



Interior Light and Shadow

Thesis Artist Book

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Dedication

This book is in dedication to the elegantly spoken words of theoretical physicist Julian Barbour, who sees life much like a work of art. "Death is the thing that puts a life into perspective," he says. "If we look at our birth and our death as a sort of frame around the picture of our life, well, it's up to us to put something really beautiful inside of it."

He formed these thoughts with his mother near the end of her life. I now speak these words to myself everyday as a mantra.

Could this be a way forward in this life then? To see it as an artist's creation?

A Turner sunrise?



“The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all true art and science. He to whom the emotion is a stranger, who can no longer pause to wonder and stand wrapped in awe, is as good as dead; his eyes are closed.”

~ Albert Einstein

“The taste of the apple... lies in the contact of the fruit with the palate, not in the fruit itself; in a similar way... poetry lies in the meeting of the poem and reader, not in the lines of symbols printed on the pages of a book. What is essential is the aesthetic act, the thrill, the almost physical emotion that comes with each reading.”

~ Jorge Luis Borges

“Be patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart and try to love the questions themselves, like locked rooms and like books that are now written in a very foreign tongue. Do not now seek the answers, which cannot be given you because you would not be able to live them. And the point is, to live everything. Live the questions now. Perhaps you will then gradually, without noticing it, live along some distant day into the answer.”

~ Rainer Maria Rilke



Soul

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Soul

A Letter from Shannon

The deep personal inquiry that I delved into with this work has felt like the uncovering of clues to a mystery. It started with a simple list of words naming things that I loved. This list soon then became a sort of map, guiding me toward the many questions that would result in this project. It has seemed that the questions themselves have acted as characters inside of this tale, as they are constantly accompanying me, deepening a sense of being within my quest. As information unfurls, I have continued to find an enhanced sense of perception, communication, and relationships within the world surrounding me, which has only generated movement in a desire for more. That seemingly fragmented mystery of lists has slowly revealed itself to hold important puzzle pieces that are parts of a whole. It is in moments when I can listen quietly, keeping patience and intuition close as my companions, that this process of searching becomes much like a work of art in itself. A framework composing each brushstroke ~ thought, feeling, perception, sensation, step of choreography ~ in which I can see a mirrored glimpse reflecting an interior world that will shape a pathway into my future.

As I push forward, I silently embody the words of Nietzsche in which he compared life to *a monster of energy... that does not expend itself but only transforms itself... A play of forces and waves of forces, at the same time one and many...; a sea of forces flowing and rushing together, eternally changing.*

Here I am activated. I sense motion. And in my constant relation to the pull that is the unknown, I am urged to consider -through waves of possibility- the wonder in the darkness. For here lie many enchanting questions.

If I can turn fear into curiosity, I am driven toward a picture that is much bigger than my individual life, and I long to look for little tiny ways in which to lean into a space of courage and self-trust that can only begin and end internally. I am learning to ground myself through the use of my senses, as they are a tool for fluidity that will help enable me to become the architect of my own experience. This is a way I can find confidence to approach the unknown with compassion. I have to believe that this connection to self is the thing that will allow for an essential interconnectedness and love for others and everything that lives. Understanding empathy as a means toward harmony.

As for beauty, I expect it to have something to do with resonance. It is surely in the sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch of the beholder. The ability to appreciate beauty, however, is undoubtedly a quality that many of us share. What I find interesting about strong aesthetic appeal, is that it has been studied to activate the same part of the brain associated with inward contemplation. Isn't it the things we resonate with that help make us feel more whole and remind us of ourselves? I think that beauty holds up a mirror that confronts us with who we really are. It gives us an opportunity to live into the fullness and richness of an experience. For me, beauty deepens and opens my spirit to more life. It reveals, fuels, flames, and invokes magic. A life without beauty could also feel like pain. *For beauty is nothing but the beginning of terror which we are barely able to endure, and it amazes us so, because it serenely disdains to destroy us. Every angel is terrible. The only journey is the one within,* says Rilke. Perhaps this is why so often the resistance to receive it can prove an easier choice. But what if beauty is a dance that we can simply be with, until we become it? I choose to see it this way, because why not?

Art as an expression of deep levels of consciousness, with its aesthetic invitation for self-reflection, is really a very pure and powerful form of communication. A way to connect with others. I believe we are creatures wired for this connection, and the infinite exchange between self and other is forever shifting the way we see. Tints and hues color perspective and shade tone of voice. So what conversations are we having? What subtle energies are we putting into the air? And what can we get curious about that will only enhance a sense of self?

Lastly, I believe in the communicative power of art to transcend the everyday. Every love, hate, sadness, joy, pain, light, or darkness can live inside an artist's creation. With empathy, its unique power can become known. Several occurrences in my life have led me to this notion, and I can see the potential in art as a window, a passageway to embrace life's great mysteries. The most astounding moments of resonance that have revealed my own very intimate relationship with my life, have also sourced the very questions that now bring me awe. This feels like hope.

I will never stop believing in art to enchant, to remember love, and to illuminate the beauty I can find in the gift of existing. For within this mystery, this work of art that we call life... transformation awaits.

~SA



Beauty

Art

Time

Mystery

Existence

Awe

Poetry

Light

Magic

Trust

Empathy

Imagination

Awareness

Curiosity

Creation

Harmony

Nature

Hope

Enchantment





Body

*the following is a narrative for a dance theater work
that takes place inside the setting of a living room space*

She sits, arms draped over the back of the sofa. There is a window, and golden light is seeping through it, changing as if with a slow coming of evening. On the wall across from the window there is a tiny swaying shadow of leaves on a tree branch, and she stays fixed on the scene as if viewing a silent film. The air inside the room is still, much like that of a museum, but the movement outside helps her to remember her discomfort. She tussles with limbs, looking for a more comfortable position, and imagines the breeze on her face. There is a faint scent of bourbon, which reminds her that this evening will be like any other. She is not looking at him, but she can feel him from across the room. The room is fairly small, yet he is far away. Hours seem long, and she wonders how she will stay here. She settles with legs outstretched and grabs a notebook. Her back against the side of the sofa, book in hand, she focuses her attention on words she had written.

Art to Enchant

A memory of magic... and three simple words of Prospero. It was in 2011, a production of *The Tempest* at London's Royal Haymarket Theater, when Shakespeare's words were delivered in such a way that in an instant a little imprint was made to be carried forever. These words have accompanied me every day since, as a constant reminder in the power of art. I remember Prospero speaking his final soliloquy, a sort of lyric fugue, out of time and directly to the audience. It was impossible not to see the personal accents of Shakespeare himself within it. The great magician had lured us into his "isle of noises" and into a dreamlike allegory between good and evil. When it became time for him to break his staff and cast away his books, it was time for him to deal in the magic of poetry no more. The performance was over. Life was to begin again as we left the theater. Before the tempest, before the magic, before the performance, but I had changed. For it was Prospero, or Shakespeare, this poet-demiurge-creator that conjured up that storm, sweet airs, a world of magic, that then ended in enraptured silence before returning to the world of humans. He asked the audience to set him free, and left us with spirit and art. When he exited the stage, it was with a despair that didn't feel like resignation, but perhaps rather hope for a better life. *The Tempest* was Shakespeare's final play written so many years ago, but those simple words will stay with me forever... art to enchant.

Taking her eyes away from her reading, she looks around the room. Four walls, a table, a chair, a lamp. There is an old television in the corner. It had been a gift but had barely been watched. Light was flowing into the room from the hallway just enough to illuminate the collection of paintings that was hanging there. This room looked like a beginning. It was sparse in decoration, except for those paintings, and she wonders what someone from the outside would see through the small window frame were they to peek in at night. She makes a mental note to dust more often, and considers what it is that becomes of things when they are not taken care of?

She shifts again and rests sitting, two feet on the floor and weight supported by hands on knees. There is resignation in her posture as she contemplates standing, but then switches her gaze toward the opposite end of the room. He sits at a wooden table, papers strewn. Left elbow rests on the table, head in hand, and there is a small tremor in the fingers of his right hand which is wrapped around a clear glass. Disheveled, shirt slightly unbuttoned, his tired eyes are isolated on an island of their own. He reads, but she wonders if he comprehends.

On Frames, Glimpses, and Architecture

Structure gives shape to something.

“Architecture frames, structures, reorients, scales, refocuses and slows down our experience of the world and makes it an ingredient of the embodied sense of our own being; it always has a mediating role instead of being the end itself;”¹ said architect Juhani Pallasmaa.

So is the role of the proscenium theater then... a wonderful articulating and enhancing of a grand exchange between world and mind that may take place there.

I love going to the theater. When the lights go down, this treasured time is mine and mine alone. I am not alone, however, I am surrounded by warm bodies and low breath. Perfumes mixed with the musty scent of upholstery and wood. Whispers and crackles and that tingling anticipation of what is about to begin. Then the lights start to dim, and the clatter falls away. It is always in this moment, as the lights lower, that anything feels possible. The architecture harbors the intensification of silence that has encountered so many other lives in this moment. The silence is a responsive, remembering silence. A vast quiet that focuses our attention on our very existence, and as with the art that we are about to witness, makes us aware of our fundamental solitude.² Emancipated from the constant embrace of the outside present, the theater gives way to the slowness of a more internal presence that holds potential for renewal of perspective, thought, and energy. A new beginning. A chance for rest. For reflection. For entertainment. Or more extraordinarily, for enchantment.



What was it that she had read about beginnings?

“The spirit of the start is the most marvelous moment at any time for anything. Because in the start lies the seed for all things that must follow. A thing is unable to start unless it can contain all that ever can come from it. That is the characteristic of a beginning, otherwise it is no beginning - it is a false beginning.”³

This room looked like a beginning.

The stage... That hollow and cavernous cave that sends whispers into the audience of such memory and illusion to be created. Proscenium magic. It is a glorious and expansive space where extraordinary light cuts through a vast nothingness, amplifying everything. Lucky are those performers growing to fill that space! Presence expanding beyond body. How alive their skin must feel with all that vastness around them. A little life standing at the threshold of a horizon. The world in a condensed form.

Sitting in the dark audience, I get a glimpse into another world that I can see but not possess. That invisible fourth wall separates the performers from all who are gathered there to witness this encounter, but it is in that wonderful occasion when the performer is living their art, that I am drawn from the house of the theater into their world. That liminal space becomes a window...
a magic mirror. Oh how art lifts my spirit!



Sometimes she is in love with the silence, but sometimes she also feels suffocated by it. They hadn't lived here long, and when they first moved in, they used to slow dance in this room. There was a floorboard that would creak and always make them laugh, but now there was only the silence. The picture of this evening lingers in her mind like a still life painting accompanied only by whispers of that memory. A lone piano chord. What was she waiting for? Her hands slowly turn the pages of her book as if marking time, and as the light has shifted through each passing day, the hands on the clock merely hold a steady rhythm. Time has come to feel like an illusion. Unmoving, like the paintings on the wall.

