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DRAWING AS AN INVESTIGATION OF PERCEPTION

By

Nicholas Croghan
B.F.A., Murray State University, 2003

A Thesis
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A Thesis Approved on

April 7, 2008

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ABSTRACT

DRAWING AS AN INVESTIGATION OF PERCEPTION

Nicholas Croghan

April 7, 2008

My recent work juxtaposes dualities such as natural/artificial, macro/micro, instantaneous/changing, and conscious/unconscious. As a process oriented artist, I enjoy creating tactile, illusionistic surfaces by building translucent layers through calligraphic gestures. This includes drawings on stone, mushrooms, wood panel, and paper using silverpoint, copperpoint, prismacolor, acrylic, ink, watercolor, graphite, charcoal, tusche, clay, eggshells, coffee, and tea. From afar, the background washes appear random and chaotic, but as one approaches intricate details engage the curious in multiple surprises. The silverpoint, which will tarnish and darken over time, is most evident against the white gesso ground as synthesized forms representing images the viewer can interpret in a myriad of ways. These visual combinations of opposites can be seen as mechanical animals, artificial skeletal joints, or more conceptually as a mirror for the logical aspect of consciousness operating in the act of interpretation. The representational

elements serve as a form of traction for the logical mind to enter into the non-objective and find a relaxed state not unlike in meditation. These springboard images are furthermore derived from mechanical devices such as pulley systems, camming devices, tackles, ancient knots that can equalize or provide mechanical advantages, and finally a

larger category comprised of selections taken from natural history. This latter classification includes investigations in archeology/anthropology, mammaology, entomology, ornithology, and geology. Stone has been an important representative of earth science and was the genesis for inquiries into different perceptions of time, fractals, and the possibilities of exposing subconscious traces of genetic memories from our ancestors. When contemplating my compositions, I think about the collective associations of stone including grave markers, monuments, religious examples like the ka'aba, the alchemical lapith, the philosopher's stone, and as the psychoanalytic idea of a stone representing the self as an unchanging whole. Furthermore, throughout time, stones have held hereditary significance, protective properties, and an inherent aesthetic beauty ranging from rough cave paintings to smooth marble statues. In my pursuit, I have used similar textures, images, and used specific cues to attempt to open a door to a recognition of that which you have always known.

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Drawing is an investigation of perception where empiricism and subjectivity are resolved as two sides of one coin. This visual synchronization of opposites produces awareness. The beauty of drawing is that it can exist in this realm beyond the four states of logic; namely, it is A, it is not A, it is both A and not A, and it is neither A nor not A. It is here that the most profound insights are revealed. This is where my art making resides and where I make the most illuminating discoveries.

Anne Harris succinctly expresses the openness of how I define drawing by eloquently describing a drawing as an organization of marks that transform a ground. This definition captures the essence of the process I employ to create tactile, illusionistic surfaces using a variety of medium and supports. This includes: silverpoint, prismacolor, acrylic, oil, pastel, graphite, copperpoint, watercolor, ink, tea, coffee, dirt, eggshells, on stone, mushrooms, panel, and paper.

Just as an archeologist will carefully brush away particles of the past to reveal fossils to the present, my work seeks to connect with the viewer the ultimate ground of his or her being. This transformative awareness investigates the mystery of consciousness within insentient matter. This thesis is an exploration of drawing as a path to this awareness. Contained within are ideas ranging from ancient connotations of enlightenment (satori vs. samadhi), to the more current debates regarding genetic memory.

There is a link between the continuing unification of natural and social sciences with the widening aesthetic of art in the 21st century. The most hopeful analogy is that of one mind evolving to see itself, therefore, one must not forget these systems of classification are used for conceptual clarity. Ultimately, I hope my art functions

symbolically as the place where thoughts cannot reach. This is my initiative to juxtapose elements from the sensory world with that of the imagination. Here the viewer will find artifacts from the natural world including investigations in archeology, entomology, ornithology, mammology, and earth science. The use of stone in this body of work can be seen as a result of scrutinizing certain aspects of geology in relation to its significance with the whole.

