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# INTO THAT RESONANT DARK

by

ADAM GABRIEL WINNIE

Under the Direction of Serena Perrone, MFA

## ABSTRACT

*Into That Resonant Dark* reinterprets the monomyth of the hero's journey as a personal quest of psychological transformation through probing the subterranean world within. This exhibition focuses on the underworld descent that occurs during the initial phase of shamanic initiation that includes passing thresholds, trials, encounters, and symbolic death. These works explore a quest into the cave of the unconscious mind through a combination of archetypal symbolism and uncanny aesthetics. The exhibition of large-scale realist charcoal drawings, ambisonic sound, and video build an ominous mise-en-scene installation within the gallery. My work draws from narrative themes found in ancient mythologies in which journeys of a transformative nature confront the unknown within the depths of the psyche, initiating and integrating the polarities within us, between the oppositions of the Dionysian and the Apollonian, instinct and intellect, emotion and reason.

INDEX WORDS: Descent, Mythology, Psyche, Alchemy, Cave, Archetype, Realist Drawing,  
Charcoal, Uncanny.

INTO THAT RESONANT DARK

by

ADAM GABRIEL WINNIE

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Fine Arts

in the College of the Arts

Georgia State University

2023

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2023

INTO THAT RESONANT DARK

by

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April 2023

## **DEDICATION**

I would like to dedicate this work to the late Morgan Santander. You were an inspirational artist, an unforgettable mentor, and a dear friend! Your spirit will continue to live on in our memories and in your works.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To my wife, Stacy Diehl: You have been, and always will be, my light! Thank you for your endless love and patience. Without your help behind the scenes, without you, none of this would have been possible, thank you!

To my thesis committee: I feel incredibly grateful to have had each of you serve on my committee. Your combined perspectives help make the magic happen. To Craig Dongoski: Thank you for reinspiring my love of sonic experimentation. To Craig Drennen: Thank you for encouraging me to question my practice at a deeper level, your candor with feedback and encyclopedic knowledge of art has helped me through many of roadblocks. To Stephanie Kolpy: Thank you for all your encouragement and generous feedback. To Serena Perrone: Since I first started at GSU your advice along the way has helped me to strengthen my work and refine my approach, Thank you.

I want to thank Joe Peragine, our previous director at the Welch School of Art, and Darian Arikoski-Johnson. Their dedication made the trip to Ireland for our residency at the Burren College of Art in the Summer of 2022 an incredible experience. Despite the challenges we faced with international travel during a pandemic, it was unforgettable and transformative.

I would also like to thank John Roach, multidisciplinary artist, associate dean and associate professor of fine arts at Parsons School of Design. John was instrumental in helping overcome technical hurdles in the early stages of my ambisonic sound work for my thesis exhibition.

Lastly, I wanted to thank all my '23 cohort at GSU for continuing to inspire me to believe in the power of creativity and the imagination!



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## 1 INTRODUCTION

When I began my studies at Georgia State in the MFA program in the fall 2020, the pandemic had been spreading around the world for over half the year. That first semester of graduate school had gone online before it even started. The resulting time spent in self-isolation led me through a period of deep introspection in the face of the tragedies that continue to unfold before us. In time, I realized that my path forward must include a depth dimension if I was to begin “fulfilling the demands of rigorous self-examination and self-knowledge”.<sup>1</sup>

In his 1950 Nobel Prize acceptance speech, William Faulkner had asked, “What’s worth the agony and the sweat?”<sup>2</sup> I believe art is uniquely positioned to tell the stories that seek to answer this question through exploring, “problems of the human heart in conflict with itself”, as Faulkner suggested.<sup>3</sup> In the stories that touch us the deepest, in the darkest places that light cannot reach to shine, an awareness of an inner illumination can be made manifest. Accessing it can be a painful endeavor which requires descending into oneself and facing the darker side of the ego, what Jung called, the shadow.<sup>4</sup> These neglected unconscious forces in confrontation with one another, are sought to be brought together in a union. Their oppositions clarify and bring to light both of their hidden aspects.

My thesis work seeks to develop a greater understanding of my psyche by examining the uncanny role the darkness of the unconscious plays in the processes of seeking individuation. I’m interested in discovering in that darkness what can give “expression to a psychic wholeness”.<sup>5</sup> The works speak to an omnipresent and growing disquiet and the need to navigate this restlessness and uncertainty everywhere, both internally and externally. Drawing inspiration

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<sup>1</sup> C.G. Jung, *The Undiscovered Self* (New York: Signet, 2006), 89.

<sup>2</sup> William Faulkner, Banquet Speech (City Hall in Stockholm, December 10, 1950).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> C.G. Jung, *Alchemical Studies*, ed. R.F.C. Hull (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 268.

<sup>5</sup> Jung, *The Undiscovered Self*, 109.

from descent narratives in ancient mythology while looking to the fields of alchemical psychology and archetypal symbolism for their dialectics. I'm interested in engaging with the unconscious oppositions at the center of being and revolve to integrate them by delving into the internal melee.

What is primeval in us is embodied and animated by the darkness. My investigations into this dark operate at a precipice of experience and explore the simultaneous fear of, and desire for separation, individuation, and differentiation. The American Psychological Association defines this individuation as, "the gradual development of a unified, integrated personality that incorporates greater and greater amounts of the unconscious, both personal and collective, and resolves any conflicts that exist." In working towards an awareness of the depths of my own psyche it is necessary to tell the stories that push to the edge of reason, between imagination and reality. These energies tap into dormant creative forces and highlight a source of greater understanding of the transformative potential which myth and imagination can reveal.

In the monomyth of the hero's journey, the underworld descent occurs during the phase of initiation that includes a quest, trials, and death. These events occur before the revelation and rebirth of the hero. Psychologically speaking, there is a clear purpose to traveling into underworld, to initiate and integrate the polarities within us, but also to explore the shadow aspects of the self. This process of the epic ordeal itself is one which mirrors the *katabasis* of Orphic and Dionysian initiates of ancient Greek mystery cults, who themselves descended into the darkness of the cave as part of their own search for revelation that sublime terror so readily asserts.

When faced with the profound uncertainty of the future and finding myself metaphorically lost, as it were, in a position reminiscent of Dante's poet in canto 1 of his *Inferno*,

In midway of this our mortal life,

I found me in a gloomy wood, astray  
 Gone from my path direct.<sup>6</sup>

These territories of myth and darkness are something I've come to confront in my work.

## 2 DESCENT

*By descending into the unconscious...the conscious mind puts itself in perilous position... [the descent is] difficult and strewn with obstacles... [yet the] journey must be made. C.G. Jung*<sup>7 8</sup>

I'm interested in how the landscape and our environment hold potential to transform us beyond language, as nature is the very embodiment of change. The landscapes we inhabit, mentally and physically, are also containers for our histories, hopes and dreams, both real and imagined. They can tell us our stories but also through some unseen agency, hide their own. This especially goes for places where the shadows grow long and dark.

Descent brings us into contact with the threshold between the known and the unknown, into contact with the palpable dark and hidden forces below the surface in the depths below. The metaphors and myths regarding a subterranean land of the dead date back well over 4000 years with the Sumerian myth of the goddess Inanna, yet still they remain relevant today. Deep underground, in the caverns beneath consciousness, towards ever deeper levels of the mind, shadows and fears reside. The underlands and netherworlds are hidden away beneath and within us, always present below the surface, they're called up through myth and archetype to translate amongst many things, the sublime experience of terror and wonder. The underworld is a

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<sup>6</sup> Dante Alighieri, *Dante's Inferno: Retro Hell-Bound Edition*. trans. Rev. Henry Francis Cary (Pittsburg: CGR Publishing, 2020), 29.

