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*HEAD HEART HAND HUMAN*

by

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Bachelor of Fine Arts, University of Georgia, Athens, GA, 2013

Thesis

presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts

The University of Montana  
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Llama David Curtis  
Big Sky Mind

*For me. For you.*

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Postma, Michelle, MFA, Spring 2021

*HEAD HEART HAND HUMAN*

Chair: Trey Hill

Abstract

My art is emblematic of the practice of accepting reality. The vehicles I use to do this are a cast of characters, materials and compositional strategies that in totality, remind the viewer and myself to be in the moment.

The thesis exhibition, *Heart Vomit and the Dream Army*, featured mural-esque ink paintings on panels and approximately 36 - 48 inch high abstract ceramic figures covered with images. Both the 2D and 3D works feature a cast of characters. These characters originate from “Michelle Land”, an imaginary world created to house an evolving symbolic visual language. The graphic black and white imagery proliferates with metaphorical smiling figures and animals. The characters and the painting process represent: modes of thought, relationships, events, places, and feelings. The universe depicted is made of infinite psychological and physical realities.

Image creation stems from two meditative practices: Buddhist self inquiry teachings and daily lap swim. Both allow access to the physiological energy that opens my imagination in unfettered ways. (page 22) For instance while swimming, I construct images through a didactic game of questioning and listening to my mind.

The works combine elements of representational imagery and chaotic expressive marks. “Chaos marks” are an extension of my emotional and energetic lived experience. The representational imagery reflects lived narrative. The paintings and sculptures are monochromatic because I want the viewer to cue into the recognizable symbols before cuing into emotions. In other words, head to heart versus heart to head.

Thesis research discusses my studio practice, including introduction, process, and historical connections to Maximalism (dense compositions), Superflat (collapse of high and low art), and Surrealism (unexpected imagery).



*Under Wolf, 6x4 ft, ink on panel*

*Alice licks a pop and goes inside her mind  
splashing ink abounds and monkeys intertwine  
hair blowing back my torso made of frog  
legs swirling down to touch upon the slog  
monkey under wolf mice play in clouds  
holding a flow of ink that won't become a shroud  
reclining on wolf haunch a rat extends an arm  
touching wonder water with-out alarm  
my arm a flamingo looking up and over all  
the other hand creates a window for the flow of fall*

## Introduction

The thesis exhibition, *Heart Vomit and the Dream Army*, featured mural-esque ink paintings on panels and abstract ceramic figures overflowing with imagery. Black and white images cascade across my paintings and sculptures. Delineated in fluid black, alert, smiling girls and buddhas interact with multi-headed rats and rabbits emerging from snail portals while hither thither fish churn ink oceans. The characters and the painting process represent relationships, modes of thought, events, places, and feelings. The energetic nature of the composition causes the viewer's gaze to move connecting images to construct stories. In doing so the viewer enters the unfolding universe, 'Michelle Land'. The universe of Michelle Land is inspired by all art forms from Hellenistic statues and ancient Hindu temples to Superflat, from Hieronymus Bosch to Li Jin. Michelle Land is the point of departure for art made of infinite reflections on psychological and physical realities.

Both the 2D and 3D works feature the same cast of characters that have emanated from Michelle Land. The graphic black and white imagery proliferates with smiling figures and metaphorical animals. These characters enter and emerge from spiral portals, pools of ink, centers of flowers, and even one another's knees or ears. The work is full of both joy and danger, nurturing and aggression. The animals are warm and cuddly; they may have fangs, rough fur, or wild eyes. Hair is an opportunity to express something specific about a character. Some hair-dos are crazy, while others are flowing or made of linear swirls. Many of the animals are constructed with a variety of mark-making or patterning, furthering their symbolic nature. No matter how weird things get the characters retain their pleasant insouciance. Their non-grasping attitude is of the moment.



The figures and animals are on par with one another. Both undergo scale and location shifting and occupy different positions of importance. An example would be *Raccoon Lotus*.



