

THE ISOLATION OF CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY
FROM THE REVELATIONS OF NATURE

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by

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THE ISOLATION OF WESTERN SOCIETY
FROM THE REVELATIONS OF NATURE

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	ii
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.....	iv
CHAPTER	
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
2. MY INTERACTION WITH NATURE AND WESTERN SOCIETY.....	2
3. INFLUENCES.....	13
NATIVE AMERICA.....	13
FAIRY ART.....	14
WESTERN ARTISTS.....	16
MUSIC.....	17
4. MY WORK.....	19
5. FUTURE.....	28
APPENDIX	
1. ILLUSTRATIONS.....	31
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	41

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure

Page

1.	John Selburg, <i>Koobird</i> , 2008.....	31
2.	John Selburg, <i>Consider the Ravens</i> , 2008.....	32
3.	John Selburg, <i>Waterless Regions</i> , 2008.....	33
4.	John Selburg, <i>The Messenger</i> , 2008.....	34
5.	John Selburg, <i>The Red Road and the Black Road</i> , 2008.....	35
6.	John Selburg, <i>Paroxysm</i> , 2008.....	36
7.	John Selburg, <i>A Time of Boundaries</i> , 2008.....	37
8.	John Selburg, <i>Artificial Light</i> , 2008.....	38
9.	John Selburg, <i>Owl</i> , 2008.....	39
10.	John Selburg, <i>The Pheonix</i> , 2007.....	40

INTRODUCTION

My people have become disconnected from Nature. I live in Western society, which is a monetary-based, globalizing, technological empire that is occupying many of the world's cultures and quickly absorbing the rest. Western society shapes the minds of its subjects by overloading their senses through technological stimulation and isolation from the non-human world. Further, people become physically and mentally entrapped within the manmade world becoming more separated from the natural world. This severance leads to two negative outcomes: the destruction of the natural world and ignorance toward God.

My upbringing helped me fall in love with nature, but the world outside of my family unit exposed me to the dysfunction of Western society. My recent work, large scale charcoal drawings, is a means to reconcile this disconnect. I look back to the Pre-Columbian Americans who were nearly perfectly in tune with nature. Concepts of fairy lore have helped me understand the connection between the untamed imagination and harmony with nature. The Western artists Kathe Kollwitz and Salvador Dali have affected me with their perception and expression of Western society juxtaposed with nature. Music also has had a strong effect on me. The following chapters are intended to give the reader a doorway into understanding my art.

MY INTERACTION WITH NATURE AND WESTERN SOCIETY

Although my upbringing helped me fall in love with nature the world outside of my family unit exposed me to the dysfunction of Western society. I grew up in a little red house with an enormous backyard. It was a sanctuary from the surrounding city. My house was on a hillside that dipped below the horizon, sheltering my family from much of the city noise. The old streets of my neighborhood were lined with fully-grown trees. My backyard exploded with my mom's flower gardens that drew wildlife to our haven.

My mom is an amazing gardener. She grows life from the earth into beautiful jungles of fairy tale colors and surreal shapes. Her gardens are so thick that our cats can prowl a foot from our sight yet we cannot see them hidden by flowers and butterflies. My mother had me with her in her gardens since I was born. While she gardened, she was quiet most of the time in a peaceful meditative state of hard physical work, but when she spoke, she often told stories that sparked my imagination.

My father also ignited my imagination through his stories. He spent much of his free time making shorebirds and decoys that were present throughout our house. I started helping him make his ducks as soon as I was coordinated enough to hold a pencil. He drew basic patterns of the feathers onto his raw wooden decoys and I used a wood burner to create the thin repetitive lines that created the texture of feathers. We made many other things in his workroom like bat houses, bows and arrows, bird feeders, and tiny reindeer.

My home always seemed to be filled with music, whether from my mom blasting old 50's and 60's tunes, my dad extracting otherworldly melodies out of his old, beat up, classical guitar, or the base coming from my sibling's rooms. The scent of incense and candles pulsed from my sister's and brother's doorways, traveling on the waves of

music from their stereos and twirling around the scent of my mom's candles and my dad's sawdust.

My sister and brother are a lot older than me, and their bedrooms were like majestic fortresses of treasures. Every inch of their walls was covered with psychedelic posters, street signs, and art. Their shelves and dressers were covered with objects as interesting as those on their walls, consisting of everything from sea monkeys to memorabilia from youth group events.

In the evening, my parents and I commonly sat in the back yard until after dark to catch lightening bugs and watch the few stars that could be seen through the city light. The stars were much more visible from my grandparents' house on Lake Thunderbird deep in the woods away from the city. At Lake Thunderbird my family and I spent much of our time in the summer fishing, swimming, hiking, and exploring for the ghosts of the Indian chief who was occasionally seen in the woods. Whether in the backyard or at my grandparents at night I could run around free from the burdens of the daylight and logic.

Often at night, my dad made my best friend, Keenan, and I torches that encouraged bats to come out of their houses and dive bomb us, which kept away the mosquitoes. During a drought one summer, there was a specifically hot day without a cloud in the sky. Keenan and I were feeling the heat in our back yard when my mom encouraged us to do a rain dance. This involved running around in a circle at the top of the hill in my back yard with the torched sticks high in the air. She stood there smiling at us saying that if we actually believed in this, it would work. So we danced, we believed, and a cloud of rain came pouring on the flowers and cooling our skin.

