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# Textures and Symbols: Creation through Association

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Textures and Symbols: Creation through Association  
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Abstract: The power of an image to elicit feelings and associations has always been something meaningful and immediate to me, but also extremely mysterious. My aim for my senior project is--by making paintings, studying the works of Joseph Cornell and David Salle, and by pairing the art with the analysis of theorists like Nelson Goodman and Roland Barthes--to illuminate some of the processes involved in making associations between images in an art piece. I want to show that each art piece contains its own system of understanding that references many other systems in order to achieve fullness--that each piece is both contained and utterly free. And finally, that through the use of juxtaposition and re-contextualization, meaningful and novel ideas can be achieved fragmentary composition of narrative and abstract form.

For my senior project, I made five paintings. Three of them are 5'x4', one is 2.5'x4', and one is 3'x4', and all of them employ collage elements. Through the work, I am hoping to gain insight into symbolic processes, how people create meaning, and how different meanings can be achieved through the same fragments. The works are exploration of color, texture, surface and symbol. I would like to know how an image or a texture evokes deeply personal responses in the viewer. And additionally, how the brain is capable of making a coherent whole out of the juxtaposition of texts or images with seemingly contradictory meanings. My work so far has been influenced by Joseph Cornell, his attempts to re-arrange meaning and create new worlds out of old material; by the works of Basquiat, his ability to achieve order through disorder, Sigmar Polke, his use texture, and David Salle's mixed-media-collage approach which forces the viewer to recontextualize images and objects. The project has also been informed by Barthes' work surrounding symbol and ritual and the creation of myth. I am attempting to pack the picture frame so that the eye stops on an image, text, or clusters of, but not for long as the paint and abstract form guides the viewer from one aspect of the piece to the other until the viewer has

constructed some sort of meaning of their own out of the fragments in front of them. My hope is that there is a level of interplay between creator and viewer in the paintings.

Some of the questions I would like ask are: What is the immense mental process that occurs between image and action? How do viewers interpret art through symbol? What freedom does a non-linear narrative offer the viewer? I would like to know how symbols--without defined representations or evocations--transfer emotion and feeling. And finally, how colors and textures so fluidly relay emotions to the viewer. My aim is to expose the ineffable quality to symbols. Here I should note, that when I use the word “symbols,” I will be speaking of images, objects, text, and even forms of mark making that represent or evoke abstract feelings and ideas.

The two artists that influenced this project the most are Joseph Cornell and David Salle. Cornell was a mid-century American artist, a recluse, heavily troubled by anxiety, but a steadfast worker, who really opened up the world of assemblage to me, and the idea that new meaning could be constructed through old material and ideas. He makes box-assemblages, which are small boxes, found or built, that have one side removed and replaced with glass, so that the viewer can see into the little world Cornell constructed. His assemblages are made of found objects, some more unique than others, with varying degrees of continuity between them. “Joseph Cornell is a virtuoso of fragments, a maestro of absences. Each of his objects—a wine glass, a cork ball—is the emblem of a presence too elusive or too vast to be enclosed in a box” (Ratcliff, 43). All of the objects Cornell uses in his boxes have already lived lives with particular usages and meanings; Cornell consciously juxtaposes past and present meaning of objects in order to make something that could never have been achieved through any individual objects. As Gell notes in “The Technology of Enchantment and the Enchantment of Technology”, “The value of a concept (say ‘dog’) is a function of the negative contour of the surrounding concepts

(‘cat’, ‘wolf’, ‘master’)” (59). Cornell deliberately uses what surrounds the object he chooses, the positive associations and the negative contours, to create worlds of meaning and emotion that escape the confines of the box. Cornell does not let the apparent singularity to an object define its effect. He is more interested in what happens in the empty space between objects that is re-invigorated by their presence.

Cornell’s work along with the Gell’s reading of the “negative contours” of an object led me helped me to think of my project, along with Cornell’s boxes as something akin to the processes involved in the creation and maintenance of myth, as described in Barthes, *Mythologies*. The processes involved in connecting meaning toward enforcing a myth is similar to the manner in which an object, name, image or narrative is frequently imbued with new meaning through rearranging previous associations.