*Raccoon Lotus*, Triptych, 4x2 ft each, Ink on panel

The characters move with intent. Each one engages with another character or the environment. In general, the female figures interact with animals, but not usually with one another. The position of the eyes often belie the direction in which their bodies are moving. The eyes also direct the viewer's own gaze. Character interactions draw the viewer in while the characters' gazes move the viewer along. For instance, in *Raccoon Lotus*, the female figure on the right hand panel wraps her arms around a monkey demon who emerges from her stomach, but her eyes look backwards and down off the panel. This encourages the viewer to question, *What could be there?* The character's gaze is used to extend the story beyond the panel plane for the viewer.

I have been asked, *Which character is you?* They are all me. They all come from my mind, from my personal ideas about everything and everyone I've encountered. The characters my perceptions. They are concepts. As life moves forward, these characters and symbols respond

and evolve accordingly. This is very exciting and engaging for me. Depending on the combination and composition of the characters - their compositional size, marking style, proximity to others, their activities - all these aspects reveal something about how I view the world. Sometimes this is uncomfortable. If I acknowledge a difficult observation in my art, then I interpret this as an opportunity to adjust my behavior or attitude. The reverse also holds true. If a hidden joy springs forth, it is an opportunity to embrace! The godmother of punk poetry and revolutionary writer, Patti Smith explains, “Really I don’t try to analyse it, but I have learnt in life that if you’re willing to be pleased with the good luck that fate hands you, you have to accept the bad luck as well. You have to work on a system of checks and balances.”<sup>1</sup>

I try to present characters who withhold judgement and experience their reality as it is, eschewing reactive stances. You will notice, the characters seem to maintain a good attitude - no matter if it is “good” or “bad”. This is because I am in agreement with Kurt Vonnegut when he says that it is impossible to determine if an event is good or bad til the end of time, in his talk referencing the ambiguous morality of Hamlet.

The characters come from many places. Some, like the goat and tiger, I have inherited from my friends’ symbolic languages. The raccoon emerged over time to fill a need in my visual language for a feral and mischievous entity. Others trickle in from books, cartoons, dreams, and pop culture. Anything I see or experience in the world is fair game. There are actual animals I have met who are players in Michelle Land. I really try not to determine the symbolic language, rather I try to allow the symbols to manifest. Characters flash into existence only to retreat into the depths of my imaginative wilderness. They patiently lurk in the shadow realm. They are very kind to me and I love them. The characters of Michelle Land are a little kooky but always

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<sup>1</sup> Simon Joseph Jones, “In-Depth Interview with Patti Smith,” High Profiles, September 23, 2012, <https://highprofiles.info/interview/patti-smith/>.

represent truth and acceptance of their art world condition. Their emanations teach me about myself and encourage me to move through the world with receptivity and wonder.

## Process

My process is designed for a lot of freedom including moments when the content and form fold in on one another and cannot be separated. I will discuss broad process ideas and in particular how works get made.

In regards to painting, one of my visual guidelines is to try and make a balanced good looking work. The density and complexity of my compositions tightens the act of negotiating positive and negative zones. This forces me to be more mentally and physically present. Ink is permanent. Any mistake must be acknowledged and integrated into the greater whole of the work. This process, for me, is a metaphor for life.

After laying in a larger core image, I solve formal issues with metaphorical solutions. The work is guided according to an internal structure of relations between characters and symbols. A lot of times, responding to an unexpected “mistake” involves me just being okay with it and shifting the idea of a mistake to something desirable. I have received many narrative gifts from mistakes! Responding versus reacting requires that I look at the event, and calmly incorporate the event into the larger design. Through this process, like my characters, I am cultivating an awareness of non-reactivity to perceived “mistakes”. This is similar to my practice for being in the world and is an example of why my studio practice is necessary.

By its very nature, chaos cannot be predicted, only explored or experienced. While chaos epitomizes the unknown, the unknown is full of possibilities to perceive anew. This is why chaos

and my chaos mark making method is important. When I engage in chaos mark making, I am physically manifesting lived chaotic experience through ink in order to get another view.