Keenan and I had many adventures. Every chance we got, we went hiking through the creek that ran through my back yard. We followed it throughout the neighborhood, walking below streets, under bridges, and through tunnels. The creek was thickly hidden with a variety of tall trees and paved by roots breaking through red brick and crumbled cement. We made up stories about the things that lived in the creek, like an underground civilization of water-dwelling, super intelligent, beagle-sized, sewer rats and a manifestation of extra terrestrial crawdads. In reality, not much lived in that water. Our imaginations kept us from noticing a lot of the things that surrounded us, like the gang graffiti under the bridges.

Every school morning, Keenan and I took our time hiking the creek on the way to school. A dense thicket of old gnarly trees opened a hole through a twelve foot tall chain link fence. We maneuvered through hole in the fence and stepped onto the massive cement recess yard behind our grade school. The school grounds were devoid of playground equipment. Even the basketball rims had been sawed down by the city because they allegedly caused gang activity. The massive school had its windows filled with plastic to prevent the students from becoming distracted by the outside world and to conserve heat. The doors were dented by bullets and the outside walls were covered in graffiti. The schoolyard was completely covered in concrete but in contrast parts of the hill were untamed. The hill felt like a magical place that was divided into three sections. One side was a vacant grass hill down which some kids would practice doing back flips. The middle was mostly occupied by a tall heavily rendered graffiti-covered wall topped with another tall chain link fence. The other side was a more natural and steep hill, occupied by a massive ancient tree with giant roots. Its trunk had to be ten feet in

diameter and its smooth bark was white with hints of light green. The thick branches stretched out in every direction shading the large hill and a third of the cement recess yard. The tree was home to huge ravens that flew around over the playground and the school. I spent many recesses sitting on the biggest root, watching the ravens interact, fight, and scream in the sky as their shadows flickered over the rough youngsters interacting, fighting, and screaming on the playground. I imagined the birds to be thunderbirds with the wisdom and spirit of a forgotten time.

The creek was a secret passage that kept Keenan and I safe, but school pulled us into the midst of a defective system. Most of the communities feeding into the school were plagued by poverty and severe gang activity. Thirty-five percent of the population of Peoria, Illinois, is below the poverty line.ⁱ Forty-two percent of children under eighteen live below the poverty line.ⁱⁱ I was immune to the pressure of joining Gangster Disciple, the gang that occupied most of Peoria, because I had active parents and was one of the very few non-black kids in my school. Gangster Disciple only pushed for black kids. Many friends who I played with at school, and who played basketball at my house after school, were coerced into gang activity. Two of them were killed when we were only fifteen.

Keenan was different than the other kids. He was very intelligent and extremely athletic. Although Keenan spent most of his free time with my family he was still sucked into a gang for a number of reasons. His older brother was a powerful and feared gangster. Simultaneously, society was pushing him away through racism. Teachers seemed to hate him. When he went places with me people treated him differently than they did me. They were wary about him. So the self-fulfilling prophecy began to kick in

for him around seventh grade when he started selling marijuana for his older brother to pay for things his parents did not provide. Walking home from school at the end of eighth grade, a high school aged gangster, ugly as sin, came rolling up to us on a little girls bicycle. He flashed a pistol from the pocket of his yellow starter jacket. Keenan went off with the kid and became a Gangster Disciple. Four years Keenan was considering a college football scholarship. He had gotten through the gauntlet of his demographics, almost. The day before graduation, Keenan took a ride home with his friend and his friend's dad. The man drove north of the city and pulled his car up to a mansion. The man and his son broke into the house while Keenan fearfully stayed in the car. The cops quickly showed up. Keenan went to prison for a year which poisoned his mind instead being allowed go to college and enlighten his mind. Since, he has been in and out of prison. Currently, he is on trial and facing about 35 years.

When I left Peoria the first time, shortly after Keenan was sent to prison, I went to college at the University of Iowa majoring in Engineering. I was surrounded by people from an entirely different world. Most of the students I met were from wealthy suburbs. Though most of them accepted me, I kept detached. I quickly realized that many of them would grow up to become upholders of the system that held places like Peoria down. They would become the system that placed Keenan into the position of becoming a criminal. Furthermore, I realized that they believed in the system that raped nature without hesitation for the sake of monetary profit and convenience.

I received a major culture shock being sucked into a fraternity filled with these people just as Keenan had become sucked into a gang. I climbed up to the roof of my fraternity house almost every night. The mansion was on a tall hill above the city. It was

my secret place where I could see a few stars in the sky, the Iowa River, and the cars driving around campus. Here I would analyze my days. I thought about God and the way the world should be. When I escaped to this secret place with no roof above my head, I could see the world in clear perspective. I despised what my Engineering degree might lead to, a cubicle without windows where I would spend sixty hours a week, fifty-two weeks a year, just for monetary gain. It sounded as demeaning to my spirit as the hours of childhood spent sitting silently at a desk, unable to explore the world, stuck in a room with teachers trying to destroy my imagination and make me conform to their system. The lyrics to a Primitive Radio Gods song called *Standing Outside a Broken Phone Booth with Money in my Hand* kept playing through my head those two years.

“We sit outside and argue all night long
about a god we've never seen
but never fails to side with me.
Sunday comes and all the papers say
Ma Teresa's joined the mob
and happy with her full time job.

Am I alive or thoughts that drift away?
Does summer come for everyone?
Can humans do as prophets say?
And if I die before I learn to speak
Can money pay for all the days I lived awake
but half asleep?

