

A Journey of Self-Love

A Thesis

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University of Idaho

by

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Authorization to Submit Thesis

This thesis of Logan A. Clancy, submitted for the degree of Master of Fine Arts with a Major in Art and titled "A Journey of Self-Love" has been reviewed in final form. Permission, as indicated by the signatures and dates below, is now granted to submit final copies to the College of Graduate Studies for approval.

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Abstract

A Journey of Self-Love is a visual narrative in the form of ten water-colored relief prints that, explore my personal journey towards the reunion with my authentic self. This colorful collection of prints investigates themes of self-discovery: my connection to nature, energy healing and experiences, metaphysics, and the rising of *the holy oil*.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge all of my faculty from Blue Ridge Community College, Western Carolina University, and the University of Idaho. Thank you for being a part of my educational journey, your influence on my art practice, and your imparted words of wisdom, the knowledge and skills gained.

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my authentic self; may you always shine your light.

To my family that has unconditionally loved me and told me to do what I love in life.

To my friends in North Carolina who understand me, support me, and love me for me.

To the curious, those who retain the connection to their inner child, and the open minded;
never let anyone in your sacred space. Keep being you, asking the questions and seeking the
answers.

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Spiritual Glossary of Terms

Source Energy: the universal life force or spiritual energy that exists in all living matter.

chakras: circular vortexes of energy located along the spinal column at different locations that are connected to organs and glands within the body. There are seven main chakras; your root, sacral, solar plexus, heart, throat, third eye, and crown.

kundalini energy: the arising of an energy and consciousness that has been coiled at the base of the spine since birth and is the source of life force (Source Energy).

holy oil: is created once a month from the combination of secreted substances from both the pituitary gland and the pineal gland.

Introduction

I created this series titled: *A Journey of Self-Love* to celebrate the evolution of my soul, becoming my authentic self. These prints illustrate a collection of personal experiences that investigate themes of self-discovery: my connection to nature, energy healing and experiences, metaphysics, and the rising of *the holy oil*. This series celebrates my personal journey through the use of color, symbolism, metaphor, and stylized imagery. The use of the eye throughout this series is a metaphor for concepts that allude to source energy or the all-seeing eye, the connection to all living beings, the spirit within, and the third eye. The chakras are represented throughout the series by the colors: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet. References to the pineal gland and its connection to nature is depicted using the pinecone. The organic textures and forms are symbolic of the underlying connection to nature and is a thread that strings this body of work together.

A Journey of Self-Love was influenced by a grand compilation of events, stresses, and opportunities that brought my life to a point of reckoning that forced me to deal, grow, and create this body of work. While an MFA candidate at the University of Idaho my marriage came to an end after a traumatic event; in 2018, I experienced the darkest period in my life. These moments forced me to spiritually awaken, and deal with the illusions, knots, suppressed emotions, and previous societal conditionings in my psyche.

The “dark night of the soul”, which precedes the “death of the ego”, is the process of peeling back the layers of the psyche by the release of kundalini energy that helps activate the subconscious mind. This activation of the subconscious brain automatically ignites a fight or flight response of adrenal activity; therefore, I was running between three and six miles a day. I was letting go of years’ worth of suppressed emotions, illusions, and pain; forgiving myself and others— eventually learning to love myself. Before I could love myself, I had to do the hard work. I turned my pain into power. I started singing, dancing, and making art every day. I ritually meditated every day, transmuted my negative self-thoughts, cleared ancestral karma, forgave my ex-husband, forgave myself, forgave past hurts, and released energy blocks. I changed my lifestyle to be a healthier version of myself and learned how to love both the light and dark parts of myself unconditionally. My first death of the ego was during this dark night of the soul prior to my kundalini awakening. During a meditated session I watched my ego shatter and break apart internally. I resolved all the problems in my psyche that were affecting me presently and the ego was dissolved. I witnessed the death of my ego a second time after my kundalini energy awakening and experiencing God consciousness. Figure 1 is an attempt to narrate this dark time period.

