

UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA FAIRBANKS
ART DEPARTMENT

Hypnagogia
BFA Thesis Exhibition Report

Presented to the BFA Degree Committee:

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Introduction

I have suffered from nightmares for as long as I can remember. I regularly woke at 3:00am to the silence and deep darkness that coaxed hallucinations out of an active imagination. I would anxiously wait for the light of day, but once there would involuntarily slip away into daydreams, becoming lost for long periods of time before even realizing that I had been gone. I lie awake at night, my thoughts circling the real and imagined, resisting sleep for the terrifying forms these thoughts took in my dreams. Locked in this cycle, I found myself increasingly stuck in the place between asleep and awake, hypnagogic, never really sure which side I was on. During the day I would try to carry on conversations that had never begun and to look for things that had never been there. At night, I wondered what was real.

Art and I were estranged for nearly fifteen years when I began taking courses at UAF, but to say we ever really knew each other to begin with wouldn't be entirely accurate. In the traditional sense of the word, my background extends only so far as the Art Enrichment program I was in from the fifth through eighth grades where I completed exactly one acrylic painting per year. Occasionally I drew when I felt the need to escape for a while. It did not happen too often, but the act of putting pencil to paper was cathartic.

My introduction to the UAF Art Department was through basic digital photography. I signed up a few years after receiving my first official camera for Christmas in 2012. As I began to make sense of my camera and become acquainted with Photoshop, I found enjoyment in the act of manipulating images originally created via an inherently "truthful process." It mirrored the blending of the real and imagined I experienced during my troubled sleep.

story. The honesty I saw while working among other artists in Alaska, each with their own story to tell, was a gift; it gave me courage to tell my own.

Inspirations

Leading up to the spring of 2017, a sense of unease had been growing in the pit of my stomach, bringing about panic attacks- and more sleepless nights- with a vengeance. While trying to make sense of what I was feeling, I turned to the photography studio, which had been a growing source of comfort over the past two years. Lost for words and unable to reach out for help, I found escape by creating and analyzing motion-driven self-portraits. As my mental stability further deteriorated, I became convinced that the answer to what was happening was somewhere in the photos I was taking. With the afflicted mind controlling how one subconsciously presents the3nd co I becning

Maruyama. “Nude” is a series of time-lapse photography done in collaboration with dancers (Fig. 1). Each image consisted of about 10,000 frames of a dancer in motion stacked afterwards in Photoshop. The dance was choreographed purposefully, sometimes taking up to five months to perfect. Maruyama described the resulting image as “the accumulation of distinct events” ultimately leading to the illusion of a fluid whole (Bierend). I was struck by the idea of the human as a sum of its parts, built from something not immediately recognizable save for small glimpses of a heel or the curve of a calf.

Bill Wadman is another contemporary photographer focusing on the forms created by dancers’ bodies. Though there are many fundamental similarities between Wadman and Maruyama’s work, Wadman’s work adds color and is shot using a long exposure rather than stacking images (Fig. 2). Instead of focusing on defined shapes, he catches brief glances of the

an end. I began to look at my own use of the technique as a way to represent the odd nature of the passage of time in hypnagogia and the dream state beyond.

