

# **Transforming the Invisible: The Postmodernist Visual Artist as a Contemporary Mystic – A Review**

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“To make visible that there is something which can be conceived and which neither can be seen nor made visible: this is what is stake in modern painting. But how to make visible that there is something that cannot be seen?”

Jean-Francois Lyotard, 1982

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Transforming the invisible emerges from an experiential trinity that includes moment, transcendence and awareness. This is an active triad employed by the postmodernist visual artist to engage a modality process that enables the transformation of the invisible into a visible form. To embrace the unseen, the visual artist confronts a subtle realm that is transcendent and paradoxical by defying the boundaries of visual language and physical time. The visual artist is both a receptacle and a vehicle for the expression of the inexpressible. Its genesis emerges from a “secluded consciousness” (Wittgenstein, 1953) that creates, tracks, and manifests visual concepts and ideas.

The individuation of the subtle and intuitive experience is the manifestation of the transformative moment when the visual artist knows what they have to do when unconscious thoughts synchronize to create a conscious idea (Anderson, 1996, p. 72). To clarify and understand this moment requires a deepening beyond the sensory. What is the precipitating moment that becomes a catalyst of influence when the invisible unites with the visible and becomes part of the comprehensive plan that impels the development of the contemporary artist’s image and meaning (Collier, 1972)?

Through the deconstruction of the visual artists' conceptual processes and framing it within a mystical context, this review is poised to construct the literature's links between the mysterious nature of the visual artists' concept development and the awareness of the occurrence of the transformative event. This review seeks to look at the field through the philosophical significance behind the mystical formation of the invisible, and explore this significance through the artists' ability to narratively represent the invisible.

## 2. POSTMODERNISM AND THE VISUAL ARTIST

Avant garde visual artists and their alignment with postmodernism have had a profound effect upon on current cutting edge visual art with its expressed ambivalence and simultaneous fragmentation that walks a tightrope between suggestion and ambiguity (Fehr, 1994). This review is not an exploration of the many sub-currents that form the arguments for Postmodernism. It is, however, a critical apogee in the history of art modernity as an integrative layer in the ongoing historical evolution of the visual arts transformative realm of visualizing the invisible. This connection is both a personal journey and a scholarly quest for understanding the spiritual essence leading to the visual artist's art-making outcome. Through a Postmodernist lens, this review will survey the field and look at the literature through the words of the visual artist and their alignment with the philosophical sources that speak to a theoretical understanding of the mystical realm called the invisible. This realm is a critical wellspring for the visual artist's creative process and the delivery of meaning through their art.

As I construct this literature review, I am struck by how much I do not understand about my own conceptual process. For over twenty years, I created public murals, sculpture and photography supported by an intuitive sensibility that discarded and collected thoughts in order to create visible meaning. It is generally believed that consciousness creates a capacity to engineer solutions through perceptual operations (Arnheim, 1986). My process, however, was often capricious within its own framework of reasoned logic. This process could include

mapping a plan that drew upon external observations of the world and infused through reasoned starting place that was engineered through self-reflective operations (Arnheim, 1986). It was not uncommon, however, to begin the execution of the artwork by scrapping a preconceived and formulated plan with a new thought that arose once my hand moved towards the “blank canvas” in my sketchbook or journal. Thoughts shaped the ideas as my hand or my eyes moved across the

surface of the picture plane. Within a moment, my reflective consciousness was usurped by an ongoing self-manifesting experience ((Husserl, 1952, Collier, 1976) beyond conscious control and reasoned logic. New imagery and words arrived unknowingly and instantaneously. I was moved to feel the emerging image and compelled to explicate its arrival in visual terms.

Historically, most visual artists retain sketchbooks filled with ideas and images, but many also write letters and artist’s statements referencing the theoretical and methodological explanations that surround their conceptual processes. There are volumes of offerings from visual artists throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> c. They are not silent about their complex processes and generously explore the process that conceives their own concepts. By understanding how the visual artist transforms the invisible begins with the artists’ ability to recognize when the mystical experience occurred and visualize the occurrence by writing about the experience. I envision this writing experience as a gathering within a reflective journal process. The artists’ capacity to look from the outside to the inside and convey it as a visible representation of the invisible is an extension of the artist’s creative methodology.

