

**Analytic hyperrealism in photography remodeling the study of light through
computational modes of exploring image making**

by

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

The cover image of this thesis is a photograph of my piece *Aqua Night* taken subsequent to the August 12th opening of my part of the Des Moines Art Center's Iowa Artists 2011 exhibition. (1) *Aqua Night* is a radically colorized and transformed abstraction that began in 2007 with *Pastel Persian Pattern* (2), an image which served as the starting point for my interest in color transparency and shape manipulations. This interest progressed to my use of Photoshop and Cinema 4D to make liquid style colorations and morphed refractions of original hexagonal geometric designs, resulting in *Aqua Night Study*. (3) This form of abstract, hyper saturated color image creation is a recent development in my ten year experiment in hyperrealist imagery.

CHAPTER 2. AQUA NIGHT

Throughout the process of designing this image, my key concern was how the image functions as a whole, particularly at the large scale of 15 feet by 21 feet, the final presentation size of the piece in *Eliel Saarinen's lobby window at the Art Center*. (4) The final image for this project gives pleasure to viewers on both a small and large scale; the patterns and designs have a fluidity, motion, transparent color overlays, and resolution that make the image extremely detailed up close and liquidly rhythmic from far away.

Aqua Night is comprised of forms inspired by patterns from books on Islamic art, shapes that originated with my understanding of Henri *Matisse's* (5) late paper cutouts,

and color concepts from my study of *Paul Klee's* (6) lifelong experiments in color transparency. I have been studying these artists since 1997, visiting their works in major museums on the East Coast, such as the Baltimore Museum of Art, which features a room filled with exceptional Matisse paintings. In trips to Europe in my twenties, I spent time in the Louvre in Paris, and took two art and architectural visits to Florence, as well as traveling to Madrid, Barcelona, Budapest, Amsterdam, and Prague to look at art and architecture. This past year, the ISU Summer Roman Program gave me a month-long immersion in centuries of Roman art and architecture.

In *Aqua Night*, curved forms presented with an intensified color palette give a viewer the sense of the paradise of tropical scuba diving at twilight.(7)*Aqua Night* On land, artists including Matisse painted the radiant beauty of sky and water light exchange. “Mediterranean Light”, under which Matisse did so much of his painting and his cutouts, is a clear, brilliant light from a high domed sky. American Painters and mid 20th century European refugee artists worked on Long Island, Cape Cod and the rest of the New England coast to take advantage of American light near water. Deibenkorn painted California beach side interiors. Light quality is essential to painters and photographers.

To explore my idea of *Aqua Night* as watery paradise, I digitally morphed my own scanned images into a multiplicity of further images that I could continue to morph. At the intuitively right moment, I decided the morphing was at a finished point for one version, then ray tracing made the image look as if it were being seen through wavy water. Starting with flat compositions, the ray tracing process added depth and an aquatic

feel to all my versions of *Aqua Night*.⁽⁸⁾

In order to bring my creations into the physical world, I employed the process of printing the images on transparency film using an Epson Stylus Pro 9800 printer. I learned that layering three identically pigmented designs on film, then adhering those layers to the on site window glass with two-sided tape was the right process to create a temporary stained glass window in intense, vibrant color. While installed, *Aqua Night* appeared to be a stained glass window to museum visitors entering the Des Moines Art Center by the main entrance to the Saarinen building. Direct sunlight in the late afternoon projected colored patterns from the window onto the lobby floor. This window and *Persian Ryder* were taken down from the two Des Moines Art Center windows on October 2. The *Persian Ryder* film was too full of tape to save while some of the individual rectangles of the Saarinen have been kept by the artist. ⁽⁹⁾ *Aqua Night Display View*

Prior to determining an aesthetically satisfying solution, I tried layering three pieces of printed film with three different, yet complimentary designs.⁽¹⁰⁾ *Overlay Experiment* Three such overlapping layers gave muddy color and lacked large scale “punch,” which was more apparent after I observed samples in several of the installation windows on-site.⁽¹¹⁾ *Correct Overlay* Only by using three well aligned, identical layers of printed transparency film was I able to achieve color brilliance at the scale required for the Saarinen’s lobby space.

As an undergraduate, I began as a photographer challenging myself to make perfect prints during nights in the darkroom. Moving from black and white into color, and beginning to see the possibilities of large scale printing, I began to use a medium format camera that produced six-by-seven cm. chromes. Back at my printer, I saw that a four-by-six foot print had the exceptional detail that I found exciting. At this time, I was influenced by the photographs of Andreas Gursky. (12) *99 Cent Store* Recently, I have been working with two-by-three foot images from my 2011 Iowa State University summer Rome Program. Large-scale work with the extreme detail seen in *Aqua Night* has a long history in my work, dating from 1999 to the present. (13) *Prairie Meadows - 2000* (14) *Grandslam – 2000* (15) *Waterslide -2000*

After solving layering issues, I determined that laminating the film would give the transparency more stability for installation. Laminating the film also improved it aesthetically by providing contrast and optical brighteners that gave the final piece its desired effect. Furthermore, the laminated film reflected outdoor and indoor light in a way that the layers of film alone did not, adding to the viewers' on-site experience. Changes in lighting conditions due to weather and time of day made each visit to *Aqua Night* a fresh visual experience. *Persian Ryder* is the second image in the show at the Des Moines Art Center (16) *Persian Ryder Display*

CHAPTER 3. BUBBLES

The next set of imagery in this collection is of bubbles, a medium that embodies the exquisite nature of ephemeral light upon moving organic transitory forms. I have spent the last five years photographing bubbles in and out of doors in a variety of natural settings, such as Brookside Park in Ames. I photographed them in winter of 2008 in front of a black backdrop in a basement. In the cold months, January and February, this work provided me with a breath of reviving artistic air. I have taken numerous still shots and videos of bubbles in motion generally in late afternoon daylight.