In Julian Jayne's *Origin of Consciousness in the Bi-cameral Mind*, he proposed the idea of stone steles as being objects with transformational properties. These steles, which could be found as large monoliths in the jungle or as small stones in the field were a catalyst that facilitated communication between the two hemispheres of the brain. His theory was that as little as two-thousand years ago the corpus callosum connecting the right and left hemisphere was incomplete. Furthermore, he believed certain painted or carved visual cues on these stones (such as large dark eyes) caused a flash of insight synergizing the then incomplete connection of the hemispheres. A revelation of a more unified mind and relationship with the environment. In my work I have attempted replications of these visuals stimuli by incorporating dual circles or collective imagery like mother goddess forms that might trigger similar reactions.

One example is *Dualistic Tensions, Y Chromosome Heraldry* (figure 1.) which is a cabinet like object with my patria-lineal crest on the front two doors. When these doors are opened one discovers stone embedded in a rich iron oxide clay with diagrams flanking the left and right (back of doors, fig 2.). The stones have two white circles that stare out and reference the oversized eyes that might have triggered divine inspiration to our ancestors. The drawings refer to systems that have been used for thousands of years,

in this case modern sailing rigging juxtaposed against ancient snare systems. Jayne's controversial theory and all the research between function, creativity, and states of mind in regards to the separate regions of the brain is fascinating, but still rather incomplete.

What is the significance of the millennial old practice of collecting stones? It is certainly more than the combined attributes of aesthetic beauty, hereditary significance, religious faith, or protective properties. The limestone and granite altered in this exhibition have been systematically chosen. First, though, it must be noted that nature is an incomparable colorist, sculptor, and illusionist. For that reason, in addition to the reasons above, some of these stones have been chosen particularly for their awkwardness of dull ugliness. All stones, in my exhibition, exist in a realm intimately unique due to their relationships as gifts or as relics from an arduous summit. The difficulty in breeching the rift of pathos between the viewer and my kinship with these artifacts is lessened by the universally pleasing aesthetics. These range from the rough unadulterated surface similar to cave paintings through the grinded and polished surface akin to Bavarian limestone. For example, the front of the *Minilith* (fig. 3. and 4.) has been laboriously smoothed to accept gesso in preparation for the silverpoint and mixed media drawing while the backside has been left untouched for a dramatic juxtaposition. While rock climbing in limestone regions throughout the country I was always mesmerized by the smooth quality the trace of erosion left and how it resembled marble sculpture.

Similarly, a drawing I did on a mushroom, *Mycoglyph* (fig. 5. and 6.) maintains its natural backside which has taken on the characteristics of the wood grain on which it lived. Drawings of the mechanical animal form and petroglyph on the front have actually

been scratched into the surface and will darken over time as organic material typically does during degeneration.

The imagery I use is a new hybrid, familiar yet strange at the same time. I am attempting to illuminate memories or the sometimes subliminal collective associations of stone like grave markers, monuments, religious examples such as the ka'aba, and Jung's psychoanalytic representation of the self as an unchanging whole. When engaged with a work such as *Along the Way* (fig. 7 and 8.) I want the stones to function as objects of mystery. I want the viewer to be able to bring his or her own interpretations to the mix and therefore it is important that they exhibit qualities referencing dichotomies such as past/future, natural/man-made, revolutionary/ritualistic, momentary/epochal, or conscious/unconscious.

If drawing is discovery, then for me it reveals not only literal fossils, but also mental fossils. What is the significance in the attraction the general populace feels towards petroglyphs or ancient rock drawings? Are there subconscious triggers at work unlocking genetic memories hidden deep within our cells? Observe a monk's relation to a mandala and you'll understand how to approach my drawings. Layers of sediment form the earth; analogously, layers of mental structures form the mind. Physically, this can be represented by the shell-core effect and what is referred to in medicine as the peeling of the onion. The "onion" portrays the brain as increasingly complex layers from the inside out. In other words, if the onion devolves from a lack of blood perfusion, the higher functions give way to more primitive functions. Mentally, in regards to holarchy,¹ can the dog remember his ancestral wolf? And are we conditioned more deeply than we

¹ Andrew Koestler's term (holons) for a hierarchical reality composed of wholes/parts in which increasingly complex functions build on existing functions; for example, atoms to cells to organs, etc

can fathom by our ancestral matriarchs and patriarchs? As genetic engineering advances so should our inquiries into genetic consciousness and D.N.A. These inquiries initiated a dialogue between organic and artificial instability and inspired forms like *Dualistic Tension* and *Along the Way*. Unraveling this dialogue and mystery in a drawing is understanding how the marks from a frozen time past transform the drawing's ground into a scenario in which a viewer's potential can travel through cognitive layers of individual experience revealing transpersonal realities.