A life is time, they teach us growing up.
The seconds ticking killed us all
a million years before the fall.
You ride the waves and don't ask where they go.
You swim like lions through the crest
and bathe yourself in zebra flesh.”ⁱⁱⁱ

I started to write “Will money pay for all the days you live awake but half asleep?” on every desk I sat at for the rest of my time at Iowa. I was fed up with that system. I was sick of being merely a student number in seven-hundred student classes. I was bored with regurgitating information and solving equations that had already been

solved. I was angry with people who desired so little, yet, would trample the world around them in order to attain it.

I received some generous scholarships for academics and art to transfer to Bradley University, which is an excellent small private university in Peoria. At home, I was able to focus on my studies during the day well enough to earn Suma Cum Laude in three majors, and various other awards for academics and for art. I lived at home and my parents were great extremely supportive and liberal but I felt the strain of the injustice all around me. Peoria was just getting worse. My car was stolen twice from in front of my house. Catty-corner to my house was a crack house. City employees would drive into our yard and cut our trees away from the power lines. This resulted in killing many of the trees in the neighborhood, including the two biggest ones in our front yard. The ones that remain in the neighborhood now have hideous scars. The roads were getting busier and the drivers more aggressive. The stars were completely hidden by light pollution. I searched for a place to escape; a secret passage big enough to free my mind. I discovered the awesomeness of the woods at night.

I drove at night to the forest preserve on the Illinois River bluff and walked deep into the dark forest. I walked into the woods habitually, even in the bitter cold and in the rain. In the woods at night my awareness of God was heightened as I became more open to existence beyond my perception. I never brought a flashlight. Few people I have met realize that they can see pretty well at night without artificial light. A flashlight illuminates the closest trees and gives the feeling of being inside. Without a flashlight, the depth and openness of the woods are revealed. A little moonlight is enough to completely

light up the woods. The moon brings out different colors than does the sun. The world appears almost completely black and white, aside from the pink glow of the city sky.

The shadows in the woods come to life as owls soar through the treetops calling to one another. My mom taught me how to call owls and pay attention to the subtle complexities of their song. Owls become curious when they are called by people. They keep their distance, but follow me throughout the woods on winter nights. Sometimes they perch right above me. Besides owl calls, in the deep cold winter, trees make noises too. They creak and groan from the depths of their massive forms when blown by the wind. They are like the vocal chords of the wind, rooted in the earth. It sounds as if they are talking to each other in the strange language of elves and angels.

The woods cleanse my body and my mind. The woods help me separate my thoughts and identify all of the false ones that enter my head through Western society. My mind is full of distractions. The woods filter these things just like the leaves filter the air. I leave the woods purified. The forest is a balance of component parts living in harmony. They help me find my balance and know truth.

Unfortunately, humans in Western society interact very little with the forest or nature. In Western society, human environment is artificial and thus the minds of its subjects are artificial. Their climate is controlled, the land is deforested, paved, and mown, iPods and cell phones occupy ears, and people travel from place to place at high speeds requiring tunnel vision. The extreme stimulation of technology forces dishonest messages directly into people's minds, distracting them from noticing the subtle complexities of nature. Even the stars have become obscured from people's vision through intense light pollution. Only a few places in the world reveal the stars that could

be seen by everyone less than one-hundred years ago.^{iv} It is not hard to imagine the psychology difference between someone who sees the arm of the Milkyway and distant galaxies every night versus someone who watches television or a computer monitor every night. The minds of the people of Western society are filled with pollution because they are cut off from the natural world where they evolved. This pollution has lead nature to become as barren and polluted as people's minds because people trample what they do not see. A society that does not properly interact with nature is lost in a hurricane of untruths. So it is not surprising to understand why Western society is destroying nature.

The amount that humans can perceive with their basic senses is great. Yet, the information detected by our senses greatly surpasses the amount of information that the brain comprehends. Furthermore, the amount of known information that exists undetectable by our senses greatly surpasses the sensed. Existence is infinite, space stretches in every direction to infinite size, can be divided to infinite smallness, and has infinite dimensionality beyond the four perceivable dimensions of length, height, width, and time. Humanity is capable of comprehending only a tiny portion of existence.

God exists beyond our perception. God bore humans through Mother Nature. God created humans to be like vessels that are open to choice. This is different than the rest of the perceivable world, because all things, uninterrupted or corrupted by humans act in accordance to nature which is the way of Gods. I have been told a story that one of God's angels fell into darkness or became darkness. This force became evil and thus was cast out of Heaven. Evil needed a physical body and found shelter in humans, as they are vessels that have the choice to be aware or unaware of God. Evil still exists in human beings, jumping from one to the other, spreading through all of us, trying to make us

unaware of God. Through our distraction we are manipulated into doing things that are contrary to the will of God. Evil is working through humans to create Hell, which exists only in the physical realm that is perceivable by humans.

Western society is surprisingly similar to the story of the Tower of Babel as described in Genesis 11:5-9. "The Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which mortals had built. And the Lord said, 'Look, they are one people, and they have all one language; and this is only the beginning of what they will do; nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. Come, let us go down, and confuse their language there, so that they will not understand one another's speech.' So the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. Therefore it was called Babel, because there the Lord confused the language of all the earth; and from there the Lord scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth." The exponential growth of technology is creating globalization, destroying individual cultures to create one civilization. People are becoming further isolated from God, yet there is little they cannot do through the technology that isolates them.