Photoshop, colored light bulbs and strobe lighting are tools I use to offer the viewer photographs that originate from but have no apparent connection to bubbles. Stroboscopic motion caught and then melded together sequentially yields pieces full of the sense of potential further motion. I first experimented with this combination of artistic tools in January 2008 while on semester break from MFA courses at Iowa State University. *Alien* has a sense of pulsing motion (17) *Alien*. In *Alien* there is a manifestation of color energy that is spectrally stimulating and optically riveting. Each person who has seen *Alien* has told me of a different meaning that was found. In this regard, it is a Rorschach design. I see the “body” of an alien who has disembarked a starship from the heavens. This image is a detail of *Alien* that was captured in stroboscopic motion.(18)*Alien in Stroboscopic Motion*

During this time, I have been observing the physical properties of large bubbles and coming to my own conclusions about their metaphoric meanings. They are resilient enough to be wind-born, yet so fragile they will pop in an instant. Once airborne, they are distorted by wind, their viscosity thinning as they fly.(19) *Persian Bubble* Bubbles begin as spheres; but especially at large sizes, their shapes warp and wobble. My photographs of bubbles feature changes in color and distorted reflections of nearby images. One example of this work is the photograph of my eye reflected in a bubble. (20) *-Eye in Bubble* Bubbles are rotating organic shapes in their brief lives. Part of my inspiration is that they move through fast stages of organic beauty until they achieve non-being. To get the best photo of a bubble on the fly is exhilarating and tantalizing. While I'm working, the next great photo that is possible keeps the photoshoot going.(21)-*Bubble* Usually too much wind or the end of good lighting ends my working session.

CHAPTER 4. TECHNICAL PROCESSES

In my experimental projects, I often employ Photoshop CS5 and Cinema 4D for unique and rigorous approaches to the world of hyperrealism. By rigorous, I mean that I patiently and repeatedly examine the results of what I am doing to see what is best for my purposes. I define hyperrealism here as super detailed, high-resolution interpretations of images digitally mediated to augment and manipulate the photographic image into an artistic reality that could not be achieved through other non-digital means. The term Hyperrealism refers to a type of imaging that digital enhancement helps envision. For

fourteen years, I have been working in hyperrealism, making use of visual techniques that explore the rich technological capabilities of contemporary digital processes.(22)-

Superman Rollercoaster.

Employing a hyperrealist vantage point, I have adopted many types of virtual lenses to enhance and describe my subject matter. I have experimented with a variety of methods and approaches while selecting images for final two dimensional work and video presentations. The media used in my work include a Canon 5D Mark II camera; Processing, a Java based computer programming language; and a 44 inch Epson Stylus Pro 9800 inkjet printer. Using the printer, I produced several 80" x 120" printed photographic triptychs.(23) *WOWEE 7* I also printed some of my designs on cotton fabric, which I then used in developing a line of sportswear; I hired a seamstress to make samples, then photographed the clothing on models.(24) *Ian in Persian Shirt* Both *Aqua Night* and *Persian Ryder* were printed on the latest commercially available grade of plastic transparency film, Crystalclear from Epson Inc.

CHAPTER 5. MATISSE' WORK AS AN INSPIRATION

The next set of images are among my personal favorites in a career of art history studies that began formally at Cooper Union in 1997, but which were also part of growing up in an art-saturated home environment. Books on Klee and Matisse, oversized books of ancient maps, Oriental art books covering India, China and Persia populated the bookcases of my childhood home. The bold, curved color forms in *Aqua Night* and *Persian Ryder* are derived in part from my study of Matisse's incredible cutouts --

brilliantly achieved organic pieces using the purest color tones. His work in cutouts took book form in the 1930s with *Le Rouge et Le Noir* and in the 1950s with *Jazz*.⁽²⁵⁾ Matisse
The desert Harmony in Red

Before World War I, Matisse studied Mediterranean light while visiting Tunisia; the pure North African tones influenced him to use unmixed color straight from paint tubes. At age 60, he traveled to the island of Tahiti for three months. At 80, he was confined to bed after a serious operation at the start of World War II; at that time, he painted various large sheets of paper with Lintel brand paints, the color intensity of which would stand up to the light of Southern France. In the text of *Jazz* he writes “Drawing with Scissors. To cut to the quick in color reminds me of the direct cutting of sculptors.”

Matisse worked as a sculptor from 1889 through the early decades of the 20th Century. Starting as a student in a night course, he worked in clay, and later in stone. In 1900, Rodin introduced Matisse to a model who Matisse hired for a series of studies and stone sculptures. The ideas that preoccupied Matisse at this time as a sculptor were worked out in extensive drawings. A second quotation from *Jazz*, “Lagoons: aren’t you one of the seven wonders of the paradise of painters” alludes to Matisse's life in Tahiti and on the Mediterranean. When I recently read this text, I saw its connection to my sense of the world in *Aqua Night*.

Matisse felt that the cutouts from his last productive years were his best work in a long prolific career. At the time of *Jazz* he was still living near Nice, separated from his

wife and in need of surgery for intestinal cancer at the start of World War II.

Recuperating necessitated working while bedridden; Matisse's wife, Amelie, an early model for one of his most famous Fauve paintings, *Woman in a Hat*, remained in Paris with Matisse's daughter; both women worked for the French resistance.(26) Matisse *Women in Hat*

Matisse used blocks of color in a seemingly casual yet strikingly bold and precise fashion. His paintings are elegant with loosely applied brush strokes that define patches of rhyming colors. There is often a final color touch that at first seems dissonant, but in fact takes the picture to a level of visual excitement unknown in the early 20th century.(27) Matisse *Musique* As Matisse admired and built on the work of Paul Cezanne, so have David Hockney and a myriad of other artists benefited from Matisse's painting genius.

Matisse's work has influenced my sensibility for bright coloring and formal elegance. Vastly experimental for his time, Matisse reinvented the picture plane with an unconventional method of applying color to a surface. He flattened space and diminished depth by adopting more than one vantage point. His paintings had their own shallow picture planes populated by colored forms or abstractly painted areas of greater darkness or light.(28) Matisse *Odalisque* A seemingly casual, "naïve" manner was adopted for this radical departure from the perspective and depth in classical painting that had been prevalent since the Italian Renaissance. From Matisse I have learned to use pure color applications and bold two dimensional design elements to push and pull the viewer around the picture plane, so that the viewer looks deeply into new materials like finely

detailed transparency film surfaces.

CHAPTER 6. MY PALETTE

Most artists since Cezanne and Matisse use fewer grey, dark or whitened hues because modern art has absorbed the color innovations of the turn of the 20th Century painters. When hues are subdued, the goal is generally expression rather than creation of a naturalistic picture. Nature is celebrated by artists like Hans Hoffman who used brilliant colors: October sky blue, maple leaf red, sunflower, marigold, horse chestnut brown, leaf bud green, the rose of a rose, the orange of an orange.