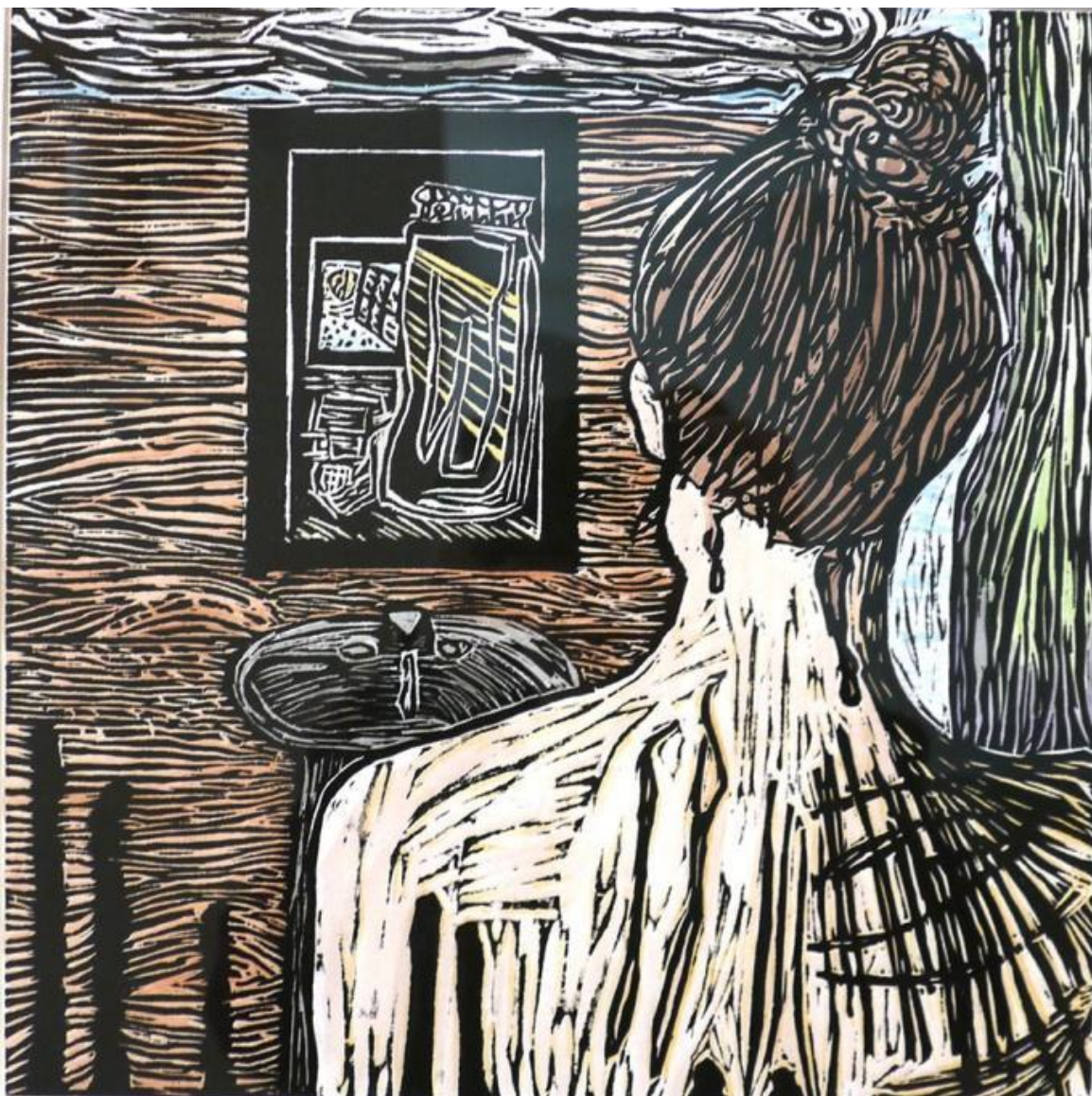


Figure 1. *Dark Night of the SOUL (Death of the ego)* Summer 2018, woodcut on paper with hand-coloring, 10 ½ in X 10 ½ in, 2019.