The paintings were inherited. They were always there keeping her company when he didn't. Sometimes she almost felt haunted by them. A history never to be erased. For these static scenes, other than the dust they collected, hadn't changed since they had been painted by the artists long ago. Yet within each frame, there breathed a little life, that while may be close to forgotten, also brought her comfort. There was the Water Painting, as she called it. Gilded gold illuminated the surf as it washed along the seashore, sprinkling its shelled treasures on the sand. She could smell the salt and the sea when she looked at it, and sometimes if she stayed long enough, she could hear the subtle splashing of its wave.





Moving Poetry, Images, and Illusion

It is often considered that sight may be the most noble of the senses. It certainly does seem that we live in an image-rich culture. But man was not always dominated by vision, was he? When we are born, our entire experience of life enters into our consciousness through every single one of our senses. The taste of water. The touch of earth. Stories were told through images on cave walls, but shifted to song, chant, poetry, and myth. It was with the written word that focus on vision dominated once again. The eye is quickly confronted with words on a page, but it is the other senses that help us articulate and process their information. The body places us in perception, thought, and consciousness, but the senses help strengthen a sense of reality and self as we integrate in our experience of the world. So it remains that the essence of the words can be found between the lines. The peripheral view envelops us in its flesh.⁴ What awareness and patience it requires to truly see!

*This awareness feels like movement.
And movement is where feeling is.*

Pallasmaa actually states that “the dominance of the eye leads to the suppression of the other senses, and tends to push us into detachment, isolation and exteriority. The art of the eye has certainly produced imposing and thought-provoking structures, but it has not facilitated human rootedness in the world. Modern design often houses this intellect and the eye, but leaves the body and other senses, as well as memories, imagination, and dreams, homeless.”⁵

But we are made to seek sensation! The sound of rain, the taste of fruit, moving our bodies to music, the smell of home... This is where life is. The pathway to refinding our sensuality must hide within the invitation of this sensory intimacy, curiosity, and pleasure.

Think of the joy a child has with its crayons or building a fort. Their uninhibited creativity only becomes stifled when they are expected to turn toward intellect and logic. Is this when the imagination begins to die?

Film director and artist Peter Greenaway says that the human imagination is one of the most extraordinary things in the universe. He dreams of a painter's cinema, and advocates for the image that engages all of the senses. Images rich in ancient vocabulary and a nowness that can stand alone, giving time and space for the viewer to infuse their own imagination. He feels that with patience, we can re-evaluate the real world within the lens of art, allowing us to be inquisitive, more attentive, and more curious. We can re-evaluate the way we see. Art constantly confronts nature and artifice, reality and illusion. Perhaps it is his sort of image that speaks to both emotion and intellect that can help us question our own subjectivity, pressuring boundaries of normalcy into experience? Stepping inside of sensation could only help us move closer into the character of ourselves and our relationship to the 'other.' "Human subjectivity is essential, and isn't that what excites us?"⁶ he says.

Poetic images form an ancient visual language.

"An 'image' is that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time. Only such an image, such as poetry, could give us that sense of sudden liberation; that sense of freedom from time limits and space limits; that sense of sudden growth, which we experience in the presence of the greatest works of art."⁷

Juhani Pallasmaa feels that the great function of all meaningful art is to direct our consciousness back to the world and towards our

own sense of self as complete embodied and spiritual beings. To reconstruct the experience of an undifferentiated interior world in which we are not mere spectators, but to which we inseparably belong. In artistic works, existential understanding arises from our very encounter with the world and our being-in-the-world- it is not conceptualized or intellectualized.⁸

These paintings breathe life.

It is Turner's *Snow Storm: Steam-Boat off a Harbour's Mouth*, that theoretical physicist Julian Barbour writes about at the start of his book. In *The End of Time* he describes the paddle steamer caught in swirling greys and blues of a snowstorm on the water depicted in this painting. It was stated by English art critic John Ruskin in 1843 to be "one of the very grandest statements of sea-motion, mist and light, that has ever been put on canvas"⁹ and shows us how the artist created an illusion of flux. J. M. W. Turner himself was 67 years old when he claimed to have made the sailors bind him to the *Ariel's* mast so that he should be forced to experience the full fury of the storm. Turner was able to recreate this sense of motion, this great force of nature, with his monochromatic brushstrokes. According to Barbour, modern physics is beginning to suggest that all motions of the whole universe are a similar illusion - that in this respect, Nature is an even more consummate artist than Turner.¹⁰

Sensation brings emotion from the unconscious...

Conscious feelings are formed by emotion.

Consciousness is awareness of one's body and environment.

And awareness is a recognition of one's consciousness.

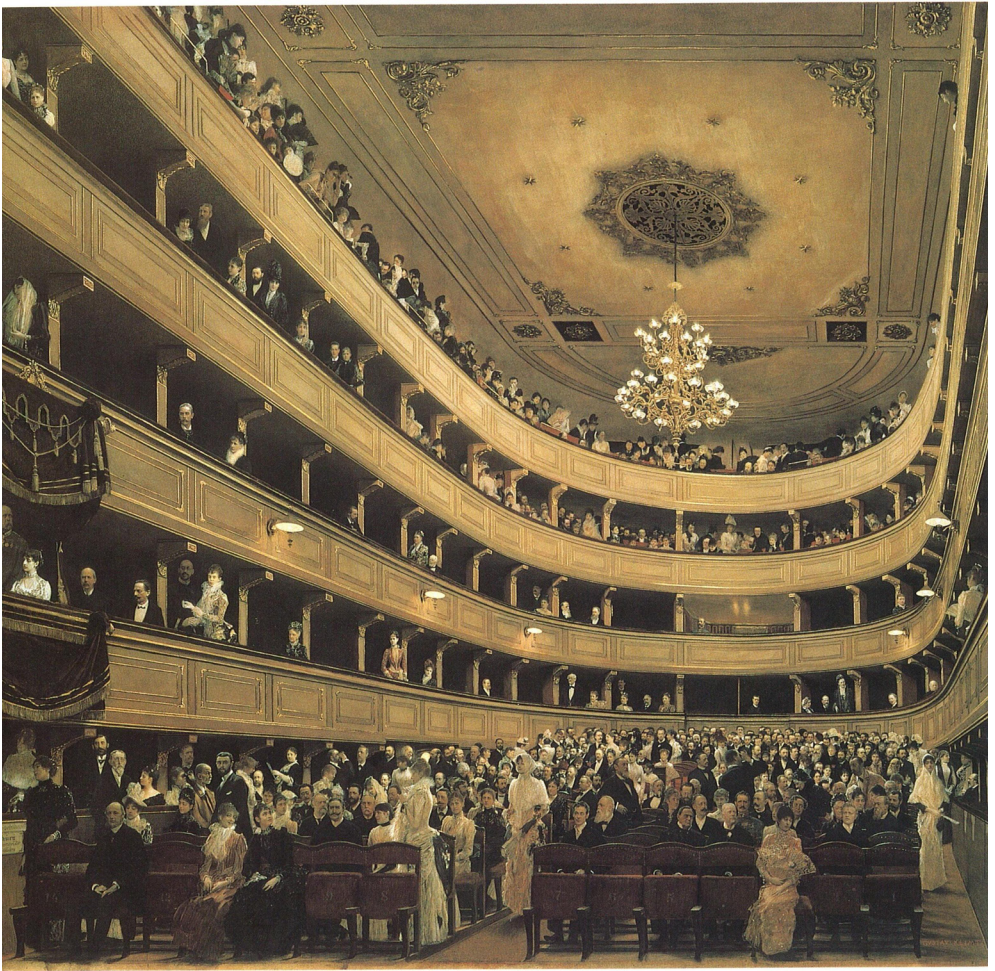
Awareness is movement...

What a mystery it is as to why consciousness shows us anything... including things in motion.









Gustav Klimt's Auditorium in the Old Burgtheater painting... there was no emptiness. But isn't that much like life? The endless detail in this frame reminded her of this. Emptiness was a sweeping sensation that moved through her, but it wasn't who she was... for nature never surrenders to nothingness. The auditorium is painted as seen from the stage, and every member of the audience looks as if they just stepped out of their own individual portraits. Programs rustling, secrets murmuring, the hum of the tuning orchestra. Hundreds of little lives forming a single scene. This space was full of life! For Klimt, the theater becomes a meeting point of reality and illusion, and this time, the audience are cast as players.





There was the painting of the woman. A feminine figure standing naked at the edge of the sea and holding the constellation Lyra in her hands as twilight falls upon her. The seductive gaze of the woman taunted her during noiseless evenings. She could hear a quiet voice calling like a siren's song from within the frame. She often wondered about this woman. There was something in the voice that moved her closer to great mystery, stirring a fearless longing deep inside of her urging toward the unknown. Freedom captured in stillness reminded her to breathe. Breathe in its life. Its magic. A life standing at the threshold of the horizon.

