

**Refuge is a place, Solace is a feeling  
The Unknown is the journey**

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Introduction

When the pandemic was just beginning, my partner LaRelle and I were in Los Angeles, and we got out two days before the city completely shut down. We observed panic: hoarding at grocery stores, quiet streets, an empty hotel, shut down Disneyland and closed hiking trails. When we returned to Saskatoon and our city was navigating the pandemic, I could not handle the way in which I saw the divides between people and their opinions, so I sank inwards, in fear that I would become irrational with my frustrations and burn some bridges in the process. I was truly scared of how this pandemic was going to tear people apart and I wanted to go elsewhere, away from the external stimuli; I wanted to seek mental refuge until the dust settled.

Over the course of this MFA education and the continued issues with the pandemic, I found myself deeply affected by my way of life here in Vancouver, ultimately influencing the trajectory of my work. What I sincerely hold true though is the ability for abstraction to be accessible to everyone and my capability to use the elements of design, such as color, texture, space and form as foundational tools in my work. What is curious for me is the introspective investigations I have about myself and where my mind goes as I create in the studio, which can be seen in various psychoanalytic observations of my own self within the thesis. This also ties into the conversations that I enjoy having with the viewer, but I do not make work about psychology or psychoanalysis. Instead, I use introspection to discover new things about my work, the way I work and what kind of affect that can have on the viewer if I share this process.

This thesis will highlight the ways I sought refuge and solace in my artwork but also the ways that I attempted to confront my own insecurities; successes and failures alike. Within my art practice I will provide what I have learned from the 18 months that I have been here and how it has affected the work I do through acrylic sculptures, ink collages and creative projects.

The questions I will address are as followed

**How does my art making and my life coexist? Are they ever separated?**

**Why is it important to lead into the unknown?**

**Fall 2020: Working with Material Transformation**

When my friend Peter was condensing his studio, I was able to get about 10 sheets of plexiglass, which allowed me to experiment with various material processes. I wanted to create a sculpture that transcended the material. This was ultimately found by incorporating heat. Within this pursuit, I began to enjoy using a material that really bothered me in the outside world, so my intent was to transform it into something that I truly enjoyed working with and looking at. The approach was as simple as that.

We are always looking through plexiglass to see someone or something. However, by folding a sheet of plexiglass on itself, it creates an affect that allowed something to not be seen in its entirety on the other side. This was an important part of the process because the skewed perception of the material has the potential to slow down a viewer and engage them in what they see or what they cannot readily comprehend.



Fig. 01: Jordan Baraniecki, 'When Life Allows for Moments of Bliss + detail', 2021. acrylic, ink, isopropyl alcohol and steel, 42" x 13.5" x 12".

*When Life Allows for Moments of Bliss* has one large sheet of plexiglass and multiple small pieces that create a line from the top to bottom. The small pieces, and the acrylic nuts and

bolts have also been dyed with a black Copic ink and isopropyl alcohol solution. Afterwards, I drilled small holes through the large sheet to bolt the small pieces onto it. Even though the acrylic piece is abstracted I left the ends of the bolts visible to show how it is pieced together. The structure is hung from the ceiling using a thin metal cable and it moves slightly as a viewer walks by, which shifts the light in the gallery and changes the transparent perspective of the plexiglass.

For the process of creating these works, I wipe the sheet clean with paper towel and blowtorch the edges of the sheet. This melts away the factory-cut edge and gives it a more glass-like look. The plexiglass goes directly into a ceramic kiln at 160°, where it lays flat on top of a thin metal sheet. This distributes the heat evenly within the kiln so the entire sheet becomes malleable when I pull it out. It is left in for 20 minutes to allow the sheet to become malleable enough for me to physically sculpt it with my hands using heat resistant gloves. The process is physical and the plexiglass behaves similar to taffy while it is hot. It droops with gravity and sticks to itself when it is folded.



Fig. 02: Jordan Baraniecki, 'Light and Dark' acrylic sculpture + detail, 2021. acrylic, ink, isopropyl alcohol and wood, dimensions vary.

