptual process that is derived from the pervious work *Vessels Through Time* is *Presence in the Stairwell*. Instead of trying to capture a visual reading of time from left to right, the visual reading is read from background to

foreground. The figure was captured at separate intervals as it traveled down the stairwell.

The problem with two dimensional images is that the subject usually depicts still imagery. This is derived from Renaissance art (Robertson and McDaniels). Through Baroque art, the suggestion of capturing motion in time begins with the exaggeration of expressions, but still is limited to a solitary moment. Through the paintings in this thesis, I have tried to suggest motion through a two dimensional space by utilizing the elements of transparency and repetition.

Section Four: Identity, Place, and Time

Out of all the paintings developed for this creative project, there are a few that most accurately address all three topical concerns. *Phantom on the Stairs*, *Reflection One*, *Self Reflection*, *Night Walk*, *Memories*, and *Dave's Last Walk* all capture a specific place, while addressing the importance of identity and time. The two paintings *Night Walk* and *Dave's Last Walk* will be discussed to explain the correlation of these three topics.

The part of the painting *Night Walk* that addresses identity is the figure walking down the sidewalk. This figure is a rendering of my brother, who often stays out late at night. One of his habitual late night routines is to go outside and smoke; so depicting him outside in a night environment is an image that accurately represents part of his identity.

This environment is important due to where it is located. After every late night class, I would walk to my car and see this environment on a regular basis. This place is located on the Ball State campus near a parking garage that is used regularly. Knowing that other students had experienced this environment, it became a good subject for



students to relate to. One way to get the viewer to explore a composition is to make it relatable in some way.

With the final concept of time, this piece depicts the figure at separate intervals, walking down the sidewalk against a stable background. The figure has variations of transparency and solidity to help suggest that it is changing against its environment. As a student that no longer resides on the Ball State campus, I relate to the memory of walking down that sidewalk as time that has been spent, and the transparency helps associate the passage of that time.

The second work of art that is being referenced for how it correlates the three concepts, is the painting *Dave's Last Walk*. In this painting, the identity of the individual walking down the hall is the individual who formerly maintained the workshop at Ball State. At the time this image was being developed, Dave had recently announced that he was going to retire after that semester. Feeling saddened that someone I knew to be a good person was getting ready to depart from my circle of influences, I created this painting to honor him and to address his transition.

The concepts of identity and place are intertwined in their importance in this painting. Knowing his routine of going to work, I came to realize that this hallway that he was walking down had some relevance to his identity. Most days, he would travel down this hallway and experience that environment continually.



These figures also depict elements of repetition that suggest the transition of time as Dave walked down the hallway. This, coupled with the elements of transparency, this suggests the transition of an individual through an environment that is constant and unchanging.

These two paintings, along with the others listed in this section, address all three of these topics in varying ways. In contrast to these works, the pieces discussed in other sections strongly project one or two concepts but lack the correlation of all three.

Conclusion

By exploring the human figure in its environment I have come to the following conclusion: through the process of creating art, our society defines part of its identity. In each evolution of art, there is a visual example of how concepts change. By depicting specific places at particular points in time, the artwork becomes an allegorical notation of the human experience.

For example, within several paintings in this thesis there are depictions of locations on the Ball State campus. As the college expands over time, the landscape will change, making these paintings historically significant. Many years from now, individuals may look back on these paintings and discover those things that are unique to our society that are mundane to us now. This includes human expression, environment, and behavior.

If I were to talk to future students who are thinking about going to college and joining an art program, I would tell them to choose their environments wisely. What you allow to influence you can enhance your abilities, or make you struggle. Since I did not choose a good living environment, I struggled with some of my schooling.

When a viewer is observing these paintings, there is a hope that he or she will start to understand how these figures transition through their environments. However, I do not expect him or her to know every underlying motivation behind each painting. I hope that these paintings will help people relate to their environments more consciously and enhance their powers of observation.

Exhibition Statement:

Human Movement: The Transition of People Through Space and Time

Any moment, at any given place and time, there are ever changing variables that vary depending on the objects they correlate with. A person walking down a sidewalk has a higher rate of change than the sidewalk he or she walks upon. In contrast, a car driving by that person would have a higher rate of change than the person and the sidewalk. An individual looking at art in a gallery may stay in the room for a couple of minutes, but the artwork will stay in that same position for a week. By showing the appearance of people at different intervals, these paintings start to address motion in one still image.

Identity and Painting as Sculpture

Several of the paintings address children and the exploration of their expressions. By exploring their expressions in separate intervals, there is an attempt to capture a characteristic that is unique to that child. Any child is a combination of two individuals, but there is usually at least one feature or behavior that is unique to the child.