The mystic and the postmodernist visual artist by coalescing the phenomenal through an unconventional lens (James, 1902) transfigures the experience to author an awareness of the event that can be visceral and lasting, but also fleeting and ephemeral (Fehr, 2002, Maslow, 1972, Tillich, 1956). The review of literature for this inquiry begins with two questions: What do we already know about this phenomenon of transforming the invisible, and where is the gap in

the knowledge and understanding? This review will explore the historical and current field that investigates the paradoxical and mystical forces compelling the mystic/artist's transforming the invisible into the visible. Through the navigation of this inaccessible realm and alignment of the invisible as an incubator for innovation and invention, this review of literature becomes a scaffold that allows access to the spiritual architecture for the incubation of the invisible.

### 3. REVIEW METHODOLOGY

This review is assembled in three phases: Moment, Transcendence and Awareness. I chose these words because words are the primary tools that the inquiry's visual artist/participants will use to express their journey into the mystical realm and their personal understanding of its invisible role. They will not be asked to paint, sculpt, construct, print, or draw an image, but use a palette of words to describe the experience as an embryonic state of creative consciousness (Lewitt, 1967).

- a. Moment: How the mystic and mystical experience is historically and philosophically defined and then critically aligned as a spiritual architecture for the visual artists' creative consciousness?
- b. Transcendence: Postmodernism as a force that frames the visual artist engagement with the mystical and deepens the transcendent relationship between visual manifestation of the visible and the invocation of the invisible.
- c. Awareness: The mystical connection and how visual artists concretized their engagement of the mystical world through the writing of their experience.

The review will also recall earlier empirical methods that seek to classify the process of creativity. It is here that this inquiry began by questioning the methods that attempted to measure the creative experience. Quantifying the creative process appears as an unnatural and anarchic response to a mystical process that transcends the capacity of ordinary perception. In

transpersonal psychology, the development of standardized measurements for the psychospiritual experiences has yet to be developed (Braud, 2001). Merleau-Ponty (1959-61) elaborated upon the body – soul connection that is capable of retaining and transforming the concept. The study of the invisible is problematic because it questions the artist's ability to identify and evaluate their individual processes that are often resulting in wordless execution of images. Braud (2001) favors personal and subjective reports that provide the most accurate indicators of the experience.

The postmodernist artist creates a self-generating spiritual culture that affirms their relation to creation and engagement with a spiritual authority (Heron, 2003). Measuring this experience requires an intuitive heart (Maslow, 1972), an existential perspective (Tillich, 1956) and apprehending the dialogue between the self and the experience (Merleau-Ponty, 1945).

In order to understand the artist as fertile ground for a mystical experience, it is critical to know how the artist engages in “rhapsodic communication” with the invisible (Maslow, 1972). This is a challenge that grew from my own experience as a visual artist who preferred to lecture on the conceptual process of art-making rather than discuss the merits of themes and materials. I resonate with Merleau-Ponty's synthesis of the invisible, the visible and the transformative as neither a disconnection nor a connection that can be measured; the mystical *structure* is an integrative one-ness until it disintegrates and returns to its former distinctions (1959-61).

Maslow (1972) asserts that this core experience is universal as a private, personal and transcendent event. To codify the experiences of the artist as mystic requires reflection into the truth about world, identity, and relationship. Using the language of the mystical dimension and align it with the avant garde artist, the invisible becomes operative as a blank canvas for the gestation of art making. John McCracken, well known for his monolithic planks, defines the state of his perception as clarifying moments that transcend the five senses, “art acts as an indication of something that may not be accessible according to the normal five senses. Even Plato had to

see his perfect forms in some other way; in order to be able to discuss them at all” (Wortz, 1990, p.345).