“Chaos marks” are the evidence of energetic emotional experience; they are without definition. Representational imagery reflects lived experiences and because they are recognizable they have definition. The chaos marks create a point of viewer entry. As an example, compare *Under Wolf* to *Racoon Lotus*. The work, *Racoon Lotus*, with its solid black background devoid of chaos marks, is more calming to the viewer. Whereas *Under Wolf* jumps out to close the gap between the viewer and the art. The looping lines slow the viewers, as their eyes may become mesmerized. When these marks pile up in a smaller space they become half tones and retain compositional stability. The harsh marks of the wolf’s fur offer a feeling of roughness and unrefined movement as opposed to the meticulous delicacy of the smaller mice playing on the left. The fluidity of meticulous marks contrast with the explosive energy of the chaos marks.



*Under Wolf*



*Racoon Lotus*

In my past practice it was unmitigated chaos. I let the expressive marks go everywhere and then incorporated the figures after. Then I began masking off surface areas to provide a place for chaos marks and narrative marks to dance together, rather than isolate. During graduate school I was able to experiment with controlling the transition spaces between the chaos marks and the figurative portions of a painting.





*Two Girls in the Hand*, 6x4 ft, ink on panel

This chaos mark strategy can also be seen in *Rabbit Head*, where chaos marks spill over some of the characters. *Two Girls in the Hand*, where masking directed the cessation of drips.

The collage style blocking and rectangle of chaos in *Mind the Gap* is like a layer of skin that has been torn away to reveal what is beneath the representational exterior. The chaos marks, figures, and grey transition zones are elements not originally in the same space.



*Rabbit Head*, 4x6 ft, ink on panel



*Mind the Gap*, 2x2.5 ft, ink on panel

In addition to chaos marks I readily use visually strategic puddles of ink I refer to as “ink blobs”. Developed ink blobs have both negative and positive applications. I consider this visual phenomenon an example of dual realities. For instance the hair functions as both the hair on the head and also the zone where space visually recedes. The background becomes the foreground or vice versa. Shapes can fold into one another, prompting viewers to wonder: *What is positive or negative? Is this void or is this hair? Philosophically translating is this good? Or is this bad? Or is this just another event?*

When all these strategies are brought into one composition they interact and respond to one another to create infinite combinations. Images fill the entire panel and extend off into the ether. This implies that Michelle Land exists far beyond what is depicted and the events in Michelle Land continue to proliferate even when we cannot see them.



*Dream Army: Mouse Humanoid, 35x11x7 in, clay*



*Mouse Humanoid, detail*

In regards to the Dream Army Humanoid clay sculptures the black underglaze functions in three major ways: ignore form, respond to form, and merge with form. All three of these modes can be observed in *Mouse Humanoid*. The underglaze images ignore the form and wrap around the surface of the legs, causing the viewer to circumambulate the sculpture. In comparison a rabbit-snail responds to the physicality by emerging from a recessed dark bowl. Mice heads merge with the form of *Mouse Humanoid*. The small heads bloom from the left breast; underglaze lines describe the features of what would otherwise be merely triangular shapes.

Additionally, in all the 2D and 3D painted imagery there is some degree of: scale shifting, repeating images, flip-flopping the picture plane space, a variety of mark making, overlap, density, abstract and representational portions, and intertwining compositions.

The paintings and sculptures are both monochromatic. Colors have a lot of emotional content. Colors tell you how to feel. With these works I am not trying to tell anyone how to feel, least of all myself. I go through a lot of effort to distance myself from my experiences by talking about them through my symbolic language. The monochromatic treatment is less hot than the emotional energy of colored works. Then my emotional ego identifies less with my experience and I can consider them more dispassionately. Author Haruki Murakami uses a similar process. He explains, “I don't like relating my experiences just the way they are. So I reshape them over and over and fictionalize them, to the point where, in some cases, you can't detect what they were modeled after. Through these steps, I gain a deeper understanding of the meaning behind the experience. Fiction writing [and image making] is partly the process of clarifying what lies within you.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Petra Mayer, “Haruki Murakami: 'I've Had All Sorts Of Strange Experiences In My Life',” NPR, April 6, 2021, <https://www.npr.org/2021/04/06/984447978/haruki-murakami-ive-had-all-sorts-of-strange-experiences-in-my-life>.