Language lends itself to myth in another way: it is very rare that it imposes at the outset a full meaning which it is impossible to distort. This comes from the abstractness of its concept: the concept of tree is vague, it lends itself to multiple contingencies. True, a language always has at its disposal a whole appropriating organization (*this tree, the tree, which*, etc.). But there always remains, around the final meaning, a halo of virtualities where other possible meanings are floating: the meaning can almost always be *interpreted* (131-132).

Though, Barthes is speaking to language or text, I believe that the same could be said of an image. The concept evoked in an image has the same potential for transformation as a word does, particularly when juxtaposed with other images. How many times has one seen a tree or trees stand in for hair, as an example? Or what processes and feelings does the image of a tree evoke? It could range from growth, nature, serenity--a lush tree--to death, loneliness, terror--a silhouette of the same tree in the middle of winter. All of these aspects or potential meanings are the “halo” to which Barthes speaks. My hope is to use the “halo” and “halos” of surrounding

images and gestures to create new meanings in my work. The idea is that work will always be open to interpretation because everyone's "negative contours" and "halos" are different, though we will likely share certain cultural connotations.

Though assemblage, or three dimensional objects, are only going to be a small portion of my work, I like to think of my role and my process as an artist as something similar to that of the assembler. In his work, *The Art of Assemblage*, William Chapin Seitz beautifully describes the process of discovery involved in creating art through found objects and images,

Like a beachcomber, a collector, or a scavenger wandering among ruins, the assembler discovers order as well as materials by accident. At the start at least, his is an atmosphere without conditions, an alternating current in which hierarchies of great and small, order and disorder, good and bad, beautiful and ugly, are reversible or nonexistent. Physically, his raw material is the random assemblage of the modern world in which nature and man are thrown together in an often tragic and ludicrous, but fertile and dynamic, disarray: the crowded city, the split-level suburb, the "moon shot", the picture magazine, the summit conference, the television western. Dada awakened senses and sensibilities to immense multiple collisions of value, forms, and effects among which we live and to the dialectic of creation and destruction, affirmation and negation, by which life and art progress. (38-39)

I believe it is important to think of both the process of preparation and creation of a work as an opportunity for discovery. Where Seitz was talking about objects, this can also be applied to images and, I think, even mark making. Being uncertain of the effect of the action of placing an image down or the paint brush scraping across the canvas enables the "collision of value, form, and effect" that Seitz is speaking to. And I believe that frequently it is the collision that imbues a work with meaning, it pushes an image beyond its recognizable associations, and makes the viewer momentarily uncomfortable in a way that is emotionally or intellectually productive--an

idea at the heart of the Dada movement. Cornell was deeply entrenched in the lineage of Dada artists of the mid-century. They were interested in collisions, absurdity, and possessed an eagerness to make every aspect of daily life subject to debate or criticism. Dada encourages skepticism and allows a multiplicity of seemingly contradictory meanings to all interact in the same shared space. I believe that frequently there is a desire in the viewer to understand the narrative in a piece of art or to be enraptured with a complete, coherent emotion or set of. Dada and assemblage, assert that new understandings can emerge from a clash of emotion or imagery, that to know completely is not to understand everything, that we can learn as much from fabricated realities, as from the reality that surrounds us; that to understand fragments and work through how they relate is potentially more productive than a coherent whole.