<sup>7</sup> C.G. Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*. ed. R.F.C. Hull (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), Collected Works, Vol. 12, 333.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, C. G. Jung *Speaking: Interviews and Encounters* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 288.

“mythological style of describing a psychological cosmos”, from which the archetype is renewed as it takes on personal iterations through visualization and direct engagement.<sup>9</sup>

Symbolized by the dark labyrinthine geography of the cave and entered though the well, *Ocular/Oracle* (fig. 2.3) leads the journey beyond the known world and into the less traveled territory of the psyche. The subterranean environment itself stands as an antagonist as its structure and darkness designate obstacles through which passage can only be discovered by direct negotiation. Around every twist and turn into its boundless depths, knowledge is gained only in parcels as limbs reach into the terra incognita, plunging ever deeper into the dark abyss. Here, a different kind vision emerges in the absence of light.

In my *katabasis*, the cyclical eternal-return, “the way up and the way down are one and the same.”<sup>10</sup> My protagonist doubles, the doppelgangers in the figurative works, *Katabasis* (fig. 2.1), and *To Know the Dark* (fig. 2.7), can only emerge from the supreme ordeal by continuing downward and descending further into the labyrinth, without Ariadne’s thread for guidance. This treacherous path, along the ‘Night Sea Journey’, is one related to the solar myths involving death and rebirth. The dissolution of the former self and the restoration of unified spirit follows the integration (union) of oppositional forces between the Dionysian and the Apollonian. The iconography of these ancient gods stands in relation to their archetypes. Here they are translated into personifications of their psychical entities which Nietzsche described as, “artistic energies which burst forth from nature herself.”<sup>11</sup>

Descent narratives represent encounters with the ineffable, the unknowable, and the numinous, all terms that elude direct translation, but for me lead back to notions of the sublime.

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<sup>9</sup> Marlan, Stanton. *The Black Sun: The Alchemy and Art of Darkness* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2005), 78.

<sup>10</sup> Heraclitus, *Fragment*, 500 B.C., 60.

<sup>11</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Philosophy of Nietzsche* (New York: The Modern Library, 1954), 956.

I'm interested in the mythologies of physical ordeals and spiritual journeys which traverse down into the cavernous underworld in search of greater understanding, of self-knowledge, in part because, "in the downward path, that is what is called to road to truth".<sup>12</sup> Of this relationship, psychologist James Hillman states: 'Mythology is the psychology of antiquity, psychology is a mythology of modernity'.<sup>13</sup> My work draws inspiration from the myths associated with Orpheus, Odysseus, figures who undertook this dangerous quest and the mystery traditions associated with the central experience of "descending into oneself", "in search of spiritual enlightenment".<sup>14</sup> These stories have inspired my own desire for initialing a personal chthonic (dealing with the underworld), journey as told through the psychological realism and narrative of the drawings in the thesis exhibition. Using iconographic symbolism to build new myths has helped me communicate my own experience of descent and the 'dark night of the soul' that one faces when working through their most despondent of moods. The descent shows that "only in the region of danger...can one find the 'treasure hard to attain'".<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 913.

<sup>13</sup> James Hillman, *The Dream and the Underworld* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1979), 23.

<sup>14</sup> Leslie Gardner, Terence Dawson, Paul Bishop, eds., *Descent of the Soul and the Archaic: Katábasis and Depth Psychology* (New York: Routledge, 2023), VIII.

<sup>15</sup> C.G. Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*, 335.





Figure 2.1 - Adam Gabriel Winnie, *Katabasis*, charcoal, and pastel on paper mounted to Dibond, artists frame, 2023, 83" x 38".

I see the ancient Orphic and Dionysian mystery initiations as efforts in search of Schopenhauer's vision of the sublime, a confrontation with the fearful inner abyss.<sup>16</sup> The shift in consciousness which the sublime represents is still deeply connected to nature and the overwhelming experience when facing the borderline where reason finds its limits.<sup>17</sup> Schopenhauer, had "envisaged a self that can in certain situations observe itself in the very act... and in doing so attain a certain dark grandeur."<sup>18</sup> Taking this notion even further, Friedrich Schiller suggested the sublime is the way which the "Daemon within man reveals itself."<sup>19</sup> In my narrative this 'daemon' is at once the Dionysian and the shadow personified. As the protagonist within, the figure in *The Summoning* (fig. 2.2), takes on my likeness as a representative of the individualized aspects of the darker side of the human condition that no one stands outside of, not even I.

In seeking out passageways into the abyss of the mind to access to a deep reservoir of unconscious symbolism, many works within my thesis take on an aesthetic of the gateway, portal or doorway and passing through these entry points initiates a transition from one state of being to another.<sup>20</sup> Entering the Underworld is said to be easy while leaving, that is the difficult part. To undertake this dangerous voyage my surrogate is sent as the protagonist. The parallel thresholds of the drawing *Ocular/Oracle* (fig. 2.3), double as an entrance to this underworld and a portal to the psyche. From the depths of that bottomless uncanny well called the unconscious, that which was hidden is brought to the light of the surface. The first portal, by way of the reference to the

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<sup>16</sup> Simon Morley, ed., *The Sublime* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2010), 16

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 15.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 16.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 16.

<sup>20</sup> Archive for Research in Archetypal Symbolism, *The Book of Symbols: Reflections on Archetypal Images* (Cologne: Taschen, 2010), 558.

eye, metaphorically leads into the mind. The second, into the subterranean geography below the surface by virtue of mimetic illusion through realism and life-size representation. These relate to physical, sensorial, and psychological implications of descent and their interrelated psychical components.



*Figure 2.2 - Adam Gabriel Winnie, The Summoning, charcoal, and pastel on paper mounted to Dibond, artists frame, 79" x 38", 2021.*



Figure 2.3 - Adam Gabriel Winnie, *Ocular/Oracle*, charcoal, and pastel on paper mounted to Dibond, artists frame (not shown), 63" x 63", 2022.

Descent directs my trajectory downward and its movement carries me from peak and plateau into the valley below and down further still into the bowels of the earth. According to Greek mythology, as we reach the border between the living world and the world of the dead, our path leads us to the confluence of the rivers Acheron (river of woe) and Pyriphlegethon (fire-flaming), two of the five rivers of this mythological underworld. This place was a land of eternal

mist and cloud, deprived of the sun and at the edge of the world. This was also a place of sacred activity: in, *The Odyssey* of Homer, for example, this gloomy threshold to the underworld was where Odysseus made his *Nekyia* (consultation of the dead), at the *Necromanteion* (oracle of the dead), an ancient Greek temple of necromancy on the banks of these converging rivers into Hades.<sup>21</sup> The landscape drawings which signify this site are the set of Lunette shaped works, *Necromanteion* (fig. 2.4), the upper and outer representation and *Chthonic Passage* (fig. 2.5), the lower and inner aspect of the journey.



Figure 2.4 - Adam Gabriel Winnie, *Necromanteion*, charcoal, and pastel on paper mounted to Dibond, artists frame, 36" x 68", 2022.

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<sup>21</sup> Homer, *The Odyssey*, trans. Robert Fagles (New York: Viking Press, 1996), XI, 13.



Figure 2.5 - Adam Gabriel Winnie, *Chthonic Passage*, charcoal, and pastel on paper mounted to Dibond, artists frame, 36” x 68”, 2022.

Together, the upper and lower portions reference the second verse of the *Emerald Table*, a foundational hermetic text dating from the 8<sup>th</sup> century. In it, the phrase “That which is above is from that which is below, and that which is below is from that which is above...”, first appears.<sup>22</sup> My use concerns the interrelated levels of existence and the correspondent relationship between the upper, above ground consciousness and the lower depths of the unconscious, meeting together and uniting to create whole. In this way, these landscapes embody overlapping metaphors from the pictorial setting of the narrative to the symbolic microcosm it mirrors. In Robert Fudd’s illustration from his *Ultriusque Cosmi Historia* (fig. 2.6), Dionysus and Apollo appear as signifiers for the darkness and light that constitute dual aspects of the universe which mirror mankind’s own dichotomy.

