

Summer 2021

Conceptualizing Thought-Forms Through Dynamic Artworks

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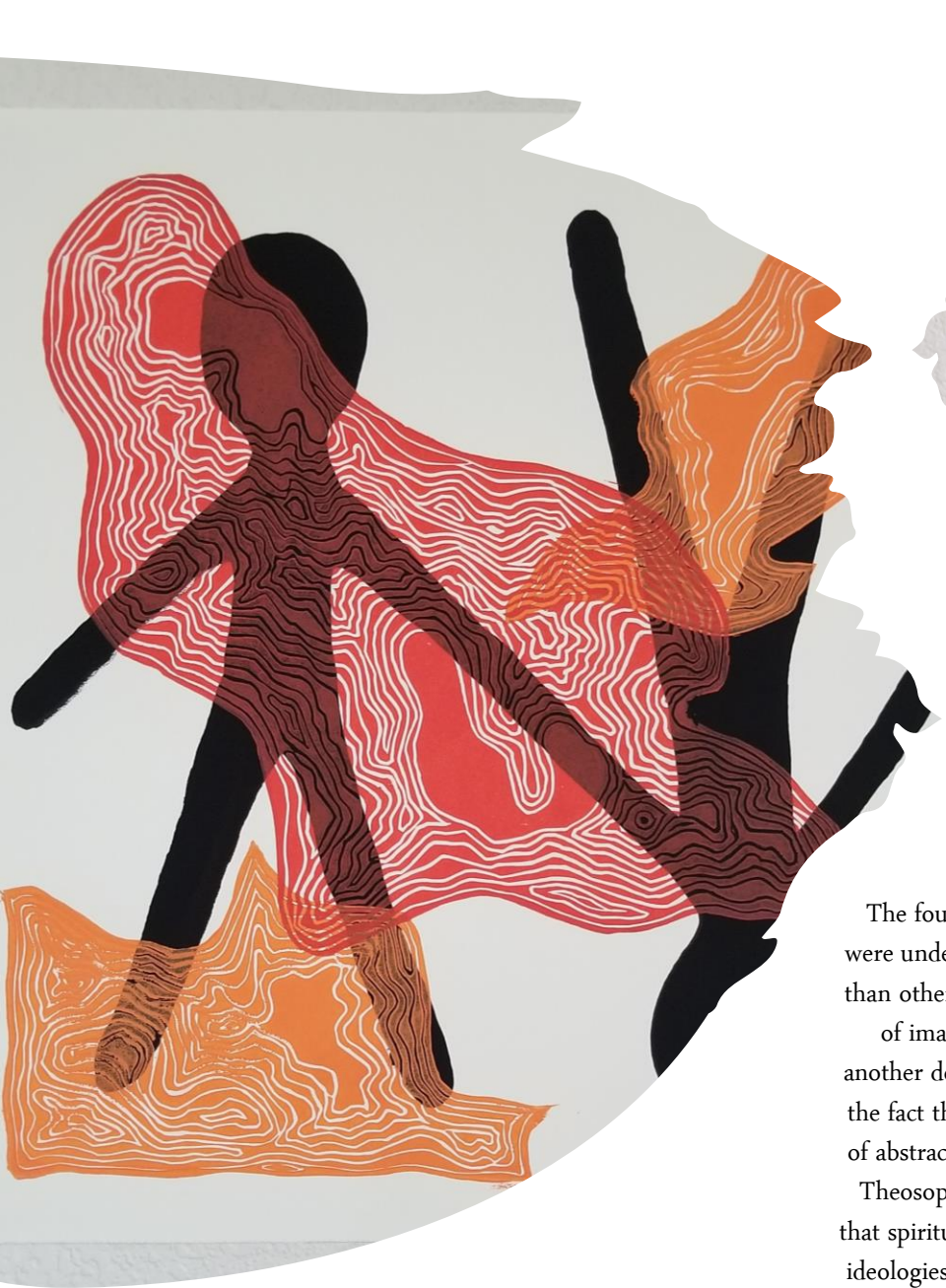
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Conceptualizing
Thought-Forms
Through Dynamic
Artworks