The Movement of Allegory and Metaphor

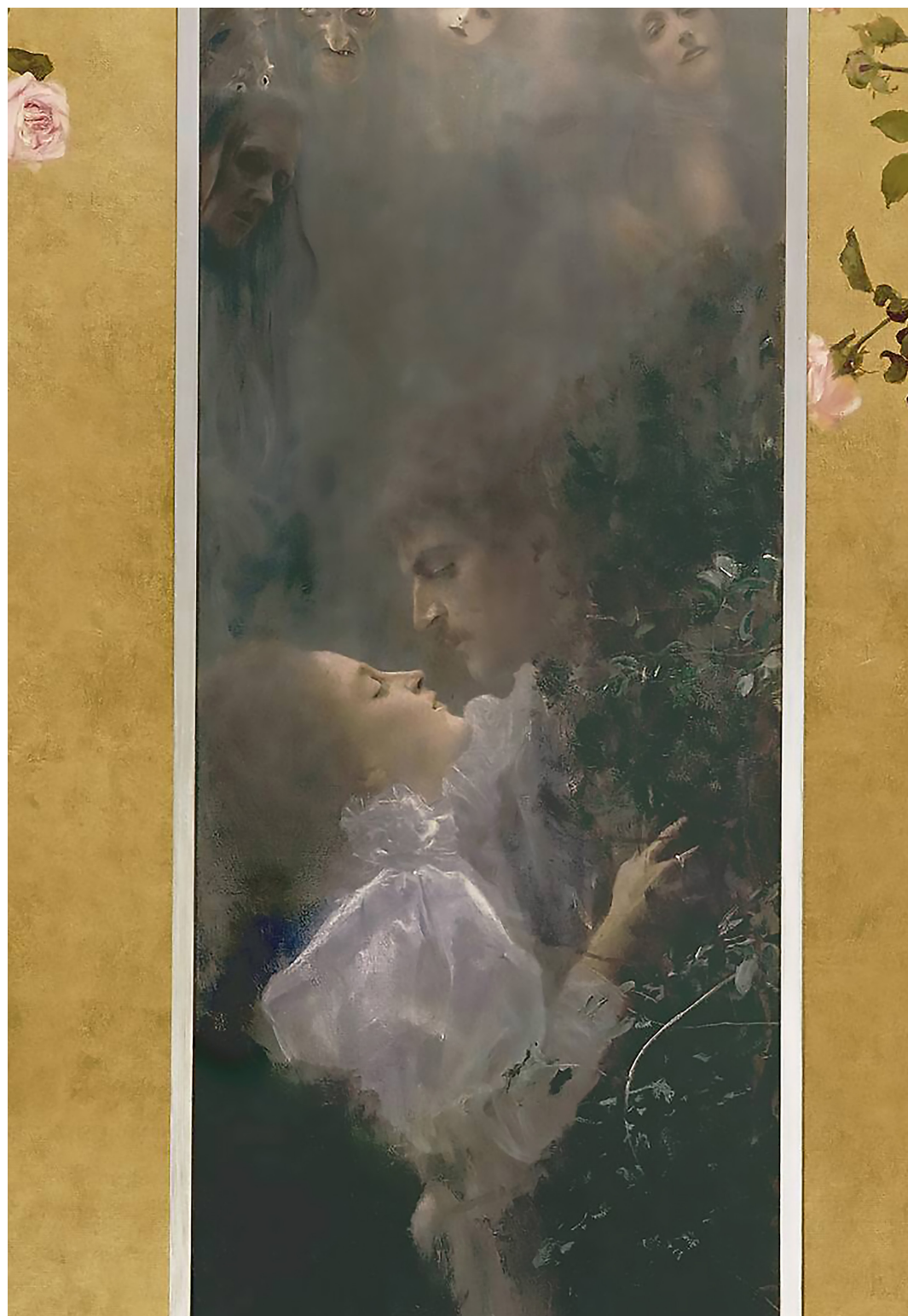
Klimt's allegory *Love* was the first painting that I looked for when I finally entered the exhibition that year in Paris. Something about this piece thrilled and fascinated me, and I had longed to see it outside the pages of a book. The canvas was divided into three, with the two outer golden areas functioning as a painted frame. The upper edges decorated with roses aroused lilting melody, as the narrow central picture set the scene. Two lovers, almost appearing as actors on a stage, held a passionate embrace. But it was the faces in the upper portion of the painting that had always lingered in my mind. The beautiful young lover, the small girl with curly hair, a man looking down at the lovers. There was an ugly-looking head that appeared to represent old age, and a pale face turned to the spectator. Most stirring were the bulging eyes of insanity and an old woman, whose long unkempt hair hung down toward the couple. Her ghostly white hand seemed to be reaching out for the woman below. Were these the visions of the pleasures and pains of love? The heads seemed to embody a fate threatening all human life. Klimt's surreal atmosphere suggested transient joy, yet with the weight of all this potential suffering.

When I finally saw the painting in person, I wept with gratitude after years of contemplation of that moment. How could this image that held so much sadness, feel so hopeful?

This allegory, full of metaphor, seemed to carve out a space between reality and the intangible, between the physical world and the spiritual world. Is this where the poetry lies? Its ideas and sensations flowed, like a choreography on dancers, freely in my mind from one realm to the other, and asked me to move. So metaphorical thought transfers, literally carries across the space, bringing the depth of its most abstract ideas onto the surface of something more easily understood. For in the nature of a single kiss looms the potential to open the heart to every vulnerability.

And isn't that a risk worth taking?

She had modeled for a painting once, naked and standing for long hours in the artist's small studio. When she had seen the finished painting she had barely recognized the image looking back at her. How odd it had been to see a picture of herself through the vision of someone else. In the vision she appeared poised and confident, yet it was only she who knew of the secret fluttering of vulnerability that she had embraced on the inside. She could remember the fire that had burned through her holding her posture there for all of those hours. The heat of summer mixed with the proximity of the artist's hand. Occasionally a soft gentle wind would come through the open window, and she would feel the tingle of it on her body in the same way that she could feel the contemplative caress of the artist's eyes. There had been much fatigue in her muscles as they held their pose and a wild freedom that came with each sensation. How alive she had felt to be seen in this way.







Sitting lost in this reflection, her meditation is broken as a piece of paper slides off of his table and lands in the center of the room. She thoughtfully abandons her memory and moves to reach for the paper. It is in this instant that he reflexively moves to reach for it as well, and as their hands brush one another faintly, the paper serves as a sort of inspired meeting point. Instinct softens edges, or perhaps it is the tingle in her fingertips from her memory, but as she looks up at him, there is something in the angle of her view that keeps her from looking away. She sees a sadness in his expression that she hadn't quite noticed before, and listens closely as memories once again whisper in her ear.

If in this moment an unanswered question hangs in the air above them, it is not one that they are ready to answer, and they step away from one another. He places the paper back on the table and turns once again to look at her. Paths that had once been joined now seem separate, yet an impression of the other is forever carved onto each of their bodies. Unhappiness comes from forgetting. Yet there are echoes of a whisper, and whispers become melody. Images move through her as if she is looking at photographs. His hand brushing hair from her face. Thigh falling across waist. Apertures shift, and she remembers tracing the outline of a crooked mouth. Wrist upon wrist.

The World Is Made of Nows

Time is mysterious and unseen. How is it that we try to hold on to something so elusive? Space and time in their previous role as the stage of the world are starting to feel redundant. For what if there is no container? What if the world does not contain things, but *is* things? Time has seemed to be a most powerful force in the universe, carrying us inexorably from birth to death, but perhaps this is mere perception. For Julian Barbour, time does not exist as anything other than an illusion. He believes instead, in a series of “Nows” as he calls them. There is no invisible river, but only instants of time.

Imagine these Nows as a series of snapshots... a succession of pictures. Photographs that confirm our impressions of the world around us. Artists were painting pictures that looked like snapshots long before cameras were invented.¹¹

Images rich in nowness that integrate us into our world.

Now imagine that with a vast quantity of these snapshots, there could be any number of possible configurations! Still-life configurations... Instants eternal... It would only be then, that with a change in the positioning of objects that we would be led toward the notion of the passing of time.

Barbour likens this view of reality to a strip of movie film. Each frame captures one possible Now, which may include blades of grass, clouds in a blue sky, a living room... but nothing moves or changes in any one frame. And the frames, all past and future, don't disappear after they pass in front of the lens. Every possible configuration of the universe, past, present, and future, exists separately and eternally. Imagine that we simultaneously inhabit a multitude of static, everlasting tableaux that include everything in the universe at any given moment.

Every Now is a complete, self-contained, timeless, unchanging, fully perceived universe. We mistakenly feel the Nows as fleeting, when in fact each one persists forever.

Barbour points out that this corresponds to the way one remembers highlights of their life. “You remember very vividly certain scenes as snapshots,” he says. Still scenes imprinted as a photograph on the mind that provoke sensation. “Many other memories take that form. People have strong visual memories. If it’s not just a snapshot, it might be a few stills of a movie you recall. Think of perhaps your most vivid memories. You don’t think of them as just lasting a second. You see them as snapshots in your mind’s eye, don’t you? They don’t fade—they don’t seem to have any duration. They’re just there, like the pages of a book. You wouldn’t ask how many seconds a page lasts. It doesn’t last a millisecond, or a second; it just is.”¹²

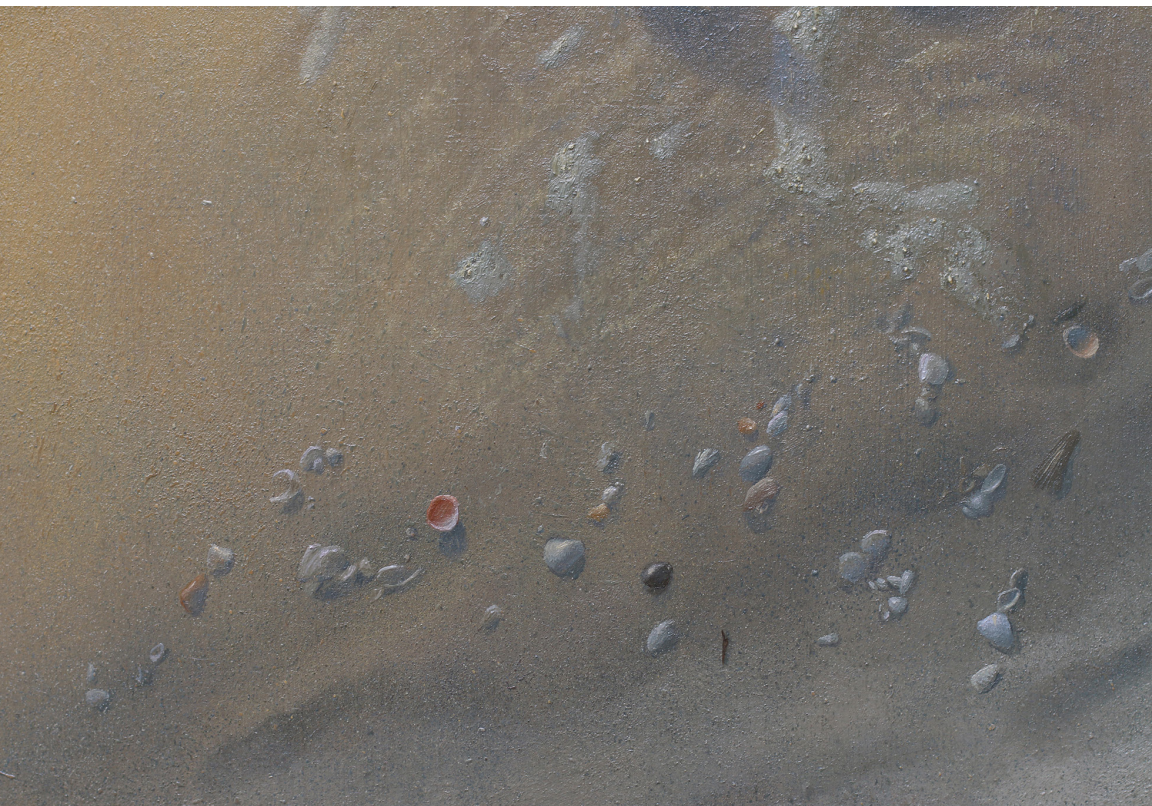
How beautiful.

But if there is no movement from one static arrangement of the universe to the next, why does it feel like time is moving so quickly, always slipping through our fingers?

“Some configurations of the universe simply contain little patches of consciousness— people with memories of what they call a past that are built into the Now. The illusion of motion occurs because many slightly different versions of us -none of which move at all- simultaneously inhabit universes with slightly different arrangements of matter. Each version of us sees a different frame - a unique, motionless, eternal Now. My position is that we are never the same in any two instants,” Barbour says. “Obviously, as macroscopic human beings, we don’t change much from second to second. And there’s

no question that we're the same people. To that extent, it's true that we do move from one Now to another. But in what sense can you say we're moving? The way I see it, not exactly the same information content, is present in many different Nows. Nothing really moves,"¹³ he says.

"The information content or the consciousness that makes us aware of being ourselves, of having a certain identity, is just present in many different Nows. There are two things that distinguish my position from what people might just intuitively think. First of all, the Nows are not on one timeline. They're just there. And second, there is nothing corresponding to motion. I'm taking a very radical position on that. I'm saying the Nows are really like snapshots. The impression of motion only arises because the snapshots have got an extraordinarily special structure."¹⁴



It is in this Now that undertones begin to mingle into some sort of haunting melody, and the past flows into the room. There is no future. There is only her. And him. Four walls, a table, a chair, a lamp. Two separate paths forever entangled. And a slow dance of memories. They stay this way for a while, seeing one another from across the room. She takes a step toward him, and a floorboard creaks. She pauses here, capturing an imprint of this scene, as the light has shifted in the room. She continues forward, for he is still there. Still here. And she thinks she can hear his song.