For a mountaineer the law of the conservation of mass and energy is tangible and leaves a taste. The massive scale seems to magnify the trace of energy's path. Visually, my work echoes the phenomenon and process of wind and water erosion by the accumulation of multiple layers which I have sanded or manipulated to create veils that reveal and also conceal. This dialogue with the natural world has sharpened my understanding of time, and the devices I've used as extensions of myself, be it a pencil or a barometer, stitch together this time.

I have found that when I draw I more fully comprehend the complexities of what I am observing. Certain systems of mechanical advantage have been of particular interest. These include spring loaded camming devices and tackle systems composed of various knots. These forms serve several functions. Beyond the attraction the geometric elegance offers, there is the relationship between the diagrammatic structure and the loose fluidity of the washes. There are also rhetorical relationships between organic/artificial or natural/mechanical, but what is more crucial is how the increasingly synthesized objects serve as a sort of traction where the logical mind can enter and then find footing in the non-objective. Latter in this thesis I'll explore various states of mind

and their relationship to art, music and daily life, but for now, what I am referring to is a state not unlike meditation, where the brain waves slow and open from beta consciousness into alpha-theta. This is the ultimate goal. Is this where our minds meet? The foreground of object now becomes the catalyst for the recognition of the background which so often becomes encumbered and misinterpreted by words.

Earlier, when I used the phrase “synthesized forms,” I was referring to the hybrid quality of these images and how they reflect a juxtaposition of anatomy, animals, and the biological with machinery and medical advancements. In *Coincidence of Opposites* (fig. 9), I made a conscientious effort to make the metallic spring loaded camming device as organic as possible. Besides curving some of the harder lines I placed the object in a shallow space and imagined how a koi fish or manta ray would flow in. In *Along the Way*, notice the auto-locking camming unit (I have intentionally altered the device to mimic an artificial hinge joint) connecting the bird skull with it’s detached leg. This not only represents concepts on the horizon like cyborgs, but also references how engineering looks to nature for inspiration.

After the representational elements are absorbed the logical mind can relax into the abstraction which functions as both foundation and antithesis (to the representational forms). This calligraphic gesture acts as the symbolic background from which thoughts arise, its detail seduces the viewer in multiple astonishments. It is fast and slow, instantaneous but changing. Drawn within the washes are reflections of patterns found in nature such as those seen on tree bark, lichen, stone, and even into the macro such as galaxies or nebulous gases. The closer one looks the more he or she will find, some things remain constant, the silverpoint, though, is not inert. As I lose and find myself in

the labyrinthine intricacies I begin to ponder notions of macro/micro, topography, and ideas like those presented in Charles and Ray Eames, *Powers of Ten*. It is important that my work contain elements of surprise. Similar to how the universe escapes observation no matter how powerful telescopes or microscopes become, I hope my drawings reveal more and more as the viewer approaches and engages in discovery. In all my work, for example, *Cicadic Seasons*, *This Side of the Reflection* (fig. 9.), the viewer will get an impression from a distance, but as he or she approaches, the piece opens up with details only an intimate investigation will reveal. If one looks close enough the crushed mica is evident in the iridescence of the cicada wings. Hopefully, in each new glance something will be seen from a fresh perspective. This perspective of amplified detail was one genesis for my interest in fractals.

Not simply a visually attractive aesthetic, fractals serve as a radiant metaphor. Similar to the Fibonacci sequence, self-similarity is found throughout nature in ferns, rock striations, clouds, crystals, and so on. The revelation of being able to see infinitely into an object was the inspiration for the self-similar magnification of the tapered wedge form and spiraled Julia set abstraction [$Z_{n+1}=Z(Z)_n+C$] in *Explorations of Self-Similarity* (fig 11. and 12). This concept also allows for a simultaneous illustration of spatial relationships with temporal relationships. For example, in *Ten Degrees of Separation*, *Entropy/Negentropy* (fig. 13. and 14.), is the fractal growing in similar fashion to a galaxy or disease, or perhaps, is our view being magnified? Viewed independently the forms also take on an aerial perspective of a city. It is this free associative quality inherent in abstraction and non-representational elements that lures my imagination and unravels the unconscious.