Dark Night of the SOUL (Death of the ego) is symbolic of losing one's identity, discarding learned societal conditioning, transmuting and physically changing one's negative habits in order to be reborn from the ashes, transforming one's thinking into a positive mindset, actions, and spoken word in order to manifest and attract a higher vibrating state of being into one's reality. The figure depicted in the print above is a self-portrait of me standing in front of a bathroom mirror unable to see myself. On this evening the moon was in the last quarter phase, preparing for the new moon. The new moon is important for manifesting, setting intentions, releasing old negative energy and for charging crystals (refer to Fig. 5 & Fig. 6). Ever since I was little, I have always been captivated by the moon; it plays an important role, as do the other planets, in metaphysical experiences and energy. The clouds at the

top of the print symbolize the dreamlike state of consciousness that I experienced. The wood grain texture in the background alludes to my connectivity to earth, getting in touch with myself and returning to the source of all things, nature. There are subtle color choices in this print; the figure has hints of yellow dripping down her back, symbolic of the death of the ego and the color of your solar plexus chakra. There are seven dark grey drips in the foreground of this print; these drips are symbolic of my seven blocked chakras during this time. The grey ink used for this print, as well as the others in this series, represents the “grey area,” or in-between zone, that I occupy when experiencing metaphysical phenomenon. This print is also not as vibrant in color, which is symbolic of the emotional state that I was in during that period. I was in a dark place emotionally, and there was not a lot of color in my world, which is reflected in this print by more neutral, muted colors.

Reflecting Inwards

The death of the ego experience caused me to cast aside my previous perceptions of reality and my learned societal conditionings. This experience forced me to look inwards at myself while also reflecting upon past experiences. During this retrospection period I rediscovered vital meditation tools and techniques previously learned prior to the dark night of the soul and death of the ego.



Figure 2. Tuning In, woodcut on paper with hand-coloring, 11 ½ in X 13 ½ in, 2019.

I concluded intuitively that when you tune into a certain hum or ringing sound in your ear, listen to it, focus on the sound as well as your breathing, and use correct meditation posture, you can transcend time and space by connecting with Source Energy. *Tuning In* depicts this mystical experience using known symbols and objects to illustrate the spiritual practice of meditation or “tuning in.” The bells within this image symbolize the frequency of the ringing that occurs in your ear. With practice and familiarity with your body you will be able to differentiate between the different tones and when the universe is calling you to meditate.

The ear and the microphone are symbolic of the process of tuning in during meditation. The vibrational hum or frequency is first heard in the ear. It can last however long you focus on it, or you can adjust your ear pressure to make it go away. Listening and focusing on the hum makes it grow louder, hence the use of the microphone. The stars, sky, and root system act as a metaphor for the spiritual connection to nature, while also representing the traditional interpretation of their symbology. Furthermore, the color of the energy waves surrounding the bells are the colors of the seven chakras, or energy centers within the human body and the foundations of your energy field. Meditation and chakras go hand-in-hand because during meditation, one can align with Source Energy and work on moving blocked or suppressed energies from the chakras so that one's energy can flow freely from the top of the body to the bottom, along the spine, and vice-versa. The repetitive line movement in the bottom third of the image is symbolic of intangible energy, which is also represented through the use of the seven chakra colors, representing the chakra system.



Figure 3. Dash + Dance Trance with the Universe, woodcut on paper with hand-coloring, 9 ½ in X 14 in, 2019.

Dash + Dance Trance with the Universe, 11/08/2014 (Fig. 3) is a self-portrait—a visual embodiment of some meditation tools that I gained from a vision I had in 2014 that helped me discover my purpose. Movement in the form of dance or exercise helps my energy flow, helps me connect with my authentic self, and creates an entry point to connect to my higher self for guidance, healing, or

creativity. The blue, yellow, and green colors used in the female figure symbolize the energy flowing through my body while dancing. The visual movement and repetition in the repeating circular marks within the green energy being emitted out of the figure's third eye is symbolic of heart chakra energy which is unconditional love being radiated into the universe. The representation of this energy symbolizes dreams, visions, connection to Source Energy, and to your higher self. The form contained within the figure's hand symbolizes the creation of Source Energy. The yellow, green, and blue marks within the figure, generate an energetic state of being. The stars or cosmos in the background references our connection to the stars, the universe, and source energy.