#### 4. MOMENT

At the first mention of mystic, visions of saints and martyrs emerge as pious individuals who access the realm of the divine in search of a union with spiritual perfection. A mystic is generally understood within an internalized spiritual context as one who pursues an identity with a divine truth through an esoteric practice that evoke the intuitive through direct engagement with a peak experience (Schopenhauer, 1819, Maslow, 1970). The artist is generally understood as the inventor of imagery by means of non-rational process (Otto, 1926) that leaps to a conclusion when the rational is transcended to an invisible place (Lewitt, 1967). As an artist, I often felt that art was born from struggle that navigated an ambiguous center that is dark and rooted in the mysterious and the invisible. It is an interconnected process that generates visceral awareness to an indistinguishable union between the invisible and the visible.

“It is in me, and shall out. Stand there, baulked and dumb, stuttering and stammering, hissed and hooted, stand and strive, until, at last, rage draw out of thee that dream power which every night shows thee in thine own; a power transcending all limit and privacy, and by the virtue of which a man is the conductor of the whole river of electricity.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1844

Navigating the literature for the invisible experience can be found amongst the philosophical writings of Paul Tillich, Alfred North Whitehead, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, John B. Cobb, Rudolf Otto and Abraham Maslow. In order to understand the visual artist’s mystical experience of the invisible, a collation of perspectives with mystical relevance can be summarized through a word thread that links meaning with moment. Intensity (Whitehead); Essence (Tillich); Invisible (Merleau-Ponty), Abundance (Cobb); Non-rational (Otto); Peak

(Maslow) are connected threads gleaned from these philosophers' realm of alchemic combinations to make sense where there is none. In this sense there are diverse links to the invisible that identify conditions by which the invisible is accessed, aligned and integrated with its parts.

According to Tye (2003) the foundation for philosophical arguments is often an opportunity to bind the smaller experiences with larger manifestations within the invisible experience. The mystical nature of experience is not bringing the whole to the part; but it is the parts connecting to the existing wholeness that is the invisible. As a spiritual link, the subtle and transformative realm of the invisible forms an intuitive *togetherness*. My argument begins as a reversal to Tye's synthesis. I posit that the larger experience is foremost in the mystic's invisible realm and holds the process where fragmented elements assemble, disconnect, and reassemble. The fragment (s) is both part of the whole and a fluid moving attraction within the whole.

The invisible experience is not static and merely operational when the visible manifested. The invisible is not passive, but always there and active in its invisible being of experience. This link to the invisible is a key issue in Augustinian theology. The polemic engagement between the primary invisible as the core truth and the visible as manifestation of that truth is critical to understanding the accession to the invisible. This premise has ramifications for the visual artists who engage the invisible as a personal and private event. Augustine discovered a link between the doctrine of the God-head Trinity and the experience of faith through the manifest God-being Son. This connection is made apparent as theologians argue the role of the invisible (God) and the visible (Son). The Son (the visible) is the revealer of the Father (invisible) (Barnes, 2003, p. 5). Augustine writes that the truth of the Trinity can only be seen with a pure heart. He does not claim a beatific sight, but claims this knowledge already exists in the cognitive realm of the mystical accession. There are no accidents (2003, p.7) and the Son who is a mediator of God and

man brings a face-to-face communion with an inaccessible realm (2003, p.9). In this way, the visual artist is the contemporary receptacle for incubation between the moment of concept, the transcendence of meaning and the awareness of the occurrence.

The *moment* is the *mysterium tremendum* that Otto (1926) defines as a characteristic of the religious experience (Maslow, 1970) places this integration between the deliverer and the creator and is at paradoxical heart for the visual artist to transform the invisible. Is the invisible bound to the visible through a maze of detours, or is it an umbilical coupling that nourishes the environment for the *togetherness* to manifest, and not the connection itself? It is the postmodernist dilemma for the visual artist to classify their own experience when the experience is indeterminate and recurring. Meaning emanates not from the visible, but is already lodged in the invisible moments. The postmodernist visual artist's mystical experience is a simultaneous accession and evaporation within the moment to be reconstructed within the *moment* that transforming the invisible into the visible (Merleau-Ponty, 1945). Maslow (1970) suggest's that truth is not dependent on man, but dependant upon a mind journey that is traveled in togetherness.

