

Tunnel vision

by

Celinda Stamy

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Program of Study Committee:

April Katz, Major Professor

Arthur Croyle

Joseph Kupfer

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DEDICATION

For my Heavenly Father. This is truly Your thesis, Your message, and I am just expressing it the best I can with how You lead me. I love connecting with the creative source of the entire universe! I love hearing Your voice and responding to You through creative expression under the anointing of the Holy Spirit. I give it all to You, and may this thesis and exhibition which accompanies it reflect, reveal, and release Your Glory.

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ABSTRACT

This document is the written component that accompanies the fine art exhibition *Tunnel Vision* that took place from April 14 to April 27, 2014 at the Design on Main Gallery in Ames, Iowa. It investigates how extensive use of technology has disrupted American relationships and experiences with people and the environment. The installation, comprised of oil paintings, vinyl, and LCD projections, prompts viewers to consider why we choose to either engage in synthetic technology or in real, authentic experiences.

This thesis discusses the personal, artistic, spiritual, and narrative influences of the body of work. The overarching themes and processes evident in the installation and within individual works are discussed. My thesis installation takes its viewers on a journey that presents to them a situation in which they will have to make decisions. The intent is to provoke thought concerning these judgments. This installation responds to the need for our collective society to put down the devices and pay attention to the world and people that surround us. It is a juxtaposition of the human and technological interpretations of the world. The familiar and mundane act of participating in the artificial world of our devices has been magnified through this exhibition, and is a reflection of who we have become.

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

My body of work is an investigation of contemporary society's obsession with personal mobile devices that has led to a lack of genuine interactions with our surroundings. I am interested in reflecting back to my audience in an unexpected way, who I believe we have become as a society. I have created an intentionally exaggerated situation based upon how we experience the world while distracted by mobile devices.

This written thesis component is intended to elaborate upon the themes and influences within the exhibition *Tunnel Vision*. In this work, I am addressing the current deception that we have become more social by engaging with others through mobile devices, when in fact our inattention to our surroundings has caused us to neglect opportunities to have authentic relationships. Our culture seems to choose the technological over the physical world too often, while failing to recognize that something valuable could be sacrificed by doing so. What is valuable, I suggest, is that God speaks to us through His handiwork. Nature itself testifies of God's power and divine plan, and prompts us to be reminded of that. Additionally, we are sacrificing genuine connections with other people for insincere forms of communication in which we are simultaneously isolating ourselves.

I have drawn upon my experience of repeatedly traveling through the Iowa and Missouri landscape to call attention to society's "tunnel vision" problem. The title, *Tunnel Vision* speaks to the concept of a journey and evokes imagery of a narrowed view in which a person is unaware of what is present in his or her peripheral vision. I have explored through these works the importance of not only making the journey, but also to paying attention to the journey itself.

The exhibition consists of an installation in which viewers have an opportunity to engage in two different experiences. The first is looking down to observe a projected synthetic, technological world, and the second is looking up to directly engage with physical, tactile paintings. When viewers enter the gallery, they enter the installation [Fig. 8]. They are confronted by a pathway, created and surrounded by curtain-like sheets of clear vinyl. A sequence of images are projected on the floor. The projections are cast from the ceiling, and when viewers enter this pathway, they are both walking upon and bathed by light and technology. Viewers are forced to become a part of the technological world being cast onto them, the floor, and the vinyl. It is a tunnel of collective technology.

Revelation

An integral component of this installation is the symbolic representation of the tunnel. Marcel Proust once said, “We don’t receive wisdom; we must discover it for ourselves after a journey that no one can take for us or spare us.” The manner in which the installation *Tunnel Vision* is composed invites the viewer to enter into a tunnel of technology and therefore on a journey. While my personal conviction is that the overuse of electronic devices is a dangerous path, I want my viewers to arrive at their own conclusions about the issue, by presenting them with an opportunity to consider and respond throughout the duration of their journey.

The goal of my work is for viewers to gain perspective and wisdom about the consequences of investing an *unreasonable* amount of time in our personal electronic devices. I do not wish to dismiss the benefits of technology or diminish its marvelous capabilities, but rather call attention to the *extent* of which we are hooked on our devices. Being given information is entirely different than experiencing firsthand. There is power in proactive

learning without coercion, as opposed to being spoon-fed filtered and pre-selected information.

When understanding is accomplished through personal discovery, initiative, and experience, exciting connections are made, conclusions are drawn, and revelation is brought about.

Revelation is powerful because it is beyond pure knowledge, it is a knowing that you can own and have forever.

CHAPTER TWO

LANDSCAPE

This body of work began as a response to a new found understanding of place. I was exploring the idea of home and what that meant to me as well as others. With the technological gifts of communication literally at my fingertips, many of my friends and acquaintances would question why I, along with my significant other, Jake, chose to make the extensive, expensive, and frankly boring trip home about every other weekend. I have been choosing the more complete experience of interacting with my family over the convenient.

Applications such as FaceTime, Skype, texting, or phone calls are wonderful tools. They allow us to communicate easily and freely to our loved ones, co-workers, and people all over the world. I do not intend to devalue our technological devices. However, when this becomes our primary form of communication, it is worth our time to consider how this affects our relationships. I maintain that our society is losing sight of the importance of real, uninterrupted encounters with people and our surroundings. In an electronically mediated interaction, our senses are limited and can only offer a narrow band-width of communication. The drama and spontaneity of face-to-face interactions are irreplaceable (Kupfer 42). Our handheld devices limit, interrupt, distract, and deceive.

Home

For the past three years of my life, I have struggled with the idea that my home and where I live are two separate physical locations. What I have considered home for the entirety of

my life is the town of Mexico, Missouri. The other location is Nevada, Iowa, which is about 275 miles and approximately five hours of driving time away from Mexico, Missouri.

The painting that sparked initial interest in this entire series is one that was simply an emotional response to a landscape that made an impression on me [Fig. 7]. It is a landscape that I drive past nearly every day in Nevada, Iowa. In Nevada, there is an off/entrance ramp to Highway 30 that continues and turns into the road that takes me to my apartment. When I am exiting the off ramp and approach the stop sign, I look to the left and right to check for traffic, and once again back to the left. On the left is a dirt road with a farm house on each side, as well as silos, and trees. I love to remain at this stop sign in my car and simply study that particular landscape. There is always something new to see. However, this same landscape that brings me such joy to observe, is also a bitter reminder that I am almost to my apartment, which I certainly do not consider home. It was a reminder of the great distance between my physical location and home. On the other hand, when that landscape was on my right, it means that I am going east onto the entrance ramp – something I do not do unless I am headed to Missouri. My relationship with the particular landscape was too strong to ignore, and I had a very strong desire to understand it. One day, I pulled over, got out of my car, and photographed it. Later, I made a painting that was based upon this photograph.