*Light in the Dark, 2x2.5 ft, ink on panel*

The black and white is more matter-of-fact, like text on a page. Without the clue of color, the viewer must read more closely what is going on in order to navigate the moral ambiguity of a monochromatic world. Functionally, color would lock in the characters and composition, making it easier to see what's what. The black and white space is more enigmatic.

### Concept

The ideas in this body of work revolve around: joyfully accepting situations and conditions, application of multivalence, tipping the hat to the importance of human interaction with flora and fauna, and the historical continuum of antiquity to now. This is a sweeping list that keeps my interest tethered to art.

For instance, in regards to the continuum of time, the panel paintings and the sculptural Dream Army Humanoids relate to the audience in different time structures. Humans experience reality in three simultaneous modes: present time, past time, and future time - all at the same



time! The viewer may be witnessing a painting in present time, even though the painting was made in past time. One way I bridge time sequences for the viewer is by the suggestion of the continuation of Michelle Land off the edge of the painting. In this way the perimeter of the painting becomes a portal to the characters inside the painting and their multivalence. When viewing the Dream Army Humanoid sculptures, the viewer is conscious of the physicality and form as well as the spatial ambiguity of the underglazed images. Therefore, the viewer experiences sculpture in primarily present time. By setting up a work of art to suggest past and present time there is an automatic awareness of future time. This flux in syntax provides an immersive experience because it closely mimics the way we consider time. As the strategies of postmodernism move forward it could be that multiple syntax becomes a preferred characteristic in art.

Another major concept woven into my process stems from the practice of self inquiry of Buddhist teachings. In particular the Buddhist prayer, *The Eight Verses of Training the Mind*. Verse three reads, “I will search into my mind and as soon as an afflictive emotion arises, endangering myself and others, will firmly face and avert it.” In response to this, I forged a game to talk with my inner selves.

### **The Swimming Game:**

What’s going on? (in my mind)

*Brain responds*

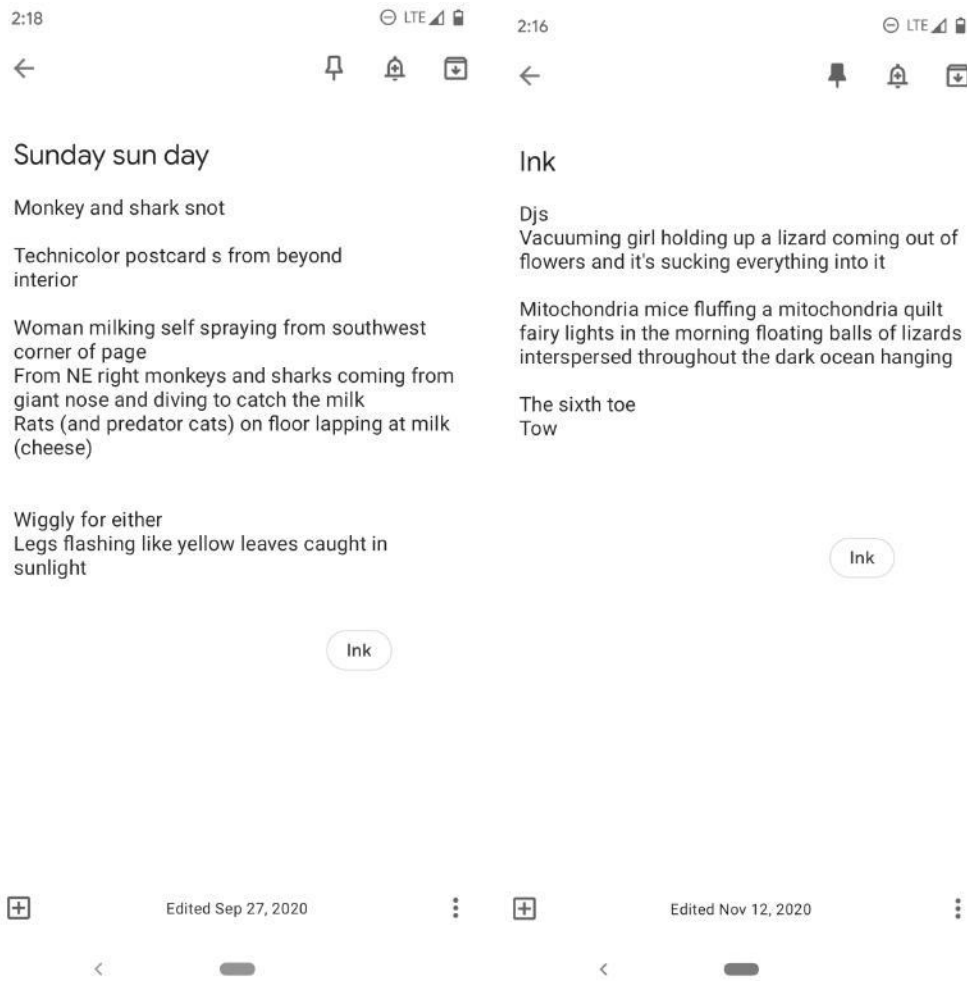
What does that look like? (in my visual language)

