

Dwell

An Exhibition Statement Submitted to the
College of Graduate Studies and Research
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Fine Arts
in the Department of Art & Art History

University of Saskatchewan

Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

By

Darren McQuay

PERMISSION TO USE

In presenting this exhibition statement in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Graduate Degree from the University of Saskatchewan, I agree that the Libraries of this University may make it freely available for inspection. I further agree that permission for copying of this exhibition statement in any manner, in whole or in part, for scholarly purposes may be granted by the professor or professors who supervised my exhibition statement work or, in their absence, by the Head of the Department or the Dean of the College in which my thesis/exhibition work was done. It is understood that any copying or publication or use of this exhibition statement or parts thereof for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission. It is also understood that due recognition shall be given to me and to the University of Saskatchewan in any scholarly use which may be made of any material in my exhibition statement. Requests for permission to copy or to make other uses of materials in this thesis/dissertation in whole or part should be addressed to:

Head of the Department of Art & Art History University of Saskatchewan
Murray Building
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7N 5A4
Canada

OR

Dean
College of Graduate Studies and Research University of Saskatchewan
107 Administration Place
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7N 5A2 Canada

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

There are many people that I would like to thank for their continued assistance throughout my time in the MFA program. First I would like to thank my supervisor Allyson Glenn for her insightful advice and constant unwavering positive support throughout the course of the last two years. I would also like to thank other members of my committee: Graham Fowler, Alison Norlen, Peter Purdue, and Tim Nowlin, for all the great encouragement, counsel, and commitment they gave.

Thank you to all the faculty and staff in the Department, especially Sharilyn Lee, Tracey Chappell, and Keith Bell. Also, I would like to thank my fellow MFA candidates for their friendship, support and advice, in particular Susan Varga, Aminah Jomha, Alexa Hainsworth, David Dyke, Donna Bilyk, and Eileen Murray. I would also like to thank Joan Borsa for her support in my final year. As well as Donald Roach who encouraged me early on. Kevin Korecki, my good friend I would like to thank for being an outside ear to all my ideas and questions. My dog, Tumi also deserves thanks for providing me the opportunity each day to reflect upon things while walking.

I also feel it is important to mention my gratitude that the Emma Lake Campus was still running during my time; a location that played a role in the positive experience I had while attending the University of Saskatchewan. Thanks to Allyson Glenn, Ken Van Rees, and Chris van Donkelaar for organizing one of the last great courses at the Emma Lake Campus and the staff of the Emma Lake facility.

Finally, a huge thanks goes out to my life partner and greatest friend Carolanne Inglis-McQuay for her caring, patient, supportive, and understanding way, without which I would not have been able to do this.

Dwell

Table of Contents

<i>PERMISSION TO USE</i>	i
<i>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</i>	ii
<i>LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS</i>	iv
<i>Introduction</i>	1
<i>Painting Process</i>	7
<i>Drawing</i>	9
<i>Breaking Down the Image</i>	14
<i>Absence of Human Characters</i>	16
<i>Phenomenology and Architecture</i>	17
<i>Buddhism and the Theory of ‘Dualism’</i>	23
<i>Quantum Theory and the ‘Measurement Problem’</i>	24
<i>Why use Dreams as a Source Material?</i>	25
<i>Diptychs and Duality</i>	29
<i>The Title of the Exhibition</i>	32
<i>Conclusion</i>	34
<i>Bibliography and Works Cited</i>	35

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1: Darren McQuay, <i>Crossroads</i> , 2012, acrylic on canvas, diptych, 72" x 120"	2
Figure 2: Darren McQuay, <i>Dependent-Origination I</i> , 2013, acrylic on canvas, diptych, 72" x 120"	3
Figure 3: Darren McQuay, <i>Dependent-Origination II</i> , 2013, acrylic on canvas, diptych, 72" x 120"	4
Figure 4: Darren McQuay, <i>Contingency</i> , 2013, acrylic and oil on canvas, diptych, 64' x 96	5
Figure 5: Darren McQuay, <i>Demarcation</i> , 2013, acrylic on canvas, 64' x 96	6
Figure 6: Darren McQuay, <i>Emma I</i> , 2012, charcoal and chalk pastel on Stonehenge paper, 24" x 32"	10
Figure 7: Darren McQuay, <i>Dome I</i> , charcoal, chalk pastel, and oil stick on Stonehenge paper, 72" x 100"	11
Figure 8: Darren McQuay, <i>Dome II</i> , charcoal, chalk and oil pastel on Stonehenge paper, 56" x 72"	12
Figure 9: Darren McQuay, <i>Dome III</i> , river mud, charcoal, titanium dioxide on wall, 110" x 168"	13
Figure 10: Darren McQuay, <i>Detritus</i> , 2013, charcoal and chalk pastel on Stonehenge paper, 48" x 72"	14
Figure 11: Martin Golland, <i>Lobby at La Gran Bahia</i> , 2008, oil on canvas, 64"x80"	15
Figure 12: Giovanni Piranesi, <i>Carceri d'invenzione</i> , 1761, etching	19
Figure 13: Darren McQuay, <i>Mindful Interior</i> , 2011, acrylic on canvas, 72" x 120"	21
Figure 14: Darren McQuay, <i>Your Synaptic</i> , 2012, acrylic and bone pigment on canvas, 60" x 78"	22
Figure 15: Darren McQuay, <i>Contingency</i> (version II), 2013, acrylic and oil on canvas, 64" x 96"	31

“We accept reality so readily – perhaps because we sense that nothing is real”

Jorge Luis Borges

Introduction

The work that comprises this thesis exhibition is a series of paintings and drawings that set up a sequence of visual problems derived from my interest in the philosophy of the mind, and in particular, with a focus on the false impression of reality that both Buddhism and quantum theories, such as the ‘measurement problem’ suggest. In addition, the phenomena of ‘being’ and dependent-origination dualism are significant aspects explored in this series of work.