Months after this painting was executed, Jake and I were taking a drive one Sunday morning, exploring the areas that surround Nevada. As we drove past that familiar dirt road, I had a realization that I had never traveled down this road. Per my request, Jake turned, and we entered this uncharted territory. As he drove, I kept asking him to “slow down!” The excitement that arose within me was completely unexpected. My experience might be comparable to being allowed to enter and walk around in a famous photograph or painting. A photograph, or even a

painting, can never be a substitute for being present and experiencing our surroundings first-hand. There is a difference between experiencing something two-dimensionally and being a part of the experience using all of our senses.

Similarly, social media sources such as Skyping, Snapchatting, and FaceTime that allow us to communicate with our friends and family are only two-dimensional experiences. They are incredible and powerful tools that allow us to communicate globally – it is truly amazing. However, when our society encourages these tools to replace genuine interactions, we are missing out on inherent dimensions that relationships with other people offer. When I entered that dirt road landscape for the first time, I discovered its richness, complexity, and dimensionality. There is also a richness and depth in the tangible interactions with other individuals.

As an artist, when I have questions about something, I paint to resolve what I am thinking about. I wanted to fully comprehend what home implies and what it means to me. Initially, I had the perception that home is exclusively a physical location. After developing this series, I have learned that home is equivalent to family. The location would be meaningless to me if the people I love were not there. We were created to need each other, to need other people. Thus, it is well worth it for me to make whatever sacrifices necessary to experience, maintain, and continue developing meaningful relationships within my family to their fullest extent – which means traveling to be there physically with them. It is taxing on my time; it is expensive; and apart from driving across Kansas, it is just about the most boring drive a person could experience. Thus began another investigation. Surely this journey could not just be a waste, and there could be something gleaned from it.

Landmarks

I began questioning why I was overlooking and disregarding the journey and placing all of the importance on the endpoints: Nevada, Iowa and Mexico, Missouri. Surely, if I chose to spend countless hours in my car, there must be something more valuable to gain from the journey.

In the beginning stages of this series, I simply noticed my relationship to specific landmarks on this five-hour journey that I chose to make about every other weekend. I became annoyed that I was continually seeing the same landmarks throughout the duration of the trip. I also realized that the sight of the landmarks evoked emotion within me because they are signifiers of how close I am to home – to seeing my family.

I have always made a habit of looking out of the window on car rides, regardless of the duration of the trip. However, I began looking for answers while observing the passing landscape outside my window. I did not know what I was looking for, but I looked, and I continue to look. I now see things I have never noticed before. The dreary, flat landscape of Iowa has come alive to me. I am overcome with the variety and the grand sky. There is pleasure in really seeing.

I made a decision to begin painting these landmarks, just as I painted the country road landmark in Nevada. The landmarks are seemingly meaningless and banal to the unfamiliar viewer, but to me they became increasingly important, as they are indicators of my distance from home. Before I began paying attention, the landmarks held little significance. Regardless, I have spent hours looking at them and painting them on a grand scale of which they may be undeserving. Since I began to pay attention to these landmarks, their importance to me has increased. I have chosen to represent this level of importance by painting them large. By doing

this, my intent is to explain to my audience that there is value in taking the time to see. I am essentially attempting to momentarily elevate the mundane. It seems as though people and the environment is what has become uninteresting.

Seeing and Looking

“[Painting] is a more human vision of the world,” said David Hockney (Gayford 121). The subject matter of the paintings in this installation is not intended to show viewers the definition of beauty, but rather, to offer a more human visualization of the world. Every second, images are being posted to social media sites which display and elevate the mundane things in individual’s lives through an impersonal, technological filter. While someone may decide their cupcake is worth looking at, once it is posted to the Internet, it becomes just another media derived image that becomes lost amongst all of the millions of images we are bombarded with daily. The human voice in imagery has become rare. By otherwise representing dull and routine subject matter in life through painting, I am not only creating a reflection of society, but a sharp contrast between the human and technological representation of the world as well.

There is a difference in looking and seeing. Truly seeing is required in order to paint, so through painting, I hope to teach people how to see, and demonstrate the benefits of doing so. We are so accustomed to technology teaching us how to observe that it seems as though this form of observation has carried over into how we perceive our surroundings.

I believe looking to be a passive act. We look at the television. We look at images on the computer screen as we rapidly click through them. We look at the people that pass us in a crowd. We have become lazy when it comes to seeing. The media has handicapped us by saturating our senses with constant and continuous imagery and entertainment. Our attention

spans have shortened and as a result, it now takes so much more to entertain us. We have been trained to see what the media wants us to see. All we have to do is sit back, shut off the brain, and indulge in a visual feast and frenzy of imagery. In television, there is a different image every second! We have been convinced that we know everything about what we have seen after looking for a matter of seconds. We are addicted to immediacy.

Artist David Hockney does not define a distinction between seeing and looking, but he speaks about it in a conversation with Martin Gayford. He says,

I've always had intense pleasure from looking. When I was young, as soon as I was old enough to go on buses on my own, I used to go straight upstairs, where it was blue with smoke in those days – I survived – and would go right to the front of the bus so I could see more. In a car, I always want to sit in the front for the same reason, because it is such a *pleasure*. Early on, I realized that not everybody gets that. Indeed, I've come to think that most people just scan the ground in front of them. As long as that's clear and they can move forward, they don't bother about anything more. Looking is a very positive act. You have to do it deliberately. Hearing is the same. If you concentrate on music, you're going to hear more (Gayford 86).

I believe the pleasure Hockney refers to is the joy and satisfaction we feel when we discover something new –something beautiful we had not seen before now reveals itself to us. Regardless of his lack of distinction between looking and seeing, I maintain that the two terms should not be equated. The source www.dictionary.com defines looking as “to turn one's eyes toward something or in some direction in order to see.” Another definition uses the word glance to describe looking. This is very different from the definition of seeing, which is “to perceive with the eyes.”

Installation as Landscape

The installation “Tunnel Vision” is designed to simulate traveling through a landscape. As viewers enter the gallery, they are immediately placed in a tunnel that stretches approximately half of the length of the gallery. The tunnel is formed by ten-foot by four-foot sheets of clear vinyl hung from the ceiling several feet away from each painting. The sheets of vinyl create a long, dramatic tunnel that stretches from the front of the gallery to towards the back. It invites the viewer to acknowledge their height, and their own presence. Not only do the tall, clear sheets of vinyl serve as a visual guide for the viewer to move through a specific pathway and to look up, but they serve a metaphorical purpose as well.