<sup>22</sup> Eric J. Holmyard, *The Emerald Tablet* (Nature, No. 2814, Vol. 112, October 6, 1923), 525-526.

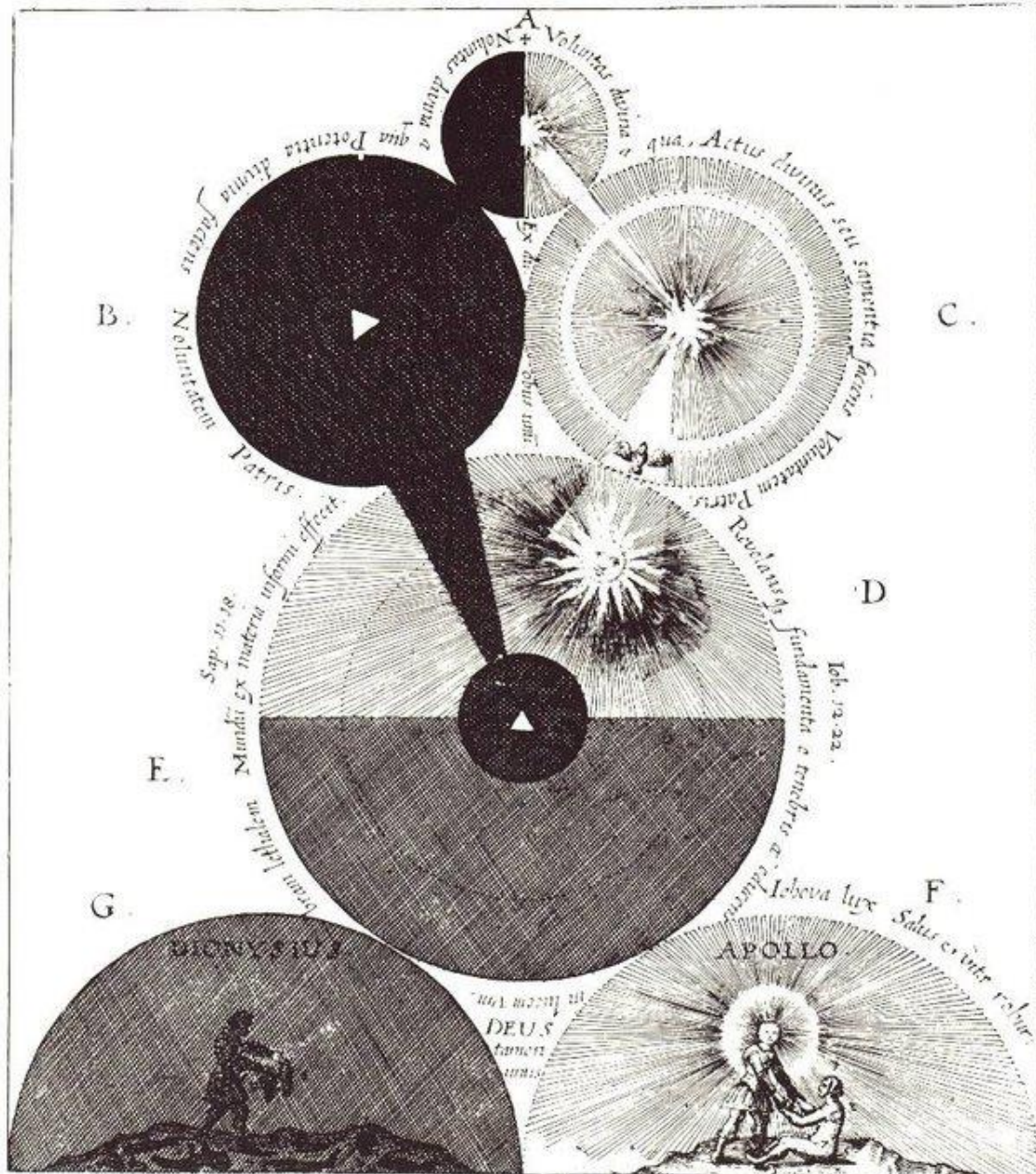


Figure 2.6 - Robert Fudd, *Man as Microcosm*, *Ultrasique Cosmi Historia*. 1619.

Dating back to the dawn of humanity, our species has associated the dark interiority of caves with sacred space. While caves have provided safety and refuge it is their mythic connections to the numinous world that imbue them with power and reverence. Here, people have explored their depths, built temples to chthonic gods, and made pilgrimages to seek wisdom from the oracles and seers. Down in dark zone of caves, initiates in ancient Greek cults endured

mysterious rites that took them through a cycle of ersatz death and rebirth; they traversed down into the underworld and became witness to back to the land of the living.<sup>23</sup> The initiate, “descended into themselves from a deliberate desire to obtain a life-transforming experience”.<sup>24</sup> This ritual process and the associations it involves provides a conceptual framework for my narrative in which I am extending the caves mythopoetical power to include semi-autobiographical underpinnings.

There is something thrilling about entering a cave by yourself that can approach the sublime, a combination of terror and intrigue. In the dark zone, a space in complete absence of light, the unique feelings which sensory deprivation elicits cannot be conveyed in words alone. Physically entering the constricting subterranean depths alters perception of time and shifts consciousness. Caves are one of the places in wilderness of nature where, as Abraham Maslow puts it, “peak experience”, can be realized in the sacred darkness.<sup>25</sup> Within the absolute darkness of the cave, the shamanic approach to altering consciousness is possible for gaining visionary and generative invocations by virtue of a sublime experience. These elements are desired for their new mythic possibilities and for unveiling the multiplicity of personal archetypes that constitute the whole self.

My initial physical descent took place in the Fall of 2020 at the beginning of my 1<sup>st</sup> semester of grad school. Classes had gone online because of the global pandemic, and everything had temporarily shut down. Being cautious myself, I traveled to somewhere I knew was isolated and remote but also sheltered and not too far from civilization (a two-hour drive from Atlanta). On that first trip underground into Pettyjohn cave, I brought camera and recording equipment to

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<sup>23</sup> Yulia Ustinova, *Caves and the Ancient Greek Mind: Descending Underground in the Search for the Ultimate Truth* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 226.

<sup>24</sup> Gardner, Dawson, Bishop, eds., *Descent of the Soul and the Archaic*. VIII.

<sup>25</sup> Fredrick Walborn, *Religion in Personality Theory* (Cambridge: Academic Press, 2014), 270.



document the interior of the cave. Using portable strobe lighting and wireless triggers I spent the day down in the cave's dark depths photographing the cavernous passages and developing figurative studies with my own body. This trip was exploratory, since at this point as I wasn't yet focused on a concept for my thesis work. However, photographs from that initial caving trip became source images and inspiration for the drawings *Chthonic Passage* (fig. 2.5), and *Katabasis* (fig. 2.1).

While in the cave I made several different types of audio field recordings. The first involved capturing the subtle sounds that were naturally occurring in the cavernous environment by way of subtle airflows and distant drips. The second recording session involved spinning a bullroar, an ancient ritual acoustical device, which resulted in an ominous sound within the cave. It was only after the fact, that I came to discover its historical use in the Eleusinian Mysteries and embrace its sound as an evocation of the Dionysian spirit. In the depths of the darkness, the bullroars reverberations transformed the quiet solitude of the space into a cacophonous chamber of sound, activating and initiating the encounter with the instinctual "other" within. These recordings together with others are used to create an auditory framework which parallels the visual narrative of the descent and is played in the gallery during the exhibition as a non-musical compositional score. Sound as the representation of the libidinal energy of the Dionysian and of the blurred boundaries between nature and the self.