In this exhibition I am utilizing architecture and dreams as the primary subject matter to help create in the viewer a sense of the uncanny, binary oppositions, uncertainty and choice. The exhibition reveals a natural evolution of thought and technique within the thematic discourse presented. As work developed throughout the course of two years, the concept of Buddhist dualism slowly began to play a more central role in the works. I have treated each painting in this exhibition like a question, and each painting has offered a different answer.

The *Crossroad* Series (see Figures 1 – 5) embodies all aspects of the exhibition’s thematic goals, and uses a single dream space to reveal a subtle and metaphoric narrative that progressed as the series did.



Figure 1: Darren McQuay, *Crossroads*, 2012, acrylic on canvas, diptych, 72" x 120"

This can be seen in the first painting in the series, *Crossroads* (see Figure 1). Presented to the viewer are two directions of travel into the composition enhanced by the diptych layout, as one choice lies in each panel. The concept of dependent-origination dualism is layered into the painting conceptually, simply displayed as a twin choice on a diptych design. Buddhists also speak about the nature of reality as an illusion (see pg 23). This is a concept I have examined in this work. I have done this by presenting the viewer with a fragmentation of reality - almost a competition between the building structure, the forest, grass and water. It is my desire to investigate these issues in the hopes that the viewer will also obtain a similar uncanny perspective of reality.



Figure 2: Darren McQuay, *Dependent-Origination 1*, 2013, acrylic on canvas, diptych, 72" x 120"



Figure 3: Darren McQuay, *Dependent-Origination II*, 2013, acrylic on canvas, diptych, 72" x 120"



Figure 4: Darren McQuay, *Contingency*, 2013, acrylic and oil on canvas, diptych, 64' x 96



Figure 5: Darren McQuay, Demarcation, 2013, acrylic on canvas, 64' x 96

The art in this exhibition stems from a strong desire to express the queries I have about quantum theory and Buddhism in relation to the nature of our shared reality, and to some extent, refutes physicalism, which is the philosophical belief that everything is physical or that there is nothing over and above the physical (Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy [SEP], physicalism, 2013).

A more detailed discussion of Buddhism, dreams, quantum theory and how they are connected in this exhibition occurs later in this essay; however, it is important to be clear at what level I am discussing quantum physics and Buddhism. I am using concepts and theories in both topics not

as a scientist or a philosopher, but as a creative artistic interaction with the more populist ideas these subjects offer (see p. 23 - 24).

What follows is a review of research and literature that provided inspiration and conceptual origins for my practice, and an analysis of how I am using these thematic influences within the process and creation of my works.

Painting Process

There are a number of methods I used to help the viewer to navigate the idea of basic binary oppositions, fragmentation, and competing ficto-realities in the works.

When making the work, I am attempting to setup a series of contrasts ranging anywhere from mark, colour, texture, stylistic, chromatic or philosophical. This creates a fragmentation in the paintings, and enhances scenarios posed in the space which challenge the viewer's conscious bias towards the purely physical. I am attempting to form natural binary oppositions in the actual work: green vs. red, light vs. dark, a shoreline, and opposing architectures. This helps to underlay the concept of dualism, and provides additional tools to explore this idea in a variety of ways.

Another method I use in my practice is the process of working 'additively and subtractively', where my mark making either builds upon what has come before, or subtracts from what is already there. This distorts and deconstructs realism, which helps to produce a push and pull between the abstraction and a more fully articulated image, and adds an eerie uncanny reception to the work.

I also work in a ‘make and respond’ manner, where each series of marks sets up a framework which leads to a new set of visual problems to be solved, and each new pathway leads to a unique result, driving the instinct to create more. The philosophical term ‘Borgesian conundrum’ (named after Jorge Luis Borges) has been defined as an ontological question - "whether the writer writes the story, or it writes him" (Taylor, 2010). This is not the first time this notion has been discussed; Michelangelo, among others, famously stated “that every block of stone has a statue inside it and it is the task of the sculptor to discover it”. It is my job, as a painter, to allow the painting to lead the process to some extent, and I believe this allows me to arrive at a more intuitive and subconscious solution. In my experience, each painting evolves and resolves differently, and often leads the process towards its own final outcome.

In addition to those tools of distortion already discussed, another means I use is painting on the floor. This orientation allows me to work upside down and from the sides. This greatly increases the variability in my work, allowing for more chance and randomness to occur. It also allows me time to view and consider the painting in a purely formal way from a variety of unconventional angles. Working on the floor (and being able to paint upside down) naturally led to painting diptych panels in reverse position on the wall (upside down and right side up) as discussed in *Diptychs and Duality* (see p.29).

Because the paintings in this exhibition start from dream sources, my visual resources are from a wide variety of places. For the architecture inspirations, I use a combination of my own photography collected from the many places I have traveled, computer programs like SketchUp,

small drawings, and direct placement of made up structures as the painting progresses. Although I have some visual aids, I end up using no source at all once the under paintings' basic layout has been established. The images I am painting are a composite of both my imagination, and the powerful imagery from my dreams, so at a certain point it only makes sense to simply paint from my mind's eye. This is the time when I use methods of distortion with more consideration to help achieve the difficult-to-visualize dream space and consider the aesthetics of the formal abstraction which is emerging. This is, in part, the reason I chose to paint the same dream space five times over in the *Crossroad* Series. I wanted to see if I could get closer to the actual visual/kinaesthetic experience of the dream. I also wanted to take some time to explore the meaning and narrative found within this particular dream place. I don't believe I have fully actualized the dream, but I do feel that I have come close, even though the painting often dictates its own destiny (in terms of the 'Borgesian conundrum'). I try to steer the direction toward the image of the dream by allowing for mistakes and chance to occur, while intentionally painting in a manner that enhances the fragmentation and disjointed visual outcomes. These are tools that aid and mimic the chaos found within a dream space, while also creating compositional beauty, which I feel is a fundamental consideration in the final outcome of the painting.