One aspect of this wonder is time. Each mark is a record of a moment of time. The medium will change, the most dramatic being the silverpoint. In *Ten Degrees of Separation*, the fractals have been grouped in three growth cycles, with the first or tenth iteration (depending on your perspective) being the opening or closing of the season. The three sections contain: a spring loaded camming unit being retracted (detail fig. 14), three systems of mechanical advantage, and also the illustration of the three-part crown knot. Another aspect of time connected with these works is the silverpoint and how it keeps the drawings dynamic, by metamorphosing with the exposure of sunlight and pollution. In regards to the space time continuum how many ways can we interpret Nietzsche's eternal recurrence? My answer lies in the perspective of a drawing as a unique form of measuring the passage of both subjective and objective time

An ancient Buddhist idea states we arise and cease nine hundred times in one ksana. This particular variation on reincarnation is interesting due to the duration of a ksana as one-seventy-fifth of a second. Then take into account one reflective moment consists of ninety ksanas. One who has fully awakened is said to be able to speak a sentence within one ksana. I once feared drawing and painting were weak compared with the ability of music or cinematography to capture time, but now I realize a drawing's strength lies in its ability to express itself in the space of one ksana.

This pursuit has led me to think of time geologically. The stones guided me to ideas of seismic shifts and tectonic plates. Shapes akin to the fracture of Pangaea began to usurp the traditional rectangle of my canvases. These "puzzle" pieces allow for more dynamic compositions that can further fracture time. Just as space makes a house livable, the space between cracks in rock form the route up a steep cliff face. These

imperfections make the impossible possible. It is a similar fissure in the psyche that I am trying to unravel. Another relationship between geologic structures and those that I have created is the representation of various strata. The most literal example is the illustration of the drum furler on *The Beauty of Opposites, Torus III* (fig. 15.). It is drawn as if beneath the surface, therefore exposing the underlying structure.

In *Dualistic Tensions, Y Chromosome Heraldry*, not only are the rocks immersed in their decomposed counterpart, but my family's crest and coat of arms hint at the strata of genetic memories. *Anthropomorphic Anthropology* (fig. 16.) also contains an object sunk in clay; this panel reveals a silverpoint drawing of an ancient cliff dwelling. It is encased in a drawer that extends off the right side and is literally beneath the surface of the more modern illustration of the main sheet system on a sloop's boom (fig. 15 is a detail of this sailing rigging). This is another analogy of how ideas nest upon and within one another as they evolve.

Along the Way,² also contains stones inside a box, this time engulfed in wax, concrete, and epoxy. For the installation of this work the former sewing box (with legs removed) is placed on a small pedestal and then surrounded by rock, then brick, then wood strata as if we can see a cross section of the entire environment. The delicate drawing on the front of the door mentioned earlier is based off the skeleton of a robin that died after flying into my window (the same species that is shown on the top of my family's crest with a sprig of laurel). Once the door is opened the quiet demeanor from the outside is overtaken by dense complex layers of wax, stone, and rich hues of kelp and

² I enjoy the openness of a title or beginning like that because it reminds me of how an Italo Calvino or Barry Urgrau story might begin or end. I have kept the third word capitalized, however, to refer back to the translation of *Tao* and how that has influenced a lot of my process.

pine green. The map and astrolabe hint at the stones history and the amber colored epoxy houses the skeleton of the robin.

As mentioned earlier, the ultimate objective is a transcendence of regular beta consciousness into one of theta with alpha spindles. A discussion of meditation will prove its connection with my visual work. If interested in the process of thought and the deeper underlying structures of cognition one must look at both the empirical findings and the equally scientific (in terms of reproducibility) contemplative traditions. Hans Berger contributed to the understanding of the external realities concurrent with the introspective interior states. In 1924, using an electroencephalogram, Berger discovered faint electrical pulsations that were classified into different frequencies and amplitudes representing various types of brain waves. (Johnston 33-34)

Although there are many subtle variations from person to person, these studies have produced interesting general trends that correspond with four basic mental states. The state of active thinking produces beta brain waves characterized by thirteen or more cycles per second (cps). At eight to twelve cps, alpha waves characterize a slowing down and, in fact, this is the state of relaxation that most people enter as they are falling asleep. As an individual enters sleep or unconsciousness the brain waves slow even more and at 4-7 cps this state is termed theta. Finally, delta is a state of deep rhythmic sleep with a slow one to four cps.