Process and Inspirations

Kendyl Chasco



The foundation for this project was laid in the fall of 2020. With a pandemic raging and school taking place remotely, my husband and I were under one another's feet far too often. We both are prone to wildly oscillating moods in a day which made some days more challenging than others and yet, I loved every minute of it. So, when for my final in a printmaking class we were given an open prompt to create a series of images, I chose to explore how I thought my husband's and my internal emotional topographies might interact and layer upon one another depending on our moods and emotions. Not long after completing the project, I stumbled upon a book that brought to my attention the fact that human beings have been preoccupied with the idea of visualizing emotional output since long before me. Further, the inception of abstract art was and its founding artists in the early 20th century were heavily influenced by the ideas of new age religious movements like Theosophy. The book, *Thought-Forms*, was written by two Theosophical leaders and became my inspiration for exploring the significance that spiritualism had in shaping the motivations of the artists who were leading the way in the abstract art movement. Exploring the lives and ideologies of the artists that follow was an incredibly special experience. I will be forever grateful for this summer research experience in that it allowed me a rare commodity in our world today- time. Time to explore, to think, to create, to experiment, and to become a more thoughtful artist and human being.

Merging Moods, Fall 2020, screen print and relief carvings

Thought-Forms & Theosophy

The Theosophical religious movement was, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, a new age idea that sought to promote a universal brotherhood and spiritual enlightenment as the main purpose of human life. *Thought-Forms* was written with the intention of helping people to consider the things in this world that we cannot see on a regular basis because most human beings are not attuned to a high enough consciousness. It presents the idea that our thoughts, feelings, and emotions take physical form when they leave our bodies and can impact those and the world around us. Using a clairvoyant medium and unnamed artists, the authors present a book filled with interesting descriptions and images depicting the thought forms seen emanating from different people and situations. It takes the idea of human auras to the next level and after viewing the images its influences are easy to discern in abstract art.



THOUGHT-FORMS

BY
ANNIE BESANT
AND
C. W. LEADBEATER

WITH FIFTY-EIGHT ILLUSTRATIONS



LONDON AND BENARES
THE THEOSOPHICAL PUBLISHING SOCIETY
CITY AGENTS: LUND, HUMPHRIES, LTD., 3 AMEN CORNER
CHICAGO: THE THEOSOPHICAL BOOK CONCERN
NEW YORK: JOHN LANE
1905