Drawing

Drawing has served as both a formal and experimental activity, but primarily act as preparation and experimentation for my paintings. I am able to produce drawings swiftly, which affords exploration of initial thoughts and ideas quickly, as well as helping to flush out areas in my painting plans that need further investigation.

Many of the initial drawings I created in the two years of my Masters program were influenced by natural wooded environments and organic-based architectural forms (mostly domes and simple shelters) viewed while on walks in the forest (such as *Emma I*, see Figure 6).



Figure 6: Darren McQuay, *Emma I*, 2012, charcoal and chalk pastel on Stonehenge paper, 24" x 32"

In my larger works (see Figures 7 – 9), I attempted to get into a meditative state while drawing these pieces. The size of them allowed for my whole body to play a role in the mark making versus just using my hand and wrist. This permitted for a very intuitive subconscious formalism to emerge. Later, I would go back into the works and highlight structures and other construction features, like docks and awnings. What I produced were excellent experiments that helped to influence the seven paintings exhibited in *Dwell*.



Figure 7: Darren McQuay, Dome I, charcoal, chalk pastel, and oil stick on Stonehenge paper, 72" x 100"



Figure 8: Darren McQuay, Dome II, charcoal, chalk and oil pastel on Stonehenge paper, 56" x 72"



Figure 9: Darren McQuay, *Dome III*, river mud, charcoal, titanium dioxide on wall, 110" x 168"

When I planned the *Crossroad* Series I more specifically began to use my drawing as a conduit to explore the various aspects of the mental images I was planning on using as subject matter.

The dream used in the *Crossroad* Series included aspects of vaulted and steel framed architecture, and natural shorelines and forests, to create a combination of merging realities between varied types of man-made structures and natural elements. Through my drawing, I was able to explore portions of this mental image. For example, in the work *Detritus* (see Figure 10), I used this drawing to explore combining architectural ruins with trees, as a study for the forest I

was planning on including in the *Crossroad Series*. *Detritus* was the only drawing presented in the exhibition. *Emma Lake I*, and *Dome I – III* were not included.



Figure 10: Darren McQuay, *Detritus*, 2013, charcoal and chalk pastel on Stonehenge paper, 48” x 72”

Breaking Down the Image

Martin Golland, a Professor in the faculty of Art at the University of Ottawa (2006) speaks to the importance of breaking down the image in order to bring out the questioning nature that is desired of the artist in the viewer. In reference to work in his 2008 exhibition *What is Said and What is Meant* (see Figure 11, *Lobby at La Gran Bahia*) he states:

“The Image-based painting is entrenched in a yearning for resolution: a match-up game between what is presented and what the spectator wishes to have occur. Yet alongside the mimetic impulse to represent the world as accurately as possible, there exists equally

a desire in representation to seek out the fissure that breaks its uniformity and is built of conversions of imbedded opposites. These forces unfold in the working process as a sequence of actions and counter actions that erode features till they threaten to lose their representational definition” (p. 2)



Figure 11: Martin Golland, Lobby at La Gran Bahia, 2008, oil on canvas, 64”x80”

In this way, he discusses that the process of painting can be regarded as a contrast of interacting visual forces; a collision of opposites that randomize and abstract the real – or as Golland (2008) states, “the role of representation itself becomes a pictorial mode that welcomes ambivalence, complexity and ambiguity” (p. 3). The randomizing and abstraction of the real as discussed by Golland is a formula I share and effectively use within the process of painting itself, and I feel it very much enhances the conceptual and philosophical interests I have in my art. As discussed, the paintings in *Dwell* have active, and sometimes antagonistic, contrasts between the rationality of the structure vs. the void abstract space beyond. By working with contrasts, in an additive/subtractive and make-and-respond method of painting, I can come closer to the balance

between abstraction and realism I am working with. This sets up the foundation for the questioning nature I want in the viewer and from there, to a perplexing disposition of reality.

Absence of Human Characters

The spaces I produced for this exhibition provide an occasion of immersive experience devoid of human characters; characters which might present unwanted content and distracting narratives. I want the viewer to experience the space on their own, with their own conclusion based on the hints provided, not the conclusion that a figure might signify. I want, as pointed out by Golland (2008), the shot presented in a way where neither the narrator nor the character are present. Or what Slavoj Žižek (Slovene philosopher and cultural critic) calls, in film, the pure, pre-subjective phenomenon which describes a film shot that is devoid of a narrator or an actor and which creates a moment in the viewer where the “shot is ‘subjectivized’ by the spectator’s pure response, which then fills in the void with their own personal projection” (Žižek, 2004, p. 153). Žižek (2004) goes on to place the notion of pure, pre-subjective phenomena in the realm of painting: “This contrived viewpoint in film can be paralleled in painting: the canvas becomes in a way the camera’s “kino-eye,” a detached hallucinatory inner vision that separates itself from any narrative content. In its place is left an all-prevailing absence that folds back upon itself“ (p. 154). I want the viewers to have their own personal, first person, phenomenological experience of the space itself, for it is the pure, pre-subjective phenomena of the space that I want to draw attention to.

Phenomenology and Architecture

Another interesting book I was reading during the conception and painting of the *Crossroad* Series was Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space*. In this book Bachelard relates an approach of phenomenology to architecture, where he bases his examination not on alleged origins, which was the trend in enlightenment thinking about architecture, but on a lived experience of architecture. In particular, Bachelard conducts an exploration of the home, from cellar to attic, in order to show how our perceptions of houses and other dwellings shape our thoughts, memories, and dreams. Bachelard unreservedly insists that architects base their work on the understanding the space will be psychologically stimulating, rather than on abstract and historical notions that the function of architecture is toward experience within it.