For the *Light and Dark* sculptures, which are installed at Herschel's Clothing's infinity box in Vancouver, Canada, I draped three individual pieces of the plexiglass over top of wooden stands when they came out of the kiln and held them in place while they re-hardened. The bubbles trapped in the acrylic are from the flame at the back of the kiln. Thinner sheets are susceptible to overheating, which causes the material to bubble and blister. However, this also creates a unique texture to the edge of the sheet that is closest to the flame inside the kiln. What initially started out as an error, turned into a love for the bubbles because they form a line within the sheet that can guide the viewer's eye through the sculpture.

The ultimate goal was to transcend the plexiglass sheet by finding a process that allows for that to happen. I take inspiration from Tara Donovan's sculptures, in which she transforms everyday materials in new, unexpected forms. In her metallic tape works, she folded pieces of metallic tape into cone-like structures and then glued together to form various sized balls. These are then glued onto themselves, beginning on the floor and developed into a formation that suggests it could go on infinitely. The material is so visually captivating that I find it like a lure that draws people into the sculpture to simply focus on their own perception of the work and how it changes as light is refracted back to the viewer. Some of the cones within each ball are bright with light at one moment, but they darken when the viewer shifts around the sculpture. This suggests that the sculpture changes in space and form when the viewer moves. Critic and art historian Michaela Mohrmann writes about the materials and transformations that happen within Donovan's sculpture that potentially deviates away from the material itself:

"The entire encounter is as mesmerizing as it is humbling; I'm left interrogating the entire eye-to-brain relay that is my chief way of knowing the world. There is, however, something empowering about this position of doubt. It encourages an open-mindedness and self-awareness that dispels received notions in favor of an understanding that is perpetually receptive to new information." (Pace Gallery)

By abstracting the material, Donovan opens up a conversation between what one sees and thinks that transcends beyond the material itself and to open up new ways of looking at something. For my sculptures, I aimed to engage the viewer in similar ways, starting with a common material (plexiglass) and creating something that was not readily identifiable due to the material transformations that came from the applied use of heat, light and abstraction.



I also incorporated a video component with Herschel's LED roof screen using my ink detail photographs as the subject matter. The videos, which are shown on the ceiling above the sculptures, cast bright reds, yellows and blues onto the sculptures, which catch the light and disperse it wildly within the box. The viewer's perception of the sculptures changes as they walk around them and the motion of the video changes the sculptures as it moves. Thus, there are always visual transformations that are present, with the potential to captivate the viewer, whether one is standing in place or moving.

### Summer 2021: Exploring Narrative Components

I was working through a project called *Tricky Beasts, Secret Landscapes & Freaky Pieces*, which revolved around a pair of feet named Budd and his wasp companion Phena.<sup>1</sup> My intentions were to create paintings and sculptures that included Surrealist sensibilities such as non-linear narratives, automatic processes, biomorphic shapes and undisclosed locations. I was influenced by the work of Surrealist painter Yves Tanguy in such paintings like *Mama, Papa is Wounded!*

I was seeking to create spaces and forms that were familiar yet unknowable. I was aiming to create both intrigue and unease. Tanguy achieved this in many ways. In a 1995 Museum of Modern Art exhibition catalogue, James Thrall Soby writes:

"In the famous *Mama, Papa Is Wounded!*, a hairy stalk rises at the right against dark gusts of color, and the illusion of limitless space is heightened by a linear cat's cradle binding the flecked shadows on the earth. The picture illustrates with extraordinary acuteness a relative constant of Tanguy's technique: the dual manipulation of perspective, from far to near and from high to low." (15)

My process for the art series was to create a story which expanded like an endless mind map by specifically focusing on space as a tool for the artwork. My inspiration was also navigated by introspective research, tapping into the subconscious and leading into the unknown with a reference to *The Hero's Journey* by Joseph Campbell and *The Red Book* by Carl Jung.