On my second trip to Pettyjohn cave I knew more of what to expect with the environment and I came prepared for a stay of twelve hours. I wanted time to include a period of meditation and experience first-hand the phenomenological influence of the dark-zone, an area which lays outside of all the sun's rays, in complete darkness. I returned with all the same equipment I had originally brought with me but this time I had arrived with more specific goals in mind. There were several 'scenes' which I felt were needed to resolve the narrative progression of the initial

phase of my descent. For my thesis exhibition I needed to shoot an additional figurative element for the last drawing which referenced the inner journey into labyrinth without light, *To Know the Dark* (fig 2.7), one must go darkly. If I was to make contact and integrate with the unconscious ‘other’, then I had to proceed into its crepuscular domain.

The last key to secure while in Pettyjohn cave involved developing additional field recordings to document the sounds that the body and environment make when physically navigating the terrain into and out of the cave. These recordings then became bookends to the audio composition, giving the score an arch over its three-hour length.



Figure 2.7 - Adam Gabriel Winnie, *To Know the Dark*, charcoal, and pastel on paper mounted to Dibond, artist's frame, 38" x 82", 2023.

### 3 DARKNESS

*To go in the dark with a light is to know the light.  
To know the dark, go dark. Go without sight,  
and find that the dark, too, blooms and sings,  
and is traveled by dark feet and dark wings.*

-Wendell Berry

*Active Darkness* has become a term I've adopted to describe a determined aesthetic I employ in my artwork. The approach can be understood as a darkness that is brought to life by mobilizing and amplifying its inherent qualities of mystery, drama, and pathos.<sup>26</sup> I use the distinctive aura that active darkness alludes to throughout my work to explore the creative and imaginal potential of darkness as an empowering practice of visualization in seeking allegorical interpretation. It's ties to the multiplicitous realm of the uncanny generates thoughts of a hidden agency operating in the shadows. Though darkness carries associations of terror, death, dissolution, and a fear of losing oneself, there are also notions of the dark as being a sacred place of refuge and restorative solitude.<sup>27</sup> This paradoxical state of fear and fascination we have with the dark lingers through my narrative impulse.

The ancient Greeks understood darkness' power to inspire, in fact, "part of the source of Pythagoras' wisdom had come from his practice of enclosing himself in dark caves for extended periods of time...in order to meditate on the intricacies of the cosmos."<sup>28</sup> William Hunt author of *Underground* writes, that after spending nearly a month in the darkness of his cave on Samos, Pythagoras then emerged and announced that he experienced death, journeyed to the underworld, and returned with sacred knowledge that no mortal had previously possessed.<sup>29</sup>

For oracles, sages, shamans, and adepts of mystery cults, entering a cave occurred as a major requirement for a entering a prophetic séance or trance state.<sup>30</sup> The darkness of the cave and its otherworldly environment had provided the conditions vital for the intensified trajectory

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<sup>26</sup> Maria Rzepińska, and Krystyna Malcharek, *Tenebrism in Baroque Painting and Its Ideological Background* (Krakow: Artibus et Historiae, Vol. 7, no. 13, 1986), 92.

<sup>27</sup> Clifford A. Pickover, *The Book of Black* (New York: Calla Editions, 2013), VII.

<sup>28</sup> Will Hunt, *Underground* (New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2018), 209-210.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, 210.

<sup>30</sup> Ustinova, *Caves and the Ancient Greek Mind*, 54.

of the activities to occur, penetrating and altering the consciousness of people who were engaged in the quest for wisdom, revelation, and insight. This approach is a means “toward the release of inwardly generated images”, which can then be used as an entry-point for a mystical or numinous experience.<sup>31</sup>

Descending into the underworld via the cave provides a pathway into alternative ways of navigating the mysteries of the psyche and engaging with the forces that reside within the labyrinthine unconscious.<sup>32</sup> As I traverse the frontiers of my mind, peering into its depths—but try not to be overtaken by—the darkness that all descents eventually succumb to.

Our journey into the dark begins with a dire warning. The drawing *Black Sun* (fig 3.1), appears as an ominous sign and signifier. Associated with psychical and physical doom, it represents the beginning process of alchemy, the blackening and decomposition of *nigredo*.<sup>33</sup> This motif is repeatedly though works within my descent. Its emergence as a paradoxical, “dark and burning ball of fire, an intensity of darkness and light”, is linked to “both tragic and ecstatic possibilities”, whose dark luminescence “opens the way to some of the most numinous aspects of psychic life”.<sup>34</sup> The symbolism of the black sun originates from hermetic-chemical treatises as *Sol niger*, where it marks the beginning of the transmutation process in which decomposition, putrefaction and death take place, a dissolution of the ego.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> David Lewis-Williams, *The Mind of the Cave: Consciousness and the Origins of Art* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2002), 124.

<sup>32</sup> Ustinova, *Caves and the Ancient Greek Mind*, 54.

<sup>33</sup> Marlan, *The Black Sun: The Alchemy and Art of Darkness*, 4.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*, 3-5.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*, 10.



Figure 3.1 - Adam Gabriel Winnie, *Black Sun (Coincidentia Oppositorum A)*, charcoal, and pastel on paper mounted to Dibond, corner TV bracket, 63" x 63", 2021.



Figure 3.2 - Adam Gabriel Winnie, *Resonant Dark (Coincidentia Oppositorum B)*, charcoal, and pastel on paper mounted to Dibond, corner tv bracket, tactile transducer, amp, mp3 player, SD card, 63” x 63”, 2022.

Linking cosmological iconography with altered states, the drawings *Black Sun* (fig. 3.1), and *Resonant Dark* (Fig. 3.2), known collectively as *Coincidentia Oppositorum A&B*, relate to the, “eclipse of consciousness or of our conscious standpoint”.<sup>36</sup> It is the alchemical concept of

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<sup>36</sup> Marlan, *The Black Sun*, 11.

*nigredo*, as represented in the 16<sup>th</sup> century illustration of *Nigredo standing on the rotundum* (fig. 3.3), which refers to the beginning and most difficult stage of the alchemist's *magnum opus*, their 'great work'.<sup>37</sup> The 'darkening' blackness of the *putrefatio* in this process becomes the equivalent to a container for all possibility, the alchemical *prima materia*, the chaos from which prime matter arises. It comes to symbolize egocide which "makes possible psychic transformation and constitutes the death rebirth process".<sup>38</sup> The interconnectedness of the dual black sun drawings relates to the "self, and the non-self as a symbol of wholeness, as *Coincidentia Oppositorum*" these coincidence of opposites contain both "light and darkness simultaneously".<sup>39</sup> Together the two sun drawings also come to represent the period when the sun travels behind the earth, a time during events of the symbolic *Night Sea Journey* (fig. 4.1), which bookend the 1<sup>st</sup> chapter of the narrative that the exhibition represents. The ultimate end being as Jung puts it is, "the restoration of life, resurrection and the triumph over death."<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Rzeplińska and Malcharek, *Tenebrism in Baroque Painting and Its Ideological Background*, 104.

<sup>38</sup> Marlan, *The Black Sun*, 73.

<sup>39</sup> C.G. Jung, *Symbols of Transformation*. ed. R.F.C. Hull (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), Collected Works, Vol. 5, paragraph 576.

<sup>40</sup> C.G. Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*, 329.