Postmodernist artist, Anselm Kiefer writes, "We (artists) cannot stand to not have a heaven in our mind" (Kiefer, 1981). In a work entitled, *Palette*, Kiefer identifies the artist's role in the connection between the invisible realm of heaven and the visible concreteness of earth when he suspended his artist's palette between two burning ropes. As a metaphor, the installation's visible meaning was expressed in fragments that visually represent the importance and brevity of the connection to the mystical whole (the palette). The visible work became secondary to the invisible whole as the ropes burned, disintegrate and replace. The fragmented *canvas* of suspended burning ropes and palette are an attempt to portray the visible in a manufactured state that expresses the transforming invisible.



This state shelters an environment that communicates a recurring genesis demonstrated by the installation of the newer ropes that are burned. Kiefer's work transformed the invisible to a visible state. His words and image are not representations that separated the invisible from the visible, but a process that evoked a visible fusion with the invisible as a complete and recurring, not a segregated process (Merleau-Ponty, 1959-1961). Augustine linked the visible (Son) with the invisible (God-head) as a manifestation of the mystical process. Kiefer concretizes the invisible as an existing state suggested by the suspended palette that symbolizes the ancient history of creative materials and methods that have no beginning and not end as long as humanity's capacity to think exists. The visible concretize as burning ropes is the human framework is an embodied manifestation that is key to knowing and understanding the invisible.

Cobb's Process Theology (2006) in conjunction with Whitehead's earlier Systemic Philosophy (1958) present broader implications for understanding the significance of the mystical as a postmodernist paradigm in the avant garde visual arts. Whitehead affirmed the fusion of opposites – the absolute with the particular. His use of the term absolute implies an unending condition that is fluid, unfixated, and transcendent (Wortz, 1990, p.91). This is the crossroads where Postmodernism and its predecessor, modernism clash; the former integrates with its cultural place and the latter segregates from the cultural landscape. Whitehead continuously explores the universal processes that are experienced through human consciousness to suggest richness and not a partitioning of feeling through the development of alternative perspectives (Cobb, 2006). He grounds human consciousness, not to absolutes or universals (Maslow, 1972), but holds them contingent upon contextualized forces and a radicalized relativity (Wortz, 1990) to the invisible.

The ongoing *tug of war* between mind/body and matter/form since the 17<sup>th</sup> c. was recognized through Whitehead's admonition that science relegated theology as a separate pursuit rather than another system that encompassed a whole range of human thought and experience. In

this way, whole or larger is the operative word that systemizes the process rather than segregates the elements. Whitehead and Cobb are asymmetrical in their opposition to a modernist creed that supports a deterministic and autonomous universe with observable laws rendering the mystical experience as impotent and non-essential. Whitehead and Cobb's relationship to the modernist creed is a segue that flows and integrates with Postmodernism's pathway as the nature of technology and theology are addressed as co-inhabitant and integrative within human consciousness. Both philosopher/theologist suggest these fields as a landscape of confluent ideas that witness the breadth of human expression, and not as polar opposites. Cobb's Process Theology focuses on shared experience as part of the experience of process, which is pragmatic, pluralistic, relativistic, holistic and natural (Cobb, 2006). This combined with Whitehead's theory calls the unconscious physical experience, sensation and thought arise through an infused wholeness that is a contemplative exploration of thought.

For the postmodernist visual artist as a contemporary mystic, the unconscious yet bodily feelings during the mystical experience becomes charged with emotion and purpose and a wellspring for concept and creativity. The visual artist's experience is a radical departure from dualism's strict organization of contemporary culture that aims a symmetrical lens of perspective rather than an asymmetrical view with diverse and complex lenses. There is an authenticity that emerges from a revelatory perspective that cuts across cultural and phenomenological lines (Mondello, 2007). Maslow (1972) sanctions the study of the revelatory and transcendent experience because the essence of the mystical experience is common within universal religions. Maslow (1972) calls artists those contemporary seers, an extension of the ancient prophets, as self-identifiers of the revelatory and mystical experience. The artist/mystic flexes an objective lens that is synchronic and balanced and subjectively aims the lens towards the transcendent moment that holds invisible experience.