My religion tells me that two-thousand years ago God opened a portal between the metaphysical realm of Heaven and the physical realm of people by God becoming the soul of a person. The one referred to as Jesus was physically and mentally a man, but had the soul of God. I believe that this created a doorway in which God can enter us. With God inside of us, evil is expelled. Evil works hard to distract humans from this portal. Evil has contorted the name and intentions of Jesus and the actions of many people who believe they are Christians. Look at all the horrors, injustice, and genocides that have been carried out in the name of Christ. Look at the ignorance that is justified by people

taking translations of the bible literally rather than metaphorically although in the Gospels Jesus said he spoke in parables to explain things to people. Many of these people who loudly call themselves Christians, push many others with deeper minds away from Christ. Even politicians believing themselves to be Christians, but actually tyrants, through actions and words push people away from the name of Christ by the thousands, distracting people from the portal. Christ taught love, humility, and having no possessions, not hatred, greed, and manifest destiny. It is imperative to understand that evil focuses its energy to distract people from the portal opened through Jesus. Today, in Western society, it is difficult to find God's will through all the false interpretations.

Because nature acts in accordance with God's will, I believe that God and the true teachings of the Messiah can be found through nature. To rid the world of evil, and for the world to come to an age of enlightenment, people will need to find God and open themselves fully to God, and see the truth of the world through their interaction with nature. The battle between good and evil exists on the physical realm, but stretches much further into the metaphysical realm. Thus, I have come to strongly believe that prayer and reintroduction to nature are the most important actions any human can take in ending the growing force of evil.

NATIVE AMERICA

The original people of the land upon which I grew and explored were in tune with nature. The woods revived my interests in the people of Native America. I commonly wondered what my environment looked like a few hundred years ago before it became torn apart by greed and ignorance Western society. When nature was strong and healthy, the Native Americans helped take care of the land. Over the years, my brother and I became close friends with an Indian chief, Michael Osogwin, in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. He has taught me about the ways and beliefs of the Ojibwa before the Europeans came and corrupted the Americas. The Chief taught me that Pre-Columbian civilizations living in the land that is now the United States and Canada lived with a reverence and worship of God through nature. They understood the importance of complete, positive, and spiritual interaction with nature. Their interaction with nature was nearly perfect and their connection with things beyond human comprehension greatly surpassed that of Western society. They were aware of and open to God because they were aware and open to nature, God's will. They were so in tune with the universe that they not only called the animals but also understood and communicated with them. The barrier between physical and metaphysical existence was transparent. Europe invaded the Americas and shattered this pristine utopia. Europe was and is building the Tower of Babel, and in doing so destroying the unique minds of people and the body of nature. Nonetheless, the spirit of the union between humans and nature in presence of God still exists, though it is hidden in what remains of nature. There are still some places in the forest that I can feel the presence of the ancestors, those who lived here before, reminding me that their ways will return.

FAIRY ART

Concepts and art built around fairy lore have helped me to understand the connection between the untamed imagination and harmony with nature. Oddly enough, ideas about fairies and elves are similar to the philosophies of Pre-Columbian Americans.^v Like the Native Americans, fairies and elves were thought to be in perfect balance with nature.^{vi} Fairies and elves were said to be protectors of nature. More metaphysical than physical, they were thought to be the guardian angels of plants, animals, and places.^{vii} The connection between these creatures and nature dates back to the time of pantheistic nature religions.^{viii} These religions believed that every tree, every hill, and every part of nature has its own spiritual protective element.^{ix} When these religions were replaced with dogmatic Catholic Christianity, these beliefs were downgraded to superstitions and children stories.^x It is difficult to frequent the woods at night without becoming curious about the existence of fairies and elves. When I feel an invisible presence in the woods, it seems as magical as the fairies and elves, but as real as the spirits who roam the woods.

For these reasons, some fairy art has become of great interest to me. Many artists used these creatures as the spirit of imagination and the forgotten love between humans and nature. Among the greatest fairy artists true to this connection was Arthur Rackham. He drew fairies that looked like tiny angels with butterfly wings. His elves looked like dancing children. He drew them in situations where they lived as one with and in nature. Many of his drawings depicted humans happy in nature among the blessings of fairies and elves. The most remarkable of his work is the life he expressed through his trees. I see the legitimacy of Arthur Rackham on the subject of nature spirits because I

understand his knowledge of trees. He shows their consciously knotting roots, twisting trunks, and branches moving in the wind and reaching toward the sun. His isolated trees in barren landscapes with faint cool colors suggest the solemn trees once part of a great forest isolated in a desert of cornfields.

Even more connected with the magic of nature is the artist Hyman Bloom. His drawings depict the supernatural presence of the woods at night. His drawings are dark with subtle light depicting trees and dense foliage that vaguely suggest supernatural beings. The viewer is unable to discern if she or he is looking at a tree or a spirit. Viewing his drawings is similar to a traveler contemplating the deep woods at night. Much of his work illustrates the spiritual interaction between the physical and metaphysical. He is most famous for his oil paintings of ghostlike people in deep states of meditation, but he always rendered the night woods in charcoal.

WESTERN ART

The Western artists from whom I have been most influenced are Kathe Kollwitz and Salvador Dali. In addition to the interaction between the metaphysical and the physical, Kathe Kollwitz incorporated the element of speed in her work. She worked under certain parameters and restrictions influenced by living in Germany during the World Wars.^{xi} She only had brief amounts of time to draw. In drawing fast, she was able to convey the energy of her subjects. Though I have time to work, I still force myself to work quickly so that I can create with the energy she used. Her drawings came to life through her mark. I work to make mine do the same as hers. As she was influenced by her society, I am influenced by mine. I try to let the energy of my world come out as she did hers. The Nazis were killing the people around her and the people around me are killing nature.