She listens as the tide breathes in and out. It's steady rhythm like that of a mother's heartbeat. Her heartbeat. And the siren calls into a salty breeze. This is a moment of an encounter. A dance between two souls that have been lost from one another. It is an instant in which she can make a choice. She can turn away, back to her books... Or she can create a new story. This is a new Now, and she beckons all of her awareness inward. Here she is soft. Here she is fluid. Here she is ready. And with her heart in her hands, she approaches him gently. The ambient hum of the current in her ear, she reaches for his arm and leads him away from the table, from his paperwork, and into the center of the room. A patch of sunlight lends a sort of spotlight for this encounter, encircled by shadow. She looks for her reflection in his dark eyes and draws him toward her, steadying him as he softens into her embrace.



This scene is in fact not like any usual evening. The golden light has brought its mystery and has also fueled her courage to open her arms to this man that she believes needs her. She tilts her head backward and awaits, immortalizing this moment before a kiss in her mind and longing to feel the sensations from her memories. He falls into her warm light and moves to rediscover passions lost. There in the middle of this room, desire fills the space. They make love, and their abandonment to the present accommodates a certain happiness.

There is nothing awkward or distant about this occurrence, for the body holds memory. And this is a man and a woman who once loved each other greatly. They lie together on the floor afterward, talking and reminiscing about earlier days. A window open to the sea. She feels like she has been taken back in time, but she also knows that there is only Now. Each instant changes to reveal an infinite number of possibilities. She knows this because she can see images of innumerable other Nows reflecting vividly throughout the room.



He smiles at her, kisses her forehead lightly, and stands to button his shirt after retrieving it from a pile of clothing next to them. She crawls lazily to the edge of the room where she reaches for the lamp, curls up seated, and idly lights a cigarette. Through an exhale of smoke she sees his body standing in the shadows with the posture of a new man. He begins a sort of pantomimed game of Charades. There is a childlike playfulness that has overtaken him, as if he is exploring his own renewed body through gesture. She laughs, yet there is a certain sadness in this sight.

It is not until he begins to finish his dance that she notices a silhouette that has cast itself onto the curtain that lines the back wall of the room. She can just make it out through the hazy mixture of afterglow and smoke. It is the figure of a man. A shadowed pose that resembles that of his, yet one that stays in place as he moves to leave for the kitchen. A trace of him echoes as he leaves, but for her, all sound has disappeared, and she is left only with this shadow. Transfixed, she stands in slow motion, drawn toward the empty space between her and this new presence. She is pulled silently across the room and reaches her hand out in front of her as if to touch it.

On Light and Shadow

Light itself is a form of matter. And matter, as deeply understood in more advanced modern physics, is “remarkably light-like”¹⁵ “The eye, this organ of distance and separation, can see light from very far away. Whereas touch is the sense of nearness, intimacy and affection. The eye surveys, controls and investigates, whereas touch approaches and caresses. During overpowering emotional experiences, we tend to close off the distancing sense of vision; we close the eyes when dreaming, listening to music, or caressing our beloved ones.”¹⁶

Shadows offer perspective. They are absent of light, yet they rely on light to exist. A shadow fills a void, reveals it... and does things that we cannot. They can never go toward the light or rest on water; and they lie in opposition to power. But shadows continue to come back. Whispering. Conspiring. Are shadows unattended much like a ghost? Flickering life, unable to end for some reason?

“Deep shadows and darkness are essential. They dim the sharpness of vision, make depth and distance ambiguous, and invite unconscious peripheral vision and tactile fantasy. How much more mysterious and inviting is the street of an old town with its alternating realms of darkness and light than are the brightly and evenly lit streets of today! The imagination and daydreaming are stimulated by dim light and shadow. In order to think clearly, the sharpness of vision has to be suppressed, for thoughts travel with an absent-minded and unfocused gaze. Homogenous bright light paralyzes the imagination in the same way that homogenisation of space weakens the experience of being, and wipes away the sense of place. The human eye is most perfectly tuned for twilight rather than bright daylight.”¹⁷



This is a dreamlike scene. She holds her breath, not daring to turn away from what she might discover as her hand moves open the curtain. She leans forward to see only darkness, but then quickly leans further as she makes out a tiny light lying in the grass outside of the window. A trickle down her spine... little currents come through. The wind changes. Disoriented, worlds shifting, she is pulled back into the haze of the room where she feels a presence over her left shoulder and turns to face it.



At once her body becomes weak, and it feels as if the floor falls away. She is caught. Hand brushing hair from face. For an instant, she feels held... carried. She is cradled in the arms of something unfamiliar, yet that she can recognize. They sway together and she is back on her feet. This room. This place. She sees a woman weeping, and sun on the water. That vast ocean that feels cool to a tiny body inside of it. Childhood memories. A broken bone. Her grandmother's book and a tree of seashells. Warm skin. She is running. She is dancing. He waits for her behind the tree. Brown eyes smiling. She is in the church in Neuss where they walked along the water. Hand in hand. Tides break. Hearts break. A bird flies to the altar. A door is closing. A kiss of the willow branch touches her cheek, and there is a picnic on the grass. His head in her lap. She is closing her eyes, and they are dancing. Ground is covered in white feathers. Papers strewn. His hand grazes her thigh. The breeze is moving through the trees and whispers its secrets in her ear. She listens. She hears the rocking of the train. She reaches behind her and picks a pine cone from a grave. She reaches in front of her and opens her palm to the sky. Gaze veers upward. She shifts and lies her head on the grass. On her pillow. In the hand of a lover. Chin lifted to a path running through the forest. Sun on water. How these currents come through. She is the song as her father's life slips away. She is laughter seeing the white dog chase its tail. She is home in the swirling of leaves falling in Autumn. The dripping of a faucet. The scent of night. She is the last 'I love you.'
She is... She is... The gallery door opens. She is lost at sea. The wind changes.

At the window she turns again to peer outside. There is only darkness. She straightens her dress, exhales, and quickly examines the room. Everything is in its place. She touches her hand to her face as if to identify her presence. She is here. Her body is the same. But something is different. She is calm. Boundless. She continues to look around her, taking in this place where she resides. Air no longer feels still. There is a stirring inside of her, and she feels she is travelling. A liveness fills the room, and she drifts into the center of its hold, bracing herself against the back of a chair. It is then that her vision narrows in on the empty glass sitting on the table, and a phone rings from another room. She can hear a muffled voice and grounds her feet as she moves back into the shadows.

What Does Hope Feel Like?

Stumbling across the exhibition in New York that September felt like a sort of coincidence at the time. Mystical Symbolism: The Salon de la Rose+Croix in Paris, 1892-1897 had come through the city and was presented at the Guggenheim Museum. Founded by an eccentric author and critic, Joséphin Péladan in 1890s Paris, the Salon existed as a series of six art and music gatherings. Aimed to transcend the mundane and material for a higher spiritual life, artists of the Salon often displayed hermetic and numinous works during a time when mysticism was a desire by many who yearned for a renewed centrality of faith.¹⁸

Thrilled at the thought of seeing works by artists admired, I was highly unaware of how impactful the experience would be. The spiraling walls that outlined The Guggenheim's nautilus shell, already symbolic by design, were covered in a deep red that warmed the space and replicated the look of an old salon. Displayed were paintings by artists such as Fernand Khnopff, Jean Delville, and Dutch painter Jan Toorop. This was all fascinating, and I felt taken back in time. It was when I saw the small unassuming glass case that housed a funeral urn by Finnish sculptor Ville Vallgren however, that my perspective really made a shift in the way that I saw my day.

It was said that Vallgren was a virtuoso in depicting the universality of innermost feelings in his works. In marbles, terracotas, and bronzes he could make palpable feelings of sadness or joy. A critic described Vallgren's use of imagery as "an entire necropolis haunted by weeping shadows, mothers, widows, daughters, lovers, jealously hugging the urns, sobbing through the lines of the dark material variegated like jasper."¹⁹

Gazing upon the *Funerary Urn* that day, I was struck with this palpability, unexpectedly overcome with something that I didn't understand. There was certainly a raw beauty in the form of the

nude female figure, head in hands, one arm hooked around the urn for support in mourning; but it was more than form that had its effect on me. There was a truth that resonated beyond bronze or flesh. A wisdom that spread its wings and penetrated the deepest parts of my soul. This urn was displayed in the Salon de la Rose+Croix exhibition in 1892, but it was over one hundred years later that the beauty I found in its sorrow bore a certain essence that reflected upon me a rendering of my own life.

Notes on Harmony?

Aesthetic syndrome, or Stendhal syndrome, is a clinical phenomenon characterized by the confluence of different symptoms, both physical and mental, when in the presence of a beautiful work of art. Hundreds of cases of aesthetic syndromes have been documented, particularly in Florence. Cases have not only occurred in the presence of manmade art, however, but also in the presence of the magnificent and almighty presence of nature. Aesthetic syndrome is common in people with a strong religious background. There is evidence that the same cerebral areas that are involved with emotional response are also activated during exposure to art. It is said that affected individuals are overwhelmed by beauty, with a manifestation of the link between emotion and knowledge lying in the deepest spaces of the brain, causing physical discomfort due to an inability to tolerate the passionate connection of art with man.²⁰

Sensations are essentially physical. Symptoms include rapid heartbeat, dizziness, disorientation, and fainting. This does not sound unlike spiritual ecstasy. Ecstasy meaning “to be or stand outside oneself.” What is it about ‘beauty’ that results in such an experience? A balance between reason and intellect? A blending of idea, form, and technique? Can harmony truly be found in the balance between real and ideal?

Is this just love in mystical form?



He enters the room carrying the telephone. It is clear now in the language that his body is speaking, that something has occurred to upset him. Clouded eyes. Skittish muscles twitching. He resembles that of a snake about to shed a disingenuous skin. His agitation diffuses her serenity, and she creeps further back into the shadows. She holds her breath steady and presses herself against the back wall. He doesn't know that she is there. Her view is fixed on him as a sort of voyeur, and she wishes to stay here as the watcher. Two figures in a shadow box. What will play out next? Their world is in condensed form, and she is standing at the threshold of the horizon. He is only a few feet away from her, but lost to her once again. So far away from the childlike spirit he had embodied moments before, his recent youthful euphoria has been replaced with the aged disposition of an old man. Tired shoulders. Gravity reflected in his body. Weighed down by a perception of time.

It only takes an instant to feel his gravity begin to weigh on her own frame. Unbound wild stiffening. She notices a wilting in her bodily stature, yet a budding rapture has already left its trace circling her heart. Fatigue tempts a defenseless burdon. His voice is resentful. Every fleeting pleasure displaced by anger. He is consumed in a world of schedules, papers, debts, deals... It was as if under a pretext of color and lighting, he was only able to view a flat surfaced panorama of a life they had once dreamed to build. She wishes to fly away from this place. If she quietly grabs her coat, she can make it to the door. Out of this room. Out of this life.