*Brain responds*

What else?

*Brain responds*

I encode the resulting mental images into a sentence in order to remember it while adding additional imagery. This is because I can only hold so much imagery in my mind while watching for more. This mental game continues until the prospective panel or sculpture space is filled. While swimming, I repeat the sentences to myself, in between imagining, so I can remember the images until the end of the swim. Then I quickly go to the locker room and write it down. As a result I have catalogued seemingly weird sentences in my phone notebook. Below are some examples:



The swimming game is characterized by an attitude of receptivity. I accept images as they arise. It is essential that I abstain from any sort of judgement during this activity. I must wait and

see. *Don't look a gift universe in the mouth.* The actual physical painting becomes a negotiation between the chaos marks and images. During this process plans and ideas shift to accommodate composition. As I allow for change, the images expand their meanings. When the work is done, I sit with it in acknowledgement of our mutual existences, allowing the process and the painting to wash over me. I think, *What am I feeling about this?* In this way, the process of my work becomes the content.

## Influences

In 2015, Chinese ink master, Li Jin, moved from color to black and white. He explains that “I can even feel warmth and coolness in ink. There is something beyond immediate recognition in ink painting, which makes it more precious. Its sensitivity and directness reflect your interiority; a person’s warmth or coolness is on the spiritual level.”<sup>3</sup> I feel related to Li Jin on both conceptual and aesthetic levels. I believe we have much in common due to the nature of ink. Ink does not hide anything. The gestural elements and the texture of ink rivlets reveal the hand of the artist to viewers. Ink is completely fluid and responsive to my every motion. Li Jin has been working with ink for over 40 years. He observes that:

“Expression is not about speed or gesture, but rather about revealing what is within oneself. Ink painting is very suitable for unmediated expression. The materials of brush, water, ink, and paper are extremely sensitive. Any contact between them leaves an indelible trace of all there is within you.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Li Jin, “After the Efflorescence,” 22.

<sup>4</sup> Li Jin, “After the Efflorescence,” 14.



Li Jin



Michelle Postma

My works which feature chaos marks combined with representational imagery find a contemporary cousin in Li Jin's series of immersive monochromatic works. In this mode of working his paintings alternate "between expressive gestures and meticulous drawing. Exploiting fully the interplay between figuration and abstraction, and between conscious control and the accidents of liquidity and gravity."<sup>5</sup> My chaos process channels the lived experience, while my representational imagery stems from my reflections on being alive. Li Jin aims to include both qualities in his work as well saying that, "There must be a union of sensuality and rationality. This is what I'm after even now."<sup>6</sup> I use a two foot horse hair brush for chaos marks. Li Jin also uses a large brush for his expressive marking. Britta Erickson, the curator of Li Jin's 2016 exhibition, *Being*, associates his works with "Chan Buddhism and the xieyi and "splashed-ink" manners of traditional masters like Liang Kai, Xu Wei, and Bada Shanren."<sup>7</sup> However, traditional ink brushwork is not my only influence.