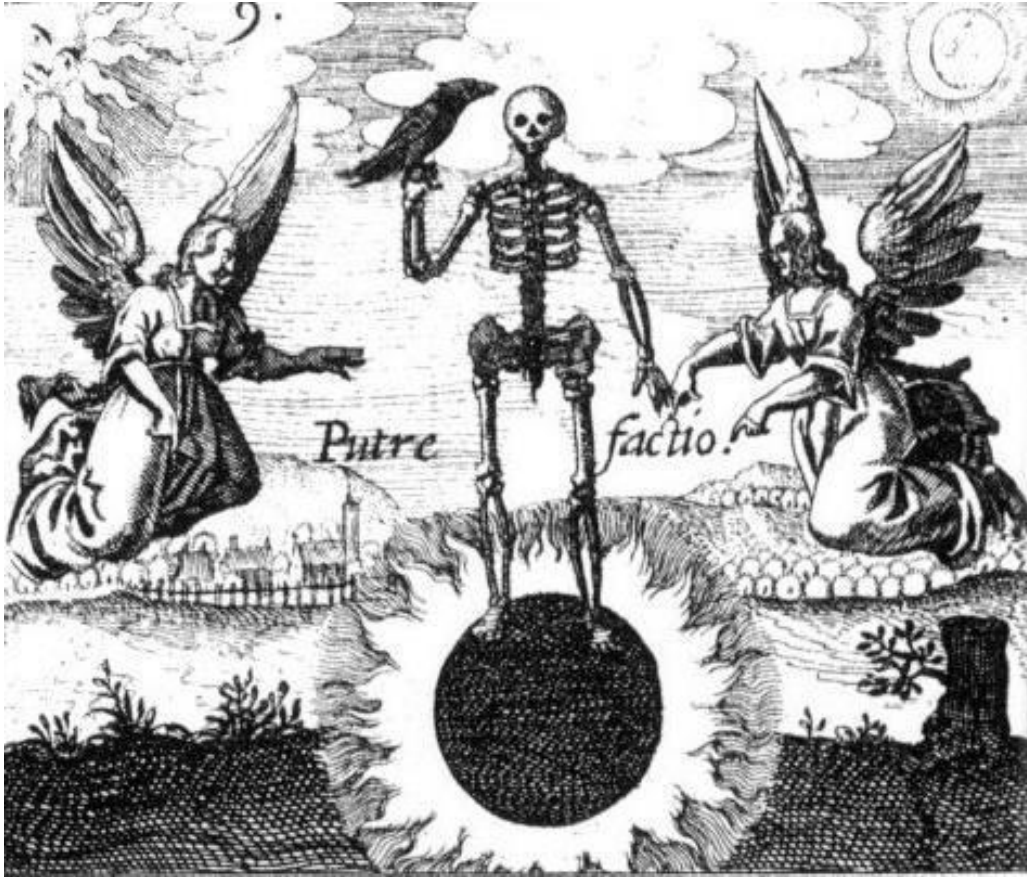


Figure 3.3 - Johannes Daniel Mylius, *Nigredo standing on the rotundum*, i.e. sol niger (black sun), *Philosophia Reformata*, 1622.

In psychological terms the ‘Black Sun’ is felt as “melancholia” and linked to an encounter to the unconscious, representing a period of being locked in a struggle with the ‘shadow’.<sup>41</sup> My use of this symbol is influenced by Carl Jung’s interpretation of alchemy as a psychological and symbolic art, which helped him decipher his own highly personal experiences in his encounter with his unconscious.<sup>42</sup> For me, it marks the beginning of a time of intense self-inquiry where I’m seeking to engage with the blinding forces represented by the ‘Black Sun’, whose dark rays shine deep into the psyche.<sup>43</sup> There was a periods in my life where this ‘Black

<sup>41</sup> Marlan, *The Black Sun: The Alchemy and Art of Darkness*, 10.

<sup>42</sup> Gerhard Wehr, *C.G Jung and Jungianism*, *The Cambridge Handbook of Western Mysticism and Esotericism*. ed. Glen Alexander Magee (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 302.

<sup>43</sup> Julia Kristeva, *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 151.



Sun' threatened to overtake me during my psychological excavation, yet, "only in the region of danger and on find the treasure had to attain".<sup>44</sup>

Although the *Black Sun* appears to be a nefarious signifier at first, its true meaning turns out to be somewhat of a paradox. Its alchemical meanings hint at a less gloomy outlook.

Renewal and rebirth are, after all, the result of destruction and decomposition: "dark luminescence opens the way to some of the most numinous aspects of psychic life."<sup>45</sup> Given the Black Sun's paradoxical meanings, its used to represent encountering the darkness within the psyche, depicting the shadowy struggle against this darkness while making it possible for "the poet to reach the knowledge of archetypes".<sup>46</sup>

One of my earliest childhood memories is of the darkness of night enveloping my body as I laid paralyzed. At a young age I would awake in the middle of the night, frozen, unable to speak or move, silent in my attempt to call out. That early experience of a night terror is what I've come to associate as an example of the "Uncanny", the intrusion of strangeness within the familiar. Nicolas Royle interprets this form of uncanny as: "drawing on the feeling of isolation and solitude" and "having to do with a sense of ourselves as double, split, at odds with ourselves."<sup>47</sup>

All these stories and memories relate the idea of a darkness with agency, a sentient force with a looming presence in our lives that is part of our psyche. The 1984 film, *The Never-Ending Story*, contains a perfect example of agential darkness. In the film, a force called The Nothing destroys everything in the imaginal world of Fantasia, leaving only a bleak wasteland of empty

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<sup>44</sup> C.G. Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*. ed. R.F.C. Hull (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), Collected Works, Vol. 12, 335.

<sup>45</sup> Marlan, *The Black Sun: The Alchemy and Art of Darkness*, 3-5.

<sup>46</sup> Pierre Brunel, and Gerald Honisblum, trans. Wendy Donniger, "Mythologies of European Decadent and Symbolist Literature", in *Roman and European Literature* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 273.

<sup>47</sup> Barbra Rose, "American Painting: The Eighties," in *Theories of Contemporary Art*, ed. Richard Hertz (Edgewood Cliff: Prentice Hall, 1993), 6.

space.<sup>48</sup> The Nothing's destruction is powered by lack of imagination in the 'real world', and as viewers we feel implicated as we watch the child protagonist, Bastian, fight to save Fantasia through the acceptance of his role in story and the power of his belief. Fantasia is reborn, but The Nothing remains, always lurking on the margins, ready to destroy again when humanity's powers of imagination run dry but also ready to create again. The Nothing is a darkness with an agenda, a purpose, and plan that involves the entropic maxim of destruction and creation.

Active darkness is manifesting these oscillations between Eros and Thanatos in my work in part through the dramatic use of chiaroscuro techniques which bring an arresting energy to the pictorial imagery of each of the drawings. My approach has been refined into a personal style which embraces the arrangement of extreme contrast to bring more depth to shadows and create an atmosphere heightened with emotion. This approach draws inspiration from renaissance artists like Caravaggio, from whom the term tenebrism is said to be derived. Tenebrism describes a type of painting in which significant details such as faces, and hands are illuminated by highlights that contrast starkly against a predominantly dark setting. Figures portrayed in this style rest against a background of intense darkness and are illuminated by a focused light source that sets off their three-dimensional forms. From the Italian *tenebroso*, which means darkened and obscuring, I use this lighting technique to bring great drama and theatricality to my subjects, amplifying the emotive potential of the imagery.

The active darkness in the shadows of my work reference the blacker than black expanse, beyond the subject or object and into the imaginal space, the dreamworld, the unknown and unknowable, the night that extends into eternity when I look inwards. When I investigate the

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<sup>48</sup> Wolfgang Peterson, *The NeverEnding Story* (Hollywood, CA: Warner Brothers, 1984).

darkness, I also peer into my imagination and the archetypes which connect me to our collective unconsciousness.