In the center of the tunnel and cast upon the floor are digitally projected moving images that represent the distractions that cause us to look down created by technology such as texting, e-mailing, YouTube videos, Instagram, Internet games, shopping, Pinterest, movies, Snapchat, Twitter, Facebook, and more [Fig. 10].

Outside of the tunnel, large 48x48 inch paintings line the walls on each side. They are spaced evenly apart from one another, representing the continuity and flow of traveling in a vehicle. Much like society’s current interpretation of everyday life, the spacing between paintings is monotonous and predictable. The works on opposite walls seem to converse with and reflect one another. The interruption of this conversation by the vinyl and projections forces the viewers to be confronted with decisions. They have a choice to be passive in their looking and experience the paintings through the clear material only, or walk through the tunnel and then behind the vinyl to experience the unobstructed paintings first-hand. The vinyl is a metaphor for a window. It serves as a literal and metaphorical barrier between the viewer and the work. The final option would be for the viewer to only look at the projections on the floor. Large painted

maps on plastic flank the entry to the tunnel to serve as barriers to prevent viewers from entering the gallery at entrances other than the tunnel. A third painted map on plastic is located at the finale of the tunnel.

Finally, the back half of the long gallery is an open and quiet space. It is the relief and light at the end of the tunnel. Once viewers are released from the restrictions and distractions of the tunnel, they are allowed the opportunity to experience works in a much different fashion and environment [Fig. 15].

CHAPTER THREE

SYMBOLISM

The Window

Until the first time I stepped out of my car and was physically in the landscape with the dirt road in Nevada, Iowa, I was limiting my experience with that environment. As a result of no longer being in a moving car, I could slow down and really *see*. On the contrary, anything observed from my car window is seen through an obstructed view. I was having a two-dimensional experience as images of the world flashed past me through my looking glass – the vehicle's window.

There is a commonality that exists among the television, our handheld devices, and the car window. This shared element is some form of glass – a window. Windows are portals to another world. A window pane may be two-dimensional by nature and definition, but it is deep by virtue of its view. It gives its viewers the illusion that it is linking the distant to the close at hand, and acts as a means of escape that joins two worlds. Windows are gateways and express longings for other worlds. When I am in the car, I am in a different world than the one on the other side of the glass.

The experience of looking through a window could be from an interior world to exterior, or visa versa. When one looks through a telescope, a whole new world is revealed through a piece of glass contained by a frame. Similarly, a new world is also revealed through the glass window of a microscope. It is no coincidence that the beginning of photography (daguerreotypes) began with the experimentation with glass.

The experience of looking through a camera is the clearest illustration of looking from one world to another through a window. The lens of the camera frames this world. It seems as though when a person experiences life through a camera lens, they are not truly experiencing the full breadth of the world they are seeing. There is a separation that exists, created by this piece of glass that is an illusion of a true experience. For instance, on one occurrence, I offered to film a friend's wedding in its entirety. I was filming from nine o'clock in the morning until the last dance at the reception. I was physically there for the entire event, and was even involved in exclusive aspects of the wedding. However, in hindsight, I do not believe that I had a genuine experience. I left with an odd feeling as though I was not really there. As I looked through the viewfinder of that camera all day, there was a veil, an invisible wall that separated and set me apart from being present at the wedding. I witness this happening to other people in incidents such as sporting events and concerts and I wonder if they are as conscious of this separation as I was, if at all. At concerts, I see rows and rows of fans with their smartphones held in the air as the owners of the phones lock their eyes on the screen and watch the events unfold through the device - on the wrong side of the glass. They are completely unaware of their surroundings and have focused their attention solely on the screen. There is so much they are missing. That screen limits a person's field of vision. We have two eyes that miraculously allow us to see the world in a wide screen format, yet we choose to only look at what a cell phone frames for us. Our two eyes, together with our brains, allow us to understand depth and space. The camera only has one eye which flattens our experiences.

Additionally, an awareness of scale between what is visible on the screen of a device and what we see when looking at the actual three dimensional world is tremendous. When we are truly seeing, our heads will move around; our eyes search, study, and adjust. We see a huge and

expansive image through our eyes. Therefore, it does not seem reasonable to choose to see something through a device that is so limiting and contained.

Furthermore, when we look through a screen (window), all other senses are quieted. The contribution of all other senses, in addition to vision, help us interpret what we are seeing. For instance, experiencing a live baseball game to its fullest extent would demand that all senses become involved. Of course there is sight, but there is also sound. The crack of the bat, the bellow of the concession salesman, the cheers and jeers of the crowd, and the sound of the gravelly dirt as a player slides into home plate. The smell of popcorn and hotdogs fills the air, and sweet, sticky, cotton candy dissolves on your tongue. There is an occasional breeze that provides relief from the heat of the sun. The warm, leathery feel of the baseball glove on your hand is a reminder to be alert and prepared for fly balls. All of our senses contribute to a full experience and encourage us to be present. Nevertheless, we are seduced by our electronic devices to such a degree that what we see in the screen is the only thing we experience. Everything else is a blur. We have tunnel vision. I believe it is important to recognize when windows (to other worlds) are acting as mediators and when they are acting as barriers.

Tunnels

Tunnels are historically symbolic of a journey, of moving from one place to another, whether it be literally or metaphorically. Another word closely associated with tunnel is “passage”. Tunnels and passageways are relatively long by definition and suggest a passing of time. The evolution from information to revelation takes time. The tunnel serves to cultivate this transition. These terms also seem to imply simply that the journey of a passage is not nearly as important as the places on either end of it. Journey suggests that the travels themselves are

important, not just the starting and ending points. Light is usually associated with tunnels as well (“light at the end of the tunnel”...”dark tunnels”, etc). It can shape the symbolism and the importance of the tunnel. In this particular installation, light is being cast from above and fills the entire tunnel. In my installation, after the viewer walks through seven projections, the journey and the paintings continue without vinyl and projections. The first half may be filled with projected light, but it is synthetic. The second half is intended to induce enlightenment – a revelation about how these interruptions affect our experiences.