In trying to understand how to apply paint to the surface of a painting, it is easier to manipulate how one perceives paint. Paint is an object that is applied to another object, and although it is very flat in comparison to free standing sculpture, it is still a three dimensional material. In addition to this alteration of perception, by depicting children with white backgrounds, the paintings become sculptures themselves.

Sculptures often can reside in multiple locations and still hold the same characteristics in

each environment. If a painting can have this same relationship with its environment, it too can be considered a sculpture.

Bibliography

- Barrett, Terry, ed. *Criticizing Art Understanding the Contemporary*. California: Mayfield Publishing Company, Published 1994.
- Berger, Michael. *About The Artist: Elizabeth Murray*, 15 October 2006. Artist Research Assignment 11 December 2006 <<http://www.mbergerart.com>>.
- Cutts, Josephine and James Smith. *Essential Van Gogh* London: The Foundry Creative Media Co., Published 2000
- Creature from the Black Lagoon*. Dir. Jack Arnold. Universal Studios, 1954
- Foundation de l'Hermitage. *Alberto Giacometti: the mature years* 18 March 2006. Thesis Research Assignment May 2008 <<http://en.fondationhermitage>>
- Graze, Sue and Kathy Halbreich. ed. *Elizabeth Murray: Paintings and Drawings*. New York: Harry N. Abrams Inc., Published, 1987
- Graze, Sue and Kathy Halbreich "Interview" Graze and Halbreich. 121 – 131
- Halloween*. Dir. John Carpenter. Compass International Pictures, 1978
- Joy, Jennifer. *Elizabeth Murray: Paintings 2003-2006*, 15 October 2006. Artist Research Assignment 11 December 2006 <<http://www.pacewildenstein.com>>.
- Mayer, Ralph. *The Artist's Handbook of Materials and Techniques*. 4th ed. Rev. and updated. New York, Viking Press, 1981
- McCleaf, Gross. *Martha Armstrong*. 18 March. 2006. Thesis Research Assignment May 2008 <<http://www.grossmccleaf.com/artistpages/armstrongpage.htm>>
- National Gallery of Art. *Charles Sheeler: Across Media* 18 March. 2006. Thesis Research Assignment May 2008 <<http://www.nga.gov/exhibitions/2006/sheeler>>
- Polasek, Emily. *Carving His Own Destiny,: The Story of Albin Polasek*. Unknown Binding, R. F. Seymour, 1954
- Robertson, Jean and Craig McDaniels. ed. *Themes of Contemporary Art: visual art after 1980*. New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., Published, 2005
- Smith, Roberta "Motion Picture." Graze and Halbreich. 8-25
- Solomon, Deborah "Interpreting Art" Barrett 45-71

The Blair Witch Project. Dir. Daniel Myrick and Sanchez. Haxan Films Company, 1999

The Haunting, Dir Robert Wise. MGM, 1963

The Thing From Another World. Dir. Howard Hawks. Warner, 1951

Wildenstein, Pace. About Elizabeth Murray. 15 October. Thesis Research Assignment
December 2006 <<http://www.pacewildenstein.com>>.

Appendix

Canvas Construction

There are several reasons why it may be preferable to construct one's own canvases as apposed to buying readymade canvases. The standard canvas that is manufactured usually is made of four sidebars that consist of a tongue and grove construction with pre-gessoed canvas. One unattractive quality that these canvases have is the way the canvas is mounted on the stretcher bars. The staples that hold the canvas to the stretcher bars are usually mounted on the sides, making them visible to the viewer observing the painting. Another unattractive quality to readymade canvases is the canvas itself. It is often thin with a gessoed surface that is lightly primed. In addition, larger paintings especially tend to cost more than what an individual could afford if acquiring the appropriate materials to build one him or herself. The greatest value to readymade canvases is the amount of time that can be saved, since building canvases does take considerable effort. However, if an individual repeats the process of constructing a canvas outlined within this thesis, he or she will be able to produce better canvases than readymade ones in a short amount of time.

The first step in the development of a canvas requires a trip to the local hardware store or lumber yard. When looking for lumber that will be used to construct the stretcher for the canvas, there are certain attributes to keep in mind. The lumber should be at least one inch by two inches in width, straight without warping, and free of knots.

Knots are the first defects to look for. When a tree is prepared for lumber, it is cut horizontally through its length, and the base of the branches that connected to the tree show up in the lumber as knots. If this defect is present in the lumber that is used, the boards may break when they are cut by a table saw or miter saw.