What I refer to as the process of discovery; of putting together the fragments, the art theorist, Nelson Goodman would refer to as, “The aesthetic ‘attitude’”, the thing that “is restless, searching, testing--is less attitude than action: creation and re-creation”(Goodman, 242) I am sure that Cornell would call his art some sort of re-creation, to use fragments of the past past to create something new, but what is it that is really being created? What is that something that comes from the combining and reassigning of labels, the creation and destruction? I do not know if I or anyone else can fully answer this questions, but Goodman provides a series of “symptoms”--aesthetic cues--that help to distinguish factors to a piece’s fullness or facets to the reward obtained by the artist or viewer from the acts of creating and discovering. Goodman describes some of the aesthetic components that enable the viewer to interact with a piece of art,

“Three symptoms of the aesthetic may be syntactic density, semantic density, and syntactic repleteness. As we have seen, syntactic density is characteristic of nonlinguistic systems, and is one feature distinguishing sketches from scores and scripts; semantic density is characteristic of representation, description and expression in arts, and is one feature differentiating sketches and

scripts from scores; and relative syntactic repleteness distinguishes the more representational among semantically dense systems from the more diagrammatic, the less from the more 'schematic' (Goodman, 252)

Throughout his analysis, it appears Goodman uses the word "density" to refer to the concentration same sort of fragments I am attempting to address in my work. So density in syntax would mean the way in which a piece re-produces or makes apparent a well-known order to things, the manner in which something was built; which is a process far more apparent in the visual arts than in literary or musical pursuits. The second "symptom" is "semantic density," this has multiple components, but could best be described as emotional density and the physical descriptors and associations that elicit such responses. "Syntactic repleteness" on the other hand, is more self-explanatory, a component to distinguishing the "semantically dense" from the diagrammatic. All of the aspects to Goodman's aesthetic analysis involve an understanding of "density" and fullness in art. Cornell's pieces embody this sort of density by confining the available space. He packs discarded objects into small boxes, overloading the space with all the processes surrounding the recontextualization of the objects. None of the objects mean the same thing they did previously, once placed in the same shared space, in other words, the embodiment of "syntactic," and particularly, "semantic density." Where Cornell uses the box as a method to amplify "semantic density," it is my hope that the contrast of abstract and concrete forms along with the fragmentary nature to my work, that will make my pieces "semantically dense."

The final "aesthetic symptom" is that of "exemplification," the quality and power that symbols have to relate to what it elicits.

"Exemplification [the fourth aesthetic symptom], like denotation, relates a symbol to a referent , and the distance from a symbol to what applies to or is exemplified by it is no less than the distance to what it applies to or denotes. As 'ineffability' upon analysis turns into density rather

than mastery, 'immediacy becomes a matter of exemplification of intimacy--a function of direction rather than of distance.'" (Goodman, 253)

Throughout the course of my study I struggled to find a way to explain how a symbol relates to what is being referred to, and if not how, then at the very least what some qualities of a symbol would be. It is really easy to understand what a symbol is, but very hard to show how it works and the quality of "exemplification" helped me to begin to reach such an understanding.

"Exemplification" is the glue--and simultaneously, the effectiveness of the glue--that relates symbol to what it refers to. It is the capability of the symbol to embody traits and elicit the same response in the viewer as would naturally occur were the viewer to encounter the symbol's referent--in much simpler terms, the symbol's "density." So according to Goodman, the "denser" symbol, that which was successfully used or created is not in the mastery of imitation or in immediacy of access, but in its ability to elicit intimate responses in the viewer, similar to what would occur when interacting with the referent.

Interestingly, one word I kept coming across in reading about Cornell, assemblage and more generally, the theory surrounding the interpretation of symbol in art was 'ineffable'. The dictionary's definition of the word is, "too great or extreme to be expressed or described in words," but I think that artists and theorists, have elaborated on the dictionary definition and tried to prove that such an inarticulateable quality comes out of collusions of meaning--or "density" as Goodman would say. Ratcliff writes, "No label applied so far has accounted for the mechanics of his [Cornell's] art, the way its fragments launch revery past Surrealist apocalypse, Symbolist absolutes and familiar allegory to a voyeur's obsession with the enchanted ineffable." (Ratcliff, 44) The magical feeling produced in the viewer surrounding "the enchanted ineffable" is the same I am attempting to recreate in my art. There is no immediate, measured or protracted reaction to a certain object, image, or their juxtaposition. Cornell defines the pieces by