Figure 4. *The Law of Manifestation*, woodcut on paper with hand-coloring, 14 ½ in X 14 ½ in, 2019.

There is a Law within the philosophical and metaphysical realms of Hermeticism that states “As Above, so Below” (Three Initiates 10). This universal law states that whatever is in the higher states of being also manifests into the lower states of existence, for example, the 3D plane vs. the 5D plane. Another way of trying to understand this law is that whatever one imagines, thinks in their thoughts and minds, and puts forth into action is created or manifested into one’s reality, in the physical realm. Intangible thought made tangible.

The Law of Manifestation is revealed in Figure 4 through the symbolism of two hands reaching towards one another, where one hand is in the physical 3D plane while the other hand is in the 5D, or higher planes of existence. Source Energy, or God, is illuminated between the two, showing how source energy is connected to everything. The seven colors used represents connecting to Source Energy through meditation and balancing your seven chakras. The mark making and colors that comprise the all-seeing eye, or Source Energy, is an attempt to capture the radiating and energetic essence. The mark making and colors in Source Energy create a flowing motion, mimicking energy. The marks that make up the landscape, as well as the colors used, in the bottom third of the image, assist in creating depth, making the landscape come to life. The hand in the cosmos is darker with less color because it represents the connection to your higher self, the spiritual grey area, and is conceptually symbolic. One cannot see their higher self, or the influence their higher self has on events and matters in the 3D world, unless you are in tune with your true essence. The lighter hand on the bottom of the composition is symbolic of our human form; the colors comprised of the hand are flesh tones with shades of brown. These colors are meant to ground the lighter hand and make a visual connection between the hand and the natural landscape in the background. The darker hand is rendered to align the connection between the cosmos, your higher self, and the intangible energy of metaphysical phenomenon.

Making Connections

After rediscovering meditation techniques from my past that assisted me in progressing forward on my spiritual journey, I started to make connections and applied them to my daily life, as well as my art practice. Knowledge pertaining to astrology, numerology, eastern spiritual practices, hermeticism, and meditation prior to the death of the ego experience was expanded upon. I realized that all main religions, ways of life, occult “taboo” religions or spirituality were interconnected, related, and trying to talk about the same thing: kundalini awakening, self-reflection, and self-love. Part of making connections spiritually through this part of my journey in Spring-Summer 2018 was reconnecting with nature.



Figure 5. [internal] *External cyclical ritual*, woodcut on paper with hand-coloring, 24 in X 31 in, 2019.

[internal] *External cyclical ritual* explores the connection of your higher and lower self, your sun sign and moon sign, and the journey of kundalini energy. The higher and lower self exists within your being; the challenge of our existence in this reality is finding a balance between the two. This is represented by the flowing profiles of the human head, one within the other, and the colors associated with them, violet and yellow. The yellow color in the internal profile indicates the lower self while

the violet profile of the figure on the outside symbolizes the higher self. The astrological signs are rendered in the order that they appear in the astrological calendar. They are colored according to their matching element, fire, earth, air, and water. The thirty-three brightly colored organic teardrop forms are symbolic of the seven chakras, and representative of the science behind the journey the kundalini energy or holy oil takes traveling up your thirty-three vertebra in your spine into your pineal gland in your crown chakra.



Figure 6. *Portal to the higher realm*, woodcut on paper with hand-coloring, 16 ½ in X 16 in, 2019.

Portal to the higher realm was the first woodblock that I carved during Summer 2018. During that time I was exploring crystal meditations, reading about the pineal gland, learning about the cycles of the moon, kundalini energy and reconnecting with nature. A part of my rediscovery was reconnecting

with nature, I went for walks in the arboretum. During my walks I would collect pinecones, spent time in self-reflection, meditated, and observed nature. I learned a bit about pinecones, their environment, and began to notice that occasionally when I went to get pinecones, I would see snakes under the pine trees. I saw a correlation and gained a better understanding for why specific cultures used the symbology of pinecones and snakes together; the pinecone and snake in Egyptian hieroglyphs reference the process of the body creating DMT once a month that a person can use to experience god consciousness, or a kundalini awakening. The pinecone represents the pineal gland, which is in your third eye chakra, in the dead center of your forehead straight back and down from the crown of your head into the middle.

