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Titles

LAC & CIM

Professor Samantha Fields

Until about 1860 titles maintained an almost exclusively unequivocal relation to the images they governed. Through the traditional hierarchy of types rehearsed by the European academies, titles positioned works of art with respect to literary, historical, religious, or mythical texts, which were elevated as history painting – for Joshua Reynolds, as for other academicians, the pre-eminent genre, governed by “Poetical” “grandeur of thought” and “dignity” of expression.⁴ Titles also positioned works by identifying an individual or group, in portraiture; by locating a place, real or imaginary, in landscape images; and, finally, by noting a mood and a setting – usually colloquial, working-class, and contemporary – in genre painting. With few exceptions the titles that accompanied works from across the range of these generic kinds were deployed as basic labels. They were denotative signs seldom permitted to exceed their own terms of reference, or to call attention to their status as textual supplements to the image. Ideally, they were as unallusive as the numbers that accompanied them in the exhibition catalogues of the Salons.

From: *Invisible Colors, A Visual History of Titles* by John Welchman

Pre-Modern:

Title: Identifies a work of art descriptively

Modern/Post-Modern:

Title: Contributes to meaning via visual/textual (art/title)
relationship

The three crucial titling modes on which visual modernism depends were first worked out during the last decades of the nineteenth century:

James McNeill Whistler used musical metaphors (Symphonies and Nocturnes) as invitations to look at his paintings as arrangements of shapes and colors.

Lawrence Alma-Tadema and Paul Signac systematically titled their paintings with consecutive numbers, introducing one of the most significant aspects of the modern title -- the retreat from names, identification, and language itself.

The third titling mode was the elaborate, over-scripted, or complexly metaphoric title, developed by Dada and surrealist artists from the 1910s to the 1930s, and reinvented by formalist art and criticism in the 1950s and 1960s.

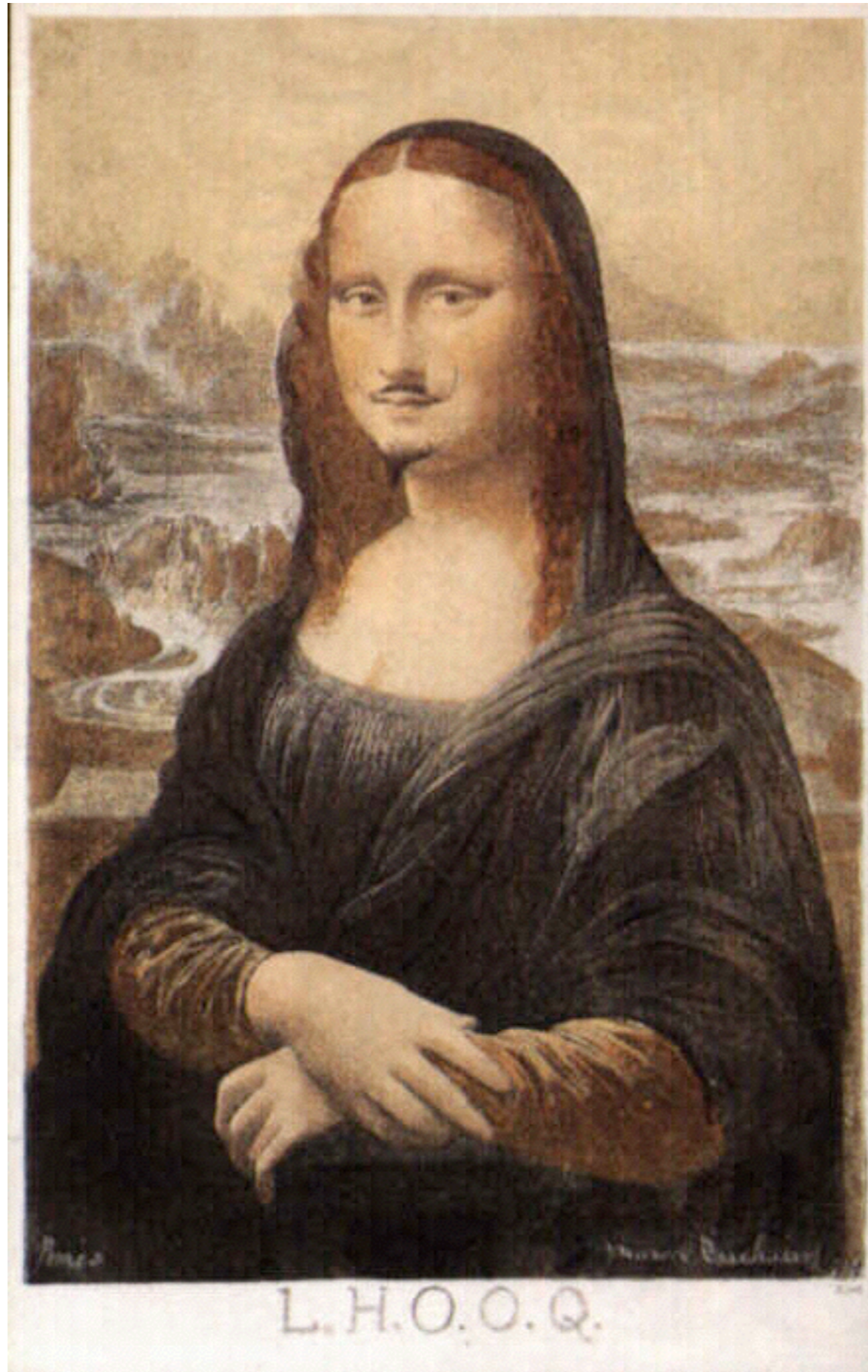
Baudrillard: conflict between text as negating (poisoning) the image and the text enhancing the image