deliberately putting one object next to the other, but the effect is only greater chaos in terms of narrative. To achieve the ineffable the artist can set no narrative, he or she can only provide the pieces. That being said, it does not mean that there cannot be stories, whims or tales that reveal themselves--intentionally or not--in a piece. "All the emblematic images Cornell assembles in his art are shadows, numinous fragments, of an unattainable wholeness."(Ratcliff, 47) I agree with Ratcliff's analysis up until he used the word 'unattainable,' here he may be speaking of attaining Cornell's wholeness--something we will truly never understand, but I think that the viewer has ample potential to create something whole, be it just a facet of a greater understanding or completeness of an emotion. I do not believe that wholeness should be defined in terms of either a logical narrative or ocular interaction with the picture frame, but that wholeness can be understood in terms of its fragments. Therefore, I agree with Ratcliff that complete wholeness is unachievable in Cornell's art, but I would argue the same of even the most representational piece of art. The point, to me, is for the viewer to try to create what one can from the little pieces that can be made whole, and understand the "wholeness" of a piece to be what the individual decides to make of the fragments.

Ultimately, I think that the fragments inside of Cornell's box--a shape that inherently encourages the understanding of its components as a "whole"--allow the viewer freedom, in addition to allowing the artist to assert his. Cornell juxtaposes image and object in a way that he feels enables association or causes the halos of meaning surrounding each object to expand as they overlap. Ratcliff, uses the static nature to Duchamp's assemblages as way to enter into the potential in Cornell's more modern assemblage technique, "If the differences between Cornell's readymades and Duchamp's are followed far enough, one arrives at an odd vantage point where Duchamp looks otherworldly in his ironic detachment and Cornell, entranced by the flow of

mass-produced images, looks like an allegorical figure of The Individual Spirit Confronting the Machine Age.”(Ratcliff, 64) I do not think that I would have used the word “confronted” so much as embraced. Mass production, as we have seen, has huge potential to destroy individual’s freedoms, and it was not so much as Cornell was confronting, as much as re-appropriating it. He proved that just because an object was mass-produced does not mean that it does not have an individual story, or the potential to react with other objects and images that would forever distinguish it from the un-altered, mass produced.

David Salle is another artist who takes the idea of a found object in a new direction. In his paintings, he will use a projector in order to transfer his images onto canvas, in this way he is both reproducing an image and giving it his own inflection. For the sake of this project, I will be primarily looking at the work that he did in the late eighties, through the nineties as it is this era in his work that most embodies traits I strive for in my art. Salle works primarily in paint and collage; as Cornell does, he creates worlds on the canvas through associations of form and content. His paintings appear surreal and chaotic, while maintaining ordered and intentional juxtapositions. In an interview with Frederic Tuten for the September 1997 issue of *Art in America*, Salle describes his process, “There’s a range of things that I do that use rhythm, sequence, timing, surprise, scale, structure, light, inflection--things like that. Concrete things. I think about the way things are put together--the terrific freedom of it. The freedom to make associations, pictorial associations, to make them in a way that feels right but not literal” (83).

Reading Salle’s articulation of his process was a watershed moment for me, as he cut directly to the heart of what I have been attempting to do in my work. He strives for “the freedom to make associations,” which creates a sort of interplay between the artist and the viewer, and enables the viewer to create as well, which I think is a very important facet to meaningful art. This

“freedom” enables the viewer to look at images for non-literal associations, opening up a far greater range and complexity of emotion. To be able to escape the literal while enabling emotions that feel completely real or “right” is a powerful project, and ultimately something I hope to be able to achieve in my work.

The more I worked on this project, the more I came to realize that it was really about operating in the world between freedom and constraint; and that the two are not necessarily mutually exclusive. As the artist, you are working between two pillars per say, on the one hand, there are images and symbols with predetermined associations--the constraint, and the on the other, there is the desire to make something novel, and the potential to do such a thing through juxtaposition--freedom. I had to learn about freedom in order to understand, that to make good art in this medium is to not let one side over dictate the process or it will appear immature. It is about striking a balance between uninhibited freedom and responsibility--or that there can still be freedom in responsibility.