The pinecone in Figure 6 represents the pineal gland; the pinecone is a symbol used to represent the concept of kundalini energy and the cyclical nature of utilizing the creative energy that lays dormant within our bodies. The pinecone is in the center of a full moon surrounded with crystals— a portal to a higher realm, a higher state of consciousness. *Portal to the higher realm* depicts a visual connection between natural cyclical patterns like the moon cycle. Certain crystals assist in energy healing during meditation. Rose quartz, emeralds, jade, other pink and green crystals, and rocks can be held or worn during meditation to assist in opening your heart chakra and clearing blocked energy from your heart center. Opening your heart chakra, as well as the other six chakras, is essential in harnessing your kundalini energy. The wood grain texture in this print references the underlying connection to nature.

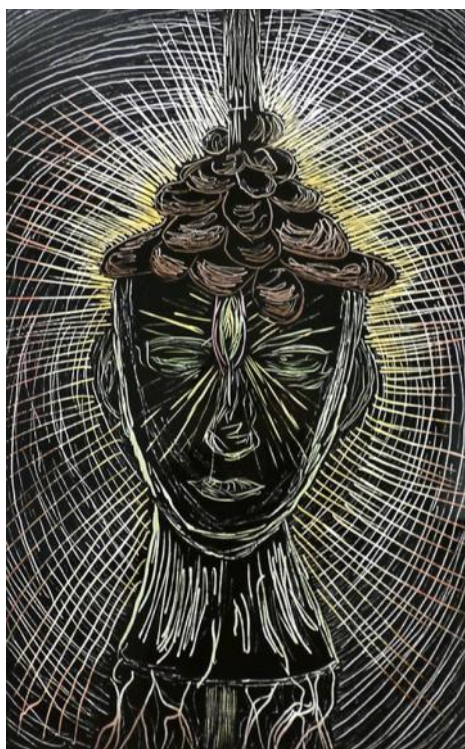


Figure 7. *Internal Acknowledgement*, woodcut on paper with hand-coloring, 25 ½ in X 15 ½ in, 2019.

Internal Acknowledgement explores self-reflection, looking inward while making connections with the natural environment. During this time period I was identifying the problems within myself and proactively working to fix them. Abolishing social conditioning, negative habits formed as bad coping mechanisms and replacing them with new habits and routines that were healthy. Going outside for walks in the arboretum, or meditating in nature was influential for self-reflecting. My excursions outside assisted me in building a better connection to the earth. These expeditions outside grounded me, gave me long moments of clarity and gave me space to make connections within myself and outside of myself experiencing nature in the present moment.

Figure 7 is darker than the others, with less color, to symbolize an internal experience; a head space, level of consciousness, inward contemplation or internal dialogue. Visually this image causes the viewer to look inward due to the directional movement created by the radiating lines accompanied with the spiral, circular lines in the background, which move the eyes to the center focal point of the composition, the head. The head in this image is subtly illuminated by the waves of energy coming in through its crown, which are represented by the yellow, golden color of the straight vertical lines moving in from the top. The colors chosen to represent the pinecone head are earth tones of green and brown accompanied by the colors red, yellow and green. The earth tones within the head establish a further connection to nature, while the red, yellow and green colors are symbolic of energy received during meditation, insight from self-discovery, and the use of the pineal gland. This print symbolizes my reconnecting to nature, as demonstrated by the head of the human form being part pinecone, with roots coming out of the neck. When I was meditating and adventuring outside every day, I was reconnecting to Source Energy my true essence.