Bachelard speaks poetically about the architecture of the imagination, and allowing for this psychological avenue in contemporary building. Throughout the exhibition I too am exploring the feeling and effect that architecture has on the viewer. The dream is the primary reference in the *Crossroad* Series therefore, Bachelard's interests in our dwellings as shaping our very thoughts, memories, and dreams is a valuable supporting opinion on architecture to represent in this exhibition. He explored the idea of an almost archetypal nature to the buildings and dwellings we experience in our life. I am also experimenting with how architecture plays into the understanding we have of reality both consciously, and in dreams.

My interest in architecture, and in particular to the classical structures present in the *Crossroad* Series, in part stems from Rome. A few years ago I spent a number of very inspiring weeks wandering the architecturally variegated streets of Rome. For my series, Rome has provided the largest architectural influence, for the obvious classical ruins, but more specifically to the motley crew of classical, Renaissance, Baroque, and modern architecture, all together at the same time, often in the same building. As Hans Ulrich Reck, a contemporary Swiss philosopher and art historian (2002) states:

“Freud's assumption and his attempted supposition that the layers of consciousness can be compared to a city in which everything exists next to and on top of each other, did not lead him to Rome by chance. He considers Rome to be the place where nothing could get lost that had once existed, and that everything remains, endlessly transformed. Rome marks Piranesi's sinking into a dream just as his dream marks the real - that is the missing and recorded – Rome” (www.khm.de, Dream and Imagination, 2002).

Reck (2002) goes on to mention that:

“the real Rome itself is a myth, a vanishing point, that allows the searching eye to develop its constructive power. It is a matter of creating a fiction that defines itself as real. Only imagination can produce a portrait of Rome that lives up to the city's reality. The real Rome itself is a myth, a clotted form” (www.khm.de, Dream and Imagination, 2002).

In the first quote by Reck, he references Piranesi, who is a perfect example of an artist who exemplified the idea of an imagined architecture to be “a clotted form”. Reck (2002) states that Piranesi's vision is entirely devoted to the summation of what is “incomparable, immense, an excess of scale, that which is both naturally and mathematically immeasurable” (www.khm.de,

Dream and Imagination, 2002). Reck (2002) concludes by saying, “It is this fantasy-induced monumentality that mirrors both a reflection of the uniqueness of the individuality of Piranesi and the uniqueness of the city of Rome” (www.km.de, Dream and Imagination). The fragmentation of different architectures within Rome is what Reck is speaking to that helped fuel Piranesi’s imagination - “Rome is a place where nothing could get lost that once existed” (Reck, khm.de, Dream and Imagination, 2002). In many of his works, such as *Carceri d'invenzione* (see Figure 12), Piranesi is taking on the psychology of these spaces. He goes beyond the classical architecture, to more of an analysis of the architectural archetypes found in our unconscious brain. Like Bachelard, Piranesi produced work that is dealing inventively with the architecture of the imagination. Rome provides the perfect environment to experience a true fragmented architectural reality, and one which I pull great influence from as many of the paintings in *Dwell* represent both classical and modern architectures opposing and combining.

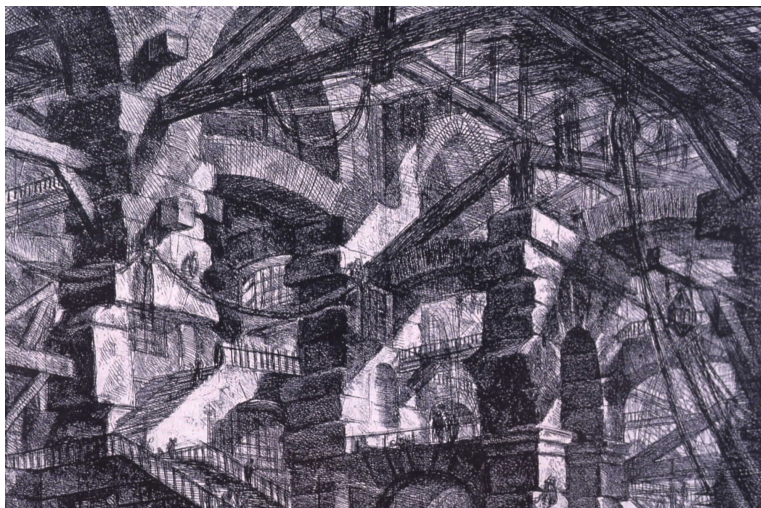


Figure 12: Giovanni Piranesi, *Carceri d'invenzione*, 1761, etching

While painting the *Crossroad* Series I spent a week in Paris, and like Rome, it was the wonderment and phenomena of experiencing combined architectures that had another strong impression on me. The injection of Parisian architecture into the middle of the series (literally)

infused me with a fresh phenomenological architectural experience. Paris, like Rome, has beautiful combined architectures in the form of opposing elements: steel framing with classical vaulting and modern architecture. All of these are evident in *Dwell*. Rome and Paris' architectural fragments stand as inspirational original examples of varying architectures and, when combined together with dream-like features, have enabled me to juxtapose both reality and fiction in opposition to each other. It is through this juxtaposition that I hope the viewer is able to gain access to a deeper structure of reality.

Within the architectural fragments used in my compositions are areas of contrast between accuracy/detailed passages and abstract spaces. I am doing this as an added method to help represent an uncanny sense of realism and the material world in my work. I feel the realism is required in order to create a starting point for the viewer to delve further into the unreal. The distorting I use in my painting process, as discussed above, is a mixing of interacting visual contrasts that help randomize and abstract reality in order to create a sense of the uncanny.