Benjamin: (In discussing photography) “For the first time, captions have become obligatory.” (Paintings have titles, photos have captions...)

Later: Barthes: Intertextuality (relationship) between image and the text, caption, or title that accompanies it

1970s: Textuality & Visuality: Derrida, Post-Structuralism: The title or caption as important component in the signification (meaning) of the exhibited work

1984: John Fisher, in his essay “Entitling”: Calls the title a “Super-Name”, whose domain extends beyond “identification & designation”



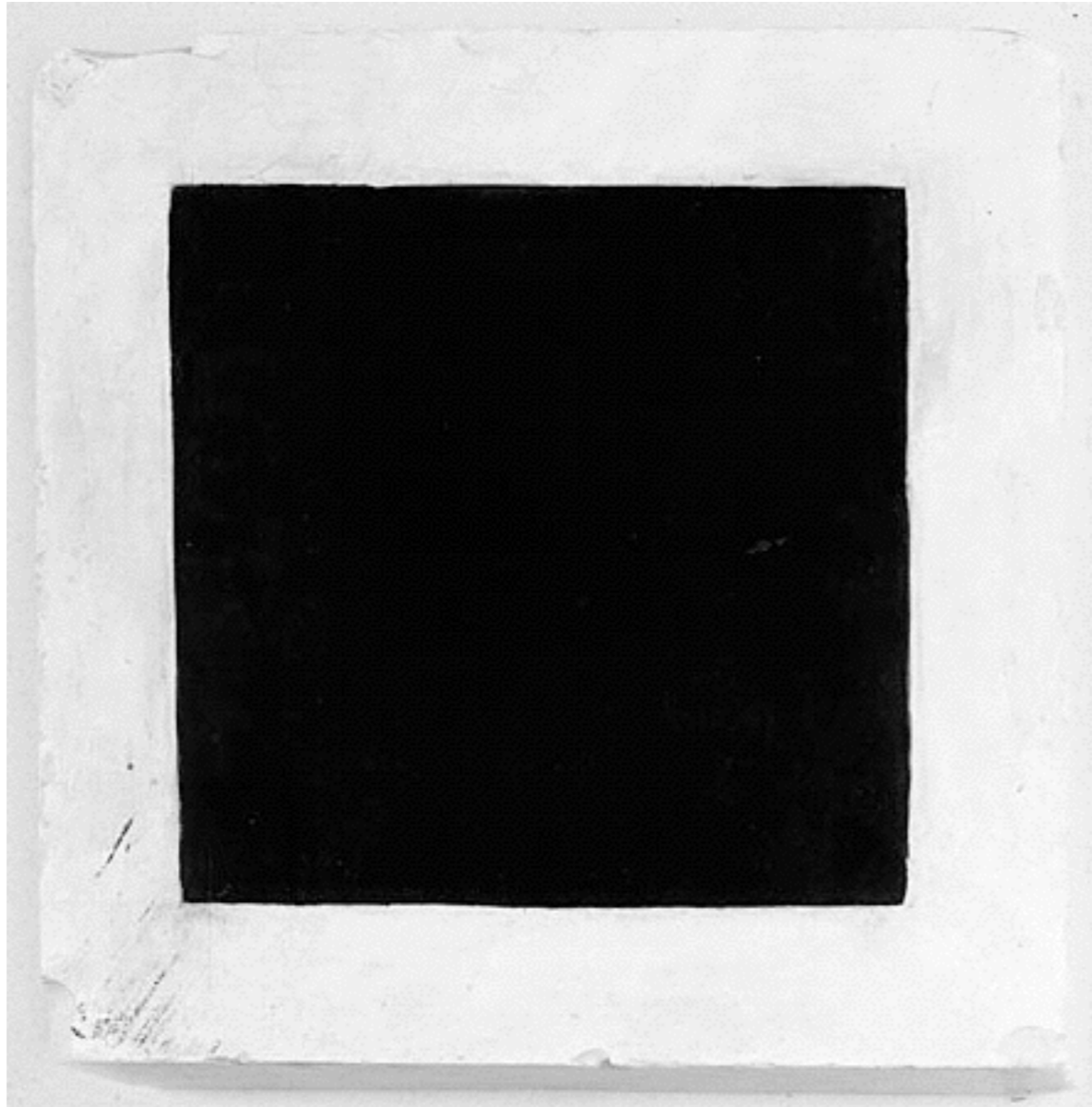


Magritte

The Treachery of Images

1928

The famous pipe. How people reproached me for it! And yet, could you stuff my pipe? No, it's just a representation, is it not? So if I had written on my picture "This is a pipe," I'd have been lying![\[2\]](#)