## 5. TRANSCENDENCE

Whenever I discuss my experience as an artist, it is generally assumed that I will begin with the materials, images and meaning behind the art work and conclude with a litany of collections that hold the work. My lectures often included the former and my art resume identified the latter, but the primary message was to construct a pathway that explored the genesis of the work, not the work itself. Perhaps, two of the most lasting directives that I received in 1985 during graduate school was from art theorist Suzi Gablik who, at the time, recently published *Has Modernism Failed?* During a graduate seminar, Gablik shredded the modernist myth that broke traditional art ideology by shocking the viewer and thereby insulating the work from its alignment with the spiritual. For Gablik, the visual artist's autonomy through radical interpretations of culturally fragmented concepts is out of touch with society and culture. Modernism in art is not a mirror of culture, but a superficial vision without spiritual investment or imbued with mythical power (Gablik, 1985). Gablik's postmodernist argument aligns with Wassily Kandinsky's (1911) firm position that art is complexity in its most invisible form.

“The harmony of the new art demands a more subtle construction than this, something that appeals less to the eye and more to the soul. This "concealed construction" may arise from an apparently fortuitous selection of forms on the canvas. Their external lack of cohesion is their internal harmony. This haphazard arrangement of forms may be the future of artistic harmony. Their fundamental relationship will finally be able to be expressed in mathematical form, but in terms irregular rather than regular. The work of art is born of the

artist in a mysterious and secret way. From him it gains life and being. Nor is its existence casual and inconsequent, but it has a definite and purposeful strength, alike in its material and spiritual life. It exists and has power to create spiritual atmosphere; and from this inner standpoint one judges whether it is a good work of art or a bad one. If its "form" is bad it means that the form is too feeble in meaning to call forth corresponding vibrations of the soul.”

Postmodernism takes Modernism's fragmentation and seeks a greater alignment to the invisible. This is both a curse and a blessing for current day critics and curators as avant garde visual artist rail against cultural boundaries and simultaneously maintain an alliance with a spiritual core. Critics clash by calling postmodernism's imagery a pastiche of oblique and

perverted extrusions concocted by creative and fractured beings. I disagree with Wilber when he writes, “post modernity dismisses the great traditions as so much confused nonsense, and that is its problem” (Wilber, 2006, p. 216). I would ask the question: can tradition made honourable by time, or is tradition made greater through Postmodernism by adding further contributions to the understanding of humanity’s mystical consciousness?

The postmodernist visual artist distinguishes the nature of conceptual art from traditional art as an unlimited realm for concepts and the making of meaning. The contemporary visual artist/mystic lives and thrives within a turbulent landscape of the invisible that is both hinged and explored through cultural consciousness. Conceptual artists are often identified as mystics rather than rationalists whose judgements are non-rational (Lewitt, 1967). I resonate, however, with this description that the mystical is not confined to the beatified saint, the reclusive aesthete or the conceptual artist. Living my own experience of germinating concepts and implementing ideas through traditional still life imagery, it is also derived from a non-rational process that leads to new experiences that are shared. Postmodernism’s alignment with Modernism’s fragmentation and cultural consumerism is the plight of the visual artist, they are often set apart by their access to a union that is the source for *infused contemplation*, a phrase used frequently by St. John of the Cross who never used the term mystic realm (Mondello, 2007). The language of infusion suggests an immersion deep into human consciousness where the localisms, philosophies and ideologies are peeled away (Maslow, 1972) in order to communicate with the invisible.

Collier (1972) separates the invisible and the visible according to Jungian model of deductive consciousness and inductive consciousness. He suggests that through a circulation of intuitive impressions the creative thought is generated from within the artist’s self. The intuitive realm functions independently from the external world’s sensory viaduct for the creative activity. Sensory information can be documented through action of the reductive consciousness, but the

inner sources for intuitive activity is vague without excavating the layers in the unconscious delivery of thought. Collier calls this serving the inductive consciousness (p. 28-32).