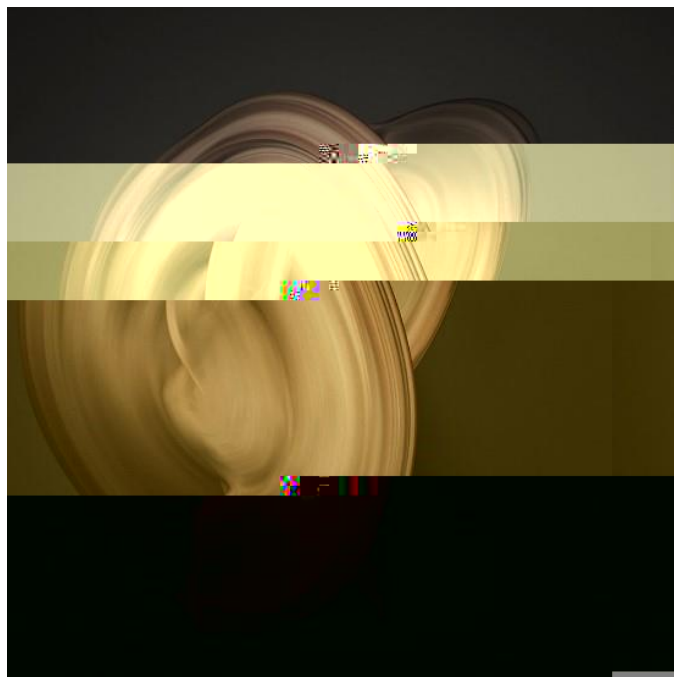


Fig. 1. Shinichi Maruyama, Nude 9, 2012

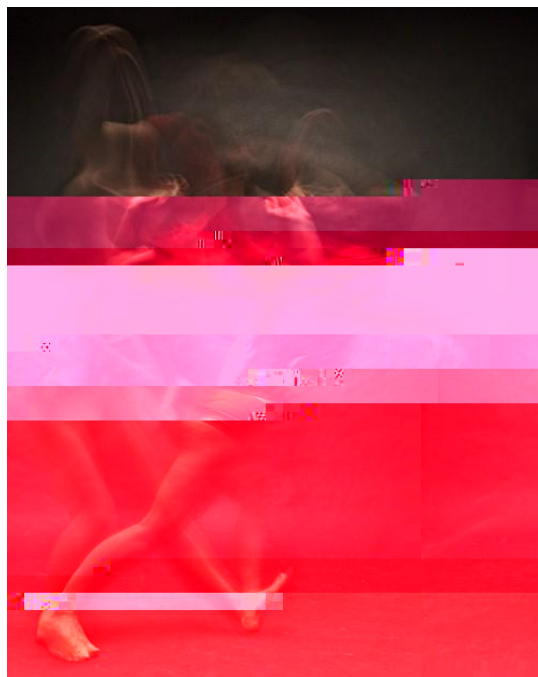


Fig. 2. Bill Wadman, Motion #30, 2012

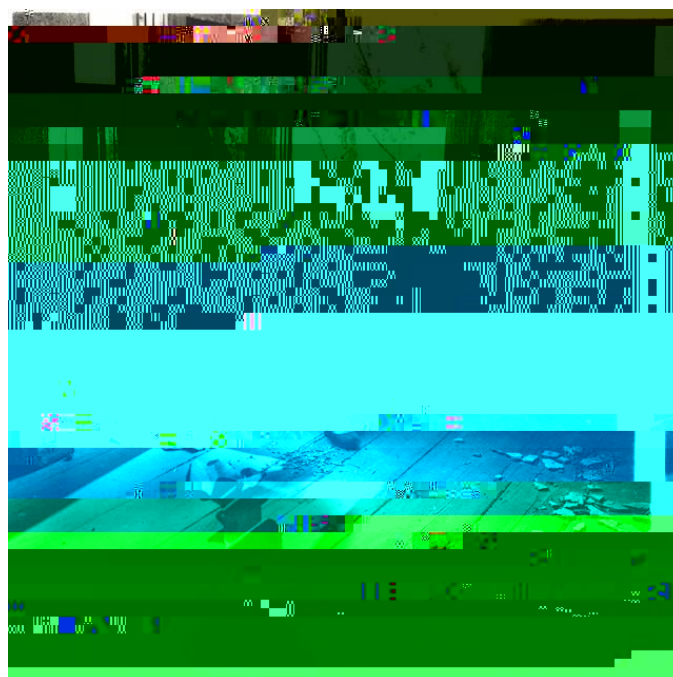


Fig. 3. Francesca Woodman, House III, 1976

consciously direct it. Therefore, decisions such as which color fabric and backdrop I would use, as well as how I would move and “paint” with the fabric, were not predetermined beyond what simply felt right in that moment.

Virtual Exhibition & Book

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic and a cross-country move, I opted to complete this thesis virtually. Hypnagogia itself

This design was purposefully created around the idea of the existence of consciousness on a spectrum. Rather than reaching terminal points, the gallery can be traveled back and forth, much like the mind sliding up and down this spectrum, almost always at some point between the extremes. The labyrinth also follows the concept of the non-linear structure of time and thought in the mind. Regardless of the time of day, our thoughts are constantly darting in all directions,

limbs slow and heavy. I was drowning, being pulled into a dark, velvety void. I saw life beyond the surface, but the skin of the water was out of my reach... I almost didn't mind this slow disappearance, though. The sun was distorted and too bright and the words of the people around me were hollow. They sounded happy, though, and I knew that to reach out would risk pulling them down with me.

It wasn't too long before my specter found its voice. It whispered, at first, here and there. It tugged at insecurities like the loose thread of a sweater, unravelling a little further each time. Gradually, the voice became louder. Wher7 7453id (a)ranc of ad aonheiya wou(t)11(e)urid (anoe)-5neuria[.)]TJ

There is one

The figure's right arm is bent; her stance suggests that her hands may be clasped behind her back. A ghost of a head gazes downward, leaning sharply to the right, and her long hair cascades around her right arm, almost reaching the bottom of the frame. There is a second semi-transparent head held high, looking left towards something off in the distance. One can see several facial features, including a mouth, part of a nose and a bright white glow where the eyes ought to be.

The

come forward in the body is a positive sign, as well. Though the flowers have not entirely skirted the bone, they press insistently against them, hinting at the inevitable change to come.