Kasimir Malevitch

Black Square

c. 1923-1930

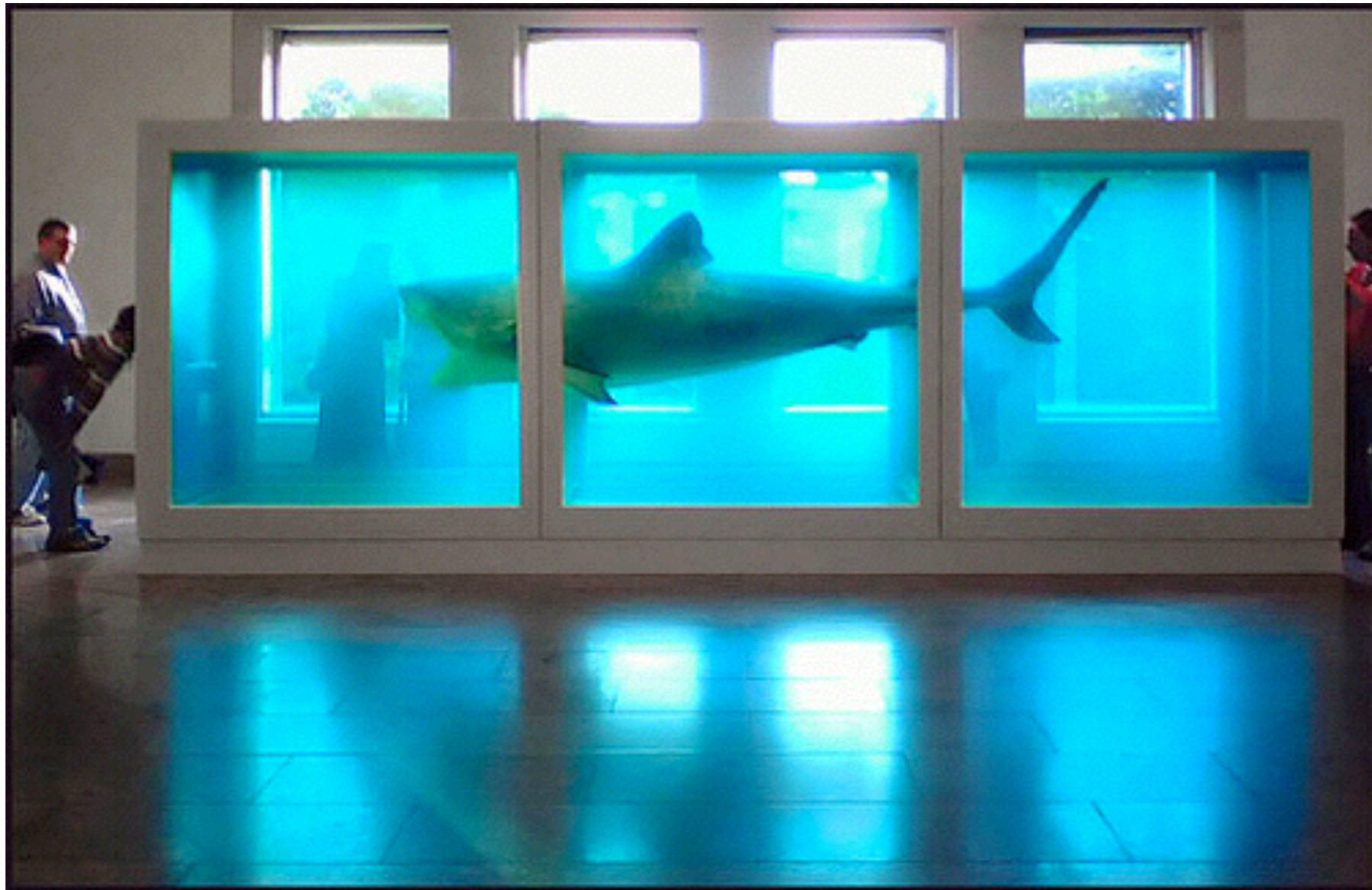
oil on plaster, 36.7 x 36.7 x 9.2 cm



Pollock, Jackson

Number 1, 1948

Oil on canvas, 68 inches x 104 inches. The Museum of Modern Art, New York City.