Persian miniature painters (29) *Persian Minature*, Medieval illuminators, and early Renaissance Italian painters (30) Fra Angelico *Adoration* had the same taste for the most beautiful earthly color that could be painted with pigments of their time. The Persian painter's palette influenced Matisse, Klee and other turn of the century European artists. From the Middle Ages into the early Renaissance and during the centuries of court painting in Persia and India, pigments worldwide were mainly mineral or organic. Minerals included lapis lazuli, the most costly ingredient in the painter craftsman's studio. Organic material included cochineal for red, plant materials, soot, and poisonous copper sulfides. All artists of integrity in these periods in these cultures used the best ingredients of their times to please their patrons just as the best Roman restaurants today use the freshest and best ingredients.

In my art, the purity of the color tone depends on how the computer interprets

color and how the color space of the computer document is transferred to paper or clear film. The printed work interacts with daylight, incandescent light, and other lighting situations in which correct tone is critical to the value of the final artwork. The best light quality in my opinion is late afternoon polarized light on a cloudless day.(31) *Venice*

CHAPTER 7. NASA LANDSAT IMAGES

Turning to more contemporary inspiration, I have appropriated images from NASA's LandSat photographs of Earth taken by satellites over the last ten years. These images catch the viewer's attention with coloration that emphasizes geographical features and climate changes, such as lake growth or shrinkage, regional or continental river system changes, expanding deserts, and diminishing forested areas. Satellite photos are revelatory aerial images of great beauty that afford a color-enhanced treatment of Earth's natural features.(32) –*LandSat Satellite Image* Satellite photos of our planetary system also provide fact and poetry to our increasing knowledge of our solar system and outer space

CHAPTER 8. ROME

Upon my return to Ames in early July, my Rome photographs taken in a niche in Santa Ignacio in Rome and in front of the Trevi Fountain found ready homes in several works (33)-*Trevi Fountain Rome*. I merged them with the Landsat and Persian ryder layers to make *Persian Ryder I & II*.(34) Nonlinear layers synthesize an image that suggests a story about modern Persia in the 21st Century Western World. Unlike the

Alien, in which I saw a specific being, the story suggested by Persian Ryder is up to the viewer to tell. My most recent work is a mixture of Persian and Renaissance imagery

(35-36) *Persian and Rome Mix* and *Persian Sky Ryder*

I am still exploring the photos I took in Rome and Venice this summer using Photoshop to achieve layering of images which, despite their disparate origins, enter into rich relationships with one another. With this new body of work, I continue to create an art of personally meaningful mixtures, building on my personal artistic history with the language of the hyperreal.

CHAPTER 9. CAMOUFLAGE WORK

In Persian Ryder I introduce camouflage patterning. I am an admirer of Andy Warhol's camouflage art of the 1980s. (37) Warhol *Camouflage* His work is one of my major modern American art influences. I've worked with camouflage designs in my textiles, using both traditional earth tones and brilliant Matisse-like colors.(38)

Camouflage

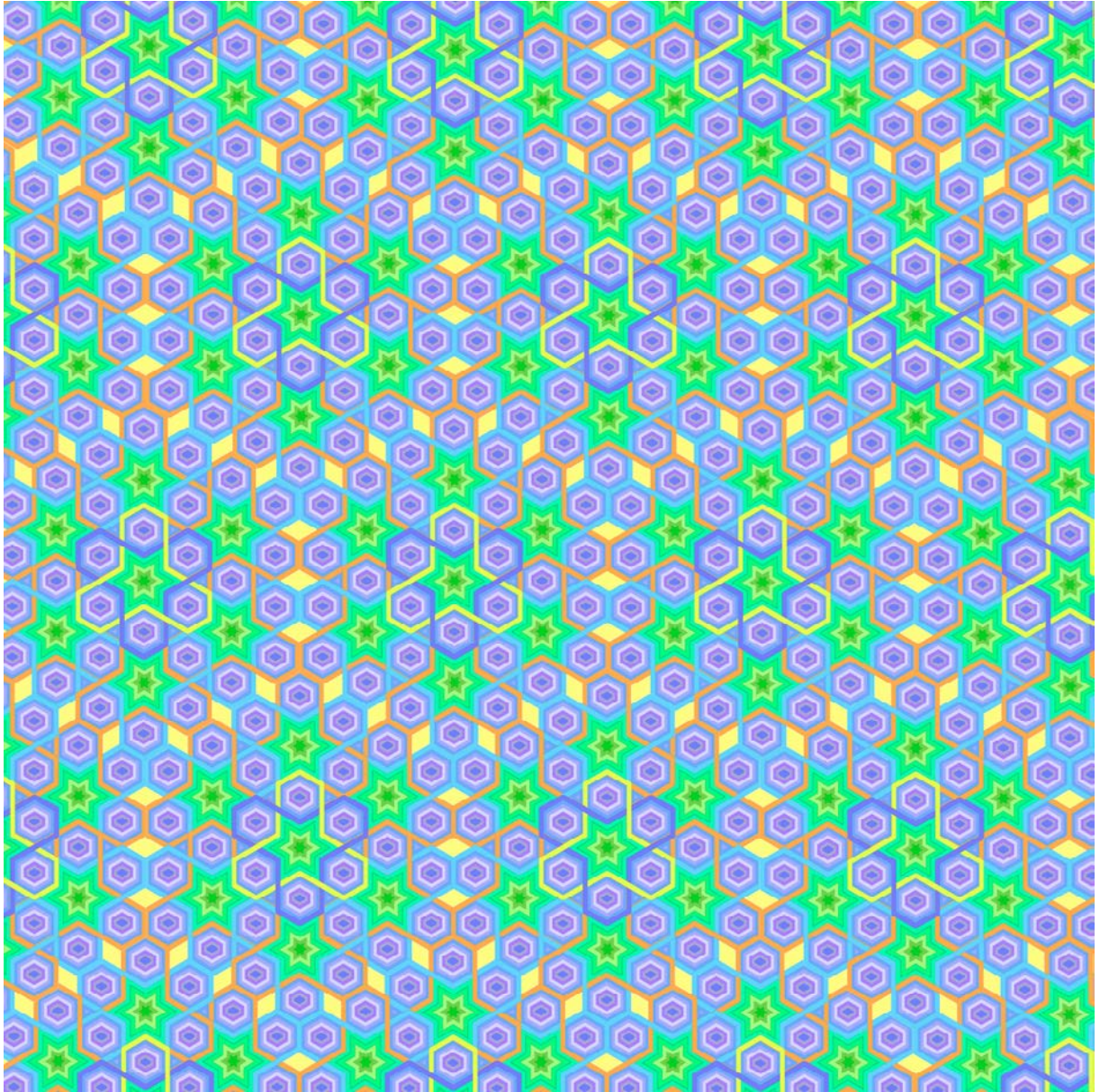
CHAPTER 10. CONCLUSION

It is a great time to be alive and making art. The computer is a tool with no less impact on our world than the wheel. Through the computational approaches to augmenting photography and my experiments with a hyperreal sensibility I have built a conceptual framework that will guide my art practices into the future. Hyperrealism is

engrained within our culture and my work resonates along the same frequency as the technologically rich world of the hyperreal.