Arnheim holds that the artist's conceptual process is the result of interplay between perception and reasoning and the selection and arrangement of objects. This process enriches visual thinking to hold as much value as written language does in its ability to carve image and meaning from experience and perception (Arnheim, 1986, p. 45).

Is the artist's consciousness a receptacle for the intuitive processes waiting for self to generate artistic thought? Is it a reductive process relying on exterior forces that become processed through the artist's senses and intellect (Collier, 1972, p. 30)? Just when, does this occur? Is it known? Can it be seen? Is it felt? How can the experience be verified and expressed as an authentic transformation of the invisible for the contemporary mystic/artist? The artist as mystic is a transmitter of the invisible experience as a visible manifestation. The affirmation of self-awareness by the artist will register, perceive and interpret the experience of the event (Braud,2001).

## 6. AWARENESS

The impact of the mystical experience on writers and poets is well documented as an integrative and necessary vehicle from which writers draw upon for inspiration and creativity. From Cervantes to Tolstoy; Wilder to Beckett; Zola to Flaubert; and Rimbaud to Ionesco, there is a wealth of scholarly research that acknowledges these writers' formation as a self-conscious barometer of meaning to an ever present and changing socio-historical environment. Words are a powerful and a direct source of multiple meaning derived from texts and interpreted by researchers. Visual imagery is also a powerful source for learning, but the historical research for how visual artists do what they do is generally situated through historical comparisons of visual themes and social relevance and not an exploration of the transcendent occurrences that deliver imagery and concepts to the artist's consciousness.

Historically, artists assessed the aesthetics of their art by aligning it with a mystical alliance that generated *something from nothing* or a transpersonal journey to the incomprehensible. Ferdinand Leger (1924) aligned his intentions as a fulfillment with “geometric order;” Paul Klee (1920) emphatically declared, “art does not reproduce the visible; rather, it makes visible.” Henri Rousseau (1908) wrote about his work as a journey, “my destination is always the same, but I work out a different route to get there.” Rousseau (1908) further writes of the essence of moment as a unifying bond between the visible fragments and the mystical invisible, “that which constitutes the superficial existence of things animate and inanimate and which is continually obscuring and transforming them, it is yet possible to search for a truer, more essential character which the artist will seize so that he may give to reality a more lasting interpretation (Chipp, p. 133).

The challenge with assessing the mystical realm through the artist’s writing is offered by Herschel Chipp in *Theories of Modern Art* (1968). In the text, Chipp acknowledges the universal bias towards the use of artist writings as theoretical source material. He cites, C.J. Ducasse (1949) who believed that “the artist’s business is to practice art and not to talk about it.” The questions of meaning, understanding, and process are appropriate to the contribution of understanding the impact of the mystical invisible on the visual artist. There is, however, debate regarding the interpretation and construction of validity and reliability as a legitimate avenue through qualitative research (Merriam, 2002, p. 25). The notion of the suffering artist speaks to a long history of the artist’s search for legitimization. Historically, recognition and validation for the visual artist, if it comes at all, is bestowed upon the artist at death. There are overwhelming numbers of artists who practice their craft pass and pass into obscurity and not registered in art history books and whose work is displayed in museums. For the few that reach this pinnacle, revelatory meaning is often found in the words of the artists who leave their journals behind.

Andy Warhol long considered an artist and filmmaker who used the repetition of trivial objects (soup cans and soap pads) and cultural icons (Marilyn Monroe and the electric chair) as a source for inspiration was elevated to a new level of research upon his untimely death after a surgical procedure in 1987. At that time, Warhol's (1977) work was considered emblematic of a superficial popular culture, he paradoxically writes, "I am a deeply superficial person." Warhol's death redefined his work as prescient for its exploration of conspicuous consumption as a vanguard for postmodernism's debate that human knowledge is limited and culturally conditioned and reconstructed. "When you think about it, department stores are kind of like museums" (Warhol, 1977). By looking at the visual artist's own words as a field of literature, artistic complexity gains a voice that speaks of truth and the interpretation of that truth is common to every human behavior including the creativity found in the visual arts.