One primary art influence was Ontario-based artist Jay Dart and his character Jiggs in *Field Guide to Yawnder*, which is a comprehensive field guide book to the characters, places and objects

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<sup>1</sup> Budd acted as my footing in the world I was creating, as he—and I—looked for self-actualization.

within Dart's created world. Within his practice, Jiggs acts as the *present moment* for Dart to collect notes as the middle man to the creative process. Jiggs and his companion Floyd are looking for where ideas actually come from and how they manifest into artwork. In an essay by Sonya Jones, curator at the Robert McLaughlin Gallery in Ontario, Jones writes:

"Dart's artistic odyssey is told through both mark making and world making. In his mark making he seeks purity of thought and expression, and in his world making he is relating his, and most likely other artists', creative journey. Making sense of the complexities of Dart's world can be challenging, but each drawing recounts a different layer of story, inviting the viewer to be a part of Jiggs' journey." (Jones)



Fig. 05: Jay Dart, 'Now Entering Beyawnder', 2015, Graphite and watercolor on paper, 14" x 17".

Dart's world is rooted in identifiable characters and vast open landscapes that suggest a place on earth, but one that encourages the imagination of the viewer to fill in the empty spaces. I found his field guide book and the artwork to be a strong influence for my world building pursuit

but I wanted to create mine in such a way that representational objects were not as identifiable. Mine was populated with: Budd, who is a pair of feet with multipolar neurons for arms; Freaky Pieces, which are objects that riffed on navigational tools like compasses and sundials; Tricky Beast creatures that mimic insects and fish of the deep; and Secret Landscapes that were not identified with any particular place in our world. The process of developing a world based on the abstraction of representational objects became a daunting task and I eventually felt that it was too much abstraction and absurdity to be lost in. The logic of my world was never quite established; as much as I researched and built, there were unknowns to the world building which left me debilitated on several occasions during the summer term. The narrative was truly never established, and it felt like a story with no direction, not even a loose one. Other than leading into the unknown, which was highlighted by my research with Campbell, I also tried to connect with Carl Jung's *Red Book*, but failed to find the connections or even have the mental capacity to finish or comprehend the book. Sara Corbett of the New York Times Magazine described the book as:

“The Red Book is not an easy journey — it wasn’t for Jung, it wasn’t for his family, nor for Shamdasani, and neither will it be for readers. The book is bombastic, baroque and like so much else about Carl Jung, a willful oddity, synched with an antediluvian and mystical reality. The text is dense, often poetic, always strange. The art is arresting and also strange. Even today, its publication feels risky, like an exposure.” (New York Times Magazine)

To base my research in something that still to this day, is a challenge for me to read, I struggled to develop a foundation that would manifest a clear start to *Tricky Beasts, Secret Landscapes & Freaky Piece*. I was interested in the process Jung took to analyze his dreams, interpret his own drawings and to self-examine himself, but did not know how detrimental of a process this could be when I tried to implement it myself in the short span of my degree. At this point in my education I felt behind, because I believed that my work—at the midway point—should have been solidified.



Fig. 06: Jordan Baraniecki, *Bits & Pieces Collection* 'at Emily Carr University, 2021.

During the State of Practice (SOP) exhibition, I exhibited a large frosted mylar painting, two irregular shaped birch panels, a folded acrylic sculpture and a 3D printed pair of Budd's feet. I believed I would only begin to scratch the surface of this new body of work during my education, so I was concerned with the first steps of Budd's journey. That is why I began with my childhood, while incorporating conceptual elements of my adult life through my past that were to come into the series later. The large frosted mylar drawing is a depiction of the swarm villain and Phena, which is titled *Phena Gets Left Behind*. The subject matter of the painting is a large black mass that was made by smearing Copic ink directly onto the mylar with a rubber glove. This portion covers two-thirds of the painting. Below are geometric shapes that use very loose 3-dimensional perspective techniques that indicate flat surfaces or grounds within an unidentifiable space.<sup>2</sup> On the

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<sup>2</sup> Scattered amongst the landscape are small Freaky Piece elements, which allude to navigation tools such as compass arrows in a snake-like squiggle and jagged black poles that have a straight shadow. Phena is in the bottom left corner of the painting and she is being left behind by the swarm.