The Western artist from whom I have received the most influence is the great Salvador Dali. He would not perceive objects simply. Rather, he would let his view of the objects that appeared in front of him morph with the freedom of his imagination and the will of his soul.^{xii} By working out of this process, he eventually discovered God through the depths of his mind and through the external world. I try to give my imagination as much freedom as his. I work with lucidity that is inspired by his work. The worlds that Salvador Dali created were beyond the locally perceivable world. The line between the physical and metaphysical is shattered in his work.

MUSIC

Music has been a very influential force of art in my life, and remains a significant influence. Music becomes flowing images in my mind that are more powerful to me than most visual art. Musicians help me search for an ideal aesthetic. Acoustic guitar and unplugged music seems black and white, and drawn. There are certain surreal and grunge elements that help define my mark and love of drawing.

The acoustic music in which I am most influenced is psychedelic or surreal folk. The sound of my dad's guitar, upon which I grew, is in tune with the spirits of musicians including Nick Drake, Donovan, Bob Dylan, Paul Simon, Neil Young, Leon Redbone, and Greg Brown. Nick Drake's music is similar to the charcoal drawings of Hyman Bloom. The voice and guitar of Nick Drake seem to come from the ethereal realm of existence. There is a specific feeling to many of his songs, as well as many of the songs of Donovan, that drives my black and white drawing aesthetic. Much of the music coming from my brothers and sisters rooms, as well as on long family car rides, was the Beatles at their most psychedelic and Jimi Hendrix. I find a great deal of influence from the free twirling melodies of Jimi Hendrix and some of the more surreal Beatles songs. The freedom of these musicians is quite similar to the freedom of Salvador Dali. I find inspiration from some grunge and more gritty music. Rage Against the Machine explodes with the spirit of revolution. Though they are plugged in with amplifiers to the max, they still have a black and white aesthetic. My more aggressive mark making reflects this group.

The lyrics of some musicians are supportive of my ideas. Musicians like Greg Brown, Neil Young, Jack Johnson, Ben Harper, Bob Marley, and Damien Marley speak

out about the detrimental direction of Western society. They talk about Western society's systematic and ignorant destruction of the natural environment and the natural mind.

MY WORK

My current series consists of drawings that reflect the struggle between the influences of nature and Western society. To communicate my concept, I render large scale black and white drawings. Recently I have been working on a series of birds and trees. The birds look like ominous crows. They exist in landscapes that are barren or wild. In each of these images, the birds are connected with trees. This series of drawings ranges from 24 inches x 30 inches to 96 inches x 129 inches. These are on individual sheets and multiple sheets combined. I recycle drawings, so commonly the drawings will have other drawings on the back. Sometimes the drawings on the back are good drawings to which I am somewhat attached, but the desire to draw overrides my sentimentality of old drawings. This is why sometimes the paper will be stained or has trace amounts of color. My preferred media for this series is Generals compressed charcoal, Prismacolor compressed charcoal, and white polymer erasers on heavyweight Rives bfk. The paper retains the history of heavy mark making. General's compressed charcoal is a cold black that is used for most of the black mark. Prismacolor compressed charcoal is a warm black sporadically used to subtly separate black from black. White polymer erasers can erase about 60 percent of the darkness of the compressed charcoal mark. I use erasers to build texture, leaving a history of the process of the drawing. The tension between what I see in Western Society and what I have experienced in nature is carried out on my paper. Marks flow over the paper in front of me as I try not to hold back. I enter into an intuitive space. The marks begin to form into images. I push and pull with charcoal and eraser to unlock the images from their surrounding chaos. I sit back to analyze and examine what I have drawn.

Koobird (Figure 1) is a drawing of a bird depicted in a three-quarters portrait view. Its beak is long and its face is as wrinkled as an elephant. Its head is balding and the little hair it has is repetitive text that is illegible, but represents the words invading my conscious from Western society. The eyes of the crow are humanlike, glancing just above the viewer, but not focused. They are slightly glossed as if the bird is in a meditative state. Overall, the bird's eyes suggest that the state of the birds mind is free from logic, and aware of the metaphysical realm. In the foreground and bottom of the image is foliage consisting primarily of flowers. The most predominant plant in front of the bird is the symbol of the Trinity. This shows the connection between divinity and nature. To the left of the bird is a tree with roots that are also a bird's claw gripping the ground. The combination of tree and bird suggests the connection among all natural things. The bird's claw is one with the earth and part of the tree. The tree stretches up to the thick leaves that surround the birds head. The opening between the leaves forms a halo or an aura. Light comes from behind the bird. This suggests that the bird is connected with existence that is greater than logical perception and overflowing with the light of God.

Consider the Ravens (Figure 2) depicts three birds reaching to the sky like baby birds with closed eyes waiting to be fed by their mother. Their eyes suggest a pure state of being and faith. The birds look scrappy because the landscape is barren except for a dormant tree. The landscape is barren because people have almost completely demolished nature. The tree is illuminated by rain like light suggesting that the tree will come back to life and the hungry will be fed. This represents the return of the natural world by divine intervention, like the story of the Tower of Babel and Ojibwa prophesy. It depicts hope and faith in a time of darkness. The drawing is in reference to Luke 12:24, "Consider the

ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, yet God feeds them.”