1					
2					
3					
4					
5					

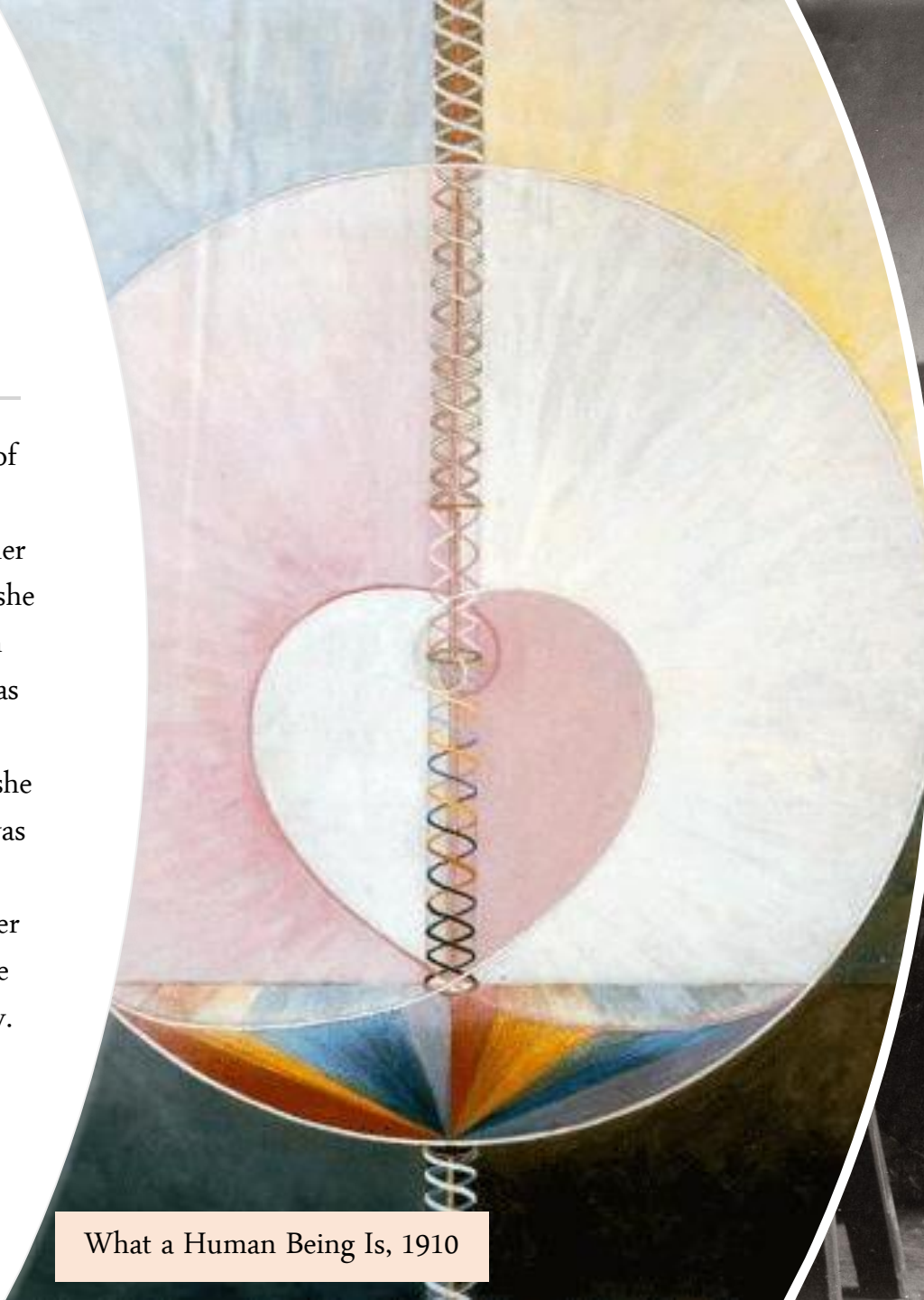
1. High Spirituality.	1. Devotion mixed with Affection.	1. Devotion to a Noble Ideal.	1. Pure Religious Feeling.	1. Selfish Religious Feeling.
—	—	—	—	—
2. Religious Feeling, tinged with Fear.	2. Highest Intellect.	2. Strong Intellect.	2. Low type of Intellect.	2. Pride.
—	—	—	—	—
3. Sympathy.	3. Love for Humanity.	3. Unselfish Affection.	3. Selfish Affection.	3. Pure Affection.
—	—	—	—	—
4. Adaptability.	4. Jealousy.	4. Deceit.	4. Fear.	4. Depression
—	—	—	—	—
5. Selfishness.	5. Avarice.	5. Anger.	5. Sensuality.	5. Malice.

KEY TO THE MEANINGS OF COLOURS.



Hilma af Klint

I am very attracted to the art and life story of Miss af Klint. A dedicated spiritualist throughout her life, she was called to paint her monumental works by a group of spirits that she and four other women communicated with during regular seances. Though her work was rejected by the religious leaders she most admired during her lifetime, she knew what she was creating was incredibly important and was undaunted in her task. Her name went unknown in the abstract art movement of her time and her paintings were not seen by the public until the later half of the 20th century. She is known today as the Mother of Abstraction.



What a Human Being Is, 1910



af Klint in her studio, around 1900



Hilma af Klint, Group IV, The Ten Largest, 1907; L-R: Childhood, Youth, Adulthood

Wassily Kandinsky

What can be said about Kandinsky in such a small space? This man pursued nonrepresentation in art with a fervor and his book *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* became an important tome for artists breaking with academic traditions, both past and present. Kandinsky's pyramid theory is an interesting way to view the ever-evolving concept of humanity and how it processes ideas. In his view, the artist is the prophet of humanity and their role is to inhabit the apex of the pyramid, offering new ways for human beings to see and experience reality. His range of paintings are incredible and varied over his long life, showcasing his own ever-evolving perception of reality.