Damien Hirst

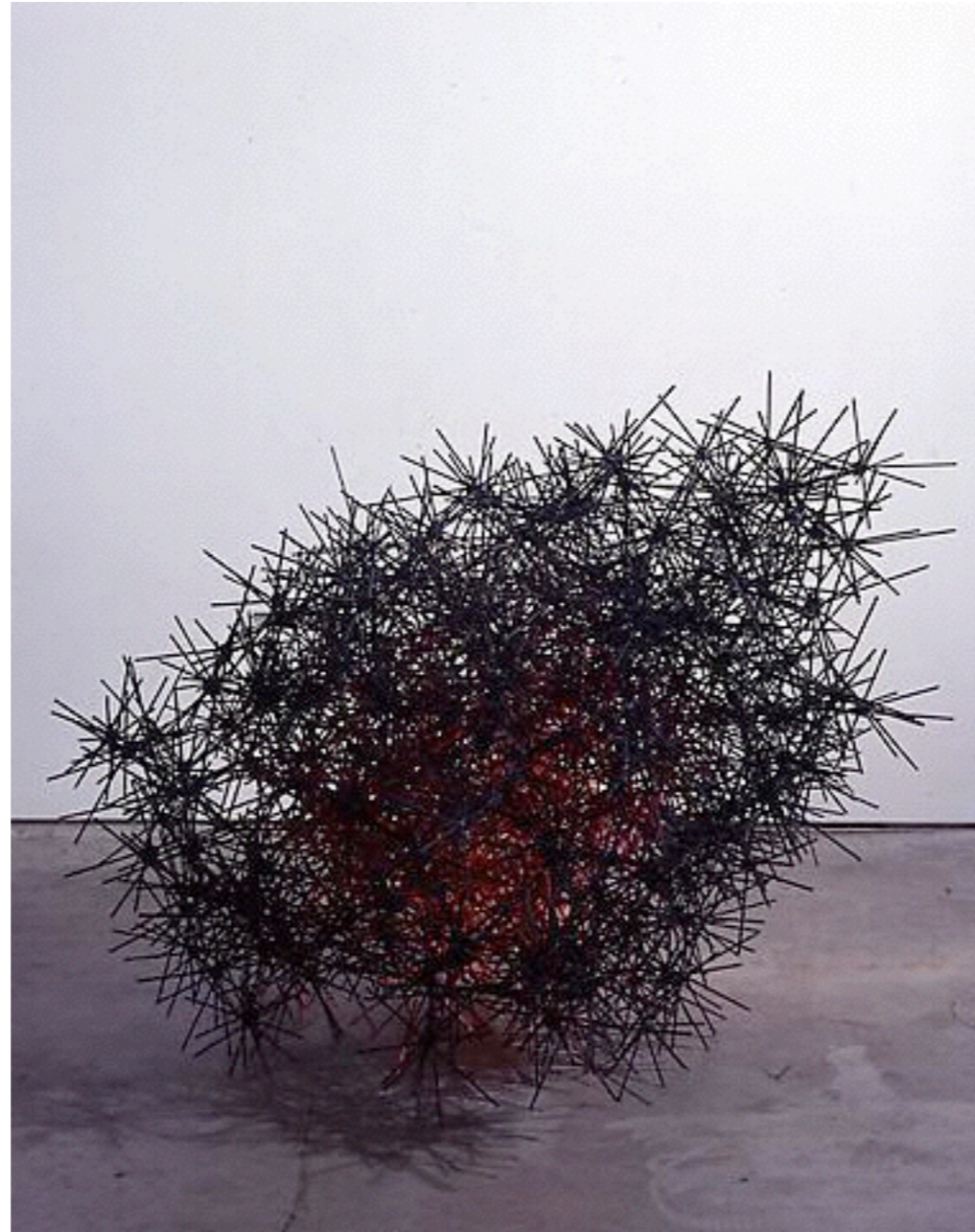
The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living

1992

Tiger shark, glass, steel, 5% formaldehyde solution

213 cm x 518 cm (213 in x 213 in)

Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City



Midy Shapero

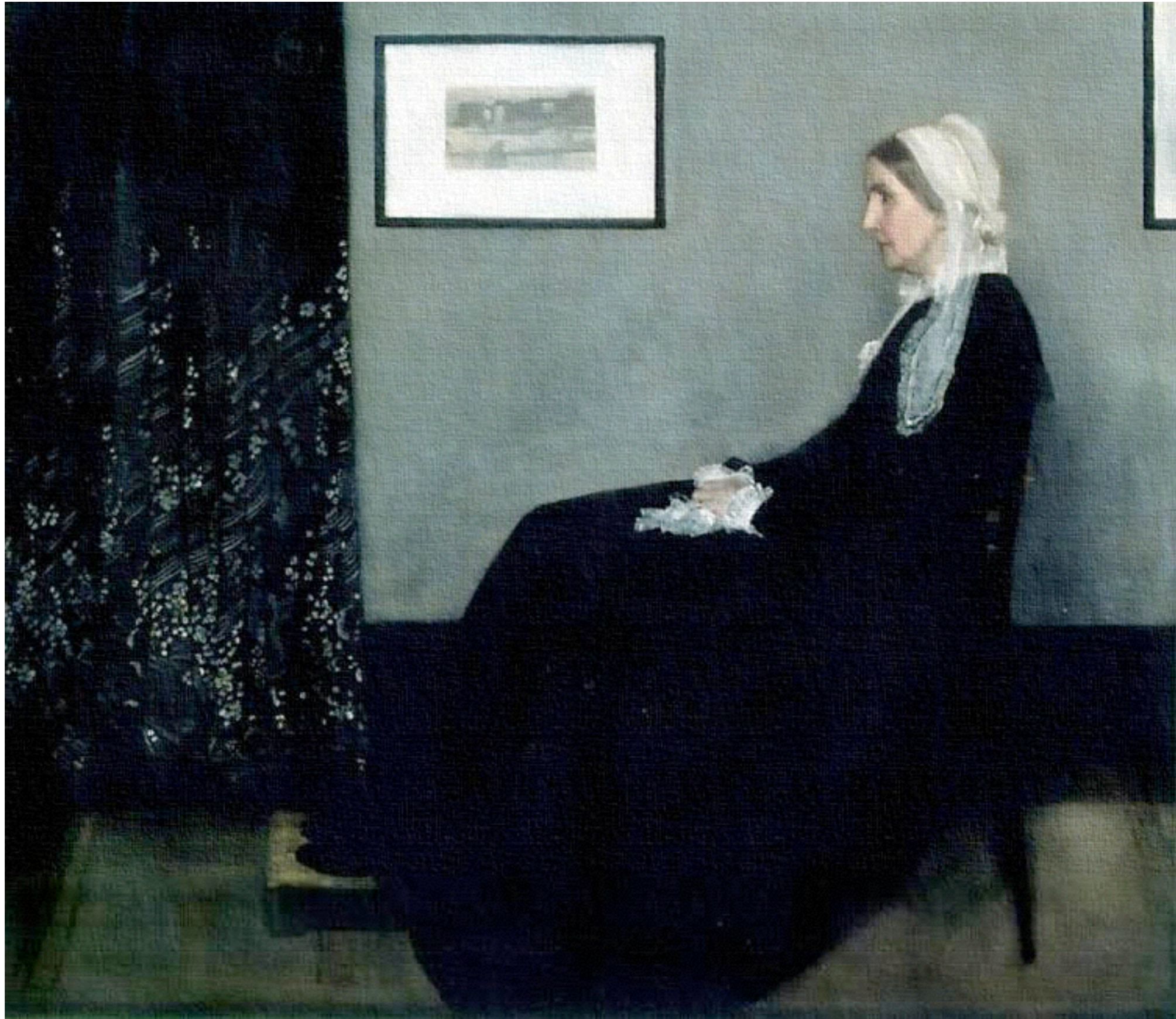
Almost the exact feeling one has when
staring at the blinded by the light for too
long just before anything is about happen,
similar to the images that you see when closing
your eyes and pressing into your eyeballs, 2004