black painted wall is a tilted square painting with Phena rescuing Budd from the Swarm and the triangular painting is Budd taking his first steps. The impressions of the footsteps are my inked baby feet prints that have been redrawn to signify Budd's first steps into the Secret Landscape world. There is also an ambiguous plexiglass wave-like sculpture that has a dark Copic ink and isopropyl wash on the surface. This object was a continued experiment from the plexiglass work, but also an attempt to bring elements out of the paintings and into sculptural forms. This process of bringing elements out of the painting was also done with a pair of 3D printed feet, which were my digitally scanned feet. I used the same style and drawing techniques that were in the paintings to highlight the opaque white feet and scratchy black lines.



Fig 07: Jordan Baraniecki, 'Bits & Pieces Collection' - Budd, 2021.

The collection was an attempt to bring together all the new elements of research I was working through to develop this world and to position it in such a way to be the starting point for this series. During this time, I was also co-curating the SOP show, and LaRelle and I were without

a place to live, which took a mental toll on the development of the work and my ability to talk to others about it. The only reason I am mentioning this is because the underlying struggle of developing a new world from scratch was also met with trying to balance my own life outside of art too. I never ended the world in an outright approach, but I began to veer away from it when it was not leading to a cohesive and viable direction for my work.

### Fall 2021: Experiences with Anxiety – A Turning Point

I reached my mental energy capacity and was neglecting my own health when *Tricky Beasts, Secret Landscapes & Freaky Pieces* became spoiled by the defeat of my inability to see how detrimental this world building pursuit was to the actual function of being a human outside of the university walls. I dissociated while walking home from the studio one night. I walked between the white lines of the crosswalk and began to feel my mind moving outside the lines. When I got to the other side of the street, the pavement was moving like a treadmill below me; as I was simultaneously walking forward but visualizing the street moving backwards.<sup>2</sup> I was simply going through the motions of coming into the studio every day and trying to rely on my subconscious to figure out the world building. Bioengineer of Psychiatry and Behavioral Science Karl Deisseroth describes the process of dissociation as:

“This state often manifests as the perception of being on the outside looking it at the cockpit of the plane that’s your body or mind – and what you’re seeing you just don’t consider to be yourself”. (Stanford Medicine)

My response to anxiety, as it pertained to the pandemic and pertained to this experience, was the same. I sank inward, contemplated my confusion and watched movies on the couch in a debilitated state.

Amongst my own confusion, I related to a scene in the 1996 *James and The Giant Peach* film by Henry Selik. James is yelled at by his Aunt Sponge to return to his room without dinner. Before he runs back to his room, he sneaks a bag of chips from the garbage which has but mere morsels in it. As he runs upstairs, he sees a spider in the window and immediately talks to her like a new friend. He brings her down from the window sill, gently places her on a chair and begins to draw on the chip bag. To comfort himself, he sings about sometimes forgetting his own name

when he is lonely or afraid. He sings, [“then I’ll go inside my head and look for James”](#) to signify an experience of body dissociation, where he escapes into his own mind to find a “self” that is more familiar. I empathize with James and I can relate to the dissociation when it involves intense anxiety during a situation you are in, but do not want to be.

It quite literally took a biological brain and body disturbance to snap out of the world I began to encompass. I was incorporating and considering all the elements that I wished I was able to bring back into my art practice and my technical experience that I felt was always so underutilized in my art making. This world was my chance to bring it all together, and that was the internal struggle. There was the *potential*, but also a lack of a coherent concept, and this led to a loss of sanity that ultimately led to my departure from the world. However, the world building exercise left no stone unturned for the self-examination and introspective pursuit I took. This allowed me to move on confidently but also take small components of the world building into the next body of work.

## **Fall 2021- Present: Piecing Things Together**

### **Thesis Work Part I: Ink Collages**

The small red circle that was revolutionary to my thinking was placed on an irregular shaped panel by LaRelle in my studio space. It was a moment that complimented the painting, but also existed as its own mark because it was slightly raised off the surface. It was part of the next paintings I was creating for the previously described project, but the effect of the red circle inspired a new way to think about my work and to refocus the direction of it. The red circle is now collaged into a work called *Untitled (Full Circle)*.