Warping is something that occurs when moisture or prolonged pressure has been applied to a piece of wood, and forces it to deform from a straight line. A warped board can cause a canvas to have an irregular shape along its contour, and may warp the corners of the canvas. A warped canvas will hang away from the wall and is an extreme presentation problem. An individual looking for warping in a board should first place one end of the board on the floor and hold the other end so they can look down it. Looking across the board, that individual would have to see if its edge deviates from a straight line. If there is no visible deviation from a straight line, the board should be satisfactory for the application of building a canvas. Some lumber from trees, like pine, have a higher tendency of becoming warped, due to the high content of sap within that kind of tree. Therefore, other lumber, such as oak, is highly preferred.

Once the lumber has been selected, the process of construction occurs. The first boards that should be cut are the sidebars, which hold the external dimensions of the stretcher. Each board should first be cut to the appropriate length. After this is done, a bevel is cut along the edge of each board that will make up the interior edge of the stretcher. This is done so when the canvas is stretched over the frame, the only part of the stretcher that will touch the canvas is the exterior edge of the frame. After the bevels are made, the ends of each board are cut at a forty-five degree angle using a miter saw. It is important to keep the beveled side of the board facing up to ensure the miter cut will be

facing the correct direction. After cutting the miters on each board, the ends of the boards should be glued and placed in a corner vice to ensure a correct ninety degree angle. After the glue dries screws or nails should be added to each corner to secure the boards together.

When constructing a painting that is larger than two feet in any direction, additional supports are often required to secure the shape of the artwork. Due to the tension exerted on the frame when stretching a canvas, the center of the sidebars may bow inward. To prevent this from occurring four additional boards will be added. Each board should be approximately one third to one half of the length of the side that is to be supported. The support bars should not be wider than the width of the sidebars of the canvas to ensure that they do not touch the interior of the canvas once it is stretched. After their lengths are decided, the corners of the boards are mitered at a forty five degree angle. When attaching these supports, the sides of the boards that are shortest in length will face parallel to each corner and will be glued in place. Once the glue dries, screws or nails are used to secure the boards to the frame. In some cases, involving smaller works of art, a different kind of support is added. If the canvas is more oblong in shape, boards are cut and attached to the centers of each sidebar that exceed two feet in length. These boards will run parallel to the sides of the stretcher and not with the corners of the frame. This form of board support can also be attached to larger works of art, but are only needed if necessary.

The final step to constructing a canvas is stretching and priming it. When purchasing canvas fabric it is preferable to buy a material that is about an eighth of an inch thick and has not been pre-primed. When gesso starts to dry after being applied to

the canvas fabric, it will naturally tighten, and this drying process secures the underneath construction of the stretcher bars. Pre-gessoed canvas hinders this aspect of the construction process, and in most cases, will have to be re-gessoed due to its thin application. When preparing a canvas, it is important to make sure that the canvas fabric has at least four inches of excess material beyond the outside dimensions of the stretcher. Enough excess canvas must be present to ensure that it can be attached to the back of the frame instead of the sides. Paying attention to this detail will keep the sides of the canvas free of staples and imperfections, in case a picture frame was not considered during the painting's development. After placing the canvas flat on a stable surface, the stretcher is placed bevel side down on top of the fabric. Starting from the center of one side, the canvas is pulled over the edge of the frame and is stapled to the back of the sidebar. After applying several staples, the canvas is rotated and the process is repeated. Once each side has been secured, more staples are added until they reach the corners of the canvas.

The corners of the canvas are very troublesome when trying to prepare them for presentation purposes. At each corner, there will be an additional amount of material that will need to be folded so the seam of the canvas will follow along the corner edge of the frame. This is done by taking the tip of the excess canvas and pushing it in towards the corner of the frame. At this point, the excess canvas will form two arches on the left and right side of the stretcher's corner. Keeping hold of the tip of the canvas, it should be pushed to the left to eliminate the bow on the right side of the canvas. Then the canvas should be secured to the back of the right side of the frame. A final flap of canvas will

remain at this stage, and is then folded so that the edge of the canvas will run along the corner edge of the frame. After securing each corner, gesso is then applied.

There are two ways that gesso was applied to the canvases in this thesis due to its availability. In the case that the artist's budget is limited, gesso should be applied by starting along the front edge of the canvas and working his or her way in towards the artwork's center. As gesso is applied to the canvas fabric, parts of the gesso may dry before the fabric is totally primed. This may warp the stretcher, so applying gesso in the previously discussed manner will ensure that the canvas will dry with minimal warping. If gesso is easily accessible, the canvas should be placed face up over newspapers on a flat surface, and gesso should be poured over the center of the canvas. A brush would then be used to push the excess gesso from the center of the canvas out towards its external parameters until the entire canvas has been covered. Once the canvas dries, it is then sanded down to create a smooth surface that will help diminish the wear on the artist's brushes.