The artist who writes of their invisible experience enriches the understanding of a process that holds emptiness as a place for chaotic reasoning. Pablo Picasso (1935) suggested that the moment of awareness is a beginning point not to be contemplated, only to be valued for what it is not. For Picasso, the *not* was never an end; only a beginning. The critical assessment by exhibition curators of an artist's creativity is usually grounded in words such as exploratory, heighten, confront, perceive, experience and relationship. To communicate a knowing of how the artist communicates their process becomes a curator's dialogue between themselves and their perception of the artist's process. In this way the excavation of the invisible truth is open to interpretation, and the visual artist is the only transport for invisible truth to emerge from within.

In 1944, Joseph Cornell, the early 20<sup>th</sup> c. artist of boxed vignettes framed the direct engagement with the spiritual that recognized a third element critical to spiritual process of creativity. He called it "revitalized nature" (Blair, 1998, p. 50). Cornell's GC'44 dossier was a 1,000 page treatise that discussed and cross-referenced the chaos of collecting objects and thoughts. Cornell was obsessed with his dreams and described his strategies as parallel narratives

between the invisible and the visible. He constantly noticed how the ordinary was prompted by the external world, but upon reflection would always turn his eyes to look at himself with objective interest. Cornell (1944) was actively receptive to expanding his capacity by delving into his own mystical experiences.

“rapid overflow of experience...overcrowding of incident and experience every opening parks leading ever farther apart. Unbelievably rich, cross-indexing (of experience); the ceaseless flow and interlacing of original experience.”  
(Blair, 1998, p.51)

Until his death in 1972, Cornell returned time and again to this dossier in search of “final distillation” to understand the experience.

By reading the artist’s words that describe the mystical moment with complexity and confusion, the words are not only a record of the experience, but a correspondence between the visible body and the invisible self. It is within this irregularity of creativity’s changing processes that the postmodernist artist transcends into a “peak experience” of object centered-ness (Maslow, 1994, Appendix A.) into a polycentric container for meaning. Objects, culture and individuals are perceived as independently framed within their own reality of perfectness that is neither something nor nothing.

The process of creativity has been identified since 1908 through various models of innovation and invention (Plsek, 1996, p. 1). The Wallas Process of Creativity, developed in 1926, and perhaps the most widely known model for creative training programs, is still in use today. It employs a division of creative labour in four stages of Preparation, Incubation, Illumination and Verification. The first and last stage suggests a complementary relationship that expresses a defined and progressive “means to an end.” The formal stages are devised to strategize the creative process as a linear progression of phases rather than a fusion of experiences. Most artists, including myself, experience surprises, distractions, and reversals in a single moment with the invisible. Not only is the visual artist rational in the concept’s chaotic



process, but also the artist is can experience clarity through awareness of their own chaos. The models developed by Campbell (1960) and Simonton (1988) align creativity as an experience that couples Darwinian randomness with William James' chance theory. Fleeting and capricious are Campbell and Simonton connectors that ignore the deeper and essential traits of the invisible.

It is the Barron's Psychic Creation Model that holds great interest for this inquiry. In 1988, Barron developed a model that places great emphasis on the subconscious and chance, but also supports the process as a mysterious deepening of events beyond the control of the creative. Barron's psychic model presents a more intuitive position that defines his four stages of creativity. They are conception, gestation, parturition, and bringing up the baby. Barron's model suggests that the mind must first be prepared just as Wallas holds Preparation as his model's first phase. The significance of Barron's creation model is its inclusion of time, suffering, and emergence as an irregular and changing process, and not a systematic approach for outcome.

Paul Tillich, the noted theologian, looks at the visible meaning of the creative subconscious as unrestricted and ecstatic. He is not an artist but views his personal experience of viewing art as a mystical. He writes of experiencing the landscape paintings of Peter Paul Rubens when he lived in Paris many years before: "You are in them somehow; they take you in, you live in them, they give you a feeling for the cosmos in a rather dynamic way, though completely on the surface of colors and forms" (Tillich, 1956). As a scholar of meaning who is sensitive to the mystical, Tillich brings a subjective and objective perspective that seeks awareness of the human experience through the artist's visible manifestation of the invisible. Existence of an idea is dependent upon essence (1956). Awareness of the essence in the invisible can be restored by the postmodernist visual artist as a barometer for humanity's estrangement from their own spiritual self. Through awareness, the disrupted forms or fragments of our existence hold the real elements of reality for the postmodernist visual artist.