It has been a year since I started down my road to recovery. It continues to be hard work and there are many checks in place to manage my PTSD and OCD. Panic attacks are fewer and further between. My sleep has dramatically improved and I am beginning to grasp its boundaries. Over the last few months I have begun to reclaim the things I used to enjoy and who I used to be. Slowly but surely I am patching the foundation which had begun to crumble away, turning it into something that will be even stronger one day.

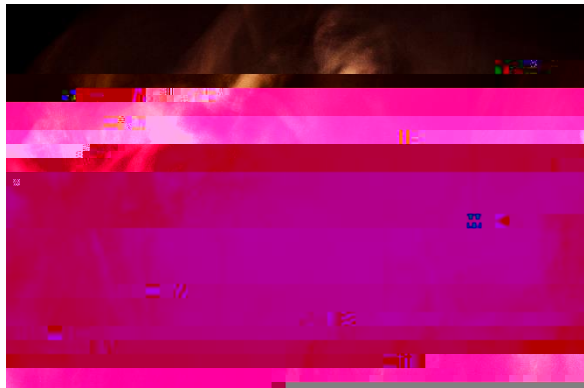


Fig. 4. Kathryn Reichert, Creator, 2017

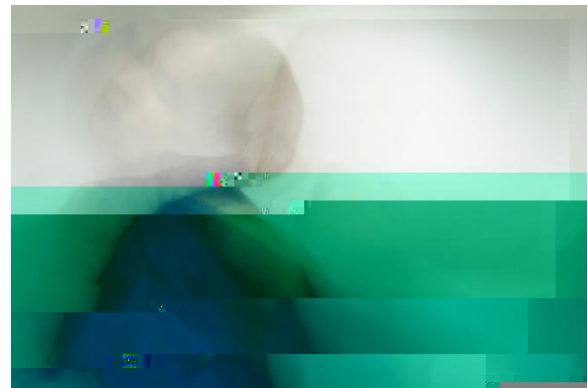


Fig. 5. Kathryn Reichert, I Would Go With You, 2018

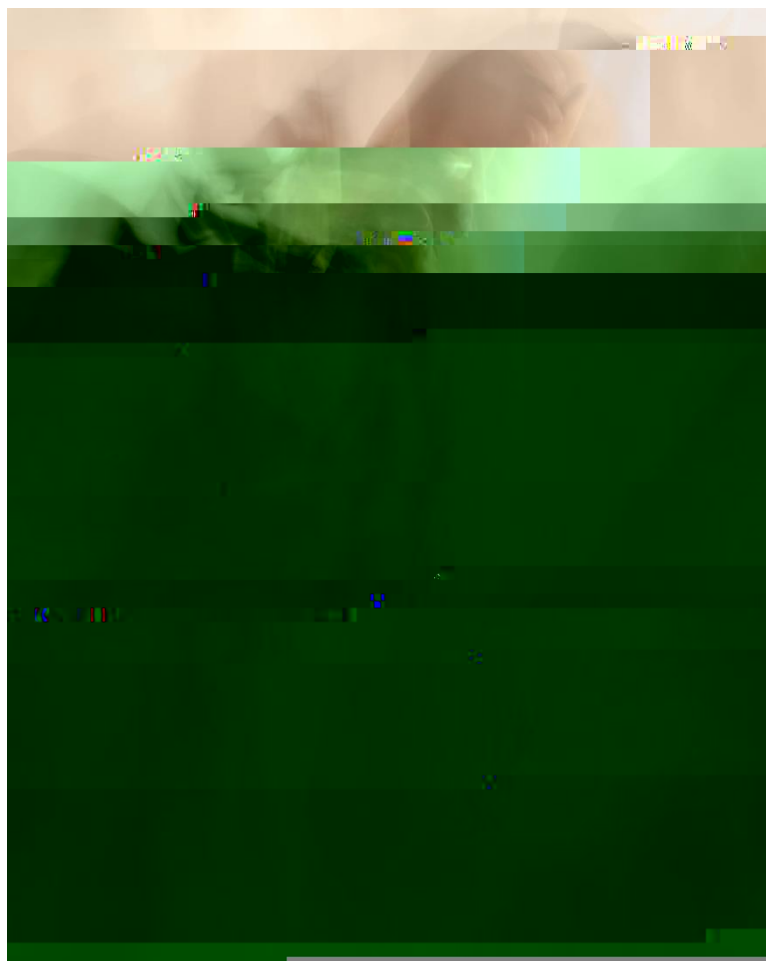


Fig. 6. Kathryn Reichert, Growth, 2017

Conclusion

The process of completing this thesis work has offered countless benefits. From the most basic, technical standpoint, *Hypnagogia* fundamentally asks “what happens when your
(camera%

Works Cited