The Magic of Doors and Windows

In the world of the architect, “A door simultaneously protects and invites, it mediates gestures of secrecy and welcome, privacy and invitation, courtesy and dignity. The front door of the house resists the body by its very weight, it ritualizes the entry and makes one anticipate the rooms and life behind it. The door silences, but it is simultaneously a sign of the concealed voices both outside and indoors. Opening a door is an intimate physical encounter between the house and the body.”²¹ A door can also be seen as a portal. What is it that may be hidden behind it? There is potential for anything to lie beyond. Unknown and unseen. And its mysterious essence holds that of a boundary that must be negotiated with before its threshold is to be crossed. Doors can protect, maintain, keep sacred... They can beckon us forward into action, choice, or defeat, offering a portal to transformation. Doors are never simple.

And what of that of a window? The eyes of the house...

The artist’s window reveals hope, change, another step into the unknown. Light or dark, open or closed. A window is like a spiritual entrance through which a soul can travel. Windows are for the watcher. Thoughts roam freely as you gaze into the sights, sounds, smells of another world.

“Windows are the fragile eyes of the house, which observe the world and inspect visitors. The eyes of the house pre-select and preview the landscape on behalf of human eyes. The landscapes and views, as framed and focused by the openings of the house, obtain a special intensity and meaning. The world seen through a window is a tamed and domesticated world. A view through a window has already been given a specific directionality, scale, and meaning. The house provides protection for the dreamer, but only windows enable one to dream freely. Human imagination desires sky and the horizon line.”²²



He doesn't know that she is there. He snaps the chair out from beneath the table, and as he defeatedly moves to sit, the phone rings once again. He forcefully picks it up, a player on a stage, and she knows this is an opportunity for her to go. He will not see her. He will not hear her. He will not remember the taste of her. If it is possible in only one instant to lose hope, then it is possible in only one instant to make a decision to change course. Still life configurations... Instants eternal...



She glides, like a phantom, through shadows in the direction of the door. This has once again become a night like any other; and it is now that she clings onto the pressing of her ear to a seashell as she grabs her coat. Her hand reaches toward the door, fingertips trembling, and she noiselessly wraps them around the knob. She is clutching her coat to her chest. She turns the doorknob. She is the lilting melody of the tide. She is the mist and light in the full fury of a storm. She is...

As the door cracks open, a sliver of light sneaks its way into the room from the hallway outside, and she turns her head back to look behind her once more. The narrow light has cast its ray on one final painting that hangs on the wall. A silvery moon glows, floating in the dark blue distance of space. Every constellation has been precisely depicted in its place around the ring of the moon's luster. In contrast to the depth of this celestial sphere that covers the left half of the canvas, the right half of the canvas is illuminated by the brilliant radiance of a setting sun. Each entity bestows its magic in its reflection on the water below. Here she sees a most sacred union of earth and sky.





Place Between Earth and Sky

It is said that the Moon's gravity pulls at the Earth, stabilizing it on its axis, bringing about the seasons, and making it a more livable planet. It is also the Moon that gives us predictable rises and falls in sea levels, the tides that have guided humans for thousands of years with their rhythm. It might be easy to take this Moon that lights up the night's sky for granted, as it feels that it has always been there, just as it is now. But the Moon is continuously spinning away from the Earth. It is speculated that the fate of the Earth's oceans and the Moon's location are deeply connected. The loss of tidal energy (due to friction between the moving ocean and the seabed) slows the planet's spin, which forces the Moon to move away from it – the Moon recedes. The tides are largely controlled by the shape and size of the Earth's ocean basins.²³



Concentrating on her feet beneath her, she turns fully now, her back to the door. She breathes slowly as she quietly observes him put down the phone. She quietly observes him stand to pace the floor. She quietly observes his head fall into his hand as he supports himself against the edge of the table. He sits down, and she lies her coat down. She pushes her body against the door, shutting out the light and staying inside of the room. There are four walls. A table, a chair, a lamp. And a story that longs to be told. She is soft. She is fluid. And as her heart opens to the pure and sublime idea that may be much like the inspiration of an artist's creation, she steps back into the shadows.



Reflections on Enchantment

Could it be that a lack of imagination is what leads to misery? Pleasure must abound if we know how to look for it. And what of this feeling of pleasure? Our conscious experience of it feels positive, enjoyable, even as if it's something sometimes worth seeking. But why then, is there seemingly so much less effort in despair? To break away, isolate, free ourselves... This is a place that is solely ours. That can feel safe. A place where we steep in the awareness of our own existence. Pain can be individual, and expression a faithful ally. But what if we creatures are designed for interaction? And what if no one listens? Life is constantly holding up that mirror. That painting. That echo of the sea. And reflections are to be found in the window pane of 'the other.' How do these perceptions change us? In the understanding of our perceived self... is it there we find a doorway?

To be understood by another brings pleasure in the knowing of ourselves. And this knowing, that allows us to connect more deeply with our own inner feelings, sensations, and creativity, is a way to know another. The pleasure that lights up in being able to know another, to truly see the world around us, keeps allowing us to unfold. And as we unfold into sensations of pleasure, we are taken outside of ourselves toward a greater mystery. And humbled before these greater mysteries, there is a potential to become aroused to an ecstatic admiration. The ego momentarily falls away into qualities that feel like magic, and compassion has the space to creep its way in. With this compassion we can listen. We can taste. We can see. We can feel. And here compassion turns to empathy in which we can truly know another. And so it goes... We lose ourselves again and again to find ourselves again and again.

May this be a lullaby that lures me to sleep.





Mind

The Ideas

Time, Movement

Empathy, Architecture

Frames, Images

Poetic Languages

Sensual Mysticism

Idealism

Enchantment

Consciousness, Memory

Symbolism

Perception, Nature

Beauty, Light

Awareness, Becoming

Hope, Existence

The Players

Julian Barbour

Juhani Pallasmaa

Peter Greenaway

William Shakespeare

Rainer Maria Rilke

Jean Delville

Suzi Gablik

Rupert Sheldrake

Gustav Klimt

Plato

Frank Wilczek

Erin Manning

Friedrich Nietzsche

Questions I Began Asking

This process began with a desperate need to take a closer look at the power that art has the ability to possess. A love for visual art led to a passion for Symbolism, and I started to ask a similar question that many of the Symbolist artists were asking at the turn of the nineteenth century in Europe. How can art help transcend this tangible material existence in which we live, and bring magic into that of the everyday?

The many writers, poets, visual artists, composers, and playwrights that made up the Symbolist Movement strived to illuminate a world beyond appearances. It was a movement that favored subjectivity over realism. A movement in which the suggestion of ideas -meanings, emotions, and moods- were emphasized behind every form, line, shape, and color, and focused on specific moments of experience, sensation, and perception. Instead of clarifying these moments, artists used tone, or intonation, to try and approach an indescribable condition. Ideas were ‘clothed’ in a form perceptible to the senses. Jean Moréas describes in his manifesto on Symbolism that it was a “present thrust of the creative spirit in art,” sparked by an interest in spirituality. He was interested in deepening the experience of reality rather than replicating it. Moréas believed that through channeling dreams and harnessing the subconscious, the arts could revive and breathe new life into a cultural landscape lacking imagination.¹

This all came at a time when modern industrial society was growing so quickly that it seemed to “reduce an individual’s worth to the cash value of his labor.”² It was a time when a loss of comfort in tradition and ritual was being met with the newness of technology and a certain anxiety -that perhaps accompanied the ever induced separation between man and nature- that it brought with it. It was a response to the pandemonium of economic, intellectual, and social change that was happening during that time. Art historian Michelle Facos states

that Symbolism is situated “in a complex social context defined by the growth of cities, free-market capitalism, medical, and technological advances, class conflict, gender relations, demographic shifts, religious debates, and colonialism.”³

Symbolism focused on subjective knowledge as a source of truth. More specifically, arguing that truth could be found in either a spiritual or mystical realm, and that it was the result of personal experience with the physical world, rather than an objective observation of the physical world. Ultimately, this is a concern with art as a type of knowledge or way of knowing the world, and this, in turn, is a concern with the language of art. It became impossible for me not to notice the urgency, at a time once again in a rapidly shifting modern world, with which I wished to continue asking these sorts of questions. Can art truly bring magic into our everyday existence? Can it reveal deeper levels of consciousness? Is art then a tool that can help build a connection to our deeper selves, and the sacredness in the nature of everything that lives? And lastly, is art a way toward empathy... imperative to the reframing of perspective?

The Symbolist aesthetic is one seeped in the richness and multiplicity of metaphor. French Romantic artist, Eugène Delacroix, inspired the Symbolists with his belief that a fertile imagination could detect in the physical world a wealth of metaphors and even gave the unconscious its due in the process.⁴ He states, “These figures, these objects, which seem to a certain part of your intellect the thing itself, are like a solid bridge by which the imagination penetrating them reaches the mysterious and profound sensation of which the forms are, in some way, the hieroglyph, but a hieroglyph that is far more expressive than cold representation.”⁵ It became clear to me that this space created by metaphor, was actually something that allowed for a flowing movement. A flowing movement and freedom of thought follows

suggestion, as opposed to a telling. When movement of thought is freed, there comes a space for a complexity of a play of a variety of possible associations to enter.

I began to wonder about timelessness... In such a fast-paced world, art seems to remain something that asks us to *be* with it. Whether it is the sitting inside of a dark theater, or the focus required in reading a book, an encounter with a work of art has the potential to actually slow the feeling of time. Theoretical physicist Julian Barbour became a guiding force in my work, considering time and motion to be mere illusion. It is perceived difference, rather, that makes up this illusion of time. His theories focus on time as instants of time, or Nows, and like photographs, or pieces of art, they can be arranged in an infinite number of possible configurations inside of what he believes to be a holistic universe. Not only do his theories amplify the importance in the many instants of Nows that he feels make up a life, but they also cause us to question the intense power of perception, sensation, and imagination. When I imagine my life as a series of Nows, it encourages and gives me the assurance to slow down in the presence of each moment. It also brings a certain mystery to the way I see the world. It is through the words of Julian Barbour, in the consideration that magic is within something as tangible as a work of art, that this project has come to be.

The practice of slowing my life in this way has not only enabled me to continuously uncover clues in my process of research, but to discover much knowledge about myself as a person. To know myself, however, has not only required a deeper understanding of my mental and emotional capacities, but also of my own physical body -which while I admittedly already knew well, being a dancer- I remained unaware of the immense importance of the ways in which it partners with the nervous system. So if the world of the Symbolists, bound in sensation and the subjective, is the gateway to the intangible...

how does it ground itself into the world of the physical object or body?

First, let us consider the workings of the body. A physical structure. A frame that holds the nervous system, and mediates between interior worlds and exterior worlds. It is a marvelous, living assemblage of exquisite self-organized organ systems, whose simultaneous, relatively-smooth functioning is a major miracle... This is a structure that grounds us to the earth, by its very nature, and houses the intelligent power and mysteries of consciousness, and our very existence.