David Hockney painted a series of works in which he revisited the same locations at many different times of the year, in February, March, May, July, October, and November. He calls the location “The Tunnel,” because there are two rows of trees which grow on both sides of a long country dirt road. There is nothing spectacular about this location, but something must have been revealed to Hockney, because he never grew tired of the scene and returned continually. It must have been exciting for him to spend time looking. He had to be expecting to see something new each time. “You have to look and ask questions like that about what you are seeing all the time. Drawing makes you see things clearer, and clearer, and clearer still.” (Gayford, 84-85). Another unusual decision he made which is of interest to me is placing the viewer directly in the middle of the road, inviting us to visually “walk into” the painting and travel down the country road/path. The viewer is essentially thrust into a visual journey.

Claude Monet was the father of this idea. He painted an entire series of haystacks. He painted this mundane subject matter time after time in an effort to understand how light affected how we perceive the object. Monet visited and revisited the haystacks during different times of the year (August, December, January, etc.), as well as different times of the day (sunset, morning), in order to reveal the true nature and essence of the haystacks (Russell 108). This idea

of repeatedly revisiting an ordinary subject matter in order to understand and appreciate it at another level is something I have incorporated in my own body of work.

The Square

The decision to paint within a square format is a significant one. The square format speaks to the shape of a Polaroid photograph. It references therefore an off-the-cuff shot. It is something that is quick and casual. I consider the subject matter of my paintings to also be quick, impromptu images. The Polaroid photograph is an object of nostalgia. The square also references the format of the side window of the car I look through on the trip home. The square format was also chosen for its nature. Home is familiar, just like a square. Its sides will always be the same length, it will always have four corners, and always have four right angles. It is predictable and implies stability – a reference to home. Finally, the shape is neutral in that it does not make any presumptions of special characteristics. Rather than imposing an interpretation, viewers are allowed freedom in asserting their own understanding of height and width into a scene. The square cooperates with the expansive, off-the-cuff compositions.

CHAPTER FOUR

PERSONAL INFLUENCES

My Testimony

Recently, I was given a smart phone for Christmas. My body of work seems to be an expression of fear that someday I will also become shut off from my surroundings and only engaged in what is happening in the world that exists through the window of my technology. I knew I needed to experience what it would be like to travel the entire five-hour journey distracted by my phone, so I asked my partner to drive the entire trip. I was convinced that this was going to be a difficult endeavor. It was not. I was physically looking down a majority of the trip, and was completely removed from what was passing by me. The times that I did look up, I felt disoriented and confused and had to ask where I was. The trip went by faster than previous ones had. Five hours seemed like two. It was scary how easily I was hooked. I played Flappy Bird for hours and could not put it down because I was convinced that it was important for me to earn a score of at least thirty-three to beat my little brother. When I finally earned an acceptable score, I immediately texted my little brother to inform him of his misfortune of once again being beaten by his sister. I then checked my e-mail, composed a few e-mails, followed by some browsing on Pinterest for wedding inspiration, followed by checking to see what the latest on Facebook was, followed by a Snapchat exchange with my cousin, followed by the urge to play another game of Flappy Bird. It was an endless cycle! There was always something to do, right at my fingertips – I was instantly and constantly satisfied. The disconcerting part is the feeling that it was necessary for me to participate. At the end of the trip, I had a feeling of dissatisfaction and emptiness. I was busy for an entire five hours, but my efforts were void of

value. I felt as though those five hours were a waste, and I was unclear as to what really occurred during that time. My partner was upset with me, because he felt ignored and isolated. At the beginning of the trip it was light, and it had now turned dark. My head ached.

After that trip, the Holy Spirit has made me sensitive to how and when I spend time on my smart phone. I am thankful my phone allows me to accomplish tasks efficiently, have information at my fingertips, and communicate quickly and easily with friends and family. However, I believe when it gets to the point where it is consuming me and my time at the expense of relationship with God, other people, and my surroundings, I need to cut back as it is bearing no fruit. I have been called to be a light to shine for Him and to love people. I do not want to be so distracted that I cannot even see the people around me.

The paintings are created based upon a source that is four times removed from the real environment depicted. The visual source commenced in the following manner: I looked through the viewfinder of my camera, through the lens, which was pointed through a car window in order to capture a photograph. I then uploaded the image to a computer and printed it off onto a sheet of copy paper, which I used as a reference for the paintings. This layering of removal that takes place is indicative of our dependence on technology, but we must learn to use it to remain engaged with the world in more direct ways.

The Holy Spirit

My relationship with God is the fundamental and principal inspiration of this body of work, so it should not go unexplained. I am continually learning how to hear from God and to be led by the Holy Spirit daily, in all aspects of my life, including art. God has a good plan for each of our lives, and He wants to speak to us about that plan. I want to listen. He has sent His Holy

Spirit to dwell in us. The Holy Spirit is our Guide, Teacher of Truth, Counselor, Helper, and Comforter to help us understand and live in accordance to His plan.

When God created Adam and Eve, He gave them dominion and authority over this Earth. God bound Himself by His Word. Since He loved us so much He gave us a free will and a choice to serve Him. Adam and Eve made their choice by eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. In doing so, they surrendered their God given dominion and authority to Satan. Satan took man's authority and dominion that are rightfully ours. God made a covenant with man. Man took that covenant and made a sub-covenant between man and Satan. Because God loved us so much, He had a plan of redemption. He had to become a man, Jesus, to perfectly fulfill the law, take back the authority from the enemy, and allow the Holy Spirit to come live inside of us so that we can once again have intimate relationship with the Father. He has given us back our dominion and authority - everything Adam lost in the garden, and more.

Many people view God as harsh because of instances in the Old Testament. People in the Old Testament weren't able to fully know the true nature of God because of the spiritual separation they faced. God gave the law to Old Testament people because He wasn't able to live within them to guide them. Sin was like a disease, so He established the law to protect His people. The law showed them that nobody could ever measure up to God's standard. His standard is so high that nobody can accomplish it in their own abilities. Jesus fulfilled it perfectly. We cannot earn our way to favor or relationship with God. Once we believe on God and are born again we don't have to perform to earn His love. He just loves us unconditionally because He sees Jesus in us.

Part of the reason Jesus had to leave Earth was so we could receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said to his disciples, "I have still many things to say to you, but you are not able to

bear them or to take them upon you or to grasp them now. But when He, the Spirit of Truth (the Truth-giving Spirit) comes, he will guide you into all the Truth (the whole, full Truth)” (John 16:12-13 AMP). Jesus could only be in one place at one time, but the Holy Spirit is with us always. He will never leave us, nor forsake us. We are children of the King and just as His disciples did, He wants us to have the supernatural power we need to live this new life.