Many fascinating things have been linked with alpha brain waves including their relationship to the right hemisphere, art-making, non-verbal communication (like the remembering of four or more notes in a musical progression), and laboratory testing revealing laughter produces alpha waves lasting for half a minute. Quizzically, ten

percent of the American population are non alpha producers. It has been shown that persistent attention facilitates this state which corresponds with the practice of drawing and truly accurate observation. Alpha has been shown to increase attentive, alert readiness. Imagine the fluid movements of a dancer and it is easy to see how “the zone” can be translated as automatic kinesthetic activity. This ability was actually tested in Tokyo using monks performing kinhin, or walking meditation. The subjects were divided into three groups; experienced Zen priests, inexperienced monks, and a control group of laymen. When monitoring the alpha rhythm production during this activity among these three groups the results were intriguing and far reaching. (Johnston 33-44)

Due to the many forms of meditation, however, it is wise to first understand the particularities of the zazen in which the aforementioned monks were trained. In fact, there is a certain similarity in the state Freud advised psychotherapists tune into when interpreting what a patient discloses, specifically a state of non-judgment where attention is held in a “hovering” mode that keeps the unconscious processes open. (Naranjo 127) However, there is a certain inability of psychoanalysis, or even English, to produce literal translations; so, occasionally, we must use the original language to describe these states. This will help us interpret the specific type of meditation that produces alpha-theta spindles that will have the most interesting correlations with drawing.

Whether of the dualistic yogic traditions or the non-dual Vedanta system, the Hindu form of meditation relies on the practitioner entering a state of Samadhi where in the yogic tradition there is a withdrawal of the Self-from the not-Self (asamprajnata); and in the case of the latter, the not-self is resolved into the Self (nirvikalpa). This could also be interpreted respectively as freedom from or freedom in. (Adiswarananda 31-69)

Regardless of these differences, the two states of Samadhi have a significant contrast with the zazen practiced in China and Japan.

Researchers found that yogic meditators enter a state where “theta-trains” are held onto and result in a detachment from physical sensations. The subjects are unresponsive to sound, cold water, or pain. The Indian term for this detachment is *patyahara* training and it is seen as similar to the conjunction of pure consciousness with insentient matter- *the creative process of evolution*. As an artist, I enjoy the example of a writer, startled awake, furiously trying to capture fleeting ideas from the unconscious. It is the epitome of the link between these deeper states, sleep, and creativity. (Naranjo 184-187)

This state of Samadhi is much different than Chan’s intended state during zazen, one that is characterized by quick flashes of illumination known as *kensho* and *satori*. From a qualitative standpoint, the brain waves reflect the character of this meditation, which is basically the production of alpha in rather unique ways. Most people cannot produce alpha rhythms without their eyes closed, but Zen masters are able almost immediately with their eyes open. So, not surprisingly, the results from the previously mentioned experiment monitoring alpha production during walking meditations showed that in the case of the non-practitioners there was a zero percent increase in alpha production whereas the monks and experienced priests increased alpha production by twenty and fifty percent respectively. Dr. Hirai in Tokyo continued these experiments by using different stimuli in attempt to cause alpha blocking in the Zen priests.

Typically, the conceptualization and discursive thinking that causes beta brain waves is inherently an alpha-blocker (intriguingly, Einstein is an exception who produced

alpha waves while doing complex mathematics). This is one link between zazen and the essence of drawing; basically, that seeing is forgetting the name of that which one sees.

Sound is also an alpha-blocker, proportionate to the experience or skill of the meditator. Curiously the type of noise does not matter. Whether it is the sound of a click or the name of a loved one, the recorded physical response is the same. This seems to hint at the Zen master's un-judged, openness to the sound vibration itself, not the content. Furthermore, the response from the Zennists was always one of surprise, as if, in each moment, seeing things for the first time. (Naranjo 187)

After discussing my drawings with a variety of people, the most common question deals with the interpretation of the non-objective areas. A confusion that I think must be stemming from the left hemisphere's attempt to rationalize that which cannot be rationalized. Just as the Zennist is interested in the vibration, the most helpful analogy seems to view these aspects of my work like music that is played for the sake of playing music.