#### 4 TRANSFORMATION

Transformation is at the heart of my interest in Jung's *Katabasis* and in my pursuit of the potential insights it can bring to light. As a reflection of my journey inward, the descent of my protagonist double is a metaphor for the trials that I've encountered as I've navigated the underworld of the mind. The quest of unifying dynamic oppositional forces within my psyche has taken by double downward into the unconscious abyss. The underworld geography of the cave became the allegorical territory where personal and collective unconscious collide.<sup>49</sup> This is the *prima materia* of archetype and the uncanny, where everything that is repressed resides. The Apollonian and Dionysian present here designate polarities between rational and irrational, self and other.

My re-interpretation of the monomyth, of the 'hero's journey', takes us through threshold into unfamiliar world that is animated with strangely familiar forces.<sup>50 51</sup> The descent quest in my narrative is inspired in-part by what Carl Jung referred to as the "perilous adventure of the night sea journey."<sup>52</sup> In this type of mythical story, Jung stated:

Entry into the dragon is the regressive direction, and the journey to the East with its attendant events symbolizes the effort to adapt to the conditions of the psychic inner world. The complete swallowing up and disappearance of the hero in the belly of the dragon represents the complete withdrawal...from the outer world. The overcoming of

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<sup>49</sup> Stephen T. Asma, *On Monsters: An Unnatural History of Our Worst Fears* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 190.

<sup>50</sup> Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (Novato: New World Library, 2008), 211.

<sup>51</sup> Nietzsche, *The Philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche*, 952.

<sup>52</sup> Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*, 329.

the monster from within is the achievement of adaptation to the conditions of the inner world, and the emergence of the hero from the monster's belly with the help of a bird, which happens at the moment of sunrise, symbolizes the recommencement of progression.<sup>53</sup>

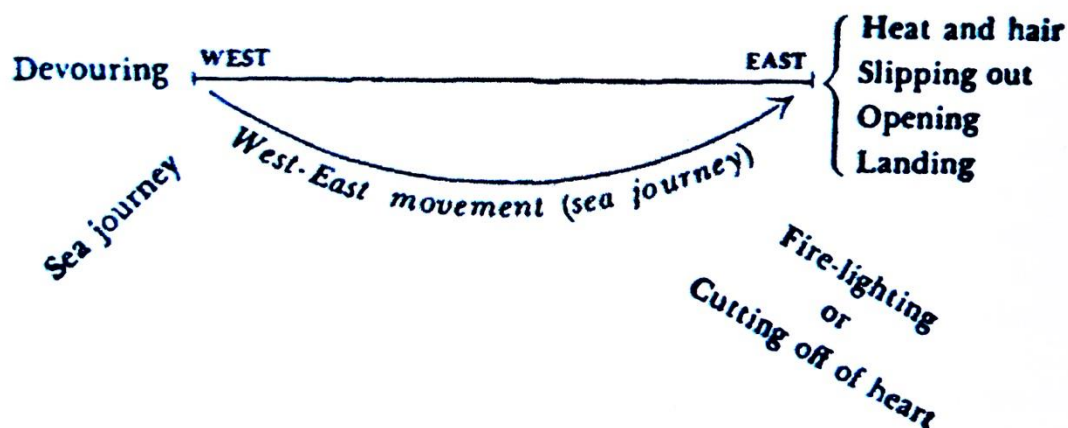


Figure 4.1 - *Night Sea Journey*

In my adaptation of this theme, the belly of the whale has been replaced by the dark labyrinthine cave and the bird that assists becomes the crow. In *The Cut* (fig. 4.2), this crow symbolizes the divinatory bird of Apollo. As the oracular god of prophecy, clarity, and light but also illusion and dreams, Apollo brings order to the ecstatic and guides the initiate through the ersatz death of the dreamworld.<sup>54</sup> As the last figurate work in the narrative, *The Cut* represents the last stage of the journey *Into That Resonant Dark* before the ascent and return to the world of the living. The cut on the foot symbolizes the loss of grounding and the physical displacement by death. The crow stands watchful as a guardian over the transmogrification which follows.

In this solar inspired myth:

<sup>53</sup> C.G. Jung, *Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche* (New York: Routledge, 1991), *Collected Works: Volume 8*, 36-37.

<sup>54</sup> Nancy Hathaway, *The Friendly Guide to Mythology* (New York: Penguin Books, 2001), 189-190.

All living things rise, like the sun, from water, and sink into it again at evening. Born of springs, rivers, lakes, and seas, man at death comes to the waters of the Styx, and there embarks on the “night sea journey.” Those black waters of death are the water of life, for death with its cold embrace is the maternal womb, just as the sea devours the sun but brings it forth again. Life knows no death.<sup>55</sup>

The solar symbolism bookends the journey and refers to not only the setting and rising of the sun on in its the journey from west to east in its nocturnal path behind the earth, but to the dual nature of Black Sun itself, at once luminous and blacker than black. Julia Kristeva points out that “beyond its alchemical scope, the “Black Sun” metaphor fully sums up the blinding force of the despondent mood...a lucid affect asserts the inevitability of death.”<sup>56</sup> Here it is also referring the projection of the ego and the encounter with the non-self. Together they form a correspondence known as the *Coincidentia Oppositorum*, a union of opposites. The hero’s descent into the underworld is linked by its long-associated symbol with the sun, as he too tragically dies in his travels to the underworld and is reborn anew, now master of both worlds and bearing the elixir of understanding.

From here, “The rehabilitation of the metaphorical and metaphysical implications of imagery is a validating insight and liberating potential for art to be more than literal reportage, as catharsis of the imagination.”<sup>57</sup> The ‘working through’ of the journey takes us down into dark cavernous underworld of the unconscious. Using archetypal symbolism as generative aesthetic experience to build meaning, my self-portraits come to embody the story though cathexis. My protagonist double in *Katabasis* (fig. 2.1), and myself by proxy, must come to understanding by

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<sup>55</sup> Jung, *Symbols of Transformation*, 319.

<sup>56</sup> Julia Kristeva, *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 151.

<sup>57</sup> Barbra Rose, “American Painting: The Eighties”, 29.

acknowledging the multiplicitous nature of the psyche.<sup>58</sup> Only then could confrontation and integration take place to move beyond an individualized state of being and into a self-directed state of becoming, in the Deleuzian sense. The approach looks to harness the continual, dynamic, and generative process of deconstruction and renewal that is manifest consciously in developing the archetypal self.

For me this means making a psychic inventory and confronting the unconscious, the fears, drives, and desires which reflect manifestations of the Shadow self, represented by the Dionysian. While the Apollonian represents its antithesis, sought for harnessing and transforming these energies through clarity and reason, bringing to light that which is in the dark. The Dionysian and Apollonian are manifestations of archetypal forces I've adapted from Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy*, to represent psychical entities at opposition within the psyche. I consider both of these creative forces to each have dual natures of their own. As for Dionysus, he is both a liberator and destroyer whose energies are sought to be redeemed by Apolline experiences.<sup>59</sup>

Both Greek gods possess traits that I am adapting as symbolic iconographies. This is represented by one aspect of the snakes in *The Summoning* (fig. 5), and the wounded feet in, *The Cut* (Fig. 12). Apollos divinatory bird represented by the crow in the drawing, *The Cut*. The realism of the pictorial imagery comes to represent the clarity and light of the Apollonian.

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<sup>58</sup> Richard Kearney, *Narrative Imagination and Catharsis* (Kronos, Volume 43, Number 4, 2017), 2.

<sup>59</sup> Ann Casement and David Tacey, *The Idea of the Numinous: Contemporary Jungian Psychoanalytic Perspectives*. (New York: Routledge, 2006), 141-142.