When I stated earlier that the Holy Spirit made me sensitive to something, I was suggesting that He was speaking to me in order to reveal and teach me something. “God speaks to us in many ways; they include but are not limited to: His Word, nature, people, circumstances, peace, wisdom, supernatural intervention, dreams, visions, and what we call the inner witness. The inner witness is best described as a ‘knowing’ deep inside. He also speaks in what the Bible calls a still, small voice, which I believe refers to this inner voice. God also speaks through our conscience, our desires...” (Meyer 7) We discern His voice by lining it up with the Word of God. God has led me every step of the way in generating this body of work and has given me divine inspiration, so I want to give Him all of the honor and glory.

Additionally, when I paint, I believe it glorifies God. Football player Tim Tebow has a similar experience which he articulates here:

In middle school, my mom assigned me to do a report on Eric Liddell, of *Chariots of Fire* fame. I was impressed by his courage of convictions, and I really identified with his statement, ‘I believe God made me for a purpose, but he also made me fast. And when I run I feel His pleasure.’ I always thought since God gave these gifts to me, my role in that exchange was to play as hard as I could and continue giving Him the honor and glory for it. To me that would be the very best way of thanking Him for the ability (Tebow 173).

I do not want my work to prosthetize or to contain an explicit gospel message. I do, however, want to create works that are created with His guidance, which will testify of His glory

and speak to people. I believe my works can be a testimony in and of themselves just by sharing my experiences. “A creation always reveals something about its creator. What artists make tells us something about how they view the world. Thus the art of a Christian ought to be consistent with a life of faith in Christ” (Ryken 51). God has put this subject of detachment from our surroundings on my heart. He has revealed to me that this is a dangerous path, so I have chosen to express this to the best of my ability.

Witness of a Younger Generation

My secondary source of inspiration comes from observing the young generation who will grow up learning that the amount of time we now spend on our personal devices is the norm. This level of addiction is the starting point for them and it is concerning to imagine what life will be like if the level continues on this trajectory.

I have watched my cousins grow up with such electronic devices. Currently, they are ages ten and twelve, each the proud and loyal owners of an iPad and iPhone, and were great inspirations for this body of work. It deeply concerns me to watch how technology has shaped their personalities and how they understand social relationships. There are two primary occurrences with them that helped shaped my position on this issue.

The first occasion is one that happened while enjoying dinner at a restaurant with family. My aunt, who we very rarely see, came to visit from out of state. My cousins sat at the dinner table the entire meal with their iPads in their laps and their heads down, not paying a bit of attention to their family, not to mention their food. I remember my aunt trying to ask them questions about how they have been, and the girls responding with one word answers, spoken in a tone that implied, “I’m busy.”

The moments with family members are precious and fleeting. While painting the landmarks I see on my trip home, I thought about how fleeting those images are. In our relationships with others, we don't remember all of the small details about our conversations, just as I do not remember what each house in Colfax, Iowa looks like. However, when I close my eyes, I can remember and imagine my experience of driving through the town. I recall my emotional experience, what that town means to me in terms of how close or far away from home I am, and I remember the major landmarks: the John Deere dealership, Kum and Go, a bridge, a short downtown strip, a left turn with a daycare on the right followed by a trailer park. When I think about my family members and friends, I know them by their "landmarks." I know my aunt is a sensitive, kind and graceful woman. I can tell you things about her personality and her interests, how she carries herself, how she speaks, what interests her, and how she makes me feel when I am around her. I know this from experience, from spending time with her, from paying attention, and choosing to engage with her. Sadly I am not sure my cousins would be able to do the same. They have missed out because they were preoccupied with digital entertainment. They were in the presence of my aunt, but not present...not really. On the other hand, how does my aunt perceive my cousins? It is a shame to imagine that the "major landmark" she could possibly be recalling when she thinks of them is them engaged with their iPads.

The second occasion occurred on one of the first warm days of the spring season. My cousins had friends over and they were sitting inside playing on iPads. I suggested that they all go outside and play. Ten minutes later I was pleased that I no longer found them sitting indoors. When I walked outside, however, I found all four children sitting outside with iPads plugged into the outdoor outlets. They each had their heads down and nobody was speaking to one another.

It is shocking to me that children choose to sit and not speak, rather than run, play, and make noise.

The youth of this society are being separated further and further from reality. My hope for this exhibition is that it will open the eyes of my viewers in regards to how children will interact with the installation. Children will likely only pay attention to the projections on the floor, and disregard other visual components. While our devices may pacify children and keep them quiet and entertained, what qualities are being cultivated in them? This next generation will learn how to play, be creative, and interact with others in face to face relationships much differently as a result of the influence of electronic mediation.

I recently spoke with a grade school teacher who mentioned the growing number of recesses that have been conducted indoors due to the frigid cold weather. Her students beg her to play on the tablets, rather than the board games and activities. This particular teacher only allows them to use the tablets once a week, and she says the scenario is very odd and surreal. The children all sit on the floor in a circle with their heads down, just as quiet as can be, and mind their own business.

This happens not only amongst children, but among families and adults as well. I have witnessed family dinners in which there was hardly any eye contact or conversation. This is the same for any waiting room, elevator, or grocery store line. We are deceived if we believe these handheld technological devices are helping us become more social...more connected. April Gornik once said, "How incredibly brief a moment of beauty really is."

(www.bombmagazine.org) If a moment like that is truly so brief, I can only imagine how many countless moments we have missed as a result of being distracted by our mobile devices.

CHAPTER FIVE
AUDIENCE RESPONSE

Looking Down

The physical act of looking down is a very striking gesture to me. Socially, when people look down, it is interpreted as shame, embarrassment, or shyness; a lack of willingness to involve themselves with others. Additionally, the phrase “looking down” suggests an attitude of disapproval; one of looking from a place of superiority. Ironically however, our devices seem to exercise superiority over us. The act of looking down is typically one of worship. When I observe people looking at their cell phones and tablets, I see a gesture similar to that of worship: head bowed, face solemn, torso bent over, eyes cast downward, and hands nearly clasped. It is clear what our society worships today. Our electronic devices by which we communicate have become like idols and gods to us. Webster’s New World Dictionary defines idol as any object of ardent (passionate; zealous) or excessive devotion. It has also been defined as any person or thing regarded with blind admiration, adoration, or devotion. According to www.businessinsider.com, “we check our phones 150 times a day, between apps, voice calls, texts, and utilities”, which amounts to approximately two hours a day. If a person exercises for two hours every single day, you would say they are dedicated to working out. Someone who brushes their teeth one-hundred and fifty times a day is obsessive. Likewise, we would consider a person who checks their cellphone about one-hundred and fifty times and spends approximately two hours a day on the phone to be someone who is devoted to their mobile device. To repeat an act such as this over and over again is very ritualistic. Synonyms for ritual include: *tradition, act, custom, habit, practice, routine*. An idol is in essence anything you

passionately seek above God and your relationship with Him. What is so seductive about our devices that we feel it is necessary to return our attention continually to them?