Therefore, I will take a brief foray into the lineage of the freedom in America, and the application of a positive freedom today, in art and everyday life. There are few words over the last decade to have ascended into the realm of political rhetoric as salient as “Freedom”.

Beginning with September 11th, Bush attempted to redefine freedom as a defense mechanism, a reason why the rest of the world hated us so much; he used it as a tool in reconstituting the American psyche. I hope in my artwork, along with the help of artist and academics like Robert Brandom and Mary-Jay Rubenstein, to redefine freedom as the ability to make associations and explore responsibly, rather than a freedom from certain entities, individuals, or oppressive powers.

Before I begin my analysis of the word, “freedom,” in its current context, I think that it is important to trace the lineage back a couple decades. When I entered a google search of the word, “freedom”, the first thing to pop up at the top of the page was definitions of the word, “freedom,” accompanied by a chart tracing the number of mentions of the word--both lowercase and capital F--in printed works since 1800. The first thing to note is the variation in the definitions, from something that enables to something that protects us. Definitions ranged from, “the power of self-determination attributed to the will; the quality of being independent of fate or necessity,” to much more negative definitions, such as, “the absence of subjection to foreign domination or despotic government.” or “the state of not being imprisoned or enslaved.” Self-determination and not being enslaved are two very different things to me, and I think what is most interesting, is that those moments in history where freedom was mentioned most were when enslavement and subjection to foreign domination were most prolific--post the global slave-trade of Africans. The word freedom began to ascend in popularity 1930 and reached a peak in 1948, just after world war II, only to peak again in 1965, when the United States was involved in the war in Vietnam. I find this only too illuminating after my initial impulse to begin with Bush’s manipulation of the word. Obviously, “freedom” has been a hotly contested word throughout history; and it appears quite possible to me now, that Bush, instead of starting the misuse of the word, “freedom,” was simply following a lineage of misuse toward the pacification of the public in order to more fluidly pursue government objectives with little transparency.

It is difficult for me to write about the role Bush played in the misrepresentation of the word, as he an easy target, who has been dissected by so many academics, and is no longer a major political player perpetuating the misuse of the term “freedom”. That being said, considering the attacks on 9/11 and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan--the two most prominent

American wars of recent history--it is with Bush that my understanding of the trend of misuse of "freedom" in the contemporary moment began, thus any exploration of the word, must inevitably address the former president. I am sure that many of us can remember sitting on the couch, watching the TV after the incidents on 9/11, with Bush's words on how "they hate our freedom" ringing in our ears, but I am sure that many of us also remember Obama's latest inaugural address, and similarly, how his speech was littered with the same word Bush used to stir the masses eleven years prior. Thus, when I say that the entry into this problem starts with Bush, I would very much like to emphasize that it "starts", as I believe we are still working through our relationship with "freedom". Currently, we are taught that freedom protects us, but what we really should be doing is looking at the ways in which a true freedom--an idea with few to no examples--enables us. Rubenstein traces the lineage of the word through Bush's speeches, in order to give the reader better insight into Bush's idea of freedom, which ultimately, shares many qualities, if it is not the same thing as the American idea of freedom.

"As unevenly sketched throughout George Bush's public speeches, freedom on one hand is measured by certain conditions. These include 'the rule of law, limits on the power of the state, respect for women, private property, equal justice, relies tolerance' (Bush, "Advancing the Cause of Freedom," April 17, 2002, 420.) access to global markets, freedom of speech, political pluralism, labors unions, independent media, privatized economies, and above all, popular sovereignty ensured by a representative government."(Rubenstein, 193)