Figure 4.2 - Adam Gabriel Winnie, *The Cut*, charcoal, and pastel on paper mounted to Dibond, 74" x 38", 2021.

When I look inwards, I inevitably enter a flux, psychological boundaries are tenuous and influenced by images both internal and external.

An uncanny effect often arises when the boundary between fantasy and reality is blurred, when we are faced with the reality of something that we have until now considered imaginary, when a symbol takes on the full function and significance of what it symbolizes, and so forth. This is the root of much that is uncanny about magical practices.<sup>60</sup>

My interest in imaginative projection originates in the works of alchemists, where each physical component of their work had its psychical counterpart.<sup>61</sup> Active imagination, talking directly to the thing you are dealing with, was Jung's way of allowing ego direct contact with what the inner psychic factors had to say. He derived this method from thinking of the psychological tradition of alchemy as the art of active imagination with materiality.<sup>62</sup> Elaborating upon this Jung explained that their work was, "in part consciously psychic, unconsciously projected and seen in various forms of matter".<sup>63</sup> We also learn from him that it was imagination itself, as the alchemists understood it, that was the key to opening the door to the secrets of their magnum opus, (the great works) of their coded treatises.<sup>64</sup>

Alchemists and shamans have shown that imagination is a powerful force. At the intersection of our perceptions and interpretations of reality and our imaginative visualizations, the mimetic powers of representational drawing can operate as a bridge between cathexis and catharsis. Myth and metaphor within the narrative are mobilized as, "machines for the purging of

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<sup>60</sup> Freud, *The Uncanny*, 150-151.

<sup>61</sup> Rzepińska and Malcharek. *Tenebrism in Baroque Painting and Its Ideological Background*, 91-112.

<sup>62</sup> Marie-Louise von Franz, *Alchemical Active Imagination* (Boulder: Shambhala, 1997), 22.

<sup>63</sup> Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*, 270.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid*, 282-3.



wounds: strategies for resolving at a symbolic level what remains irresolvable at the level of lived experience”, while simultaneously enabling new archetypes to develop.<sup>65</sup>

The artworks became aggregations of the mythopoetic processes and focal points of reflection when the “psyche struggles against the dark asymbolism”.<sup>66</sup> As my narrative gradually unfolded, synchronicities and connections were made that drove my work forward, or in this case downward and inward. It was an organic process that built momentum as the works progressed. While drawing one work, I’m already visualizing ahead to where it leads next and so forth and so on. The imagery that resonates with me most makes it to the next round. I use photographic references in my drawing process, staging my self-portraits. Translated onto the surface of the drawing paper, the indexical trace of the charcoal becomes more objectively real to me than the photographs do, while also taking on a life of their own beyond the source image.

My approach to building narrative is inspired by Matthew Barney’s long form approach to visionary cinematic epics. In Barney’s *River of Fundament* (2014), he traces an odyssey of death and its mythologies inspired by Norman Mailer’s 1983 novel *Ancient Evenings*. It tells of the regeneration and rebirth in which Mailer’s soul, aided by deceased Pharaohs and Egyptian deities, seeks reincarnation and immortality. In a separate subplot, the hero’s journey is paralleled by the rise and fall of the American automobile industry. The narrative structure of the operatic film and the artworks from the exhibition component are of particular interest to me in their enigmatic and esoteric symbolism which requires investing time to come to terms with. His concept and method of developing parallel narratives is particularly useful in illustrating potential strategies of layering meaning.

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<sup>65</sup> Kearney, *Narrative Imagination and Catharsis*, 3.

<sup>66</sup> Kristeva, *Black Sun*, 151



Figure 4.3 - Matthew Barney, *River of Fundament*, production still, 2014.

In Barney's *The Order*, from his *Cremaster 3* (2002) film, the Apprentice, the story's protagonist, must pass through a series of trials to proceed to the subsequent levels. The artist's approach opened the gates for the transformative potential of art. His transdisciplinary practice crosses over from and to film, establishing an extension to his cinematic world which then bleeds into our own. The strategy I've come to adopt in my descent is an inversion of Barney's ascent, which sought to reach the highest level. My protagonist double is in search of the lowest, far below the foundation and deep beneath the roots. Sculptural and video works reference ideas and motifs in my drawings and vice-versa, building sensorial bridges between mediums while adding depth to the narrative quest.



Figure 4.4 - Matthew Barney, *Cremaster 3: The Order*, video still, 2002.

I'm looking to embody an enigmatic psychic resonance within my artworks that has potential hold the viewer captivated in a delay, leaving a latent image of the work on their memory. There is sense that these vignettes are part of a larger world that is never fully revealed. In the dark corridors, compounding plot, and multiplying meaning. While approaching my narrative I'm allowing for diverging paths to generate additional entry-points of discovery. This points to a refusal of limits or finality, opening the work to the speculative interpretation which keeps the story continuing onward.

Another artist whose work deals with narrative transformation that has had an influence on my work is Rinus Van de Velde, whose large-scale drawings have captured my imagination. As a self-proclaimed armchair explorer, he rarely leaves the confines of his studio, instead his approach has him constructing a fictional autobiography which intertwines personal fabrications with the biography of others to develop new persona.<sup>67</sup>

## 5 THESIS EXHIBITION



Figure 5.1 - *Into That Resonant Dark*, thesis exhibition detail, Welch School Gallery, April 3rd-7<sup>th</sup>, 2023.

For the exhibition component of my thesis, *Into That Resonant Dark*, (fig. 5.1) I presented nine large-scale charcoal and pastel drawings as well as installations involving video, ambisonic audio, and a floor sculpture. The concept was to consider the works as vignettes driving a larger narrative and building a world, one drawing at a time, that corresponded to both

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<sup>67</sup> Dirk Vermaelen, "The Cunning Little Vixen," in *Rinus Van De Velde: Inner Travels* (Antwerp: Hannibal Books, 2022), 19.

an interior and exterior archetypal significance. Together the works represent the 1<sup>st</sup> chapter of the journey, the descent through the threshold into the depths.

To create the drawings for the exhibition I began with photographing my subject matter. The process often involves me staging necessary figurative scenes. Because this work represents my own experience, I only used images of my own body. To support the size of the drawings and keep them as flat and rigid as possible, paper was first mounted to Dibond. To prepare the aluminum composite panels they were first cut into arch, circle or lunette shapes using a router or jigsaw and then sanded to provide tooth. After the panel is cleaned with 90% isopropyl alcohol, a layer PVA glue is rolled out with an adhesive roller and allowed to dry. After drying a second coat of PVA is applied and once it tacked up Lenox 100 paper was rolled out and the a brayer was rolled over the panel as the adhesive set. When the panel is ready, sections of the to-scale images are printed as references for the drawings. To create drawings with as much depth as possible, I use black pastel in addition to charcoal in all its forms. Since the pastel is pigmented, it gives me a couple of extra shades of dark to work with. In addition, its velvety texture absorbs light more than charcoal, giving its matt quality an even darker appearance.

To frame each of the large, curved drawings I used ¾" MDF that is cut with either a CNC or a router and table saw and doubled up. Each frame is made from 4-8 separate pieces that are joined together using a pock-hole jig and wood glue creating a frame that is 1 ½" deep. Once the frames are assembled, they are given two coats of a shellac-based primer and 3-4 coats of flat black enamel with an HVLP spray gun, sanding in-between each coat for a factory finish.