This familiar gesture of worship is also evident when someone is paying respect to something or someone. The absurdity of this is that when someone is engaged in something on their device, they are not giving respect to anyone. It is as though we all have “Do Not Disturb” signs hanging around our necks. Some people allow their cellphones to consume their lives at the expense of communicating with people, which is what we were created to do.

Instant Gratification

Additionally, we have developed a habit of flipping through and looking at images at a rate that is unprecedented. It is impossible to understand everything we are seeing in a photograph in a matter of a second or less, yet we do it. Click. Click. Click. Click. Click. We seem to be adapting to the sheer quantity of images that are saturating our society. We have to keep up. In order to get through all of the images out there for us to look at, it seems logical to cut back on the amount of time we spend with each image. According to Popular Photography, in an article written in May of 2013, “The advent of digital cameras brought on a new era in photography and it's a prolific one. The number of photos we take each year has sky rocketed. In fact, in a recent presentation by Yahoo!, it was claimed that as many as 880 BILLION photos will be taken in 2014 if we continue on the current trend” (www.popphoto.com).

The speed at which I see landscape and landmarks fly past my car window reminds me of how quickly we look at images. There is a difference between looking at the landscape as a whole and trying to really see the landscape. It is similar to observing a film in motion versus viewing a film frame by frame. When I try to truly see what the Iowa landscape is composed of

through my car window, I feel frantic. It is as though I cannot keep up and am missing out on everything. If I choose to look at a particular lawn ornament at a farm house, for example, I feel my eyes scrutinizing the object and moving very quickly. My head and body also have to move as the object is moving very quickly in and out of my picture frame. The disappointing part is that I have missed everything else there was to see for that frame of time and distance.

Just as there is a distinction between looking and seeing, there is also a difference between apprehension and comprehension. In order for our brain to handle the bombardment of images from the media, it has to compensate by apprehending. Apprehension is by definition, “to grasp the meaning of; understand, especially intuitively; perceive”. We do not have the time, or capacity, to fully observe and comprehend every single image we take in each day. It would be exhausting if we tried. We use intuition to quickly perceive what images are and their meaning, based on prior knowledge and experiences. Comprehension, on the other hand, is the, “capacity of the mind to perceive and understand; power to grasp ideas; ability to know”. It is a profound understanding.

Within the installation, this distinction is realized in the juxtaposition of the projections and the paintings. The projections consist of an overload of images that are constantly and quickly changing at a rate out of their control. The viewer must apprehend the imagery being projected. Conversely, the paintings encourage quiet observation, in which the viewers are allowed to enter a meditative state with one painting at a time and at their own pace. Comprehension can be achieved in this environment. I encounter a similar experience when I witness the landscape rush past my window at speeds over sixty miles per hour. I am forced to apprehend what I see. It is not until I take a photograph of scenes, paint them, and see them again, do I begin to comprehend what I see.

Distinguishing Spaces

At the conclusion of the journey and the tunnel, there is a third large plastic sheet with mapping painting on it, suspended from the ceiling. Viewers are confronted face on by this final painted plastic sheet [Fig. 10]. From this point, viewers can either travel left or right around the sheet to enter the space beyond the tunnel, or circle back to travel down the two outer aisles. It serves as visual representation of the decision-making the viewers have experienced in their journey through the tunnel. It also marks the viewer's final decision within the tunnel.

The transition from the tunnel space to the area at the back half of the gallery should be one from constriction to relief; from contraction to expansion. The 5 foot by 10 foot painted plastic sheet is capable of both enclosing and releasing, much like a tunnel. It encloses the viewer within the tunnel comprised of plastic sheets. Plastic, by nature is difficult to penetrate. When we are fully engaged with our electronic mobile devices, we isolate ourselves and discourage others from interacting with us. It is as though we are in an isolated space of our own...a space within a space. In the installation, the silhouette of the tunnel itself mirrors the contour of the gallery space [Fig. 9].

When moving through a tunnel, travelers are confined in a relatively tightly enclosed space and are moving linearly towards the opposite end. Perhaps there is some anxiety involved. Upon exiting, there is a transition in which the space outside of the tunnel feels light, grand, full of life, and freeing. The painted plastic sheet allows for a similar transitional feeling to occur. It establishes points of departure, thus releasing the viewers to the space beyond the tunnel.

CHAPTER SIX

THE PAINTINGS

Photographic References

I am painting from photographic references, printed from an ink jet printer. I have physically never spent any time being a part of the landscapes I have painted from this journey. Using an SLR camera, I quickly capture a landscape that rushes past me as I drive past it within the confines of my car. I am isolated from it. My brain is telling me I know and have seen more than I really have. The camera is capturing more information than I take in when I drive past a location. On each painting, my photographic references always reveal more than what I observed first-hand for a brief moment – no matter how many times I have driven past and observed the location. It makes me question what it means that I am responding primarily to the two-dimensional surface, qualities, colors and texture of the photo reference, rather than the landscape itself. I am essentially experiencing the landscapes third or fourth-hand. The image is through a camera as well as through a car window. The result is, I spend more time observing and responding to the photograph than the actual environment. Once again, I recognize how technology can operate as an invaluable tool in our lives. I am using technology – car and camera- to travel through and record the landscape. It enables me to see it more completely.

Process

Over the course of time, the subject matter and imagery of the paintings revealed themselves to me and therefore, my approach evolved as well. What began as an exploration of landscape and the objects it embodied, transformed into a response to my experience of the

landscape while in a moving vehicle. I became less interested in what they *are* and their make-up, and more interested in expressing my relationship to them.

When I paint, I am primarily interested in expressing the essence of that landscape or experience. For each painting, there always comes a time when I begin slowing down, making one mark at a time, and stepping back a great deal to question if the amount of information I have given the viewer is adequate or too much. I am interested in finding out how much information I can express with one brushstroke.