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<sup>5</sup> Britta Erickson, "Being: Li Jin," Ink Studio, May 28, 2016, <https://www.inkstudio.com.cn/exhibitions/20-being-li-jin/>.

<sup>6</sup> Li Jin, "After the Efflorescence," 24.

<sup>7</sup> Erickson, "Being: Li Jin".

My work is a big pastiche of artistic models and literary sources. Viewers enter the universe unfolding in the works. My work relates closely to the art movements: Maximalism, Superflat, and Surrealism.

Maximalism is characterized by an overabundance of visual input. Imagery floods my compositions. The preeminence of receptivity in my art practice relates to the Maximalist propensity towards “pouring on, not not editing out, but adding in...It’s an attitude and an approach that welcomes things in.”<sup>8</sup> When I open my mind to images, I am welcoming them as they arise instead of denying any image for any reason. Maximalism encompasses “more than visual excitement: It’s about the power and necessity of plurality and tapping into what makes us human. It’s about being omnivorous, about seeing the world with open eyes, and about expressing who you are and what you love.”<sup>9</sup> The awareness accentuated in Maximalism parallels the ancient concept of Chan in Buddhist tradition.

Li Jin elaborates that the idea of Chan in Buddhism is multivalent; it can be minimalist in the tradition of cave dwelling aesthetics or cleve to an antithetical embrace of everyday living. He elucidates, “Retiring to the mountains, becoming vegetarian, giving up material life—all that is Chan, of course. But there’s another kind of Chan, and that is to immerse oneself thoroughly in sensory experience, to express authentically the pleasure and romance of the mundane world.”<sup>10</sup>

The art movement Superflat, generated by Takashi Murakami’s Superflat Manifesto in 2001, “also extends to a view of art that rejects hierarchical divisions between different artistic genres or eras and frees artistic activities from definitional boundaries.”<sup>11</sup> Superflat refers to the

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<sup>8</sup> Diana Budds, “Inside the Powerfully Expressive World of Maximalism More is more,” CURBED, February 28, 2020, <https://www.curbed.com/article/maximalism-decor-trend-design-style.html>.

<sup>9</sup> Budds.

<sup>10</sup> Li Jin, “After the Efflorescence,” 15.

<sup>11</sup> Bruce Sterling, “Takashi Murakami's Superflat Collection,” Wired, January 23, 2016, <https://www.wired.com/beyond-the-beyond/2016/01/takashi-murakamis-superflat-collection/>.

flattening of the picture plane and a collapse of the divisions between high and low art. My thesis exhibition, *Heart Vomit and the Dream Army*, probed these concepts as well. My ink delineations are completely linear and flat. I debased my large paintings for plebeian coloring books.

Correspondingly, Takashi Murakami's signature flower character is embodied in a ten meter bronze sculpture, but also graces a skateboard deck.



Takashi Murakami, *Haha Bangla Manus*, 10m, bronze, 2020 Skateboard Decks \$950, 32x8.5in

Surrealism, “an artistic and literary movement in Paris in the 1920s”<sup>12</sup>, extolled the virtue of receptivity in art making. Surrealists leveraged automatism, an activity of free association, in order to “release the unbridled imagination of the subconscious.”<sup>13</sup> Max Ernst, closely associated with Surrealism, “marveled that he ‘came to assist as spectator at the birth of all my works.’”<sup>14</sup> The Surrealist movement, more so than either Maximalism or Superflat, “prized the irrational and the unconscious over order and reason” and encouraged passivity in order to bypass “the

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<sup>12</sup> Jessica Backus, “Beyond Painting: The Experimental Techniques of Max Ernst,” *Artsy*, December 30, 2014, <https://www.artsy.net/article/jessica-beyond-painting-the-experimental-techniques-of-max>.