Waterless Regions (Figure 3) began with marks forming into a skull in the center of the wall-sized drawing. The skull grew horns and from there the spiritual body of the Devil was drawn. The spiritual body is below the horizon and points counter clockwise to the viewer. The spiritual body of the Devil is at the root of the tree, causing the tree to go barren and attempting to annihilate the message of God. The incarnate body of the Devil is also connected to the skull, but above the horizon. The Devil is the power behind the isolation of Western Society leading my society astray from the truth. The incarnate body is insect-like, with heavy elephant feet, suggesting the trampling of Western Society. The destructiveness of the incarnate body is heightened with the axe tail moving to chop down the tree. The birds fly like angels against the direction of the Devil. They are battered and scarred. Their eyes show different states of meditation and awareness. This drawing suggests that a force influences humans to destroy existence, but natural and spiritual beings, depicted as birds, fight against this evil movement. This drawing is especially dark and complex because it reflects the state of existence today. The name of drawing is derived from Luke 11:24, “When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it wanders though waterless regions looking for a resting place, but not finding any, it says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came.’ When it comes, it finds it swept and put in order. Then it goes and brings seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and live there; and the last state of that person is worse than the first.”

The Messenger (Figure 4) depicts a young bird with its head turned 180 degrees to its left. Its wings are spread as if it is about to fly. Its foot is bent as if it is running as it

looks back to the barren horizon. The only thing on the horizon is a dormant tree at the top of a hill. The eyes of the bird are opaque as if it is receiving a message from the tree in a realm of existence separate from the realm displayed in the picture; more precisely the realm of Heaven. Light comes from behind the horizon in the area between the birds head and the tree, further explaining their connection. The beak of the bird is short suggesting its youth, but the white aura of the beak stretches further suggesting its growth or maturity. The fur on the head of the bird is illegible literature. The bird's head is crowned in thorns, referencing Jesus. The crown extends into a halo around the birds face suggesting the bird's divinity and its importance beyond the physical realm. The body of the bird is camouflaged with the surrounding foliage, suggesting the ways Native Americans lived in one with Nature, unlike Western Society attempting to conquer nature. Hidden in the foliage in front of the bird is the foot of an unseen bird with a claw stretched out to trip the bird. The foot is a representation of the restrictions of Western society and the manipulation of Satan. A well camouflaged angel is subtly flying with the bird, showing the divine favor. The bird is receiving the message of God given through the tree, showing that Earthly connection to God is through nature. The bird is like Jesus as it knows the message, but the bird and the message will be ambushed by society.

The Red Road and the Black Road (Figure 5) is a composition of two birds moving in opposing directions. The bird to the viewer's left is healthier than the bird on the right. The left bird is feathered in gospel while the right bird is feathered in negative writing. The good bird brings the viewers eyes clockwise along an ascending staircase, seen from a bird's eye perspective. The bad bird brings the viewer's eyes counter

clockwise along a descending staircase. When conducting ceremonies, the Ojibwa encourage clockwise movement as it represents the way to live in the light of the creator. Counterclockwise movement represents the distracting darkness of the Devil. The ascending staircase begins as vertebrae coming from the root of a tree. To the right of the tree is the reaper with a rabbit ear formed from flesh sewn together. Overall, this drawing represents the contrast between isolation and revelation. Isolation is the disconnection between humans and nature. Revelation is the way of God as revealed in nature.

A bird was formed from the marks of *Paroxysm* (Figure 6). A white sheet restricts the movement of the bird. On the viewers left, the bird is wearing a mask of the face of Kathe Kollwitz. The bird's beak is forced open with string tied to the cloth that covers the bird and flows behind it. Its mouth is opened as if it is forced to eat the vegetation below. Different parts of the bird are exposed as they come through the cloth. The foot of the bird is resting on the foot of an elephant that is trampling the vegetation below. The elephant foot and the vegetation is disguised by the white fog of spores coming from the vegetation that the bird is about to swallow. Bird feet do not trample nature as they tread lightly over the ground leaving only a light mark that looks like a peace sign. Elephant feet trample the ground, and so the birds feet resting on elephant feet shows an unnatural action, similar to the unnatural way humans interact with the environment. The bird represents a person forced to conform to the ways of Western society. The natural state is suppressed as the bird wears a mask and is restricted in movement. The actions of the bird are determined by its restrictions. Its actions are detrimental to itself and its environment. The overall composition of this drawing depicts existence from a great perspective. The free flowing lines of the cloth move through the

picture plane as life and light move through the void of darkness. The cloth begins as a corset of light in the upper right corner and ends as the entrapment of a bird.

A Time of Boundaries (Figure 7) is the prototype of this series. A bird is depicted bound from flight by a complex dark mass. The bird's eyes are opaque like *The Messenger*. Its fur is covered in repetitive gospel of John 4:48, "Unless you see signs and wonders, you will not believe." A bee's stinger penetrates through the mass of the restriction. This references the declining numbers of bees. If bees go extinct then many flowers cannot pollinate and much life on Earth will become extinct. The overall form of the bird is enclosed in a rectangle, further expressing limitation. The top of the bird's fur and the bird's foot do not obey the restrictions of the rectangle. The foot is depicted in outer space forming a peace sign among planets and moons showing that peace is the way of God far beyond human interaction. Adjacent to the bird's face is an echoing form and a tree. The tree appears in the distance and emanates a message like ripples in water. The ripples do not extend into the rectangle expressing isolation from the revelations of nature. However, the bird is aware of this message because its eyes are opaque as if in another realm and the reflection of the bird's head in the world of the tree. Glowing orbs form at the bottom of the bird. They appear like a UFO of a spaceship. This is referencing lyrics to Neil Young's *After the Gold Rush* (1969): "I dreamed I saw the silver spaceships flying in the yellow haze of the sun. There were children crying and colors flying all around the chosen ones. All in a dream the loading had begun. Flying Mother Nature's silver seed to a new home in the sun."^{xiii} The space scene in this picture is to remind the viewer that Earth is a tiny delicate bubble of life floating in the outer regions of the Milky Way Galaxy somewhere in the infinite void of space.