Sky

When I begin paintings in this series, I always start with the sky. I use a medium to thin the oil paints and lay down a light blue wash which encompasses approximately one-half to two-thirds of the canvas. When I travel through the Iowa and Missouri landscape, the sky to me is expansive, generally inactive, and massive. It is so vast. I see no need to beautify the sky with a multitude of brushstrokes and fluffy clouds. I use a large brush to continually add large drippy strokes. Watching the canvas soak up the color and run all over the surface is a thrilling experience. I am interacting with the paint in an unpredictable way. I never know which direction the drips will head next, how thick the strokes will become, or which areas of the canvas the paint will choose to leave exposed. When I set the wash of the sky, it is a dance with the paint. The act itself is a response to how I experience the Midwestern sky. I cannot contain it. Iowa's terrain in particular has been altered to such an extent that the land is very flat. Therefore, the land takes up a very small portion of my field of view. It is the sky that takes up a tremendous amount of space. I believe it is quiet in its awesome grandness, so I attempt to emulate this through application of paint.

Drawing

While the wash of the sky is still wet, I take sticks of graphite and begin drawing into the canvas. The act of drawing is very meditative for me. Drawing is a conversation between me, the surface on which I am drawing, and the subject matter I am observing. It is an act of honesty that cannot be matched by words.

I chose graphite to begin the painting because of its soft nature. It is not a dark value, which would create a stark contrast between mark and canvas. It is gray, soft, and when mixed with oil medium, creates a beautiful hazy mark – suggestive to me of memory. When I am moving down a highway at speeds up to seventy-five miles per hour, it is not possible for me to be able to scrutinize details of landmarks as they race past me. What is left is a mental image. When I close my eyes, I try to re-envision what I saw and study the landmark in this manner. As previously mentioned, I work from photographic images. Thus what develops is a dialogue between the images in my memory and what the photograph reveals to me. The photograph always reveals new details about the landmarks I see when I study them. A new discovery is exciting. Once I discover them, I look for them the next time a journey home is made.

The process of drawing never stops once I make a transition in medium from graphite to oil paint. I am always drawing with my paint brush. I understand drawing as a very immediate act. As I observe, I have a desire to immediately respond to what I see. As a result, I typically end up with several paint brushes of various sizes and with various colors on them in my hands and at my disposal at the same time. I am very shape oriented and see surfaces in terms of planes. When I draw with my paintbrushes, it is very satisfying to be able to address entire planes with one stroke.

Color

The color choices in the paintings were made based upon a response to the speed at which I view these landscapes in person. The colors are pasty and washed out. There is either a lot of white mixed with the hues, or the white of the canvas is left exposed. This is symbolic of the flashes of information about the landscape I process at high speeds. It also speaks to memory and recollection. The intent of the low intensity colors as a whole is to create contrast between the paintings and the highly seductive, colorful, and bright projections. Apart from white, I choose to lay down color just to the extent indicated by that particular landscape to evoke the appropriate sensations of being present there.

Mark-Making

Because the paintings are a direct response to my personal relationship with the landmarks visible on my journey from Iowa to Missouri, I maintain that responding to my sources in a very direct and honest manner is appropriate. My mark-making has a sense of immediacy and is loose and expressive. These marks are conducive to the subject matter in this body of work.

On the other hand, I wanted to manipulate my application of mark to address how our eyes focus and refocus on objects of interest. Within most paintings in this series, there are areas which have very clean, hard edges. Not only does this serve as a place for the eye to rest, but discloses to viewers perhaps the specific area my eye falls upon when I observe this environment from my vehicle. It is also a reminder that we can only focus on one thing at a time. As much as we think we are capable of multi-tasking (i.e. being on a mobile device and attempting to do anything else at the same time), our brains are just not equipped or designed to do so. Finally,

the juxtaposition of expressive and geometric marks is symbolic of the relationship between the man-made and the natural.

There are also paintings which have smeared marks on them. In response to the fleeting images, in some areas, I dragged my palette knife or the side of my palm across newly painted areas.

Mapping

What are the images our generation will leave behind? Referring to the photograph, Berger says, “No other kind of relic or text from the past can offer such a direct testimony about the world which surrounded other people at other times.” (Berger 10) When we take a look at the photographs that will be our testimony, there are plenty of images to choose from indeed. Millions of photographs on our personal, handheld devices are being taken each day. German artist Gerhard Richter began a work titled *Atlas* that is massive in size, ongoing in its production, and influential to my thesis installation. He uses photographic images in an attempt to articulate the sheer quantity of images being taken daily by billions of people all over the world. He chooses to organize these banal images in a very specific manner.

“...Richter is in a clear position of power, deftly organizing his barrage of otherwise unwieldy photographic imagery – and personal history – into a controlled area, fit for presentation, much like a mapmaker. Far from neutral, atlases of maps have always been constructed to communicate and circulate world-view through their particular spatial arrangement of visual information. The atlas-maker’s job is to assemble a view of the world from the best available sources: an atlas seeks to create a whole greater than the sum of its parts.” (Albers 11)

I consider this installation to be an atlas, composed of paintings. Each painting is a map in and of itself. The paintings are a collection of images, linear networks and text, which work together to create a visual representation of specific geographic areas. I argue that by assembling the paintings in a particular order (together with the clear vinyl and projections), I am creating a very specific view of the world – of two worlds, really – based upon their content and spatial arrangement.

In addition to assembling and communicating a view of the world, the responsibility of an atlas is to teach people how to see the world. “Atlases both define and claim knowledge of discrete subjects... Atlases...are the guides all practitioners consult time and time again to find out what is worth looking at, how it looks, and perhaps most important of all, how it should be looked at. They are made to instruct, expected to do no less than teach us to see.” (Albers 11) The inclusion of mapping into my paintings serves as an exploration and reminder of this idea. I want to teach my viewers how to see. I hope that through this exercise, many will come to realize that seeing the world through technology is limiting. Technology directs and decides what we are to see and when. For example, on the popular social media website, Facebook, members above all are exhibiting snapshots of their lives. They are posting only their highlight reel. The goal is for Facebook audiences to witness how interesting, beautiful, and enviable they are. It is a false depiction of reality. Furthermore, we are cultivating a generation of self-promoting, self-absorbed people. The trend of taking and posting “selfies” is on the rise. The act of taking a “selfie” simply involves turning and pointing the camera at yourself and taking a photograph.

Maps also aid us in understanding our sense of place. They help us when we are disoriented, want to know the lay of the land, find specific landmarks, gauge distances, and

more. When I am mapping onto the paintings, I only draw in the sky. The sky serves as an uncluttered area in which I can conceptualize a map, both on the canvas and in physical encounters. As I develop the map, I am imagining traveling through that particular space and everything which embodies it. The simple turning line represents the road, and I denote landmarks with geometric rectangular shapes and text. My personal attempts at navigating this world are unfortunate. Without specific visual references and left/right directions, I am lost before I leave. That being said, I have chosen to map according to how I see the world: there are no indicators of cardinal directions, street names, or measure of miles. I understand my environment through visualization of landmarks and their proximity and relation to one another.