One of my main desires as an artist has been to synthesize and experiment with transcendently beautiful art from European and Middle Eastern regions. I have incorporated such imagery into my newest computer generated work. The borrowed masterworks that resides in my digital collages reflects a belief that through cultural exchange of ideas, aesthetics and sensibilities we in this world may find a common ground of art theory and discourse that may lean away from contemporary political differences. A dialogue could yield admiration of each others cultures founded on an appreciation of the history of visual arts in these two very different regions of the world. America as the cultural melting pot and dominant world power now is the natural home of artists like me who absorb and celebrate world art. With gratitude I take in art that represents experiences of joy, freedom, and abiding life energy across the centuries from any culture. When I see art that expresses this way of being in the world, I feel that my heart is at home.

CHAPTER 11. IMAGES



2) Pastel Persian Pattern



3) Aqua Night Study

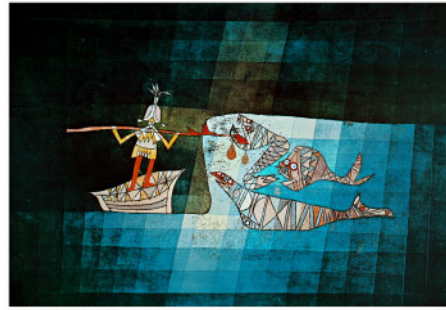


4) Eliel Saarinen's lobby window at the Art Center

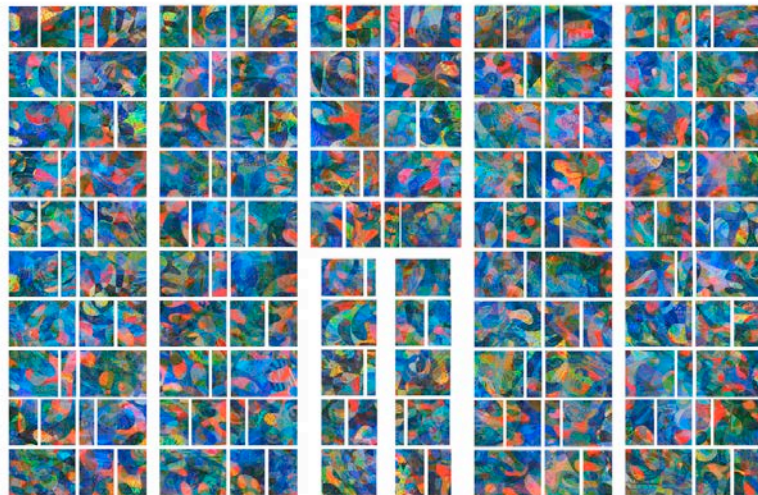
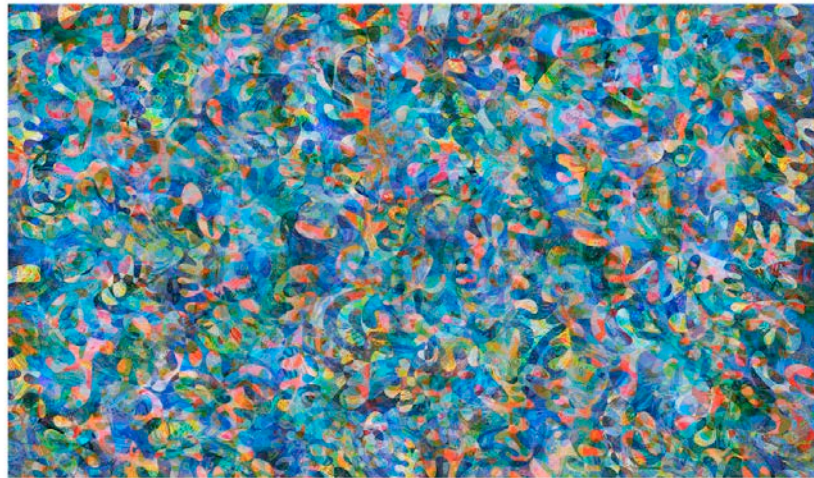
Matisse