Friedrich Nietzsche offers much in his writings and philosophies that affirm the importance of living on the Earth as human bodily beings. He insists on a sensory awareness of the body, and the cultivation of perception and responsibility, in order to be able to participate fully in the creation of values and of the movements we make. This is the way in which we can consciously express love for ourselves, others, and the Earth. He states that, “An ability to affirm life demands bodily practices that discipline our minds to elemental rhythms, to the creativity of our senses, and to the ‘great reason’, our body, ‘that does not say “I” but does ‘I’.”⁶

Sensation is the way that the body perceives external stimuli, the physiological basis of perception, inputting information about the physical world obtained by our sensory receptors. The process then by which the brain selects, organizes, and interprets these sensations is our perception. Sensation and perception work together in a fluid and continuous process. And the sensory gates, like a system of boundaries, are in charge of defining and separating what is you, from what is not you. While perception of the same senses may vary from one person to another because each person’s brain interprets stimuli differently based on that individual’s learning, memory, emotions, and

expectations, this is the way that we are constantly taking in the world around us.

It is written in the publication on a study of consciousness, *Awake and Alive Mind*, that a traditional definition of conscious perspective is not just a metaphorical space of internalized experience, but a literal set of portals, such as eyes, ears, mouths, and noses. These sensory apertures transmit information from an external reality to an internal realm of being; they turn the objective into the subjective, translate analog information into digital sensation, and transfer the external motion into internal emotion. This concept of conscious sensation as a portal from a “physical” dimension to a “mental” (or purely informational) dimension is so ephemeral that consciousness is considered to be one of the greatest mysteries of all time.

Consciousness, to be clear, does not refer to identity or memory - rather, humans are conscious of our memories and our identities in the same way that we can be conscious of a tap on the shoulder. Instead, consciousness refers to the deeply transcendental essence that rests at the heart of all experience: the feeling of being that sits behind all perspectives. Furthermore, besides the objects, people, and environments around it that consciousness constantly simulates, human consciousness also simulates itself. This self-conception is a holistic summation of all other representations, the representor themselves, and the representation of the representation of the representation, ad infinitum.⁷

While the process in which sensory data come in is, in truth, primarily unconscious, it is constantly being integrated into consciousness... always updating itself over and over again. Like the lens of a camera, the sensory gates work as a series of lenses with apertures that are set to various dilation points. As soon as a novel experience is had, or something new is learned, the experience filters in to begin its process of being integrated into the identity.

The way that the world is perceived and expressed is then put into relation to be perceived and expressed again by another. It is a constant dialogue and negotiation of our perceptions of reality. A “strange loop” that is much like what happens when you point a video camera at its own output on a screen. Any motion or change that the camera detects will ripple through the layered images as infinitely regressive waves creating a hauntingly beautiful hallway of infinity.⁸

While perceived thought may be the way in which we create the language that speaks to us in words, it is actually through the sensations experienced in the body that the language of our emotion speaks to us. Emotional reactions are guided by sensory information and are physical, bodily responses!⁹ It is how we articulate and name the emotional response, then, that becomes what we identify as a feeling. A sensation of heaviness on a grey day may be accompanied by sadness, or a song may bring us to tears without having consciously yet articulated why. It is the feeling that is the subjective perception, the conscious awareness, that comes as a result of the emotion. Perceived emotion, or feeling, is how we can regulate our internal states of consciousness that are largely responsible for our entire experience of life. Understanding that emotions influence thoughts and behaviors helps us to know and connect to our deeper selves. The body holds much truth within its archive of history, trauma, and emotional language, and there is self-knowledge to be found when we are able to slow down enough to listen.¹⁰

So if identity is, in effect, constantly being formed, it seems to me that there is a constant opportunity for becoming. The writing of philosopher Erin Manning became exciting to me in this very regard. She speaks of an idea of *worlding*, or to keep unfolding within experience. This requires an awareness and sense of self. A knowing and a being. She writes, “The infant is not a passive slate into or onto which the world can be written. The infant is itself an emergent

experience, an individuation of interweaving strata active in the creation of ontogenetic worldings. These worldings are affective. They meet the infant halfway, transforming, at each level of the co-constitutive strata of experience, being and worlding as they come together. This coming-together is not based on cognitive confirmation. It is a preconscious, situated in a pure experience of proto-awareness. It is an immanent becoming-present of experience in experience, the feeling of a 'deja-vu' in a nowness without, as yet, a past or a future."¹¹

I love this idea of pure experience outside of time. Is this the place where we might find an even broader perspective of existence and an aliveness in just being present? The infant's senses are wide open to welcome the entire experience of life as it enters. I feel that this absolute presence could help me in my own life to tune in to my sensory apertures when they are being overloaded. With focused awareness, I can decide and preserve my sensory input when the world gets too fast-paced. Experiential receiving of the world seems more possible with this awareness. This bodily act is one that I want to continue to think about in connection to art.

As the body proves to be the intervening structure that mediates the relationship between interior and exterior worlds, we can thus see art as an intervening substance through which impressions are conveyed to the senses. Art is an extension of body. It is an instrument used to shape and form that which is intangible into something that we can experience. It allows wishes to be shared, and holds the potential to provide a new perspective through the recursive exchange forever taking place between art and viewer. Thought and association. Emotion and intellect. Reality and imagination.

In the writing of Rainer Maria Rilke, we are shown how life and art meet. Art provides a pathway toward transformation by exposing the sensuality of thought in a capture of the ephemeral. In a fleeting

moment of experience, focusing and losing oneself in subtle pure sensation opens that space of consciousness where inside and outside come together. Consciousness unveils each sight and sound as a contributing creator in an indescribable language of one's life. And how the mind can find amazement in the glow of just sitting in the sunshine as colors are tinted through perception! Following these perceptions all the way from the external object into the depths of one's innermost being, allows discoveries to start flowing outward once again from a deep and sacred place of ancient knowledge.¹² Through the awakening of sensation, we are able to reveal and become. For answers are within.

Rilke's poetry calls forth this richness in everyday life. In *The Sonnets to Orpheus*, he writes about the unspeakable pleasure of experience.

*Plump apple, smooth banana, melon, peach,
Gooseberry... How all this affluence
Speaks death and life into the mouth... I sense...
Observe it from a child's transparent features
While he tastes. This comes from far away.
What miracle is happening in your mouth?
Instead of words, discoveries flow out
From the ripe flesh, astonished to be free.
Dare to say what "apple" truly is.
This sweetness that feels thick, dark, dense at first;
Then, exquisitely lifted in your taste,
Grows clarified, awake and luminous,
double -meaninged, sunny earthy, real -:
Oh knowledge, pleasure - inexhaustible.¹³*

With the discovery of one's own inner poet, there is beauty to be seen all around us.

Jean-Paul Sartre argues that objects perceived through our senses

are, in fact, not complete without imagination. It is consciousness that enables and frees the imagination, bringing a synthesis of knowledge gained from being fully awake in the world up to that point. This lends to wholeness... the totality of experience. He points out that, "A consciousness that could not imagine would be hopelessly mired in the 'real,' incapable of the perception of unrealized possibilities, and thus any real freedom of thought or choice."¹⁴ Perception and imagination reside in the same place in the brain, and rely on each other. It is through this lens of art then, that the world can be re-imagined. Re-created. For there is no creation without imagination!

Art, in its human expression, is above all things a psychological, a spiritual, an inner phenomenon; it is of the imagination, and human imagination is an independent faculty... To produce any work of art, to make manifest a beautiful thing, the artist need not depend on the surroundings in which he lives, neither need he reproduce or imitate the objects of those surroundings or look to them for his inspiration.¹⁵
~Jean Delville

Architect Juhani Pallasmaa states that the bridge between art and the world feels delicate. He trusts it requires extreme structure and care. It can "guide, tune, choreograph and stimulate actions, interests, and moods. Art mediates and maintains the resonance with the world in which we live. The qualities of our life experiences are reflections or reverberations of this resonance."¹⁶ There are two levels in which imagination is projected. There is the formal geometric image that projects material, external images from life. This is our lived experience of perception 'as reality,' in essence. And then there is the empathetic image that interprets that perception and emulates embodied and emotive experience, qualities, and moods... This is the existential experience that calls for the elevation of imagination.

It is this empathic, peripheral, “flesh of the world” that is actually the truly lived reality in which we dwell.¹⁷ For Rilke, Nietzsche, and Pallasmaa, embodiment and incorporation of all the senses are fundamental in the experience of art and life. And art is a most powerful source, the relational phenomenon, that mediates and maintains the resonance with the world in which we live.¹⁸ With this view, once again art holds a very special and magical mission. If it is true that art is a reflection of the soul of civilization, so it is that the soul can reflect art!

Imagine now the great responsibility of the creator! There is a communicative power in the work of the artist, for it is a tangible representation of consciousness that comes from within. The mind that is expressed through the creation of art, reveals layers of an intangible essence of the artist’s lived experience, or soul. This, in turn, becomes a direct reflection of soul. Of life. French symbolist painter and draughtsman Odilon Redon, known for his “dreamlike” paintings, recorded in his journal, *Confessions of an Artist...*

I have created an art after my own heart.