Fig. 08: Jordan Baraniecki, 'Untitled (Full Circle) + detail', 2021, ink on stone and Yupo paper, 15.75" x 10.5" x 1.25".

The collage works did not manifest right away though. I played with the idea of simply mounting the cut-out pieces on the wall on their own, but it did not quite resonate with me. As I progressed with the work, I considered what the work could achieve if the pieces were paired together, which created conversations between each piece that centered around color, texture, space and form. Rather than a singular gesture of these marks being cut out and placed on the wall, the pieces themselves were in conversation with one another. Depending on the colors and textures, chaotic or orderly patterns form within the collage.

I start by rolling out a large sheet of Yupo paper, which is a synthetic paper, or I use a pad of stone paper for the smaller marks. With both papers, the ink dries on top of the surface rather than being absorbed into the paper. Every single detail is preserved within the drying process, which means that the ink itself can bring the viewer inward to see that there is something to look at very closely. I use Copic ink directly from the refill tubes to make my marks because there is a looseness to the mark making techniques that are not easily achieved by using the markers. There is a free flow to the ink, which allows me to only guide the ink with a directional gesture, but there is an element of chance because the ink will take its own path on the paper, especially when I add water or isopropyl alcohol. The integration of water and chemicals do two things to the ink: if I apply a bed of water onto the paper and apply ink onto that surface, it will disperse wildly within



the water and then dries organically on its own; if I apply a bed of isopropyl alcohol onto the paper and apply ink onto that surface, it will integrate into the alcohol and dry unevenly.

Mixing chemicals with Copic ink also brings out unseen colors. For example, pastel oranges, pinks and blues come out of the Black 100. Every single detail is preserved within the drying process and when the ratio of chemical to ink changes on the surface, the different colors appear and dry amongst the black. This also creates three-dimensional perspectives because the ink looks like it is receding or protruding in space.

While the ink is still wet, I sometimes use different tools to move the ink around. I have experimented with oval makeup brushes, rubber makeup brushes and a camera dust blower. By creating the ink marks with different tools, it keeps the process inquisitive and left slightly to chance operations.

After the ink has dried onto the surface of the Yupo or stone paper, I meticulously cut out the shapes using a precision knife. Once they are cut out, they are free from the white space around them. They are additionally, contained within their own space too, which means that each piece within the collage is contained as its' own mark and in conversation with the marks around them. The negative space becomes the space between each collaged piece in a multi-layer way.

I have various sized pieces in the studio and I pull different ones out when I am collaging them together. The first layer is always glued directly onto the birch panel surfaces. Afterwards, I build up the surface by adding small adhesive sponges to the backs of the next layer. This adds a three-dimensional quality to the collages, so I am simultaneously collaging each layer as its own layer, but considering what the layers on top of the other layers will look like. In terms of color choices, I start the process with a thought in mind but if I ever get stuck, I hold pieces in front of the collage and simply move them around till they find a place. I wanted to create unity within the black ink pieces of *Untitled (Fish Fly By)* and to keep the palette relatively cohesive, but there are times where an unconventional pop of color is used to break up the darker ink pieces which puts an emphasis on one specific color in such works as *Untitled (Viva La Resistance)*. This process is developed as I work on each collage and rarely follows the same structure. I hold an inventory of ink pieces in my studio, which I grab from when I need to shake things up a bit. By having different pieces available and being open to the possibility of displacing color and texture within the ink collages, it also opens up the possibility for something unexpected.

In *Untitled (Live Wire)* which is an eclectic mix of colors, texture and forms. I began with a triangular birch panel that was used in my *Bits & Pieces* Collection. I glued the first layer of ink pieces directly onto the canvas and began to build from there. The goal is not to plan the composition, the collage or the colors, but really, I respond intuitively to my curiosity as I make. The darker pieces began to mute each other so I started adding in brighter colors to offset how dark it was. I decided to see how far I could push it by adding in a bright red blob and a mix of straight light blue stripes to offset the organic shapes. This experiment allowed me to see how I could pair unlikely ink pieces together.