The next interesting note about this type of meditation was what happened after about forty minute with the advanced priests. The brain waves would develop rhythmic trains of theta and delta like the yogis, but with alpha spindles mingling intermittently with the longer waves. One school of thought interprets this as the physical manifestation of the unconscious becoming conscious. Links have been made revealing that creativity can be heightened by entering into such an alpha-theta state using hynagogic imagery. This fact is made further puzzling by the increase in reported visual awareness during zazen and the possible relation to the experiments using stabilized imagery and ganzfields. A solid understanding of these findings gives artists an

empirical understanding for compositions that, as Matisse said, “act like armchairs for the mind.”

Experiments done by Lehmann, Beeler, and Fender attempted to investigate what occurred in the brain when inducing a stabilized image on the retina. The normal act of seeing involves the eye performing large circular movements called “saccades,” in more fixated attention the movements, called optical nystagmus, are involuntary and smaller. These two movements keep the image on the retina in constant motion. The researchers discovered that if they projected an image through a specially designed contact lens (that would follow the movement of the eye and thus keep the image always the same) it would disappear after a short time. Strangely, at that moment, the brain dropped into alpha. A similar result happened when the subjects were exposed to ganzfields, which are basically homogeneous fields of light or color. It is a space without depth and the easiest way to create one is by slicing a ping pong ball in half and taping each part over the eyes. The therapeutic effects have been explored in installations by artists like James Turrell, but in this case, during the “blank-out,” the subjects reported the same emptiness similarly qualified at about twenty minutes as “not seeing,” which is quite a bit different from seeing nothing. (Naranjo 164-165)

I have tried the aforementioned experiment including ganzfields of orange and blue hues (I was able to improvise using colored Easter eggs). Very quickly it felt as if I was outside on a bright day staring at the sky with my eyes closed. After a brief moment of discomfort I noticed flashes of the compliment color from what I presume to be after image effects from overloading the cones in my retina. A few minutes later geometric patterns began fluttering across my visual field accompanied by the strange sensation that

I could not tell whether or not my eyelids were open or closed. Unfortunately, without an EEG machine I am unsure whether my brain waves slowed to alpha; although, a sense of calm pervaded the latter part of the session. Again, whether this was psychosomatic cannot be proven.

In work such as *Binary Escapism* (fig. 17.), the representational elements of the rope and tackle system function to intrigue the viewers curiosity and provoke inquiries into the figure/ground relationship. Eventually, the viewer relaxes in the atmospheric space where forms simultaneously emerge and dissolve, like images and memories in the mind.

The relationship between these findings and the practice of meditation is similar to the painter Mark Rothko and his enormous color-field paintings. To invoke a sense of the transcendent he removed any trace of identifiable subject matter and intended the viewer's consciousness to follow into the realm of the non-verbal. As argued in his book, *An Artist's Reality, Philosophies of Art*, these are not nihilistic forms without a subject, non-objective does not necessarily mean non-subject. (Rothko 86-87) And woe is thee who reduces the meaning to simple color relationships or theoretics:

I am not interested in relationships of color or form or anything else...I am interested only in expressing the basic human emotions-tragedy, ecstasy, doom, and so on- and the fact that lots of people break down and cry when confronted with my pictures shows that I communicate with those basic human emotions. The people who weep before my pictures are having the same religious experience I had when I painted them. And if you, as you say, are moved only by their color relationships, then you miss the point!

Rothko is certainly successful at evolving into deeper, more meaningful paintings by including what he learned from his predecessors and by transcending their achievements with transformatory processes, but why is the result not universal? Why doesn't every person have such a "religious experience?"

Answers give rise to more questions, but it is the questions that matter. Joan Miro said, "art does not render the visible, rather it makes visible." I speak about the thunderclaps of illumination. I know the viewers' curiosity lies with my own and if it becomes satiated the illusion ends. Therefore I'm continually mixing that which doesn't mix. The process is extremely important as I constantly seek the unexpected. What is the graceful process of thought? In addition to grace, though, these objects must contain beguiling elements, the lovely quality of that which repels and confuses. Indeed, in some of these works there is also a dark mood reflecting something I feel is missing from our current humanity.