Mounted Paper Construction

Another process that was used in the making of these paintings involves the stretching and mounting of acrylic primed paper. The first problem that must be addressed when preparing paper is the material's ability to warp when coming in contact with wet substances. A process that is traditionally used in preparing water color paper was modified in the development of this form of construction (Mayer 283). Considering the weight of the paint material that will be applied to the surface of the work, a thicker

heavily toothed paper should be used. For each painting the paper is first soaked in water and then stapled to a stationary surface. Since some of these paintings on paper are quite large, they were temporarily mounted to a studio wall. Before the paper dries, acrylic medium is applied to the surface to allow the paint material to soak through the paper. An additional layer of white acrylic paint is added after the paper dries to ensure that the paper is efficiently protected from the corrosive qualities of the oil paint. Once the paper dries, it should not warp when paint is applied to the surface.

Painters tape is used to determine the official outer edges of the composition, and then the sketch of the composition is created. Once the painting is completed and has had an adequate time to dry, it is placed face down on a flat surface. The board that the painting is to be mounted on is then added to the back of the paper. Glue is applied to the back of the painting with a brush or wooden board to prevent pockets of glue from pooling between the paper surface and wooden panel. To ensure that this problem does not occur, weight is added to the back of the wooden panel to force the glue flat between the painting's backing and mounting surface. Excess paper is wrapped around the edges of the wooden panel and then stapled to the back of the artwork.

Frame Construction

The third construction process used with these paintings involves the creation of frames. First, a wooden frame is made that fits the exact dimensions of the exterior measurements of the painting. Each wooden frame was constructed using a four step process. First, sidebars are cut to the same length as the external dimensions of the

artwork, and then mitered at a forty-five degree angle at each end. After the corners of the sidebars are attached, the rectangular structure is added to the back of the artwork.

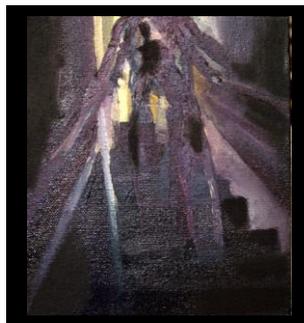
A second set of four boards are then produced to make the outside edges of the frame. When cutting these boards, there are two things that must be carefully observed. The interior edge of these boards must be the same length as the exterior edge of the artwork. These boards' depth should be wider than the previously built frame, plus the board which the paper is mounted upon. Each board will have its end mitered at a forty-five degree angle to ensure that the outer frame matches the exterior dimensions of the artwork. The mitered edges of the boards are then attached. After this frame is built, it is either glued or stapled to the frame previously attached to the back of the painting. This process can also be applied to canvas paintings.

Other Thesis Paintings

Presence



Presence on the stairs



Memories



Reflection One



Bow



Boo Bag



Yo-Yo



Material List

Winsor & Newton Winton Oil Colour

Cadmium Orange Hue	Cadmium Red Deep Hue
Cadmium Yellow Pale Hue	Cerulean Blue Hue
Dioxazine Purple	French Ultramarine
Permanent Alizarin Crimson	Permanent Green Light
Phthalo Blue	Titanium White
Viridian Hue	Yellow Ochre

Water Color

Cadmium Red	Cadmium Yellow	Cerulean Blue
Permanent Green light	Titanium White	Yellow Ochre

Liquitex

Cadmium light	Cerulean Blue	Naphthol Red
---------------	---------------	--------------

Gamblin

Cadmium Yellow Light	Cadmium Orange	Cadmium Red Light
Cobalt Blue	Hansa Yellow Light	Ivory Black
Naphthol Scarlet	Transparent Orange	Ultramarine Blue
Yellow Ochre		

Gamblin Mediums

Galkyd Medium	Neo Megilp	Cold Wax Medium
---------------	------------	-----------------

Grumbacher

Cobalt Drier	Oil Paint Medium I
--------------	--------------------

Other Materials

Black Acrylic Gesso

Eighth inch Canvas

Cotton Rags

Razors

Compressed Charcoal

Indian Ink

Flat Brushes 1 – 10

Pallet Knife

Oak wood boards

Oil Pastels

White Acrylic Gesso

Eighth in Cold Press Arches paper

20 inch square glass plate

Vine Charcoal

Graphite Pencil

Golden Gel Medium

Round Brushes 1 – 10

Staples

Peg Board