<sup>13</sup> James Voorhies, “Surrealism,” *The Met Museum*, October 2004, [https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/surr/hd\\_surr.htm](https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/surr/hd_surr.htm).

<sup>14</sup> Backus, “Beyond Painting.”



constraints of the artist's rational mind."<sup>15</sup>My swimming image method of mentally watching images arise is akin to the Surrealist automatic drawing technique. Both produce "surprising, unexpected imagery."<sup>16</sup>



Max Ernst, Illustration from *A Week of Kindness*, 18x13 cm, 1934  
*Feet First* detail, 15x29x4 in, ink on panel

These movements dovetail with my art practice physically and conceptually. Specific works of art that I look to often for inspiration and instruction include: *La Vache*, by Jean DuBuffet is delightful due to its joyful absurdity and raw manner. Rodin's *Gates of Hell* inspires me with its rivers of writhing figures and consideration of the human condition in a way that is...not depressing. The Ain Ghazal statues were given to me after making the *Dream Army Humanoids!* This makes me feel like I'm connecting to something ancient and human. Commonalities include: double heads, arresting glance, and disproportionately large eyes.

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Voorhies, "Surrealism."



Jean DuBuffet, *La Vache*, ink on paper, 32.4 x 45.7 cm, 1954



Rodin, *The Gates of Hell*, bronze, 635 x 400 x 85 cm, 1880



Ain Ghazal Statues 7500 - 5000 bc, Amman, Jordan, plaster H:88 cm

Buddhist Tibetan thangkas are a constant source of inspiration in my philosophical ponderings and artistic aesthetics. The complex imagery of the thangkas is dense with fantastic creatures and symbolism. The artworks are heavily metaphorical and allegorical with narrative messages concerning both practical and spiritual life.





Romio Shresta, *Chakrasamvara: The Wheel of Bliss* 40x28in

Romio Shresta, *Cosmic Fire: The Vision of Rahula* 68x46in

It has been incredibly illuminating to find creators and movements that I resonate with in the grand context of the art world. Then I can explore my historical and contemporary associations and discover more connections.

Contemporary ceramic artists: Ted Saupe, Sunkoo Yuh and Ron Meyers, from the University of Georgia, greatly influenced me as a fledgling artist. With their guidance and examples I began to navigate into the unknown art world. Their creative practices may seem casual and effortless. This is due to their daily dedication and underlying faith in the creative practice. Additionally, all three master artists move through the world with kindness towards humans and value community building. We all use drawing as a way to process life experiences.

Professor Ted Saupe is a master of elegant fluidity and poetic line work. He passed down the tenets of line quality and the ability to use line to shift from 2D to 3D. He gave my eyes the

ability to notice the tone and tempo of a line: comfortable quick gesture, alluring s-curves, shaky knees, ad infinitum. I studied his exposed structural construction and mark making techniques in slips and clay.



Works by Ted Saupé *Cups*, porcelain, stoneware, underglazes

Professor Sunkoo Yuh builds totemic sculptures composed of humans and animals. His figures are sourced from his prolific drawing practice. I saw black ink for the first time in Sunkoo's studio and was totally enchanted by his drawings' energetic immediacy. He uses ink painting as a way of talking to his self. His ink drawings spill over with images representing people as animals, depicting all kinds of relationships between people and his relationship to the world; his drawings show the intangible and reflect the chaos of existence.





Works by Sunkoo Yuh, porcelain, cobalt

Professor Emeritus Ron Meyers depicts a menagerie of animals, friends, and mythological figures in expressive ink-esque paintings on earthenware pots. His artworks exhibit humor, optimism, and compassionate insights through his friendly animal groupings. The passionate freedom of his images belies the maximum care I have observed in his art practice.