This ongoing dialectic is the locus for empathy in my work. To facilitate more universal responses I've left an openness to the imagery. However, there is often a narrative aspect to the representational objects, their placements, and even the hue choices for the non-representational gestures. In regards to the latter, the color has been used traditionally for emotive emphasis, spatial relationships, and as reflections of seasonal change. The stories told are of experiences confronting nature, sometimes finding a route through a blizzard, the view from a calm summit (rare), sometimes serenely tacking into the wind under a full moon, but sometimes battling hurricane force winds and hail. Water is such a mystical element that I have attempted to appropriate it's

qualities to create similar translucencies, transparencies, veiling, and refractions. This can be seen in the triptych *Pitch Pole* (fig 18. and 19.), the title referring to what happens in the wrong conditions when a sailboat does a nose dive and flips forward. In keeping with the theme of polar opposition there are also facets of experience from above the water or land. In the *Coincidence of Opposites*, within the sea of blue is a patchwork grid of various emerald and algae/lichen hues that mimic different farm boundaries as seen from an airplane or in the valleys from a peak. Indeed, not much compares with the exposure of high elevation or altitude. These are the places where I have truly been introduced to myself.

This symbiosis with that which gives rise to our being is being threatened. Nature, however, takes all things back to itself, sometimes in one deft blow. In these works, therefore, the artificial is never dominant, occasionally equal, but mostly subservient. The use of silverpoint whispers about false reproductions, but the real issue is mass-production. Living in the backcountry as a guide for an extended period of time taught me the truly essential. It's amazing how other cultures re-invent what we define as garbage. How many applications can you think of for a bottle cap? I choose to incorporate found objects as supports for my work to comment on this throw away society. Also, these fossils from our time, whether old sewing machines, shelves, or roof slate, are endowed with a potent, albeit quiescent, humanness. They have been used before, in different ways by disparate people, and contain the unpredictability of life.

Figure 1. *Dualistic Tensions, Y Chromosome Heraldry*
 silverpoint, prismacolor, acrylic, clay, limestone, eggshells, tusche
 23"x16"x2"closed 23"x32"x2" open
 2008

Figure 2 detail

Figure 3. *Minilith*
silverpoint, prismacolor, acrylic, wine on limestone
13"x10"x1-2"
2005

Figure 4, detail

Figure 5. *Mycoglyph*
graphite on mushroom
10"x15"x1-4"
2007

Figure 6, detail

Figure 7

Along the Way

silverpoint, prismacolor, acrylic, limestone, wax, epoxy, bird skeleton, concrete

18"x 24"x14"

2007

Figure 8, detail.

Figure 9. *Coincidence of Opposites*
silverpoint, prismacolor, acrylic, oil
48"x28"
2005/06

Figure 10.
Cicadic Seasons
silverpoint, prismacolor, acrylic, spray paint, oil, mica
40"x30"
2006

Figure 11 (preceding page)
Explorations in Self Similarity
silverpoint, prismacolor, acrylic, wax
72"x27"
2007

Figure 12, detail

Figure 13.
Ten Degrees of Separation, Entropy/Negentropy II
silverpoint, prismacolor, ink, acrylic, spray paint, oil
32"x80"
2007

Figure 14, detail.

Figure 15. *The Beauty of Opposites*
silverpoint, prismacolor, acrylic, oil
28"x15"
2006

Figure 16. *Anthropomorphic Anthropology*
silverpoint, prismacolor, acrylic, ink, oil, clay, eggshells
48"x28"x5" with 12"x12"x4" drawer
2006

Figure 17. *Binary Escapism*
prismacolor, ink, tusche, acrylic, silverpoint, slate
31.5"x22.5"
2007-08

Figure 18.
Pitch Pole
silverpoint, prismacolor, acrylic, ink
19"x 49"
2005

Figure 19, detail.

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Bi-Person
2008 M.A. Thesis Exhibition, Cressman Center Gallery, Louisville, KY
Group
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2006 St. James Art Festival, Louisville KY
2006 New Orleans Benefit Exhibition, Ekstrom Library, Louisville, KY
2006 Drawing Invitational, Rouge Noir Gallery, Louisville, KY
2004 Scene/Unseen, National Juried Exhibition E.N.M University, NM
2004 La Petite XII, Alder Gallery, Coburg, OR
2004 New Horizons Invitational, West Tennessee Art Center, TN
2003 Recent Drawings, Curris Center Gallery, Murray, KY
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