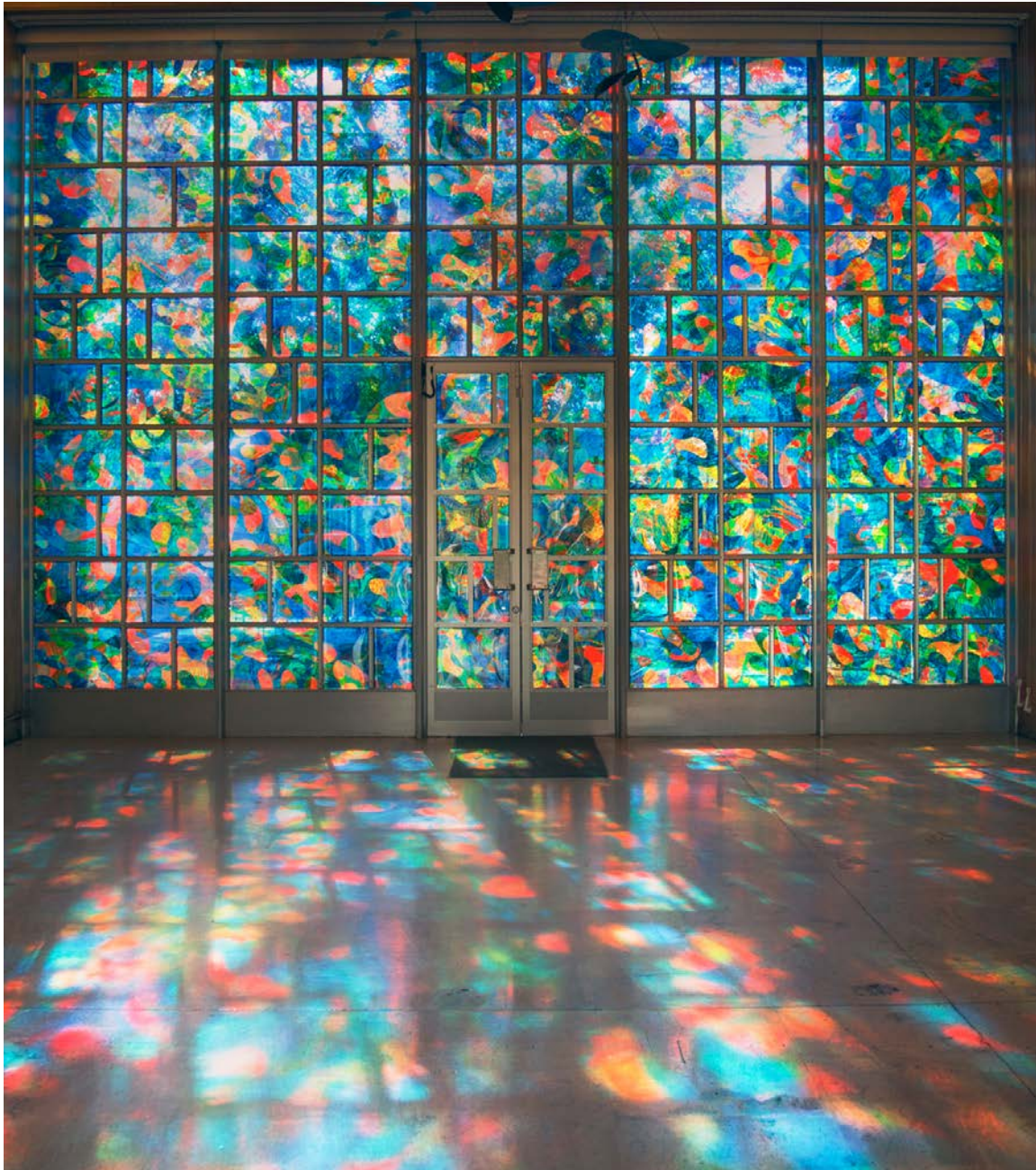
Klee



5-6) Matisse and Klee



7-8) Aqua Night



9) Aqua Night Display View



10) Overlay Experiment



11) Correct Overlay



12) Andreas Gursky -99Cent Store



13) Prairie Meadows



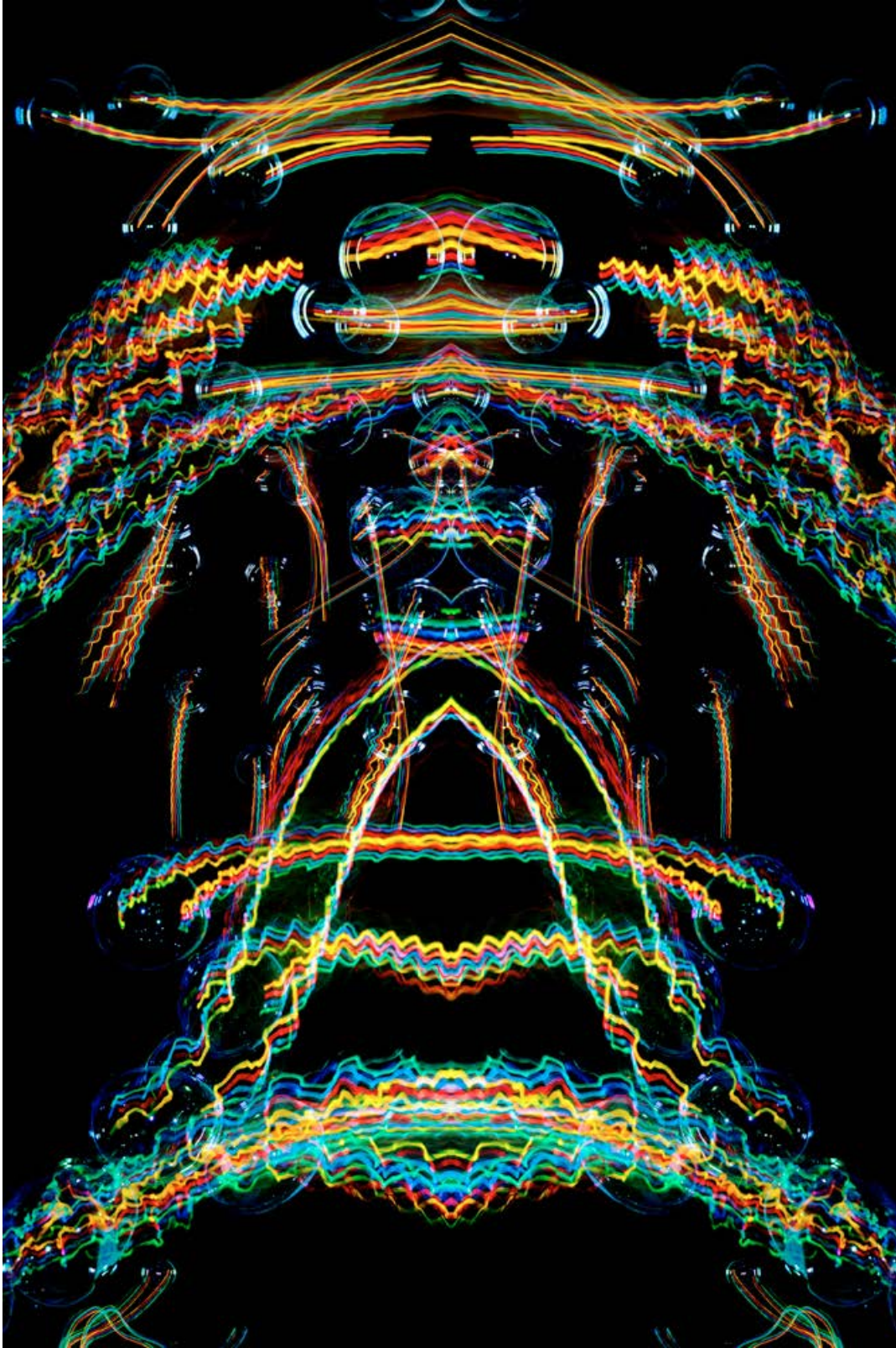
14) Grand slam



15) Waterslide



16) Persian Ryder Display