My choice to represent structural framing in some of the work is to characterize the temporary, to show the structure of something, its primary foundation, and to heighten ones sense of change (change in the structure, that is), as well as to create feelings of uncertainty and danger. *Mindful Interior* (see Figure 13), *Your Synaptic* (see Figure 14), and the *Crossroad* Series express uncertainty through the structure of the framing which presents a feeling of danger, difficulty in passage, uncertainty of travel, and the temporary nature of the architecture used. Temporary is an important word in this exhibition. In my mind, the concept of a temporary structure is consistent with the idea that there is both the presence and absence of that structure. This is similar to the

idea of a silhouette, but also expresses the root meaning of a temporary structure, which is that it is, in fact, temporary. I use temporary structures to suggest and question the nature of reality. Do buildings and structures simply exist because we believe they do? Are these structures as much psychological as they are physical?

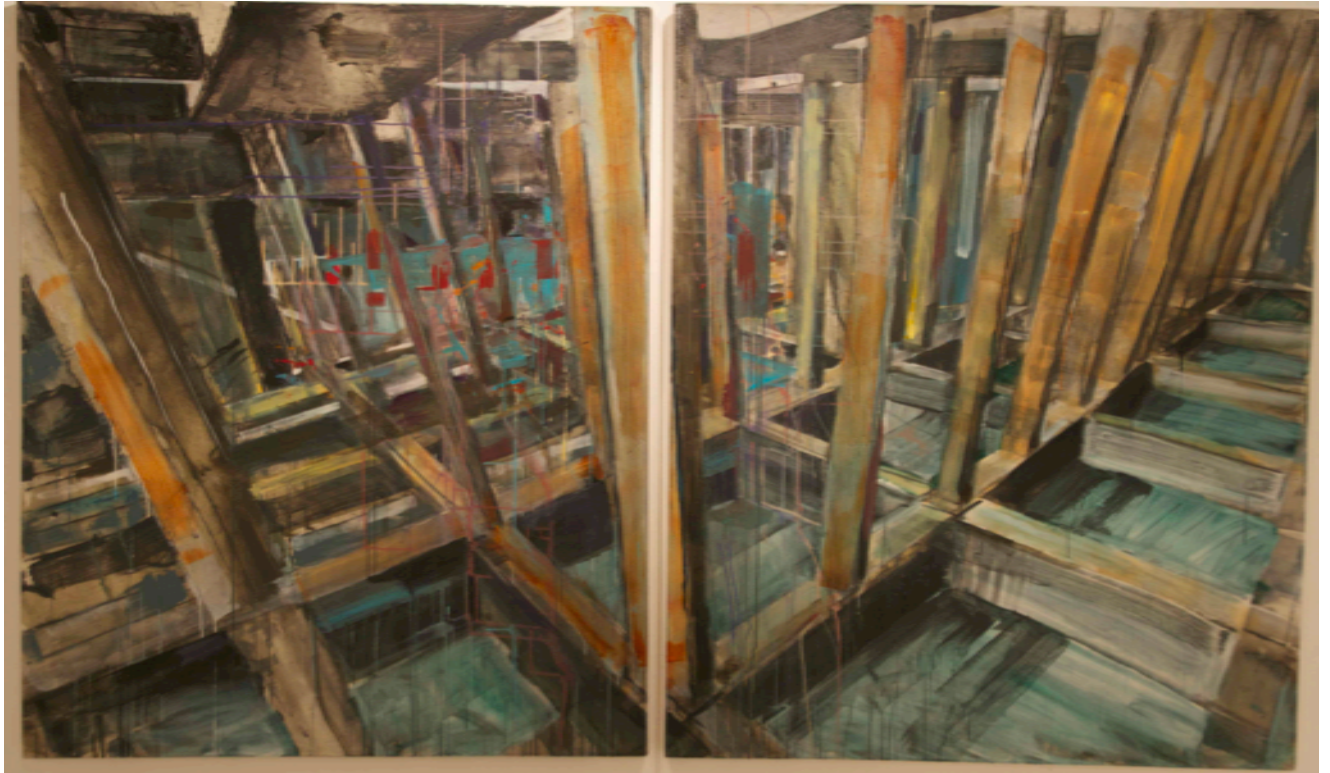


Figure 13: Darren McQuay, *Mindful Interior*, 2011, acrylic on canvas, 72" x 120"



Figure 14: Darren McQuay, *Your Synaptic*, 2012, acrylic and bone pigment on canvas, 60" x 78"

Beyond the temporary structure in *Your Synaptic* is the feeling of groundlessness. The structure provides the viewer with both a sense that things are grounded (through the structure) but also groundless. In my opinion, juxtaposing a real structure with a groundless space, and tipping the vantage point forward to force the viewer to feel as though they are falling into this space, subconsciously encourages the viewer to consider the Buddhist philosophy that reality is an illusion.

Buddhism and the Theory of 'Dualism'

For many years, Buddhism is a subject that I have been interested in. It is not a surprise that Buddhist concepts are explored in the exhibition and dualism has become a sort of frequency or 'musical note' that has under-laid many of the works in *Dwell*.

It is important for this exhibition that questions linking Buddhism and quantum theories, such as the 'measurement problem', are outlined, as these provide a much broader background to situate the ontological queries about a shared false sense of reality that I am exploring in *Dwell*.

In the latter half of the 20th century, a case was made that Buddhist teachings shared commonalities with modern scientific and philosophic thought, as outlined by John Gribbin (1984), who is a British science writer, astrophysicist, and visiting fellow in astronomy at the University of Sussex. Some have even gone as far to say that Buddhism is much more than a religious pursuit, but one that focuses on a scientific and philosophical approach (Gribbin, 1984). It is generally accepted among populists' beliefs that Buddhism connects to discourse regarding evolution, quantum theory and cosmology, though most scientists, as outlined by Amos Yong, the Dean of Theology at Regent University, continue to see a separation between the religious and metaphysical statements of Buddhism and the methodology of science (2005).