Experience

At the same time, I was making connections between past knowledge obtained and new readings, I was experiencing these intense yet beautiful energetic metaphysical experiences during deep meditative states. On August 9th, 2018 I had an experience that was so awe inspiring it changed my life forever. Upon meditating that evening, I visualized connecting to Source Energy above and below, envisioned the light energy pouring into and through my being, my chakras, and extending outward from my heart. During this meditation I visually experienced all the colors from my root chakra to my crown as they ascended inside myself as waves of energy, moving all the way up to the crown, resulting in a big bang in my crown and third eye. It was like my soul transcended into this altered state of consciousness, my essence was above my body in this other level of existence where it was warm, happy, in pure bliss and ecstasy. I was in this state for about five minutes. As I came back down into my body, I cried tears of gratitude and thanked God for that experience, since it was everything that I was searching for and was even better than I could ever have imagined. I cannot adequately articulate in written or spoken word, or convey visually, this wondrous experience. The two prints below (fig.8 & fig.9) are my best efforts to illustrate the indescribable energetic experience my soul and physical body underwent.

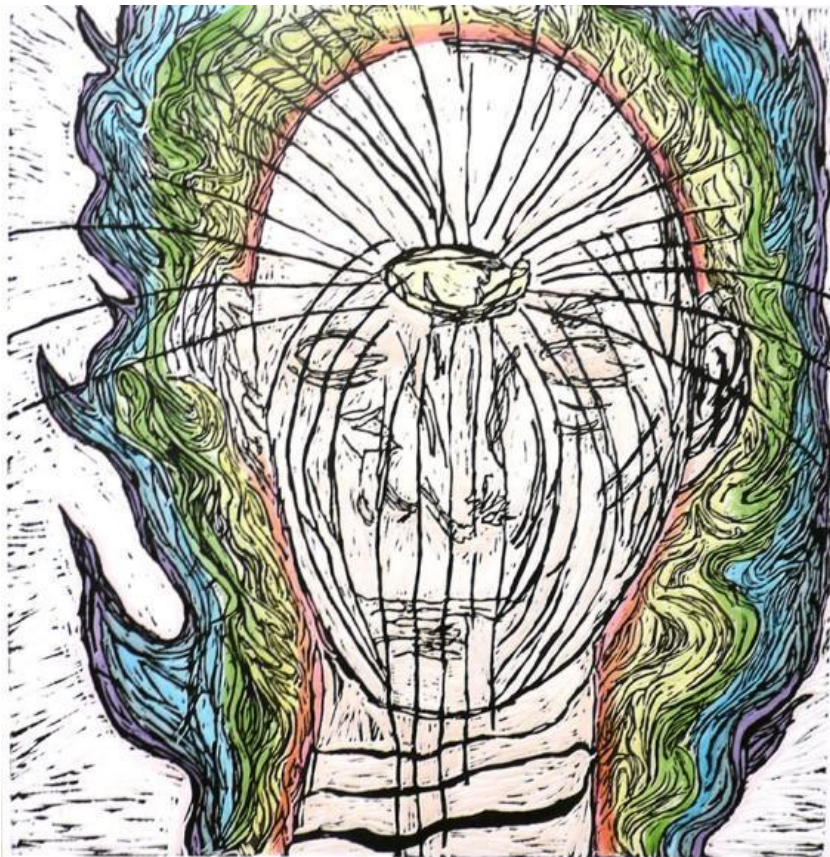


Figure 8. *External transcendental reality*, woodcut on paper with hand-coloring, 25 in X 24 in, 2019.

Figure 8 is a close-up of the Big Bang as it encompasses my being, emanating all around the crown chakra of my head and above. The third eye and crown chakras are important in meditation because Source Energy communicates with you and sends you messages in the form of songs, words, energy, or feelings and emotions. You can also feel the connection to Source through the third eye chakra and some people even experience seeing a golden thread stemming out into the cosmos that connects us back to source energy. The rainbow fire-like energy around the figure's head is symbolic of the kundalini energy awakening and moving through the body from the sacrum all the way to the crown and beyond. Thus, the symbolism depicts opening up all of your chakras and aligning them with Source.