Black Lines, 1913



Kandinsky circa 1913



Wassily Kandinsky, Composition VII, 1913



Watercolor Sketches

1. High Spirituality. —
2. Religious Feeling, tinged with Fear. —
2. Sympathy. —
4. Adaptability. —
5. Selfishness. —

1. Devotion with Affection. —
2. Highest Intelligence. —
3. Love for Humanity. —
4. Jealousy. —
5. Avarice. —

KEY TO THE MEANING



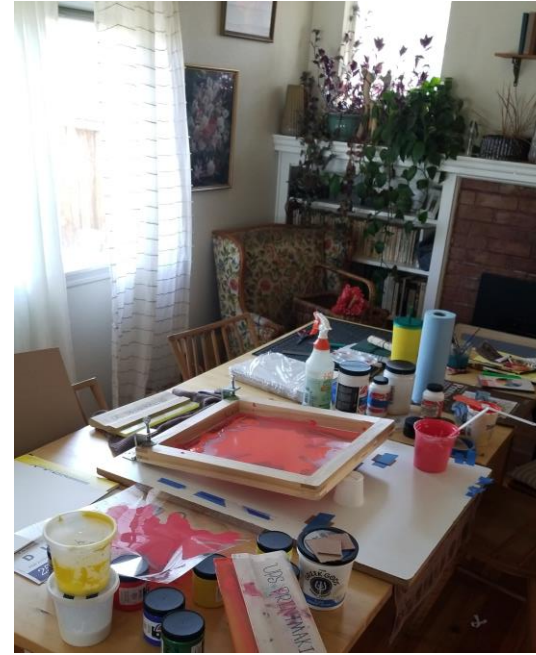
L-R clockwise: Hilma af Klint, *Wheat and Wormwood*, 1923;
Wassily Kandinsky, *Untitled*, 1934; Kendyl Chasco, *Watercolor sketch*, 2021

I have been making paintings using watercolors, especially a wet on wet (wet pigment applied to a wet surface) method, for a long time as a way to simply destress and tune out but only during this project did I realize the significance of the practice. Many abstract artists also used this medium to test ideas for larger works and often I find these quick sketches to be some of their most intriguing pieces. The quality of watercolors can allow for both crisp lines and a certain fluid lack of control that often results in highly appealing abstract forms and color combinations. Using this method for testing results in a wide array of images that can stand on their own or be used to reference larger compositions.



Screen Printing

I took to screen printing right away when I tried it in the spring 2020. I have wanted to create 2-dimensional images for a long time but have never felt comfortable in mediums like drawing or painting, so finding this medium and a voice within it has been a very fulfilling outcome of my education at UPS. Screen printing is the forcing of ink through very fine mesh screens that are prepared with positive images in a variety of ways. I used a simple method of drawing fluid and screen filler which allowed me to easily work from my home, a true blessing during this summer when to heat waves made leaving the house almost unbearable.





Filling a screen

- Creating the shapes using drawing fluid was the first step in making screens
- Filling the screen using screen filler blocks out all areas that are to remain clear of ink
- Once the screen filler has been cured with a hair dryer, the drawing fluid is cleaned out using water and the positive image is revealed