Here, Bush defines freedom as something that protects the individual from persecution rather than as something that enables the individual. Bush's perception of freedom is niive, it promotes pure independence and liberation, an individual free of influence who has severed ties with individuals or institutions that may reign him in. This definition of freedom reads contrary to Robert Brandom's idea of "positive freedom"--or a more mature concept of freedom. "The

central feature determining the character of any vision of human freedom is the account offered of *positive* freedom (freedom to)--those respects in which our activity should be distinguished from the mere lack of external causal constraint (freedom from)" (Brandman, 188). Take the free market and big government as an example of the difference between "freedom from" (naive) and freedom to (mature) versions of freedom. A frequently held belief in public and political spheres--and I would say Bush would agree--is that the free market embodies the American idea of freedom and big government is the antithesis to same idea of freedom. (Phoner) Whereas in truth, the free market embodies the naive perception of freedom, and big government, though not necessarily, can certainly maintain a more mature version of freedom. The free market promotes the idea that the individual, completely exonerated of any sort of regulation or restraint is truly free, he or she follows no one and worked to earn everything he or she has; the individual took advantage of the opportunities created for oneself. What this reasoning fails to acknowledge is the people whose freedoms were trampled in allowing the one individual to ascend and fully express their "freedom". As we saw with the collapse in 2008, a lack of regulation impinged upon the freedoms of Americans, offering people unfair loans and ultimately requiring that their tax money bail out the companies of the "truly free" and naive individuals. People lost their homes and more important the right to fair information with which to make the best decision for his or herself (freedom). Therefore, a regulatory government, if successfully managed, serves as a set of restraints to preserve everyone's freedom, allowing equal opportunity and fair representation, rather than the disparity we currently see in influence between corporations and the greater population in policy making. So seemingly paradoxically, greater restraint can mean greater freedoms to, in offering a wider range of the population the opportunity to benefit from governmental structures which ultimately inhibits the naive freedom from--regulation,

inclusiveness and reciprocity--of those who wield power in the country. True freedom, therefore is meant as a tool in preventing the exploitation of the individual by social and economic systems, which ultimately enables the individual to make a greater range of choices.

The hope in my artwork is to explore a more “positive” idea of freedom, one that benefits the individual and greater social groups. That being said, obviously, “positive” freedom is not as simple as enabling the individual to act as they please, rather it is understanding the shared meaning surrounding images, texts, utterances, actions and using such understandings to produce something novel. Brandom states, "One acquired the freedom to believe, desire, and intend the existence of novel states of affairs only insofar as one speaks some language or other, is constrained by some complex of social norms. Expressive freedom is made possible only by constraint by norms, and is not some way of evading or minimizing that constraint" (Brandom, 194). In other words, freedom is obtained through understanding cultural specificity and elaborating on it, just as I am doing in my art pieces. Using images, texts, textures that evoke certain emotions and ideas, I hope, through juxtaposition, to enable the viewer to create through our shared cultural understanding of symbols and associations. To Brandom, true “freedom” is what we do with the halos of meaning surrounding every object, image or text. They enable the viewer to do something, expand rather than insulate him or her. If we recall David Salle’s exaltation of the, “The freedom to make associations, pictorial associations, to make them in a way that feels right but not literal” (Tuten, 83). It is my hope, that the viewer, like Salle, feels the “terrific freedom to make associations”, but in order to do so I am relying on Brandom’s theory--from Kant--that the only way to produce or enable freedom is to be constrained by the same set of norms, language, cultural context, understand the pictorial representations and make from them associations. In this way, a mature use of freedom, when applied to painting, would

be to understand the associations an image recalls and use that association rather try and overpower the context. So understanding the association is an act of constraint but ultimately allows for inclusiveness, which differs greatly from the way constraint could be applied to Bush's use of the word freedom. The constraint Brandom promotes is the struggle of shared understandings, whereas Bush's constraint tries to sever the individual from shared understandings.

Through my work, I would like to try to change the American understanding of freedom from something that "protects" us--though more accurately severs the individual from communities-- a privilege we maintain, to something that enables us. Freedom has been distorted to enable fear and in turn constrain the American public through a lack of understanding of difference. Freedom could, and in certain instances does, facilitate insight into shared cultural understandings that would ultimately produce better relations and "free-er" individuals.