In this print, the third eye is a golden, abstract eye that alludes to the golden thread emanating from the third eye that connects us to Source energy or the higher power that is in every living thing. The figure is colored in neutral flesh tones and appears soft to convey how this metaphysical experience is adding color to my world. The visual movement of the mark making around the head represents the kundalini energy moving up and around the figure, and the colors symbolically represent the energy of each chakra on their ascent to the crown and into higher realms of consciousness. The head is the focal point, the main emphasis, and is symbolically used in my work to reinforce the importance of one's mental state while doing energy work. Visualization is a tool in meditation and energy work which stems from your imagination and your mind.



Figure 9. *Transcending Time and Space*, woodcut on paper with hand-coloring, 24 ½ in X 30 in, 2019.

Transcending Time and Space captures the energetic experience I had visually during my kundalini awakening, the colors and visual line movements surrounding the figure are an attempt to mimic the energy expanding out of my being and showing the colors that I saw moving through my body in my mind. I saw red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and purple energy rising like translucent waves up in core of my body, with each color moving through its corresponding chakra until it reached the crown of my head and expanded up and out of my being. The watercolors used to enrich the print have a translucent quality to them, you can still see evidence of the paper through them, and I think they are the perfect medium to convey the translucent, energetic experience I saw in my mind's eye as well as felt in my body at the same time. *Transcending Time and Space* can be read as a self-portrait, depicting me in my true state, as unconditional love and my authentic self.

Looking Forward

Three evenings before my kundalini awakening experience, I had a vision of a man, myself, and the all-seeing eye pulsating between us. This was a premonition for what I am being spiritually prepared for—divine love and physical union with another person.



Figure 10. *Divine Counterparts*, woodcut on paper with hand-coloring, 24 in X 34 in, 2019.

Divine Counterparts documents a vision I had on August 6th, 2018. Source Energy is depicted in the middle as an all-seeing eye that illuminates the divine counterparts. Source Energy is comprised of the primary colors, capturing the electricity of colors that I experienced in my vision. The colors of the divine counterparts are blue and red, two parts to a whole. Symbolically the divine counterparts and Source Energy depict the holy trinity: the divine masculine, the divine feminine, and Source Energy.

The figures represent the divine masculine and the divine feminine. The divine masculine depicted in red is symbolic of the sun and the planet Mars, whereas the divine feminine is blue, symbolic of the moon and the planet Venus. The alternating of the colors blue and red are symbolic of the duality in their relationship to one another, as the two complement each other, making up a whole. The all-seeing eye in between the two silhouettes of the figures is a symbolic rendering of Source Energy. I

saw Source Energy comprised of three primary colors: yellow, red, and blue; I decided to mimic that in my translation from vision to print with my color choice and application of the watercolors. There appeared to be waves of color emanating from the all-seeing eye. The third eyes of both the divine masculine and divine feminine are illuminated by Source Energy, which is symbolic of the divine nature of the connection between the three and the opening of the third eye chakra. The stars in the background of the image reference the underlying connection to nature, one of the recurring themes within this body of work.

Through meditation, energy work, and my studio practice, I am exploring the concept of the twin flame phenomenon. This concept has been newly introduced into my spiritual practice and life. I look forward to creating more work exploring this concept and accompanying experiences in the form of printmaking and ceramic sculpture.

Conclusion

This body of work has assisted in my healing process. The creation of this series of prints was a way to communicate abstract and complex ideologies and experiences that I underwent during this transformational period, a unique and personal spiritual journey. This journey was about seeking truth, re-discovering and celebrating my authentic self, as well as healing. These profound experiences have reshaped my lifestyle and redefined my overall perception of physical reality. I have created this work for a select group of people, those who are aware of their energy or have had similar metaphysical or paranormal experiences. However, it is not intended to exclude viewers who are not yet aware; rather it is intended to open a dialogue that is celebratory in nature about each individual human experience.

I look forward to continuing to draw inspiration from experiences that reference and reflect my personal spiritual cosmologies and experiences through reading materials and the creation of new artworks. This work will be a life-long endeavor: of making connections between acquired knowledge, learning about myself, improving and expanding my spiritual connection with myself and sharing these experiences in the form of art and storytelling with others in hopes to educate, celebrate and make emotional connections.