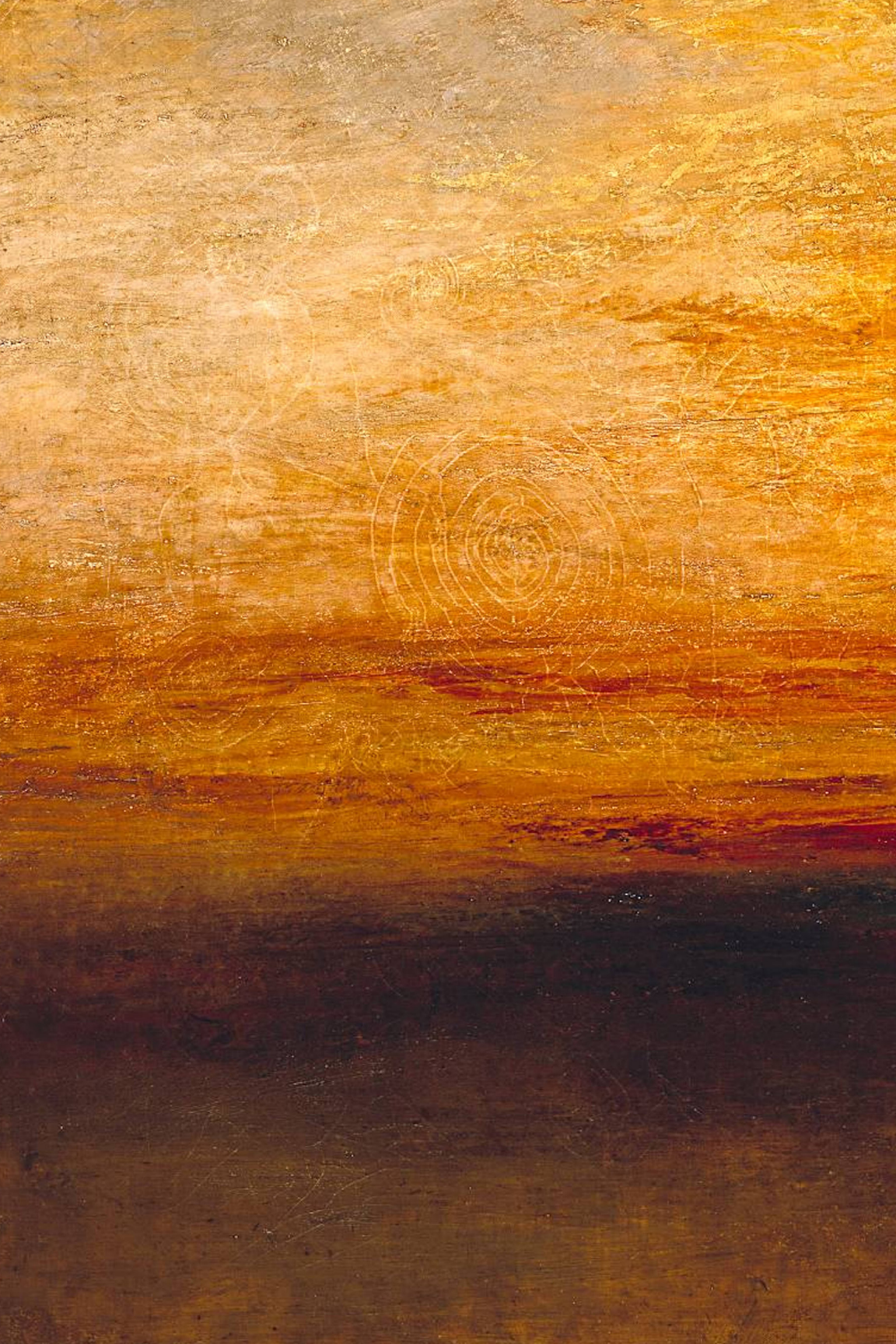
I have created it with my eyes open to the wonders of the visible world and, whatever may have been said, with steadfast determination to obey the laws of nature and of life. I have also preceded in full awareness of my love for a few masters who have drawn me to the cult of beauty. Art is the ‘ultimate reach,’ high, wholesome, and sacred; it causes everything to blossom; it only produces in the art lover a sense of unique and delicious enjoyment; in the artist, however, it brings, with torment, the new seed for the new harvest. I believe I have yielded obediently to the secret laws that have led me to fashion, as best I could and according to my dream, things in which I have totally immersed myself...¹⁹

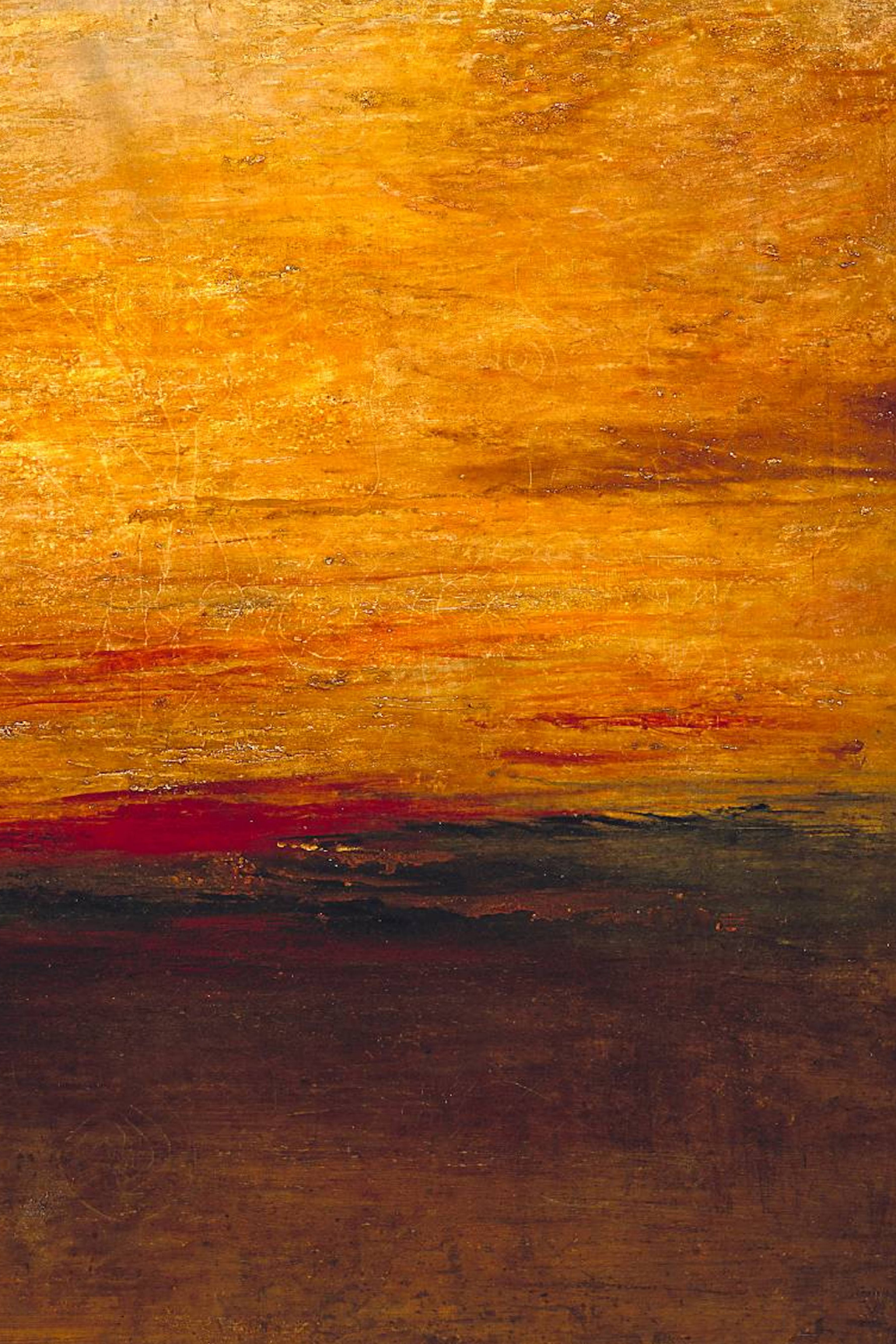
The role of the artist does not have to be all that unlike the role of the non-artist. If we consider that we are all creators of our own lives, each human, with a natural wellspring of creativity, it could prove such a great resource. I know for myself, some of my most fulfilling moments in life have often come in times of creation... whether it be through work as an art maker, work toward the evolution of self, or the work of growing a baby in the womb. Each process of creating something new brings with it, possibility! Even something as simple as a discussion, a walk, or a meal cooked could have an unexpected outcome. With a keen sense of awareness, there is awe to be seen in this, much like that found in the eyes of a child as they discover each new sensation.

So we can see how art itself can act as a sort of portal.

A magic mirror. Through art we can know another. And through art we can know ourselves. To be with a work of art is to be with yourself. It is a conversation and may require patience and listening. One simple line of poetry can transform a life, and in considering this fundamental and emotional impact, we start to realize how art can be an expansion of our realm of being. It enables, whether making or witnessing, a potential to perceive the material world around us, penetrate consciousness, and make real change. For it is in fleeting moments of experience that another... a viewer, listener, reader... carries the potential to be moved toward abandon, the unbinding of previous thought, to then find themselves once again anew. Art confronts us with nature and artifice, reality and illusion. It can give space for curiosity, deepen awareness, inspire, and lift spirits. In taking this power with careful regard, the artist becomes an alchemist, and a light which can shift perspective by showing their own.

The magical realm of dreams and the subconscious can be felt in the sensations of our everyday existence, and art is a way to experience this. Art to reveal a new way of seeing. A new state of consciousness. And a way to find movement through metaphor that feels like seeking. Perhaps this seeking is where we find hope. For Nietzsche, hope is the metaphorical rainbow “over the cascading stream of life.” The “illusory bridge.”²⁰ For me, hope beckons me forward into the rest of my life’s work. It leaves me with more questions than I started with, and urges me to seek art that continues to provide that bridge, that window, that doorway toward transcendence. A life of enchantment.