Fig. 09: Jordan Baraniecki, 'Untitled (Live Wire) + detail', 2021, ink on stone and Yupo paper, 27" x 13.5" x 1.25".

The ink collages allow me to create in two different ways that I have categorized by my personality results based on the Enneagram Test. This 144 questionnaire categorized the personality traits I possess by analyzing a series of A or B scenarios. I choose the one that sounds more like me, and then it generates a series of personality traits that best fit the answers I gave. Although I was comforted by the Enneagram test, I know it only skims the surface of discovering one's own personality. However, at the time that I dissociated I was looking for *any* kind of foundation and fantastically enough, the test gave me that.

I found comfort in the test because I was not finding comfort in my life, and it was difficult to keep leading into the unknown while developing my world because I was so lost within it. This test provided written explanations of my personality so that I was able to find solace in the identifiers. The Enneagram test is popular in companies, the military, schools, and other institutions, and although science does not back the test in such a way that would be scientifically factual, I still found relief in it. It allowed me to see the ways in which my unhealthy lifestyle was affecting my creativity. The outcome of the test was that I was assigned as an “Investigator” and a “Reformer”. The Investigator outlines my desire to understand and look beneath the surface of things with a deeper insight of reality. This trickles into my art practice with the amount of research I did on material exploration, memory and psychoanalytic observations of the self. “The Reformer” outlines my intense desire for purpose and a passion for a life’s mission. On the unhealthy side of my traits, I become reclusive, isolated from reality and highly self-critical. I saw this test as a way of categorizing my personality traits and combining the different energy levels I have when I am at the studio as a process of working on my art. I have a wildly energetic personality that needs to be met with a release, investigation, or a material exploration, so I have categorized the gestural ink marks as that personality type for myself. I also need space to think, contemplate and be alone, so I have categorized this as the time I spend cutting out the pieces and collaging them together. Although this seems like a very simple venture or revelation, it was something that I had to reintroduce into my process to make sense of myself. This also allows me to come into the studio with whatever kind of energy and make work regardless. These in turn lead to new ways for me to understand visual relationships within the artworks and I believe that this methodology leads to engaging results. Again, the personal inner starting points are useful for myself as the artist, but are not necessary needed for the viewer’s interpretation of the work.

I took inspiration from Katharina Grosse’s way of painting, as the process is explained by Zoltan Alexander for the “Prototypes of Imagination” exhibit at the Gagosian Gallery:

“She experiments with techniques, forms, material, multiplying this potential with stencils cut out of cardboard and thick foam, which create further cut out forms, layers and depths of perspectives. Her gestures unfold all at the same time, engulfing the viewer in flames of colors.” (Alexander)

Her work is wild in presentation but akin to a concentrated way of working that can be seen with the layering of colors and the attention to the negative space between the paintings and

installations. I find her color choices to mesh and repel in different areas of the work. Additionally, her work is reduced to the purest states of color, texture and space.

In *Reductionism in Art and Brain Science: Bridging the Two Cultures*, Eric Kandel, who is a psychiatric medical doctor and neuroscientist, assesses the reduction method in relation to science, art and perception. He goes on to say:

“Artists often use reductionism to serve a different purpose. By reducing figuration, artists enable us to perceive an essential component of a work in isolation, be it form, line, color, or light. The isolated component stimulates aspects of our imagination in ways that a complex image might not. We perceive unexpected relationships in the work, as well as, perhaps, new connections between the work of art and our life experiences as recalled in memory.” (5)

My desire to focus on color, texture, space and form was a place of refuge for me when the complexity of the *Tricky Beasts, Secret Landscapes & Freaky Piece* world fell apart. This process within my ink collage work allows me to look at the art languages that I understand and focus specifically on them. By simply focusing on color, texture, space and form I leave the work open to imagination for the viewer who will have an individual experience of their own.

I found my own foundation within the ink collages allow me to look at my personality types and create work that was specific to that formula. I was also able to ground myself in this work so I could focus on different projects that use ink as the subject matter. By incorporating digital technologies, I am finding tools that transcend the ink collages.