Buddhism claims that external reality is an illusion, both the mind and external phenomena are equally transient, and that they arise from each other. The mind, as declared by Buddhists,

cannot exist without external phenomena, nor can external phenomena exist without the mind (buddhanet.net, dependent origination, 2013). This is known as Pratītyasamutpāda, or ‘dependent-origination’ (buddhanet.net, dependent origination, 2013).

As hard as it is to believe that conscious reality is potentially much more of an illusion than we think (or at the very least more complicated than just physicalism), it is entirely possible that the shared false impression among the human species is the simple truth that we collectively believe in the physical experience of the world as physical beings. Dependent-origination dualism, in my mind, speaks to the principle found in quantum theories the ‘measurement problem’.

Quantum Theory and the ‘Measurement Problem’

Jim Al Khalili (2012), a nuclear physicist at the University of Surrey mentions that quantum theory tells us to be sceptical of the belief in the purely physical. Quantum theory states that matter co-exists as both physical and pure energy, but exists as one or the other, not simultaneously (SEP, quantum mechanics, 2013). Since the end of the 19th century, theories in quantum physics have had a profound effect on science and philosophy (Al Khalili, 2012). Amit Goswani (2002), a theoretical nuclear physicist at the University of Oregon, further suggests that quantum mechanics has had ramifications in psychology and religious studies as well.

Interestingly, many physicists suggest that the nature of reality is not just one that is physical as we see through human eyes, but one that is much more complex and deceptive than we perceive.

Al Khalili (2012) explains that the ‘measurement problem’ in quantum theory is that an atom only appears in a particular place if one measures it; that an atom is spread out all over the place

as wave energy until a conscious observer decides to look at it. This suggests that the very act of measurement or observation creates a sort of physical reality as seen or observed by the viewer (Al Khalili, 2012). Goswami (2002), in his book *The Physicists' View of Nature Part 2: The Quantum Revolution*, goes even further than Al Khalili by outlining that this means that if one dives down into the nature of matter, everything that is known about the everyday world dissolves and that there are no objects anymore, only relationships. In Goswami's (2002) understanding, we can make sense of the world only if we base the world on consciousness. Consciousness, he states, allows the atom to physically exist where it does because we choose to observe it there. This is a beautiful conundrum of perspective, and a challenging concept to wrap our physical brains around. This is also a concept that sounds like the Buddhist statement that physical phenomena cannot exist without the mind, nor can the mind exist without the phenomena. I am aware of, and utilize ideas from, dependent-origination and 'the measurement problem'. As a result, this resonates in my artistic practice, and I express it by using process-based tools (as discussed above) to facilitate the break down and fragmentation of competing realities and architectures. The subject of the dream supports this, as an uncanny contradiction to our physically conscious experience of the world.

Why use Dreams as a Source Material?

Throughout time, dreams have been seen as a connection to the unconscious world. For this exhibition, dreams provide the perfect gateway to begin a discourse around the notion of reality I am attempting to discuss.

The ‘dream argument’ hypothesizes that the act of dreaming provides initial evidence that the senses we trust to distinguish reality from illusion should not be fully trusted. The ‘dream argument’ was discussed by early Western philosophers, such as Plato (Theaetetus 158b-d) and Aristotle (Metaphysics 1011a6) and, received more serious attention in Descartes' *Meditations on First Philosophy* where the more modern definition of it is discussed (SEP, Descartes Epistemology, 2013). In their article *Media presence, Consciousness and Dreaming*, Joseph Barbera and Henry Moller (2006) discuss that any state that is dependent on our senses should at the very least be carefully scrutinized to determine whether it is in fact real. The SEP (2013) goes on to mention that the ‘dream argument’ has become a prominent sceptical hypothesis, and has wide reaching influence on contemporary philosophies. Barbera and Moller (2006) state:

“it seems that dreams are not a simple replaying of the days events. But rather isolated fragments of waking experience, extracted and incorporated into conscious narrative in novel ways. Extracted elements may be those with emotional salience or those concerned with procedural learning” (p. 103)

It is these “fragments of waking experience” that are being utilized in *Dwell*. The *Crossroad* Series attempts to portion and splinter the architecture, mixing and contrasting it with the natural elements of turf, water, and shorelines in order to create a mysterious dream-like perception of reality. I am hoping that, perhaps, this will lead the viewer to the philosophical place I am also seeking to find.

Even more interesting, and to the point of an uncertain reality, the results of three experiments performed by psychologists Elizabeth Loftus and Giuliana Massoni (1996) suggest that dreams can sometimes be mistaken for reality. Most people do not typically realize they are dreaming

when it is occurring. This has led philosophers to ponder whether we could actually be dreaming all the time, as opposed to distinguishing the difference between awake and dreaming states (Barbera and Moller, 2006). At the very least, Barbera and Moller (2006) state we cannot be certain that at any given moment one is not dreaming. They further mention “given the phenomenological characteristic of the dreams, it is not surprising that several authors have likened the dream experience to a form of virtual reality” (p 103). In his book, *Dreaming: a cognitive-psychological analysis* (1985), David Foulkes has commented “that while the dreamer creates dreams mentally, they are experienced as life rather than thought, and as perception rather than imagination” (p. 26). According to this perspective, dreams take on the form of credible world analogs, through which we move and interact with other individuals (Foulkes, 1985). In fact, the simulation of reality in dreams is so complete, Foulkes (1985) states: “the question is not why we accept it as real but why we shouldn’t believe it to be real” (p. 27). Barbera and Moller, (2006) mention that Tor Neilson and Doug Stenstrom prominent dream psychologists, describe dreaming as portraying “coherent virtual worlds”, noting:

“Dreams seem to take place in real, spatially coherent, environments with which the self interacts perceptually, for example, by orienting, seeking and assimilating sensory information, much as it does with the real world. The self also seems to engage realistic characters in emotional and intellectual exchanges. Semantic information and a sense of knowing are often also present” (p. 103).