Works by Ron Meyers, earthenware, underglazes

## Conclusion

Aristotle's idea of imagination, or *phantasia*, is full of possibility. Imagination is an “intermediary between perception and thinking. It is a motion of the soul caused by sensation, a process that presents an image that may persist even after the perception process disappears.”<sup>17</sup> Through imagination, artists are constantly translating reality. Artists are filters, funnels, amplifiers. We take everything in and amplify that which we deem most important, thereby reinforcing certain neural pathways of the world.

I am a facilitator. I am facilitating this cast of characters to come up with their own reality. Then I accept that my reality is not the only reality. My practice goes from my point of departure (swimming, reading, and personal practice) and proceeds to the realization that part of being in the now is allowing the narrative to take off. I construct the environments and friends the characters require as I progress deeper into the labyrinth of image creation. This stance connotes the positional acceptance of other characters. That is called empathy.

In medical terminology, to inspire is to breathe in. I breathe in the exhalations of the universe; it inspires me. In turn, Michelle Land gives life to a profusion of characters. This evolving cast whirls and floats across 2D ink paintings and 3D ceramic sculptures. As I reflect on my experiences and explore my own internal and external worlds, they engage with their symbolic visual environment. Michelle Land is an inverted mirror that allows me to quietly observe my own self and the world. I am infinitely grateful to the denizens of Michelle Land, for they accept reality no matter how weird it gets.

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<sup>17</sup> F.E. Peters, *Greek Philosophical Terms: A Historical Lexicon* (New York: New York University Press, 1967), 156.

During my graduate studies, my studio practice has become more aligned with how I live. The paintings and sculptures in *Heart Vomit and the Dream Army* are the evidence of this experiment.



Deborah Postma, Kathy Postma, Michelle Postma, Bill Henry, Michael Postma



Catalogue: Works from the 2021 Thesis Exhibition: *Heart Vomit and the Dream Army*



*Heart Vomit and the Dream Army*, Zootown Arts Community Center, March 2021



*Heart Vomit and the Dream Army*, Zootown Arts Community Center, March 2021



*Big Hug*, 29x15x3.5 in, Ink on panel



*Body Window*, 4x2 ft, Ink on panel



*Cat Belle*, 4x2 ft, Ink on panel





*Feet First*, 15x29x4 in. Ink on panel



*Garden*, 20x20x2 in, Ink on panel



*Is this how wisdom works?* 14x27x3.5 in, Ink on panel



*Light in the Dark*, 2x2.5 ft, Ink on panel





*Mind the Gap*, 2x2.5 ft, Ink on panel



*Pal Juice*, 4x2 ft, Acrylic on panel



*Pigtails*, 15x29x2 in, Ink on panel



*Raccoon Lotus*, Triptych, 4x2 ft each, Ink on panel





*Shark Smell*, 32x19x3.5 in, Ink on panel



*Rabbit Head*, 6x4 ft, Ink on panel



*Two Girls in the Hand*, 6x4 ft, Ink on panel





*Under Wolf*, 6x4 ft, Ink on panel



*Dream Army: Fire Eye Humanoid*, 42x15x10 in, Clay



*Dream Army: Four Legs Humanoid, 35x13x7 in, Clay*



*Dream Army: Hole Humanoid, 38x13x9 in, Clay*





*Dream Army: Mouse Humanoid, 35x11x7 in, Clay*



*Dream Army: OG Humanoid, 35x10x6 in, Clay*

## THANK YOU

The art faculty of the University of Montana is composed of masters of art and life. It's sometimes like I am in the dark, saying *where is the art path?* You respond, *It's over here!* And I go *OH Thank you! I was looking for that.* And off we go. Your generosity of spirit and time has changed the way I live. I know I will be thinking of you for years to come. Thank you xmp

Thank you to my family and friends. Thank you to nature. Thanks to the community of Missoula, Montana and the many people and organizations who have gifted me precious belief.

*Allez!* Mural Program

Big Sky Mind

Open AIR Montana

Radius Gallery

The Clay Studio of Missoula

University of Georgia

University of Montana students and faculty

Wildfire Ceramics Studio

Zootown Arts Community Center

*Made possible by Coffee.*

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