For the video installation, *The Toll Due* (fig. 5.2), I used a thumb-drive with a 4k video file set on a loop that consisted of my right hand moving into and out of a fire coming out of a stack of stones. This is set in slow motion over a period of 09:14. Halfway through the video the fire reverses and travels inward into the stones. Set in front of pleated black curtains, the work

dramatizes self-sacrifice as a trial needed to proceed to the next stage in seeking the boon of treasured self- knowledge. The outer fire of the flames ignites the inner-fire of the spirit and sets in motion the transmutation of the body and the passage from one plane of consciousness to another. The transformation symbolized has a cyclical nature, an eternal return, that unites both the macrocosm and the microcosm.



Figure 5.2 - *Into That Resonant Dark*, thesis exhibition detail, Welch School Gallery, April 3rd-7th, 2023.

The audio components consisted of eight hand-made speakers positioned around the perimeter of the gallery near the ceiling, two studio monitors and a subwoofer. The sound system was controlled by two interfaces, one which ran to two, 4-channel amps that supplied power and signals to the eight perimeter speakers and signal to the subwoofer and one that provided signal to the monitors. For the audio, I composed an 11-channel 3:30:00 soundtrack

that played during the reception. For the other open days of the gallery the track was pared down to 4-channels and played through four mp3 players set on a repeat. To house all the audio components, I altered a wall-mounted server cabinet, blocking out any ability to see into the box. Titled, *Black Box*, (fig. 5.3) the name of the work references unseen inner-workings.



Figure 5.3 - Adam Gabriel Winnie, *Black Box*, digital interface, custom speakers, amplifiers, subwoofer, studio monitors, mp3 players, network cabinet, rug, 210:00, 2023.

When creating the score for the exhibition I was thinking about how films use sound to set mood and tone. I was particularly influenced by the work of Vangelis in *Blade Runner* and Hans Zimmer and Benjamin Wallfisch in *Blade Runner 2049*. Using a combination of field recordings created on location in Pettyjohn's cave in Georgia and the Burren in Ireland, I wove

an arch through the audio which suggested movement of a figure over time thought the environment. Over the course of the audio composition that includes these sounds I introduced a series of deep resonances which emerge and undulate through the gallery. The effect of the sound develops an environment which frames the visual work and adds to its drama and mystery.

The floor installation, *Transference*, (fig. 5.4) was conceived first as a single pile of stones, hand coated in graphite powder titled, *Shake and Bake*. As the exhibition evolved, I wanted a component which not only suggested a ritualized function but connected to the idea of the monad, the totality of all things. In this instance, representing aspects of the ego kept hidden or repressed and inhabiting the territory of the unconscious, yet still constituting an essential aspect of the whole. In the center of the all the darkness, a light still flickers within.

The seven cairns encircling the hundred-year-old blackened lantern symbolize the seven classical planets, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, the Sun and the Moon. The reference of the planets also corresponds to the seven stages of the alchemical processes. In addition, each cairn comes to represent one of the seven “internal octaves” of consciousness between waking and sleep with the lantern as representing their shared connection to a central, internal luminance of the mind.<sup>68</sup> David Lewis-Williams states of this spectrum of consciousness as consisting of, “waking (problem-oriented thought), realistic fantasy, autistic fantasy, reverie, hypnagogic states, dreaming and unconscious.”<sup>69</sup> Further adding to the numbers significance in my work, Apollo is associated with the number seven as he was born on the seventh day of the month. *Transference*, is ultimately a reinterpretation of the ancient rite of *solificatio*, symbolizing the ascent through the spheres of the seven planets and “the return of the soul to the realm of the sun from which it originated”.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Lewis-Williams, *The Mind in the Cave*, 122-23.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid. 123

<sup>70</sup> Archive for Research in Archetypal Symbolism, *The Book of Symbols*, 430.





*Figure 5.4 - Adam Gabriel Winnie, Transference, 1923 lantern, black 3.0, graphite on sandstone, led lights, 68" x 68", 2023.*

The exhibition was organized in somewhat of a linear progression following a counterclockwise rotation through the gallery. On the right wall of the gallery, two lunette shaped works, one above ground with an upward facing arch and one below ground with a downward facing arch, begin to suggest traveling from place to place, a journey from above to below. Further, the circular work *Ocular/Oracle*, provides a deeper descent into the depths, following the rope that extends into the abyss. From here on the front and back walls of the gallery, two figurative works, one facing downward, *Katabasis* and the other with a curved left side, *To Know the Dark*, suggest a personal descent beneath the surface and into the labyrinth of the cave.

On the left, north facing wall of the gallery, four works balance the four on the other side. On this side of the exhibition two black suns loom, one in the upper right (east) corner and one in the lower left (west) corner. Both are suspended away from the wall using corner tv brackets and aluminum sub-frames on the backs of the Dibond.

The two vertical figurative drawings on the left were two of the earliest works in the exhibition. They have come to hold many meanings which have compounded as the other works progressed. They have come to represent not only the Apollonian and the Dionysian, logic and instinct, reason and chaos, intellect, and primal libidinal energy, but as encounters with the shadow self, symbolic death, and transmutation. The crow is Apollo's divination bird, signifying omens to come, standing watchful as a guardian to return the spirit to above. Snakes, as creatures from beneath, emerge from crevices in the earth. Upon the birth of Dionysus, "Zeus had crowned the child with a crown of serpents".<sup>71</sup> As such, the drawing *The Summoning* (fig. 2.2), references this relationship and is positioned across the gallery, opposite from the cave interior drawing *Chthonic Passage* (fig. 2.5), whereas *The Cut* (fig. 4.2), the drawing of a crow perched atop feet, is across from the landscape drawing *Necromanteion* (fig. 2.4).

Visitors who came through the gallery would often stand in front of the works for long periods. When one group of students gathered around a drawing and sat down, I asked "what they were doing." Their response was simply, "watching it", I smiled thinking that was a perfect reaction. While the soundtrack drives cinematic overtones, the complexity and realism of the drawings have an immediate aesthetic impact, yet they take time to soak in symbolically. The delay in front of the artwork suspends disbelief in their fiction and opens the narrative for longer consideration from the viewer, inviting an imagined participation.

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<sup>71</sup> Hathaway, *The Friendly Guide to Mythology*, 246.

My thirst for virtuosity in drawing and in the craftsmanship of my work relates to a desire for self-actualization and regaining agency over both my mind and body. In a time of media saturation and infiltration into our lives, behavioral control is an omnipresent contention. If we cannot retain conscious control of our own actions and thoughts, we risk not only manipulation from others but derailment from the path leads to the realization of the self archetype. In response to this and on personal and individual level, I ask myself “what unknown forces within my own psyche, steer and control my life”?

## 6 CONCLUSION

During my three years in grad school at Georgia State University, the intensity of my studies was compounded by the atmosphere of fear and uncertainty surrounding the pandemic. This time has been without a doubt the most challenging period of my life; artistically, intellectually, professionally and on countless personal levels.

What I’ve come to realize was that what drives me is an elusiveness of what I cannot see, what I do not know about and what is hidden from me. That is what keeps me looking into the mysteries of the abyss, "In the downward path, that is what is called to road to truth."<sup>72</sup> When my own depression and melancholia threatened to overwhelm me, it was only through the depth dimension, that I was able to gain perspective and bring to light that which sought to remain hidden. The world is uncanny, and the same goes for the psyche, it’s another example of the microcosm / macrocosm concurrence.

Arising under Jungian influence, my interest in his approach to alchemical research made it possible to begin deciphering insights into the structures of consciousness and my own psychic realities.<sup>73</sup> The concepts underpinning my thesis work led me towards investigating the

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<sup>72</sup> Nietzsche, *The Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 913.

<sup>73</sup> Wehr, *C.G. Jung and Jungianism*, 302.

relationship between psychology and mythology as well as the nature of individuation itself.

From here, I see my practice as being driven from this inexhaustible source of inspiration into the frontiers of the mind.

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