The discussion brought up by Foulkes, Barbera and Moller are ideas I seriously consider, and consequently they turn up in a questioning manner in my work. The dream acts as the perfect platform from which to explore the enquiries and philosophical interests discussed in this essay. To me, a dream poses the ultimate ontological question we all share about reality - how real is

real? The Buddhist dependent-origination notion that the “the mind cannot exist without external phenomena, nor can external phenomena exist without the mind” (buddhanet.net, 2013) is, in my opinion, a perfect philosophical expression of the ‘measurement problem’ and this is where the *Crossroad* Series has found its source inspiration. In terms of the ‘dream argument’, I believe that the physical world and the dream world are separate, but I wonder if the fabric of both waking realities and dreams are actualized in the same manner as described in the ‘measurement problem’ and dependent-origination. The primary inquiry I am engaged with in my work surrounds how we manifest a reality, and whether or not this occurs only when there is a need. Do we manifest our own reality, and is this reality reinforced by a shared belief in this certainty? Does our species (and other animals, for that matter) form a collective need for a shared physical reality? Does this resonate in our psyche, the memory of a reality layered from one generation to the next? Quite simply, is the physical world just the predicament of physical beings?

All the works in *Dwell* are based around specific dream images from my dream journals. The five paintings in the *Crossroad* Series are based around the same single dream image as described above. What is hidden in the composition is a subtle laying of binary oppositions between the fragments of different realities, such as structures vs. natural elements, structures vs. structures, inside and outside reversed, as well as complimentary colours in the palette. All these elements are forming and creating a visual discussion around the notion of dependant-origination and the nature of being.

Diptychs and Duality

While I was painting the *Crossroad* Series I was also reading works by Borges including *The Garden of Forking Paths*. Borges is known for embracing ‘unreality’ in his literature, which is the illusionary nature of things, and has been quoted as saying: “I am not sure that I exist, actually. I am all the writers that I have read, all the people that I have met, all the women that I have loved; all the cities that I have visited, all my ancestors” (Borges, p. 43, 1941). *The Garden of Forking Paths* (1941) discusses the idea that there are forking paths through the passage of time (or perceived time), where none of these paths are the same, but all are equal. Borges (1941) uses the recurring image of a “labyrinth that folds back upon itself in infinite deterioration” (p.153), and in this way, Borges states, “we become aware of all the possible choices that might be made” (Borges, p. 153, 1941). Borges (1941) goes on to mention that these forking paths have branches, which represent these choices and ultimately lead to different endings.

Borges’ notion of the labyrinth was another influence in the *Crossroad* Series, and this influence can be seen as the dual pathway into the composition, along with the confusing labyrinth of architecture and the natural elements mixed together. In particular, as the Series progressed, I became interested in posing questions that include more fully dependent-origination doctrine. Thus, the choice to use a diptych is two part: one, it enhances the idea of a dual pathway or choice within the painting, and second, it is metaphoric for the idea of dualism, and of the labyrinth as “folding back upon itself in infinite deterioration”.

Dependent – Origination II (see Figure 3) has a more developed visual representation of Buddhist dualism in its diptych form. I present this as a contrast of complementary colours (red and green) split between the two canvasses. The red is situated in the left canvas, which sits as opposite to the green in the right canvas. Both canvases', however, spill a proportionately smaller amount of colour into the opposite canvas, which is intended to visually demonstrate a 'sort-of' yin-yang symbol: a symbol, which is representative of a true binary opposition.

This more developed visual representation of dependent-origination is also present in *Contingency* (see Figure 4). I intentionally painted the left panel in a reversed state about fifty percent of the time. Initially, I wanted to display the vaulted architecture reversed to what a viewer would normally expect, as seen in the position below (see figure 15). In this orientation I felt dependent-origination was being represented more forcefully, because the architecture was also in a yin-yang like position.



Figure 15: Darren McQuay, *Contingency* (version II), 2013, acrylic and oil on canvas, 64'' x 96''

However, I settled on displaying *Contingency* with the architecture in both panels in its proper real world positioning to make the duality somewhat evident but less forceful (see Figure 4).

Regardless of the final compositional layout, the process of reverse painting greatly enhanced the chaotic and fragmented nature of the actual dream space I was depicting.

I was also comfortable with the final layout of the panels in *Contingency* because I painted *Demarcation* (see Figure 5) next, which is the first non diptych painting in the Series of five. The reverse architecture works well in *Demarcation* to express dualism in the absence of a diptych. The harmonizing colours in this painting are also based around a red/green palette.

The use of the diptych, combined with elements like the forest and shorelines in *Crossroads* (see Figure 1), *Dependent – Origination II* (see Figure 3), and *Contingency* (see Figure 4) also help to confuse and complicate the suggested decision put forward to the viewer as to which way to travel within the individual panels. This is also representative of the idea discussed by Borges' *Labyrinth*. In *Mindful Interior* (see Figure 13), I am attempting to create similar visual barriers, but this time through the use of thick paint, strong mark making, and opaque colour to barricade the natural pathway into, and exit out of, the painting. The pathway presented in each canvas within the diptychs is somewhat perilous, but always achievable. I want the choice to be complicated and potentially difficult, to serve as a metaphor for the challenge of such pathways in life.