## **Part II: Digital Approaches**

My first attempt to transform my ink work was a triptych series of prints for the *ProTO-type(s): Canadian Experimental Print* exhibition in Krakow, Poland. The subject matter came from playing on Adobe Photoshop with the detail photographs of my 2018 India ink paintings. The blue is striking and it highlights every single detail of the ink. Similar to the way Copic ink dries, India ink also dries on stone paper in a way that preserves reticulations, ripples and crackles.

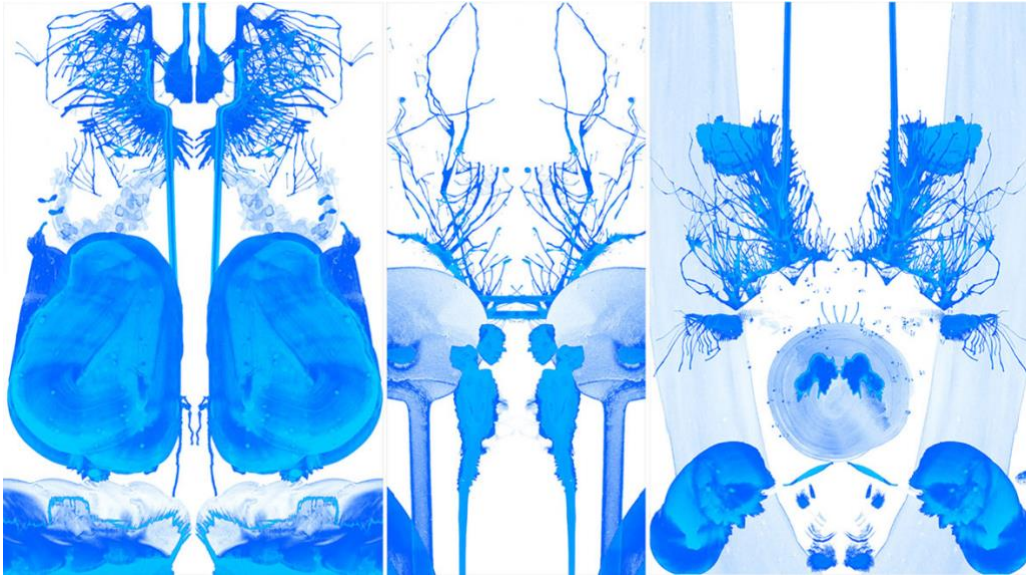


Fig. 11: Jordan Baraniecki, 'When the one is set against the other, The one seen as pervading them all, At the same time embracing them all in itself', 2022, ink on clearfilm, various sizes.

I did not start out by creating a Rorschach image however, the psychological test intrigues me as a visual perception tool mostly. Award winning writer Damion Searls of *The Guardian* writes about the history of Hermann Rorschach and the test itself:

"Inkblots had been used before, to measure the imagination, particularly in children, but in his early experiments, Rorschach showed people inkblots in order to discover what they saw, and how. As a lifelong amateur artist, the son of a drawing teacher, he knew that while a picture itself constrains how you see it, it does not take away all your freedom: different people see differently, and those differences are revealing." (The Guardian)

The organization of my prints came about after I moved different layers around, duplicated and flipped them. The bright color also did not come about with direct relation to the cyanotype but I started to think about it as I was choosing the color. The cyan visually charged the subject matter so that every detail was captured. It also took away from the traditionally black ink of the Rorschach test. Beginning with play and curiosity spawn the ideas that encapsulate what the subject matter can attach to and what I connect to after the process is done. Perhaps it can also give viewers some insight into the way in which art can attach to other lines of research in its presentation.