Freedom, in many ways liberates the artist, but in order to make associations he or she must understand the system through which one is trying to make connections. It is not enough to simply "let the mind run free", in order for an image or symbol to have a salient impact, one has to understand how it relates to its referent or what it exemplifies, and additionally, how juxtaposition with other images and symbols would alter the meaning of a work. To make a comparison, "The difference between art and science is not between feeling and fact, intuition and inference, delight and deliberation, synthesis and analysis, sensation and cerebration, concreteness and abstraction, passion and action, mediacy and immediacy, or truth and beauty, but rather a difference in domination of certain specific characteristics of symbols" (Goodman, 264). I believe that the same could be said of each individual art piece, each of David Salle's

paintings is its own system of understanding that actively recalls other systems in order to make associations between aspects of the piece. The same image or symbol can mean drastically different things depending on the system or context through which it is presented.

And that is the beauty and fulfillment that comes of the role of the artist; to be able to choose which system through which one would like his or her reality to be constructed, to be able to elicit unexpected associations and ask the viewer to interact with the familiar and the unfamiliar. Goodman describes the process best in saying, “It involves making delicate discriminations and discerning subtle relationships, identifying symbol systems and characters within these systems and characters within these systems and what these characters denote and exemplify, interpreting works and reorganizing the world in terms of works and works in terms of the world” (Goodman, 241). I know personally, that the process of making this series, at least in part, changed the way I look at the world. It has offered me new clarity into the way that ideas and images and emotions are connected, how associations are made and what a “system of knowledge” is and how present such systems are. There is nothing--no understanding or action--that operates outside of systems and I believe that important facet to be aware of in art, and even more so in the day-to-day.

I began this series of paintings in May 2013. It was before I knew how to stretch canvases, so I began by looking around Vassar and Poughkeepsie for old canvases, I found one in the now foreclosed “Chabad House,” along with a big old painting that I found by the side of the road. Up until this point, I had only worked on a smaller scale, but in many different mediums. I had done drawing, silk screening, photography, collage, painting and sculpture work, but had found it hard to combine or make something large and meaningful. So, I began the

project with intent of making these images that would bring together the various skills I had learned, along with making something more visually impressive.

I work in my room, I have it set up so that I live in one third of the room (a little chair, rug and mattress) and the other two thirds is my work space. The idea is that I would let things flow from my head whenever I thought of them--so working somewhere else was out of the question. Additionally, I would work on the piece up to ten times a day for various amounts of time, I would leave it and come back to it or just spend an hour looking at it, unable to put anything down. For materials, I pulled out all of my old disposable pictures, cut-outs from magazines and books, colored paper, paints. Sometimes I would spend 6 hours in a day, just watching TV (or more accurately listening) and cutting out images, only half of which I will likely ever use, but this project is one of those things where I need to see it laid out in front of me in order to figure it out. After cutting all of the images out I would make a collage on the canvas, maybe paste it on right away--a single image or many-- or let it sit for a few days then take it off and start all over again. I would alter between rounds of painting and rounds of collaging in order to blend the images within the frame. This was an interesting lesson for me because it taught me to let go of components of the works I was most attached to, sometimes I would go over an aspect I really loved, just to find that whatever I had overlaid looked even better. I could not let myself become too emotionally invested in the smaller pieces, I had to keep thinking about the whole, a whole that was constantly changing on me depending on how I looked at the work. I fluctuated between moments of extreme chaos and order, it my hope that both sentiments come out in the series. I have lived with these pieces for the last ten months, they are a huge part of me, they are where I vented whatever I was feeling, as they were so immediately accessible to me. Over time, the series progressed, I began to simplify the chaos and direct it

more. They are still not coherent, but I tried to work through the material that had less of significance. I do not think I could have produced the works if I had not lived with them (if I was forced to make them in a studio). My personality does not really allow for long stints doing one thing and if I had had to work in the studio they certainly would have ended up more uniform. The wall I rest the paintings against to dry is exactly opposite where I lay my head at night, so every night, or time I am in my bed for that matter, I was looking at them, thinking about what to do next, what I did and did not like. They are an experience for me, a physical demarcation of my thought processes during this period more than an aesthetic product.

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