Wood and acrylic

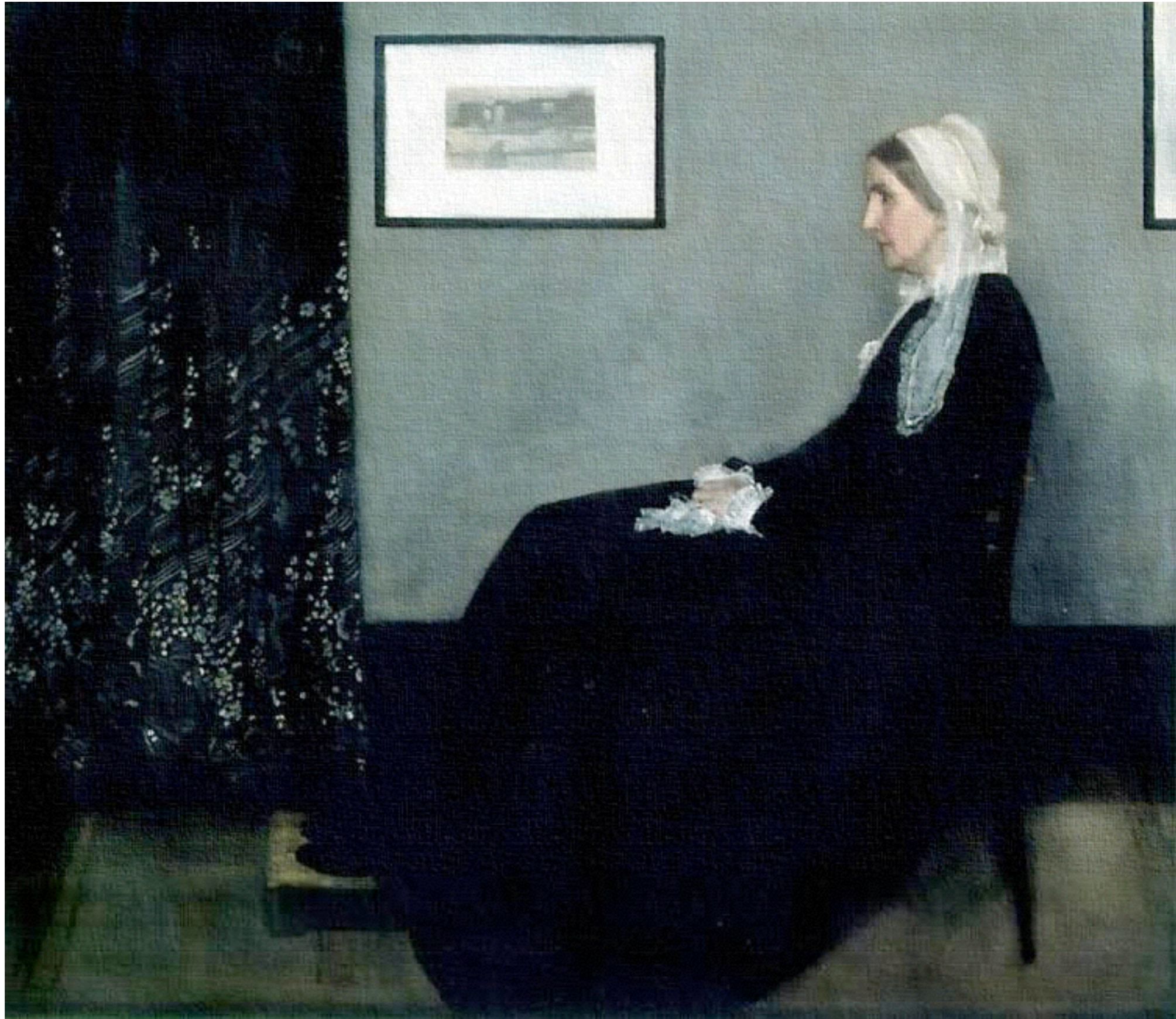
36 x 40 x 38 inches



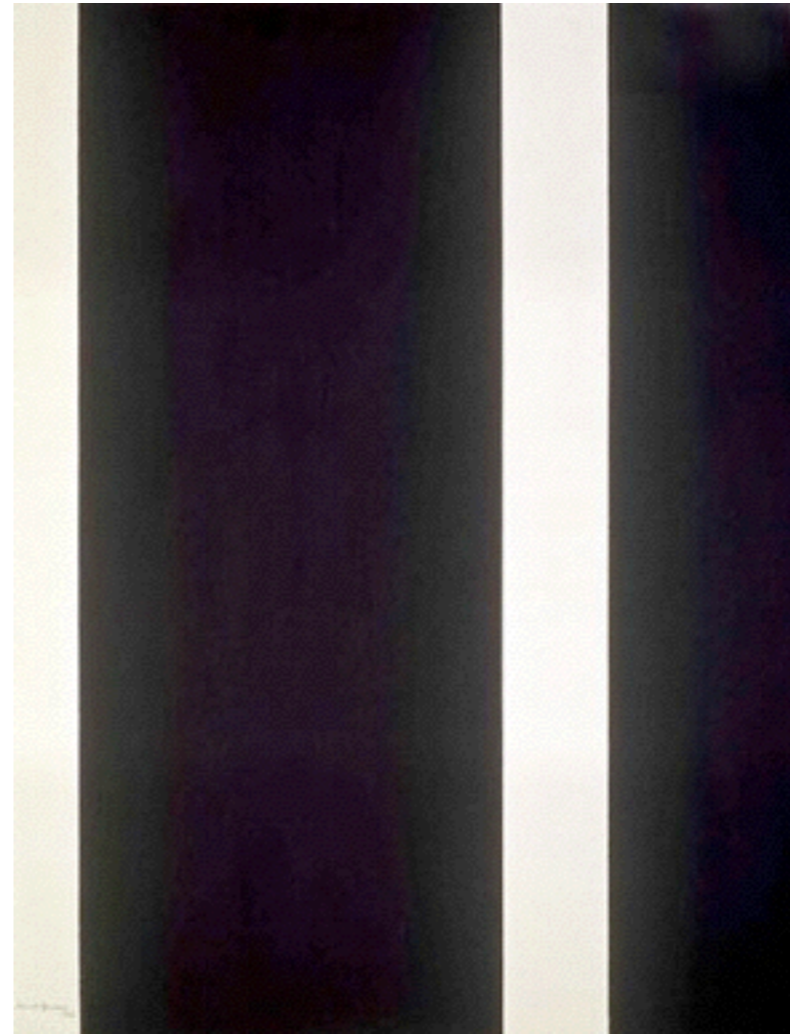
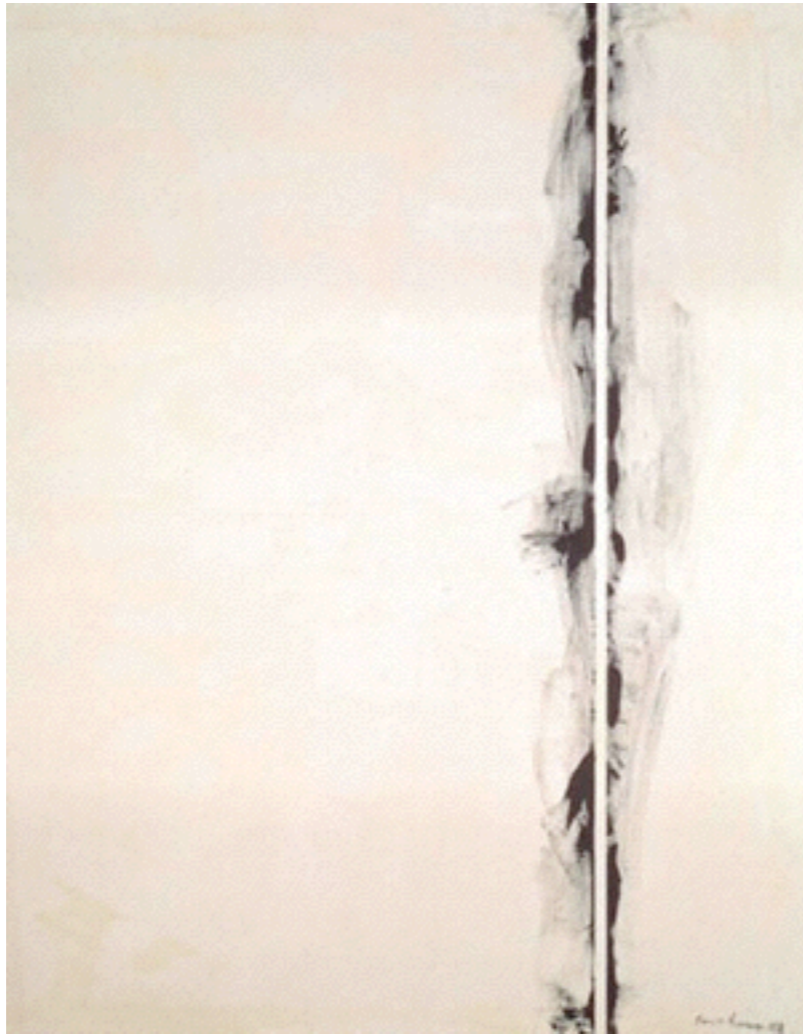
Distorted Circletrap Monsterheads, (all colors)
these are the empty shells of the heads of the
circletrap monsters that were never able to discover
the silence and slowness in order to escape.
They now become the ways out of the circletrap
for those that do find the peace, where everything
slows so that you can actually see what is happening
around you. The floating monsterheads are now the
first key, when you see one that faces you,
if you are able to, simple slide your head
inside the hollowed monsterhead. 2005-06
Paper mache, acrylic painted
handcut paper, and acrylic
60 x 28 x 56 inches



James McNeill Whistler, *Arrangement in Grey and Black, No. 1*, 1871



James McNeill Whistler, *Whistlers Mother*, 1871



Barnett Newman, Stations of the Cross (Why Hast Thou Forsaken me?), 1958-1966