Marbling

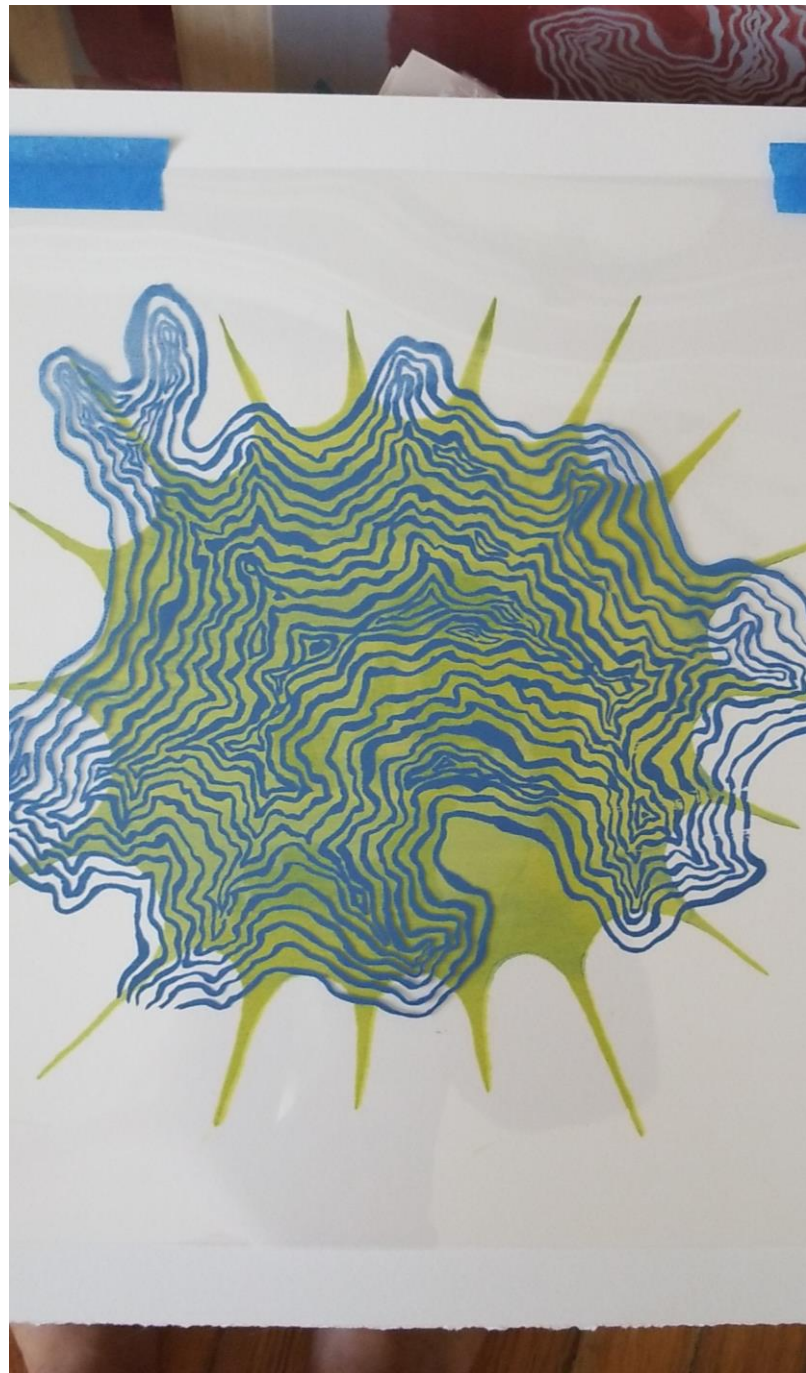
This is a technique that I have been working on since the fall of 2020. Using simple products, shaving cream and food coloring, I am able to create fluid images that I think speak to the intensely transient nature of human emotion and thought. This technique is cheap and easy to try at home and I highly recommend having a go at it! The possible outcomes are seemingly endless. Plenty of tutorials can be found online.



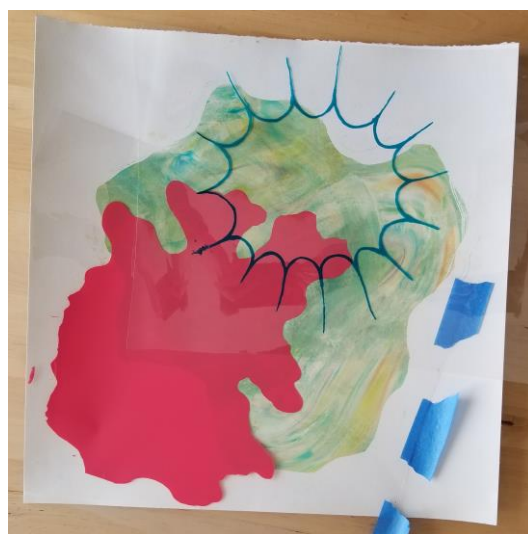
Using mylar as a way to test layering

- Mylar is plastic sheet that is often used in screen printing to ensure accurate registration or the desired placement of all the layers, especially when creating multiples
- I found printing on mylar to be a good way to test different ideas for layering the shapes and colors
- I am excited about the potential for including mylar layers in larger collage type works





Marbling
&
Mylar
Layering Tests




The End?

There is no conclusion to this project. In fact, this is just the beginning and I am VERY excited about future iterations of these ideas. Building on this project for my senior thesis, I plan to explore incorporating 3-dimensional forms among these 2-dimensional surfaces to create a collaged installation that overwhelms viewers with color and movement. I have taken away the drive to pursue risks and to build on ideas and methods that at first seem incomprehensible or even foolish. I think abstract art was a challenge to the rigid academic tradition in art that prevailed throughout history into the late 19th century and I am grateful for the risks these artists took in changing the narrative of what art can be.



Thank You!



I would like to give a very big and sincere thank you to Janet Marcavage for advising me on this project over the summer. Her thoughts and expertise have been invaluable to me, and I am so pleased to have been supported by her through this project. I am also indebted to the Agricola Scholar Endowed Fund for choosing me as a recipient this summer. Without this very generous support, this project would not have come to fruition as it has. A final thank you to the University of Puget Sound for offering this incredible opportunity to its students- I am so grateful to be a member of this institution.