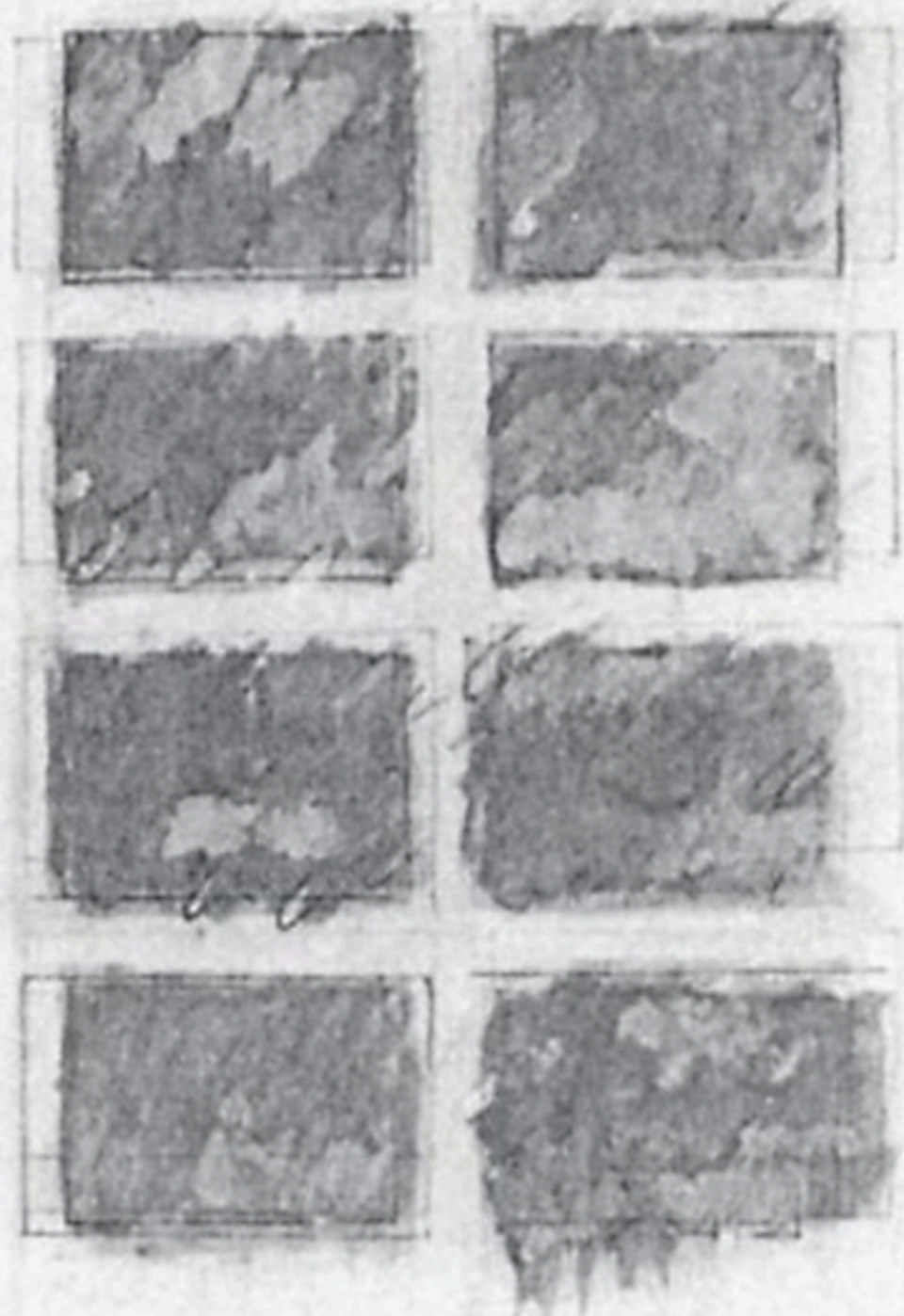
Images

- Cover Jason McPhillips, detail from *Seraphim*, 2014, oil on panel, 18 x 24", Private collection.
- Page 5 Source Material: Brkati Krokodil, *Interior of An Old Abandoned House*, 2014, photograph, NIKON D90
- Page 27 Desiree Dolron, *Xteriors XV*, 2001-2018, Kodak endura print, 75 x 58 cm, 29 1/2 x 22 7/8 in, Ed. 6/8 + 2AP
- Page 29 Jason McPhillips, detail from *Ontology*, 2018, oil, gold leaf, and pastiglia on aluminum panel, 18.5 x 44 inches, Private collection.
- Page 30-31 Jason McPhillips, *Ontology*, 2018, oil, gold leaf, and pastiglia on aluminum panel, 18.5 x 44 inches, Private collection.
- Page 35 J.M.W Turner, detail from *Snow Storm – Steam-Boat off a Harbour's Mouth Making Signals in Shallow Water, and going by the Lead. The Author was in in this Storm on the Night the "Ariel" left Harwich*, 1842, oil on canvas, 91 cm x 122cm, Tate, London Great Britain.
- Page 36-37 J.M.W Turner, *Snow Storm – Steam-Boat off a Harbour's Mouth Making Signals in Shallow Water, and going by the Lead. The Author was in in this Storm on the Night the "Ariel" left Harwich*, 1842, oil on canvas, 91 cm x 122cm, Tate, London Great Britain.
- Page 39 Gustav Klimt, *Auditorium of the Old Burgtheater, Vienna*, 1888, gouache on paper, 82 x 92 cm, Wien Museum, Vienna.
- Page 41 Jason McPhillips, *Voice (Twilight)*, 2017, oil, gold and silver leaf, sgraffito and pastiglia on panel, 26 x 52.5 inches, Private collection.
- Page 44 Gustav Klimt, *Love (Liebe)*, 1895, 60 x 44 cm, oil on canvas, Wien Museum, Vienna.
- Page 46 Jamy Meek, 2020, home photograph.
- Page 50 Jason McPhillips, detail from *Ontology*, 2018, oil, gold leaf, and pastiglia on aluminum panel, 18.5 x 44 inches, Private collection.
- Page 52-53 Gustav Klimt, detail from *Beethoven Frieze, floating genii*, 1902, caesin color on plaster, 215 x 3414 cm (long walls 1392 cm each) Secession Building, Vienna, Austria.
- Page 55 Source Material: Yaroslav Gerzhedovich, *House model*, 2013, photograph, cardboard, paper, foil, glue, painting 2.5 x 1.5 cm ("doorway").
- Page 58 Dark interstellar matter in the Milky Way north of the star Theta Ophiuchi, Unknown.
- Page 64 Ville Vallgren, *Funery Urn*, 1892, bronze, 21 x 12 x 14 cm, Musee des Beaux-Arts, Nancy, France, First Salon de la Rose + Croix, 1892, cat. no. 215, p. 34, photo courtesy of C. Philippot.
- Page 68 Oswald Berends, *Sun in an Empty Room, Vilhelm Hammershøi*, 2016, video still, Den Haag, Nederlands.
- Page 70-71 Jason McPhillips, *Hieros Gamos (Sacred Union)*, 2018, oil, gold and silver leaf, and pastiglia on aluminum panel, 18.5 x 44 inches, Private collection.
- Page 73 Jason McPhillips, detail from *Hieros Gamos (Sacred Union)*, 2018, oil, gold and silver leaf, and pastiglia on aluminum panel, 18.5 x 44 inches, Private collection.
- Page 74 Gustav Klimt, *Philosophy*, 1900-1907, oil on canvas, 430 x 300 cm, from the series of faculty paintings for the University of Vienna, destroyed by fire in 1945 at Schloss Immendorf
- Page 81 Desiree Dolron, *Xteriors VII*, 2004, Chromogenic print, face-mounted to acrylic, flush-mounted on board, 68 1/2 x 45 7/10 in, 174 x 116 cm.
- Page 82 Vilhelm Hammershøi, *Interior with the Artist's Easel*, 1910, oil on canvas, 69 x 84 cm, Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen, Denmark.
- Page 96-97 J.M.W Turner, *Sunset*, 1830-1835, oil on canvas, 81.9 cm (32.2 in) x 66.7 cm (26.2 in) Tate National Gallery, London.
- Page 101 Peter Greenaway, Pages from *A Framed Life*, 1988-1989, mixed media on paper.

For Peter Greenaway, the very act of seeing provides the script; and the clues for seeing a work of art can be brought into the open only by working out the similarities and differences between what goes on in the presence of the work of art and what goes on in a variety of quite different discourses, different frames. It is the realization of this that has enabled Greenaway to discard the image in his films and depict what so unexpectedly lies beyond it; the frame becomes not the unique locus of objectivity in a world of subjects but a subject in itself. He repeatedly returns to frames because they are all we have: the content of the world we possess and the only clues to the lost Eden we intuit. The frame reveals everything and nothing; it is the mystery of a total banality, a surface that is nothing more than raw exposure, unhealed wound. There is nothing more to seek; what lies beneath is a void.

~David Pascoe

Peter Greenaway, Museums and Moving Images



the original design was made with red ink
- the design was made with red ink, and the design was made with red ink

Notes

Body

1. Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Embodied Image: Imagination and Imagery in Architecture* (West Sussex, United Kingdom: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 2011), 100.
2. Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses* (West Sussex, United Kingdom: John Wiley & Sons LTD, 2005), 52.
3. Louis Khan, “New Frontiers in Architecture: CIAM in Otterlo, 1959,” *Louis Khan: Writings, Lectures, Interviews*, (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1991), 85.
4. Pallasmaa, *Eyes of the Skin*, 10.
5. Pallasmaa, *Eyes of the Skin*, 19.
6. Peter Greenaway, “Where Next for Storytelling,” November 29, 2017, Sheffield Doc/Fest, YouTube Video, 1:03:42.
7. Ezra Pound (As quoted in JD McClatchy, ‘Introduction’, in *Poets on Painters*, JD McClatchy, editor (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1988) XI.
8. Pallasmaa, *Eyes of the Skin*, 25-26.
9. William Rodner, . *Encyclopedia of the Romantic Era, 1760–1850 – M-Z*, (London: Taylor and Francis, 2004). Writing by John Ruskin, *Modern Painters* (1843).
10. Julian Barbour, *The End of Time* (Great Britain: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1999), 1.
11. Barbour, *End of Time*, 18
12. Tim Folger, “From Here to Eternity,” *Discover: The Sciences*, (December 2000).
13. Folger, *Eternity*, 2000.
14. Folger, *Eternity*, 2000.
15. Frank Wilczek, *A Beautiful Question: Finding Nature’s Deep Design* (New York: Penguin Press, 2015), 130.
16. Pallasmaa, *Eyes of the Skin*, 46.
17. Pallasmaa, *Eyes of the Skin*, 46.
18. Vivien Greene, *Mystical Symbolism: The Salon de la Rose+Croix in Paris 1892-1897* (New York: Guggenheim Museum Publications, 2017), 15.
19. Vivien Greene, *Mystical Symbolism*, 100.
20. Leonardo Palacios-Sánchez, “Stendhal Syndrome: a clinical and historical overview,” *Arq. Neuro-Psiquiatr* (São Paulo February, 2018), Vol. 76 no.2.
21. Pallasmaa, *Embodied Image*, 131.
22. Pallasmaa, *Embodied Image*, 130.
23. Mattias Green and David Waltham, “How did the moon end up where it is,” *The Conversation*, (April 2019).

Notes

Mind

1. Kelly Richman-Abdou, "Symbolism: A Meaningful Approach to Turn-Of-The-Century Poetry and Painting," *My Modern Met*, (July 2020).
2. Michelle Facos, *Symbolist Art in Context*, (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2009), 11.
3. Facos, *Symbolist Art*, 6.
4. Henri Dorra, *Symbolist Art Theories: A Critical Anthology*, (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994), 4.
5. Delacroix, *Journal*, (October, 20, 1853). There is ample evidence that Delacroix's aesthetics theories were fully developed in the 1830s and that he jotted down felicitous formulations later with intention of writing a dictionary of painting - which he never did.
6. Kimerer LaMothe, "For Nietzsche, life's ultimate question was: 'Does it dance?'," *Aeon*, (March 2020).
7. Ben Callif, "Consciousness: A Strange Loop of Emotion," *Awake & Alive Mind: A publication on the science of consciousness*, (2019).
8. Callif, "Consciousness: A Strange Loop of Emotion," (2019).
9. Callif, "Consciousness: A Strange Loop of Emotion," (2019).
10. Hilary Jacobs Hendel, "Emotions are Physical: Build emotional resilience by learning how to listen to the body," *Psychology Today*, (February 2020).
11. Erin Manning, *Always More Than One: Individuation's Dance*, (Duke University Press, 2013), 6.
12. Rupert Spira, "Rilke and The Tantric Path," May 24th, 2019, From the seven day retreat at Buckland Hall, Spring 2018. YouTube Video, 11:04.
13. Rainer Maria Rilke and Stephen Mitchell, *The selected poetry of Rainer Maria Rilke*, (New York: Random House, 1982).
14. Maria Popova, "Sartre on Why "Being-in-the-World-Ness" is the Key to the Imagination," *Brain Pickings*, (June 2012).
15. Jean Delville, "Modernism in Painting," *The Theosophist* 48.1 (October 1926), 74-84.
16. Juhani Pallasmaa, *Empathic and Embodied Imagination: Intuiting Experience and Life in Architecture*, (Finland: Tapio Wirkkala, 2015), 7.
17. Juhani Pallasmaa, "Empathic Imagination: A talk by Juhani Pallasmaa at Bengal Architecture Symposium," January 30, 2017, Bengal Institute, YouTube Video, 52:33.
18. Pallasmaa, "Empathic Imagination," 2017.
19. Dorra, *Symbolist Theories*, 54. excerpt from Odilon Redon, "Confidences d'artiste," in *A Soi-même. Journal (1867-1915)*.
20. Claudia Bloeser and Titus Stahl, "Hope," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2017 Edition).

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creation, destruction, pleasure, pain, day, night

...time and time again