For my latest collaboration, I worked with the Vancouver Opera's *Cavalleria Rusticana* performance, in which I used detail photographs from my 2021 ink collages. The work was rear

projected onto a large screen behind the performers, functioning as an abstract storytelling element. All the images were animated and different colors were considered for the variety of moods within the performance. For example, smoother and brighter ink details were used during the springtime scenes, while the murder scene featured dark blues and reds. Additionally, there is a singing-argument within the performance, and I added a Rorschach component that was cued when they sang at each other. The goal was to ultimately create transitions that mimicked the slow passing of time throughout the day with an emphasis on colour as an emotional tool. Research Scientist Spike Bucklow at the University of Cambridge writes about the colour red as a way to look at life by stating:

“Red’s position is life’s position, and our lives are not static, so, voluntarily or otherwise, they are played out between those opposite states, changing constantly, and transforming us through those changes. This dynamic aspect of life is also consistent with traditional understandings of the colour red’s dynamism and passion.” (202)

I made a conscious effort to keep the transitions subtle so it would not take away from the music. The color and texture are maximalist design though because the story of *Cavalleria Rusticana* is loud, raw and emotional.



Fig. 12: Jordan Baraniecki, *Cavalleria Rusticana* performance and the Vancouver Opera, 2022.



Additionally, I used images with different orientations. For example, an early morning image was also used for the dark and stormy ending. However, the image was flipped and changed to a dark blue so there were only very subtle textures that would appear similar. I repeated the use of the images to evoke something that was familiar but slightly unfamiliar. I also used Pixaloop, which is a phone app that allowed me to create motion within the images. They were saved as PNG files on Dropbox, imported into Pixaloop and then exported as a 4k file for a mapping software called Watchout. In total I used 23 different image-video files for the performance.

This process was a collaborative effort between Stage Director Amanda Testini and the Projection Design Mentor Sean Nieuwenhuis. Amanda offered her insight based on the musical transitions of the performance and how I could tie in the use of color and texture for the story based on different cue points in the show. For example, we timed the murder of scene at the end with a dark blue image that ran red for the moment when Turridu was stabbed. With the help of Nieuwenhuis and his expertise in projection mapping, we were able to create the video transitions that supported the story. Each scene was also created in collaboration with Lighting Designer Andrew Pye, who chose the light, as a way to further strengthen the visuals and their relation to the story. There were endless possibilities for changing colors, so Amanda and I experimented with different color combinations to give each panel the desired effect. There were three transitions within the performance that also faded to black and white to evoke a disturbance within the story.



Fig. 13: Jordan Baraniecki, *Cavalleria Rusticana* performance at the Vancouver Opera, 2022.

Different material and digital transformations made their way into the work I was doing throughout my MFA, which ultimately lead to an art practice that transformed certain elements from each. The Herschel project included my detailed ink photographs on an LED video screen that projected the bright colours onto the sculptures, similar to the way Andrew was lighting the choir and orchestra for the *Cavalleria Rusticana* performance in response to my projections. I was taking elements that worked from various projects to transform them in new ways so that there was a level of cohesion within my practice, and ultimately the work that manifested.



Fig. 14: Jordan Baraniecki, LED video screen for Herschel project, 2022.

## Conclusion

Over the course of my Masters of Fine Art at Emily Carr University, in Vancouver and during a pandemic, I made a conscious effort to seek refuge and solace in my work—and in my life—but to lead into the unknown while doing it. Only now have I felt a sense of clarity within the haze of these past 18 months, which has propelled me forward with a body of work to continue post-graduation and a way of living that has become fruitful for the art making process. I was recommended the book *Art & Fear* by writer and artist duo David Bayles and Ted Orland by Jay Dart while I was developing my world, and I believe it pertains to this entire experience as well:



“Some people who make art are driven by inspiration, others by provocation, still others by desperation. Artmaking grants access to worlds that may be dangerous, forbidden, seductive, or all of the above. It grants access to worlds you may otherwise never fully engage.” (108)

I found that my world is never split between the art I make and the life I live, and by using this process to create, I look inward to propel the work forward. By considering that this is the way my mind works—as it does for many artists—I use my titling as an opportunity to mark each artwork in time. I always list them as “Untitled”, while providing a word or phrase in parenthesis which gives me a point of departure from the work but also encapsulates the experience of making it. Most likely, the viewer will have a different association with the words, which allows each individual to come to the work with how they interpret the work; their own experiences that tap into life events, memories, associations and states of mind.

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