Artificial Light (Figure 8) is a drawing of a crow on the ground in the deep woods near a pond. The crow's head is facing the viewers left toward a pond with some barren trees. The crow has human eyes rendered from an old picture of a Native American woman. The crow's mouth is forced open by strings attached to a mask and the back of the bird's head facing the right. The mask is a leathery human face. The eye sockets have no eyes, but rather are filled with a gas-like light that illuminates the right half of the paper. A praying mantis is drawn to the smoky light and away from the subtle natural light that illuminates the pond in the depths of the woods. This shows the distractions of human creations. Animals are confused by our transgressions. The praying mantis seems to meditate aimlessly into a trap. The insect seems to be praying, but is turned toward the direction of the artificial light. This shows that some people with good intent are actually following Satan rather than God. The idea for this piece came from direct observation. I carried a large rolled up piece of paper with me out into a field in the woods. Quickly, the bright white paper was filled with insects that included the curious praying mantis that stood still praying long enough for me to draw it.

Owl (Figure 9) is an obscure drawing of an owl in the woods next to an illuminated tree. The Owl is camouflaged with the thick vegetation suggesting that it is a being in tune and living one with the woods. This rendering also refers to the characteristics of owls as they are perfectly stealth beings. The owl is peering from its dark placement toward a glowing tree. The tree stands out from the picture as it is bright white in contrast to the black of the rest of the image. The tree is like the form of a woman dancing. The full moon shines from between her branches and emanates through air like ripples in water. This references the unity between God and Mother Nature. The

message of God is traveling through the moonlight, through the tree, to the owl, and ideally to the viewer. The blocked square cutting through the top of the image references a division between realms of perception.

The Phoenix is the beginning of the bird series. It is a drawing of a strange animal confined by the parameters of a box. The animal has a bonelike horse head and a body similar to a pregnant horse mixed with a bird. Its wings are attempting to stretch out behind it. The creature sits on water that is misting like an underground river. People are praying around a glowing cross in the water. The people are quite small in comparison to the rest of the picture. Above the creature is another horizon. It looks like an Illinois field with a few trees at night. To the right of the picture is strange writing referencing fairy or elf writing and the strange voices of the trees. To the left of the picture is more writing over darkness disguising the subtle faces of ghosts'. Because the creature is betwixt horizons, it is also between or beyond human perception and thus metaphysical. It is like fairies and elves that are said to live betwixt. People are praying for the release of this creature. The creature is the spirit of Mother Nature who has been confined and coming to a time of rebirth. As she awakens, she will explode through the horizon and give birth to the will of God. Like a phoenix, Mother Nature will rise from her ashes.

All of these drawings are intended to suggest the isolation of Western Society from the revelations of nature. They are like metaphors, helping people to step outside of the perceivable realm to view the actual world in which they are. Hopefully, my work will help change peoples perspective on things. People need to change their habits. They need to turn off their televisions, cell phones, and computer monitors, and go outside. They need to heavily question the systems within which they act and think. People need

to become aware of the importance of the nature, discover the will of God, and act upon it. Most importantly, beyond all other actions, the most powerful thing a person can do is pray.

FUTURE

My life experiences, my spirituality, and my influences from Native America, visual art, and music have informed this body of work. The bird series suggests issues that I feel are of drastic importance to existence. People need to connect with nature so that they can view the fallacy of their destructive ways. If human isolation persists, they will perish. I deeply believe that contemporary society can change its ways. I think that when it does, the world will be a better place than it was before humans became destructive. People will become more in tune with God and more respectful of nature than they have been throughout their evolution. The time to come will be a time of true enlightenment. My drawings are intended to help bring my people to this point.

My goal is to keep creating and evolving my ideas, knowledge, and skills and my Bird series has helped to achieve this. Also I find that in order for my message to reach anybody, I must get my work “out there.” I intend to get my work into as many galleries and exhibitions as possible. I also plan on allowing my work to reach a wider audience. One of my target audiences is the young men and women of Western society. They are undergoing the transition of getting their heads out of the clouds and putting their feet on the ground. My art could help guide them from becoming brainwashed by society. Teenagers do not have the money to buy art and few of them frequent art galleries, but they do however buy posters and books. When my work is mass produced in these formats, teenagers will be able to examine the artwork at their will. Having my art on their wall or in their backpacks will allow them to contemplate my drawings far longer than merely passing by it in a gallery.

My next big project will begin in late May, 2009. I am staying with Michael Osogwin, Chief of the Ojibwa, in his house deep in the woods of the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. There I will draw all over boards that will cover his massive ceiling. I will continue to develop my work and my ideas. I wish to work even larger and create also in three dimension. I wish to not only convey my message through drawing, but also through carving. I will continue to push forward my ideas and skills until I can no longer create.

When one steps into a natural environment, away from the physical and mental penetration of other humans, she or he will become aware of more than can be logically explained. One will see that the land echoes the sky, and everything natural is harmonious, magical, and holy. When one sees all the living messages and signs from God present in nature, she or he will unlock the door of her or his perception. The trees are breathing and the sky is flowing. The spaces in between all things are alive and visible. Birds know of Heaven, but my people only know of the Hell we have created. My people are lost; blinded by their ways; ignorant to the spirit that moves through all things. The time has come to rid ourselves of evil.