17) Alien



18) Alien Detain in Stroboscopic Motion



19) Persian Bubbles



20) Eye in Bubble



21) Bubble



22) Superman Rollercoaster



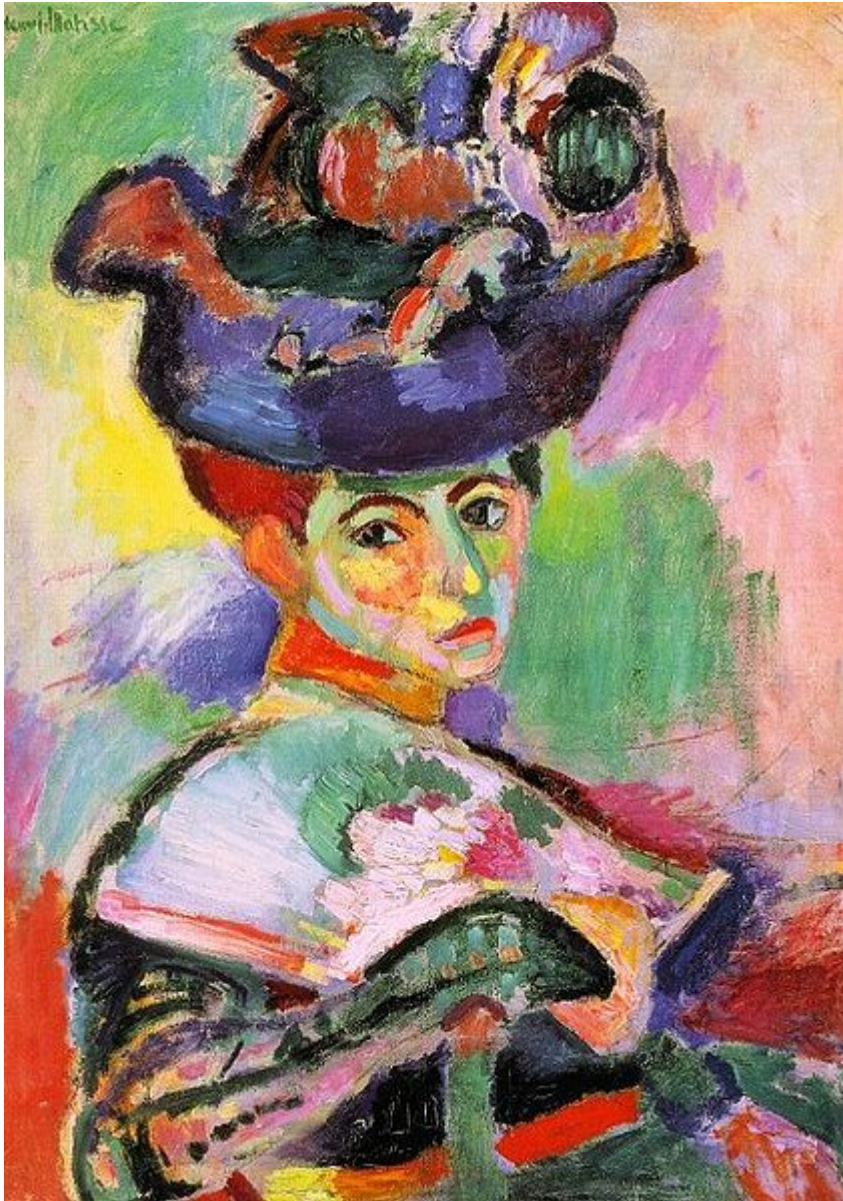
23) Wowee 7



24) Ian in Persian Shirt



25) Matisse *The Desert Harmony in Red*



(26) Matisse *Women in Hat*



27) Matisse *Musique*



28) Matisse Odalisque