With the creation of this series I have learned more about myself and how to love myself unconditionally. My goal, with my art work presently and in the future, is to share the tools, techniques, and knowledge I have acquired to assist others along their own personal journey to self-love, reflection and growth. Learning more about myself has given me a feeling of liberation and has given me confidence to break free from certain rules I have made for myself in the past, in both my art practice as well as in my daily life.

With an awareness for my purpose and calling, I would like to peruse a lifelong exploration of learning how to make this spiritual knowledge assessable to the average person with the sole intention of assisting in raising the consciousness of my community, future communities that I call home. It is my hope that these people I have reached and assisted in their transformation can influence others.

In the future, I plan to continue exploring and expanding upon spiritual concepts of god consciousness, the holy oil, twin flames, kundalini energy, and the connection to source energy through printmaking, ceramics, and video.

Influences

I have many inspirations and influences when it comes to my art practice. My primary inspiration and influence are my own personal experience and journey. I am also inspired by the work of other spiritual artists. Additionally, I have always been sensitive to music, which is another art form that has always been present in my life that I find inspiration from and have an emotional attachment to. Finally, I find joy, creative motivation, and am influenced by my spiritual reading materials. All these things culminate into this body of work.

Art Influences

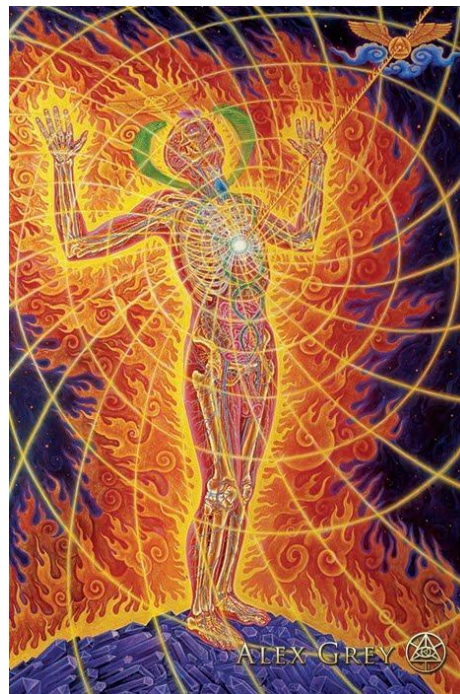


Figure 11. Alex Grey, Holy Fire Panel 1, 1986-87 oil on linen

I discovered Alex Grey in 2006 in my first high school art class. I was unaware of my life path and purpose at such a young age but was intuitively drawn to his work. This painting is from a series called *Progress of the Soul*, which Alex Grey has been working on for over the past 30 years. I recently discovered this series after undergoing a spiritual awakening myself and found that both of our work is an attempt to communicate the same fundamental ideologies. I am drawn to his symbolic use of color, the visual movement within the image, and the occult symbolism from ancient Egypt and other eastern cultures that create a strand of narrative throughout both his *Progress of the Soul* series and his *Sacred Mirrors* series. I also admire his attention to detail, and the rendering of realistic human forms, as well as his metaphysical interpretation using colors and symbols.



Figure 12. Amanda Sage, *Holy Matter*, 2016, acrylic, casein and oil on canvas

I stumbled upon Amanda Sage on Instagram in 2016 and I have since been drawn to her paintings. She is associated with Alex Grey's spiritual network and they collaborate on spiritual workshops, artist talks, and paintings. I am moved by the surreal recreation of her metaphysical experiences, as well as her vibrant and radiating color choices within all of her bodies of work. I love the visual movement created when she tries to convey our auric fields, energy being received during meditation, and the connection to the Earth.

Music Influences

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Tool. "Lateralus." *Lateralus*, Volcano Entertainment, 2001

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Heilung "Hamrer Hippyer." *Lifa*, Season of Mist, 2018

Robert Delong "First Person on Earth." *See you in the Future*, Glassnote Records, 2018

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