CONCLUSION

Without creativity and those *artists* who can access an alternative thought dimension, innovation and change are stunted. “*No problem can be solved from the same level of consciousness that created it.*” Einstein’s quote recalls Rudolph Otto’s (1923) numinous mystery as an a priori capacity that places an incumbency upon human beings to look deeper for the illuminated meaning. The visual artist is a human conveyor that seeks to relay human experience from the inside out and assign it as wave of truth in an increasingly technological world. It is the visual artists’ destiny to travel this sublime journey. As with most journeys, however, the conveyance differs amongst individuals and the road, at times, is traveled in semi-darkness (Otto, 1923).

Postmodernism’s dissolution of meta-narratives spawn a crisis in ideology when ideology is no longer transparent and meaning becomes decentralized. The traditional past is replaced by postmodernism’s fragmented irony of indeterminacy, hybridity, expandable and centerless. The irregular and the concept collide for the postmodernist visual artist that is transcended through an invisible realm beyond the ordinary boundaries of intention and purpose. The “mystical (peak) experience” is a disorientation in time and space that contrasts sharply with normal experience (Maslow, 1994). It is here that the postmodernist visual artist accesses the invisible through the mystical experience that asserts a transformed identity.

Postmodernism’s complexity begins with its own identity that is fragmented and not delineated by dualist thinking. For the artist, the mystic experience is an extension of postmodernism’s identity that is neither a single idea nor a composite idea. The experience is found to criss-cross, integrate, and meld historically or temporally with no clear beginning and, most of all, with no end in sight. (Klages, 2007). Postmodernism’s definition appears to be cast in the shadow of Modernism’s rejection of existing meaning by subjective and fixed points of view (Klages, 2007, O’Donnell, 2003). In an attempt to grasp Postmodernism’s basic meaning seems elusive as a series of diaphanous and mystical markers for understanding the evolution of

transcendent and visible meaning. The markers begin with the Moment that the experience is registered, the Transcendence of the non-matter (invisible) into the matter (visible) and the Awareness of how and when the event occurred.

The postmodernist visual artists' experience as a contemporary mystic consists of two interdependent, but non-identical existences that produce a condition of balance between the two dynamic forces of interaction and integration. Can a non-rational process organize itself through self-awareness for the purpose of finding meaning and still transcend its own experience?

Koestler (1972) posits that because the experience is "inarticulate" it lends itself to many manifestations of forms. The artist mystical experience can neither be ritualized, linear nor

predictable. The complexity of fragmentation that is found in postmodernism offers an environment that both deconstructs and unifies itself (Wilber, 2006, p.218). It is here that the postmodernist artist synchronizes its visible fragments within the existing invisible.

The challenges that arise for this study of the postmodernist visual artist's access to the invisible realm are two fold:

- a. How is the Invisible Moment defined, experienced and disseminated by the artist?
- b. Does the artist hold a truthful capacity to reflect and restore the mystical experience through a visible manifestation of that experience?

Post Modernism's consciousness is a mirror to itself and the conceptual process holds a subjective array of discordant responses to that mirror. The results of this process fuel the visual artist awareness of their own experience into the invisible. There is no one-dimensional definition for awareness as its own system functions within a cooperative and consuming system (Donald, 2001, p.123). Jasper Johns, perhaps one of the most well known 20<sup>th</sup> c. artist as a transformer of common and emblematic symbols, calls the mystical experience as a way to satisfy a contemplative hunger. He writes, "Seeing is like eating and being eaten." The all consuming invisible is a divine disorientation that is always present, always changing, always

expanding, and existing for the visual artist to discover it any time or any place. This inquiry is a study into the postmodernist visual artist's personal and private access and transformation of the invisible.

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