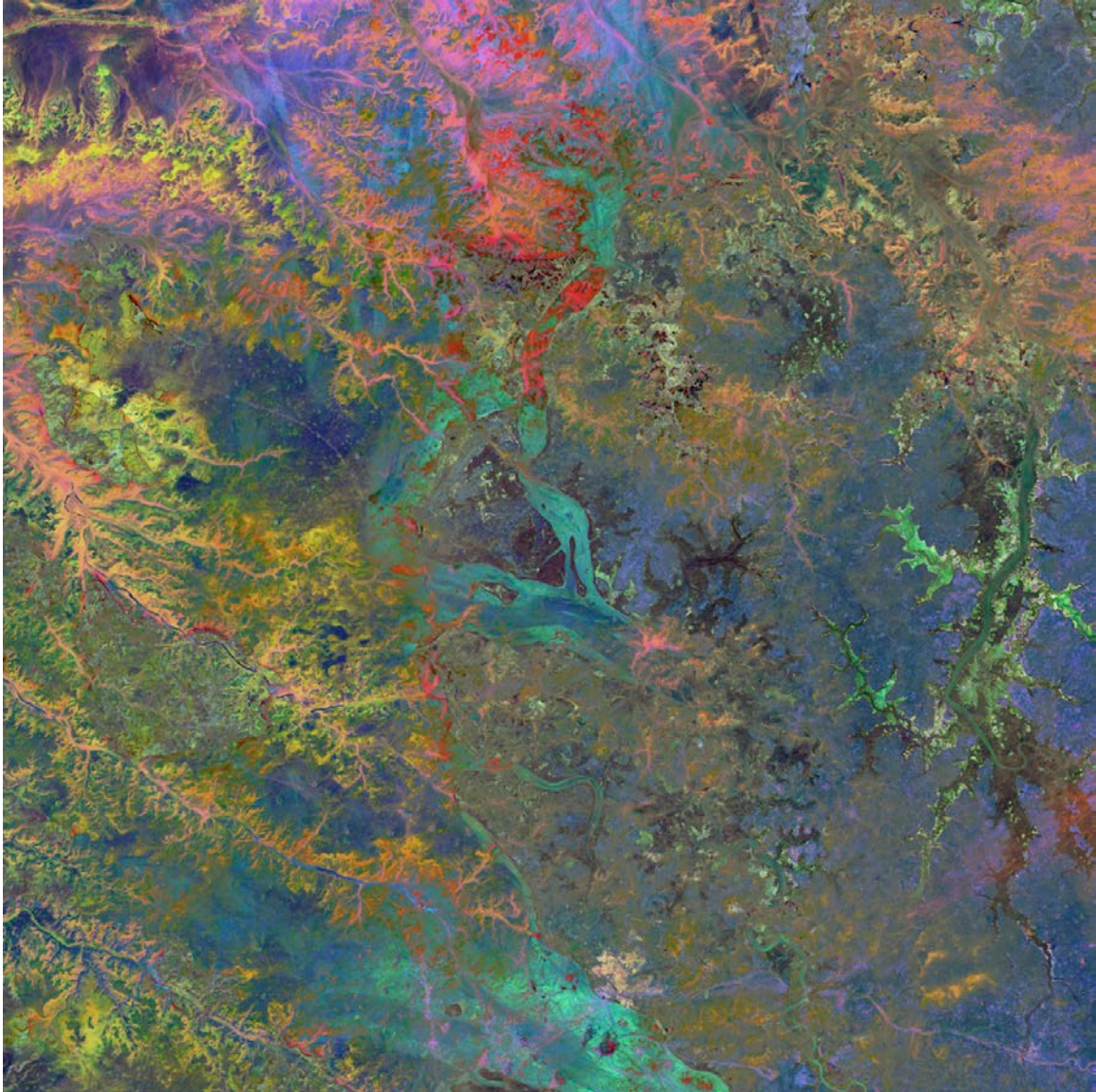
29) Persian Minuatures



30) Fra Angelico *Adoration*



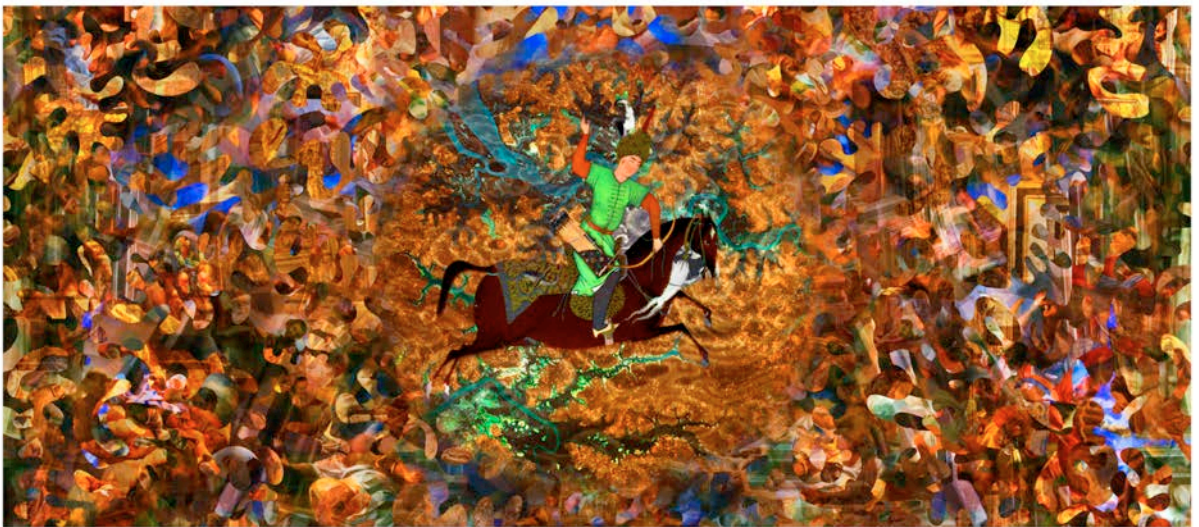
31) Venice



32) LandSat Satellite Image



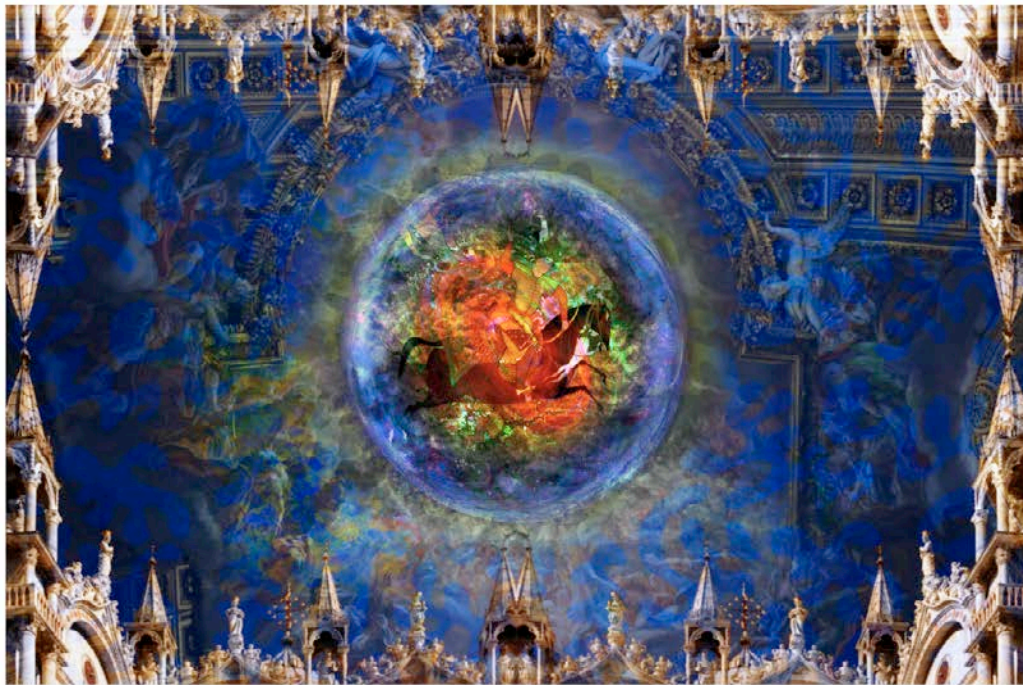
33) Trevi Fountain Rome



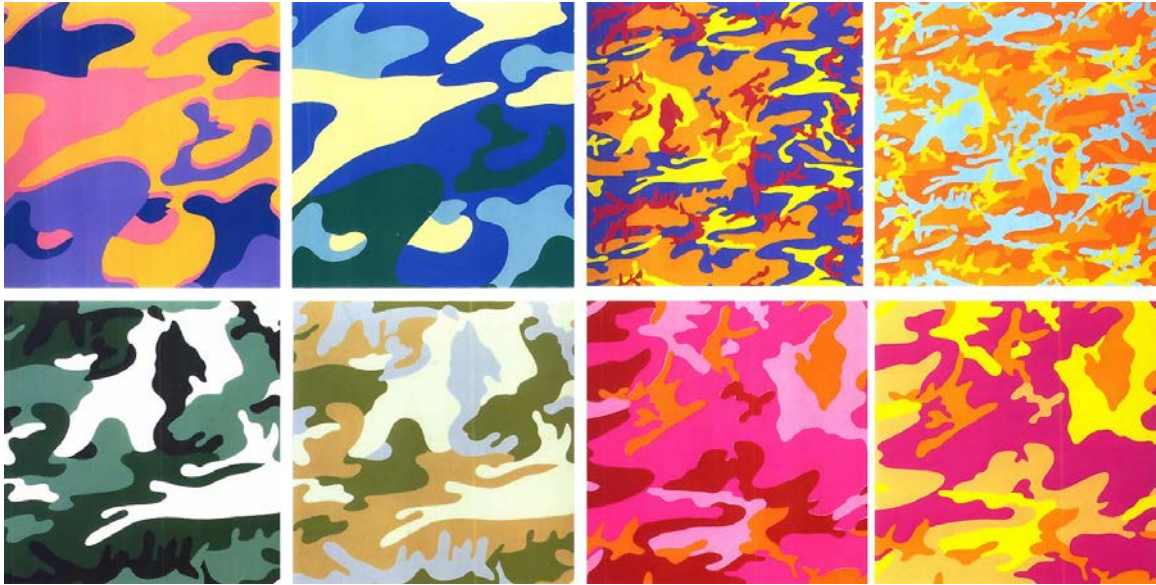
34) Persian Ryder I and Persian Ryder II