The Title of the Exhibition

The title of the exhibition, *Dwell*, is influenced by phenomenologist Martin Heidegger's book *Building Dwelling Thinking*. In his book, Heidegger (1959) discusses the notion of dwelling and asserts, "only if we are capable of dwelling, only then can we build" (p. 6). Heidegger's (1959) essay outlines the dwelling–building relationship and suggests, "to build is already to dwell" (p. 6). Heidegger makes the point that it is more than just for shelter that we build structures, but that we invest our entire being and psyche into these created spaces. He argues that they are true psychological spaces, as well as physical ones. Heidegger's means of investigation is to source the historical root of the word *bauen* - "to build" and connect its origins to dwelling. The old word *bauen*, Heidegger (1959) states that it is, in essence, 'that I dwell, you dwell'. He argues that "the way in which you are and I am, the manner in which we humans are on the earth, is *Buan*, dwelling. To be a human being means to be on the earth as a mortal. It means to dwell"

(Heidegger, 1959, p. 1). “As human beings, we cannot fail to dwell” suggests Heidegger (1959), “for dwelling, ultimately, is the essential existential core of human beings” (p. 1). These ideas strongly influenced my exhibition title, *Dwell*, as I wanted the title to suggest that the empty and uncanny architectural spaces I present in the paintings are, to some extent, about us as dwellers – as well as being a nod to Heidegger’s ideas about architecture, buildings and dwellings. Our dreams as humans are impregnated with architecture and buildings borrowed from the physical conscious world we create. It is important, then, that this exhibition provide a hint toward the root of our existence as dwellers and builders.

I chose to use the word dwell in its root form of the verb. This leaves things more open for interpretation for the viewer in terms of the pronouns they might apply to the word: I dwell; we dwell; you dwell; she dwells; he dwells. Or, dwell on, to dwell on about something or, even directly in relation to the phenomenological premise that *we are dwellers*.

Conclusion

Overall this exhibition is a comprehensive examination of the phenomena of dreams and architecture within human experience, and also examines questions that originate from the 'measurement problem' and Buddhism's dependent-origination theory. My artistic interests stem from these concepts, and support this discourse.

In my works, I want to create an environment that allows for occasions of discovery; silent, but loaded compositions placing the willing viewer in a contemplative stance where architectural fragmentation, dream psychoanalysis, and dependent-origination dualism all combine to suggest that our shared physical reality maybe a false impression.

Through formal technique, I have attempted to create basic binary oppositions and contrasts between elements within the painting, whether by colour, texture, style, or upon the base philosophy. I want to present a questioning nature by utilizing these complementary yet divergent elements, where I ultimately pander to the indecisive and unsure nature of the human psyche.

Bibliography and Works Cited

Al Khalili, J. (2004). *Quantum: A Guide for the Perplexed*. London, UK: Orion Publishing Group

Barbera, J., Moller, H. (2006). *Media Presence, Consciousness and Dreaming*. In Riva, G. et al (Eds.). (2006) *From Communication to Presence. Volume 9 Emerging Communication: Studies Technologies and Practices in Communication*. (p. 96 – 119) New York, NY: IOS press

Blackburn, S. (2008). *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, 2nd edition revised. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press,

Bachelard, G. (1994) *Poetics of Space: a classic book on how we experience intimate spaces*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press

Borges, J. (1941) *Garden of Forking Paths*. In Hurley, A. (1988). (translation). *Jorge Juis Borges: collected fictions*. (p. 67 – 119). New York, NY: Penguin Press

Dependent Origination: Fundamentals of Buddhism (2013). *Buddhanet.net*. Retrieved from: <http://www.buddhanet.net/funbud12.htm>

Descartes Epistemology. (2013). *Stanford encyclopdedia of philosophy*. Retrieved from: [http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/descartes epistemology/](http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/descartes%20epistemology/)

Foulkes, D., (1985). *Dreaming: a Cognitive-Psychological Analysis*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates

Golland, M. (2006). *What is Said and What is Meant*. (Master of Fine Art thesis, University of Guelph). Retrieved from the author.

Goswami, A. (2002) *The Physicists' View of Nature Part 2: The Quantum Revolution* Berlin, DE: Springer

Gribbin, J. (1984). *In Search of Schrödinger's Cat: Quantum Physics and Reality*. New York, NY: Bantam Books

Heidegger, M. (1959). *Building, Dwelling, Thinking* (Hofstadter, A. Trans. collected in: *Poetry, Language, Thought*. [1971]). New York, NY: Harper Colophon Books.

Mysticism. (2013). *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Retrieved from: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/mysticism/>

Norton, J.D. (2001). Einstein for Everyone in *Origins of Quantum Theory*. Retrieved from: http://www.pitt.edu/~jdnorton/teaching/HPS_0410/chapters/quantum_theory_origins/

Parry, J. (Eds). (2011). *Art and Phenomenology*. New York, NY: Routledge

Phenomenology. (2013). Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Retrieved from: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/phenomenology/>

Physicalism. (2013). Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Retrieved from: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/physicalism/>

Quantum Mechanics. (2013). Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Retrieved from: http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/quantum_mechanics/

Reck, H. (2002). Dream and Imagination: a résumé about Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720-1778). Retrieved from: <http://www.khm.de/kmw/reck/essays-ecrits-writings-saggi-ensayos/english/dream-and-imagination-a-resume-about-giovanni-battista-piranesi-1720-1778/>

Taylor, E. (2010). Book review: 'The Thieves of Manhattan' by Adam Langer. Los Angeles Times. Retrieved from: <http://articles.latimes.com/2010/jul/18/entertainment/la-ca-adam-langer-20100718>

Yong, A. (2005) *Buddhism and Science: Breaking New Ground* (review) *Buddhist-Christian Studies* - Volume 25, 2005, (p. 176-180) Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press

Zizek, S. (2004). *Organs Without Bodies: On Deleuze and Consequences*, New York, NY: Routledge. (153-154)