Beyond all my attempts to express my intuition through logic is God. All of which I am trying to express is beyond words, beyond logic, and beyond art. Nonetheless, with my art and my words, I am trying to translate what I am being shown, but as the Ojibwa say, it is “the Mystery.” The words of William Blake summarize my ideas. “If the doors of perception were cleansed everything would appear to man as it is, infinite. For man has closed himself up, till he sees all things through narrow chinks of his cavern.”^{xiv}

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- ⁱ “Census Bureau” 2006
- ⁱⁱ Ibid.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Primitive Radio Gods
- ^{iv} “The End of Night,” *National Geographic*, November 2008
- ^v The term “fairy” has various spellings. The two most dominant spellings I have found through my research are the American spelling, “fairy”, and the British spelling “faerie”.
- ^{vi} Ellen Phillips. *The Enchanted World, Fairies and Elves*. pg. 121
- ^{vii} Brian Froud and Allen Lee. *Faeries*. “Faerie Flora,” unpaginated.
- ^{viii} Iain Zazcek. *Fairy Art*. Pg.164
- ^{ix} Ibid.
- ^x Ibid.
- ^{xi} Elizabeth Prelinger. *Kathe Kollwitz*. Pg.20.
- ^{xii} Paul Moorhouse. *Dali*. Pg. 6 – 24
- ^{xiii} Neil Young. *After the Gold Rush*
- ^{xiv} William Blake. *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. Pg.141



Figure 1

Koobird



Figure 2

Consider the Ravens



Figure 3

Waterless Regions



Figure 4

The Messenger

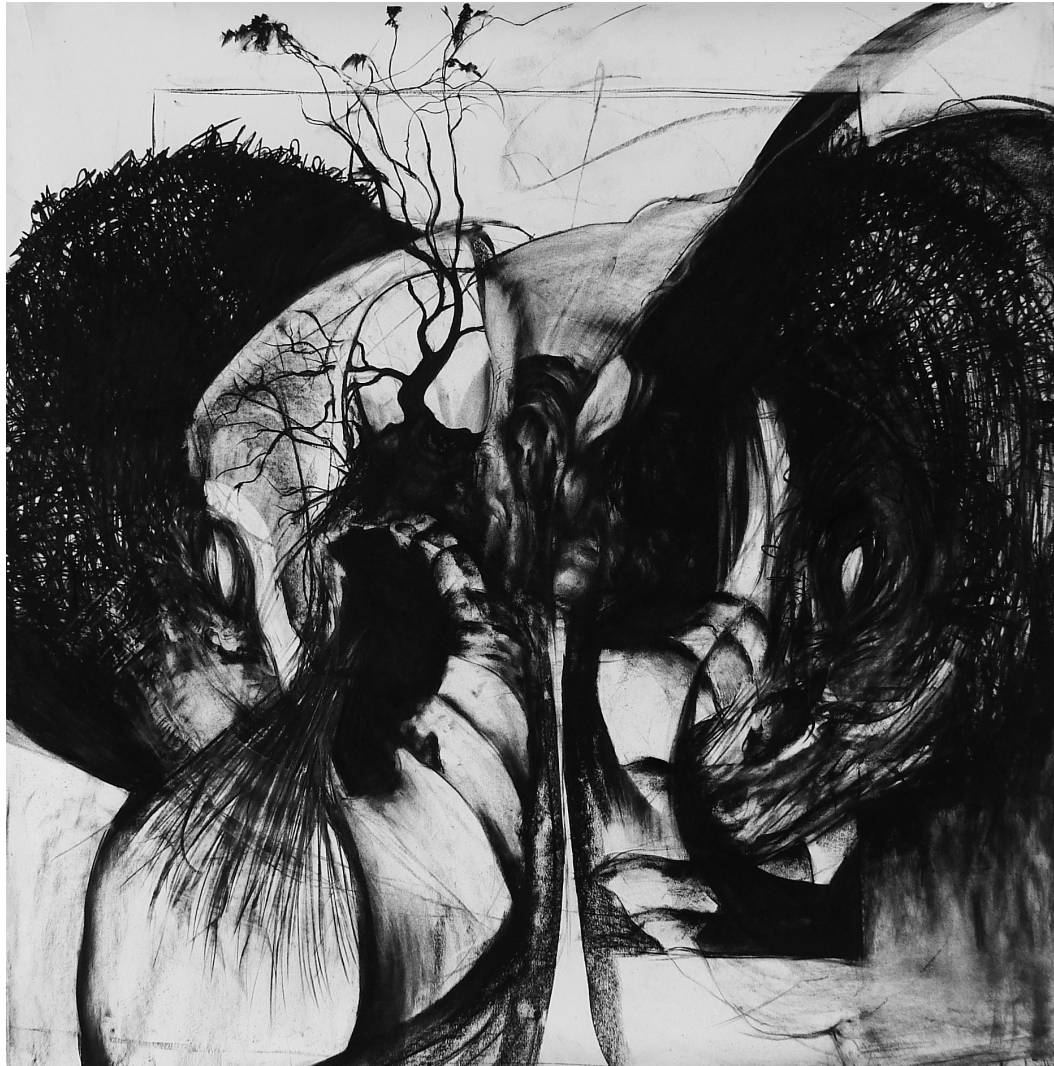


Figure 5

The Red Road and the Black Road



Figure 6

Paroxysm



Figure 7

A Time of Boundaries



Figure 8

Artificial Light



Figure 9

Owl



Figure 10

The Pheonix

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