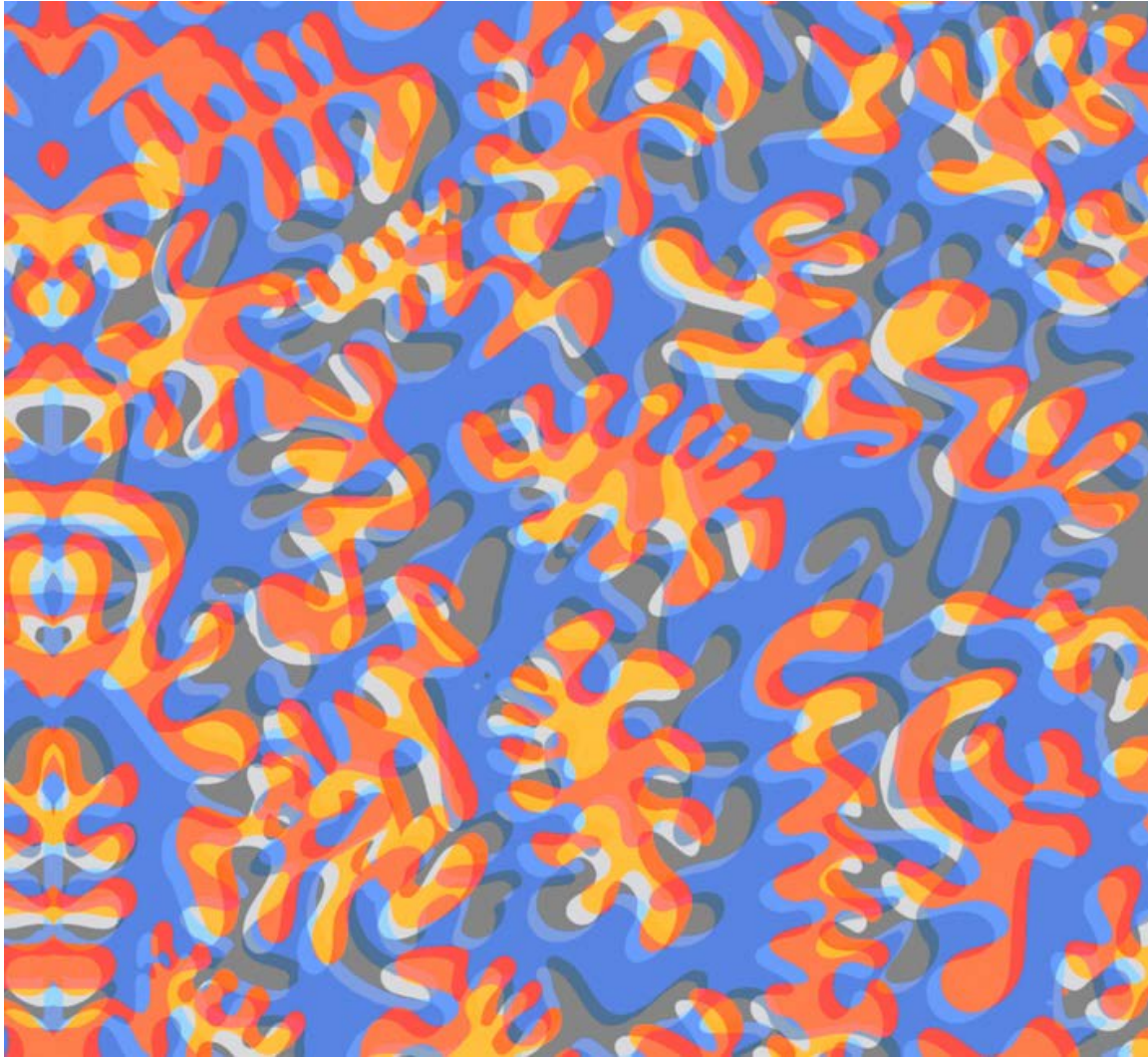
35) Perian and Rome mix



36) Persian Sky Ryder



37) Warhol *Camouflage*



38) my *Camouflage*

GLOSSARY

- **ray tracing is a process that uses a computer aided design software to render or visualize 3-D models in space by casting virtual light beams across a scene to make an animated or still image. This process is used in computer animation for movies and images.**
- **hyperrealism is the product of high resolution imagery made on the computer with ultra saturated colors and fine detail.**
- **the hyperreal is beyond real in the sense that the image is made in a fashion so that the photographic nature of the image is pushed to constructed and manipulated ends.**
- **high-resolution is an ultra detailed image that has more visual clarity than the human eye perceives.**
- **Photoshop is a computer software that is used in digital photography for image processing**
- **stroboscopic motion is the process for capturing a moving object with pulsing flashes of a strobe light.**

CHAPTER 12. REFERENCES

ARTISTS

Henri Matisse

Paul Klee

Andy Warhol

BOOKS

JAZZ HENRI MATISSE George Braziller, Inc. New York, 1985

Originally Published: Paris, Editions Verve, 1947

PAUL KLEE, Grohmann Will, Harry N. Abrams, Inc.

PAUL KLEE The Berggruen Klee Collection in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Harry N. Abrams, Inc. 1988

Ellen McBreen review of Matisse's sculptures on tour 19 Century Art World Wide

Matisse Painter as sculpture

DIGITAL IMAGERY

NASA www.landsat.org , Satellite Image Gallery 2011

The Images Grand slam, Waterslide, Superman Rollercoaster and Prairie Meadows are undergraduate works made before studying at ISU.