Our awareness and notion of place is diminishing as we choose to engage with virtual spaces more frequently. Our devices are portable by nature, so we can choose to interact with them in just about any environment: the barber shop, classroom, public transport, ball fields, grocery store, etc. If our experience in each of these diverse environments is a virtual one, it blurs the locations' discrepancies. "When everywhere is the same in affording the opportunity to create a virtual space, then the character of place is clouded...The solitary yet portable nature of techno-electronics dulls our awareness of space as public because wherever we are feels the same, with the same phenomenological texture" (Kupfer 49). Kupfer further elaborates and states, "When these environments become irrelevant to what we are doing, they will lose meaning for us and we will cease to inhabit them in any meaningful way. Anywhere is nowhere" (Kupfer 39). While there is certainly significant value in the portability of technology, the unreasonable amount of time spent in the virtual spaces, rather than actual physical places has caused us to become disconnected with our surroundings. The act of mapping functions as an attempt to gain an understanding of place, and a call to the viewers to do the same.

I argue that there is also a correlation between mapping and visualization of space, which has a powerful relation to the title of this thesis exhibition. Having tunnel vision implies one's periphery vision is blurred and the focus is on what is in front of the viewer. When I am envisioning moving through a space it is very similar to this. Approaching scenes directly ahead are in focus while the scenes in my periphery flash past me. A very similar perception of space occurs when traveling in a vehicle. The focus is on the road directly in front of me through the windshield and vast fields are a blur as they rush by through the side windows of the vehicle.

Furthermore, tunnel vision is indicative of how we are choosing to orient ourselves in space while being engrossed with handheld media devices. Spend fifteen minutes on a college campus and there will likely be multitudes of students with their heads down, occupied with their phones, and yet walking from one location to another. Compared to my own navigation skills, I will admit this act is somewhat impressive. However, I have tried this for myself, and what I encounter is a tunnel vision experience. Not only is my field of view impaired, but the only thing in focus is my phone and the ground is a blur – it is tunnel vision. When someone is distracted in this manner they lose sight of not only their surroundings, but are not properly navigating themselves through space because they can no longer visualize a lay of the land (a mental map). In America, walking and texting has become such an epidemic that people are dangerously jaywalking into streets, running into objects, falling into lakes, and more. In London, it has become such a problem that they have begun padding the posts and poles. In Philadelphia, e-lanes were created as an April Fool's joke for people too distracted to pay attention while they walk (www.abc.com). The unnerving part of this story is that people were upset they were going to be removed because they enabled and encouraged this habit of texting and walking. Now, a person could keep their head down their entire walk across town!

The inclusion of mapping elements into the paintings as well as the exhibition as a whole is a response to the lack of awareness, orientation, and sense of place that has developed as a result of being distracted by mobile devices. Maps and atlases instruct people how to view the world, and by inviting people to interact with the installation, I hope a certain amount of awareness arises after navigating themselves through the gallery.

Influences

Eric Fischl

Often times when I paint, I simply lay a book out in proximity of my painting. I find oftentimes I am subconsciously influenced by an artist in this way. Eric Fischl is an example of an artist I study in this manner.

Of particular interest to me is the beach series Fischl completed. He too elevated the mundane and worked from photographs. The photographs are off-the-cuff and casual. The subject matter is nothing extravagant – simply individuals enjoying spending time at the beach. Fischl does a great job of capturing a brief moment in time. His compositions suggest a snapshot, and he successfully captures fleeting gestures of his subjects.

Furthermore, his application of mark evokes a sense of immediacy. His subject matter is continually being altered. People are always moving about and he has captured that mobility, regardless of his frozen photographic reference.

Larry Rivers

“...for Rivers drawing is the most important part of the painting, to which everything else is subservient and dependent” (Levy, Rose, and Serwer 35) I have taken this quote to heart, and

see painting only as an extension of drawing. In the shift from drawing to painting, there is no change except the tool being used.

Rivers often leaves portions of the canvas bare and draws with graphite within his paintings. The graphite marks are soft, much like the thin washes and layers of color. His marks with both paintbrush and graphite serve as representations of his exploration of form and subject matter. They are thoughts and responses, left exposed for the viewer to explore for themselves. “Pentimenti are not only left visible but encouraged by the painter. They serve as reminders that the figures have a past and also as a general reference to the layers of memory encrusted in the artist’s interpretation of his subject” (Levy, Rose and Serwer 35).

Rivers incorporates labeling into many of his works, so I looked to his paintings to understand how text, line, color, and shape could all live cohesively together. I appreciate his ability to transform text from words the eye must read to design elements that are seamlessly incorporated into the painting. They have a presence, but are not distracting. I hope to achieve this with the mapping I have chosen to integrate in my own works.

The loose, gestural, and unfinished traits of Rivers’ works are qualities that resonate for me. When I think about fleeting images, I imagine an incomplete scene with areas of interest. There are also differing areas of high and low specificity. When I experience the landscape at sixty to seventy miles per hour, land and objects closest to me appear to me moving faster. Objects further away appear to move slower and are more clear. I studied how Rivers successfully incorporated areas of interest and specificity and order to convey this observation.

Additionally, Rivers incorporates drawing with patches of color on top of light ambiguous washes. The canvas is treated like a watercolor painting, and the pigment is dilute and liquid. The light, non-committal color washes remind me of memory or a brief moment that

flashes by. Thicker paint implies to me something more concrete and stable. I was inspired by Rivers' combination of wash and brushstroke to respond to the moving landscape. Particularly intriguing, his mastery of quiet washes with loud brushstrokes. I especially admire the recording of the gesture of the arm. The act of painting becomes equally important as the final image and makes evident the artist's presence.

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

Choose Life

This thesis exhibition is fundamentally declaring to its viewers, “I set before you life and death. Please choose life.” What we choose to spend our time looking at is important. Our devices are not immoral in or of themselves – but I believe the amount of time we spend preoccupied with them is empty and futile. When we waste our time, or engage in activities that are devoid of worth, we allow those things to take root in our lives. We reap what we sow. If we continue to sow seeds of emptiness and waste, we will only reap more of the same. A popular axiom is “the eyes are the windows to the soul.” What we see through our eyes, we internalize and it affects us physically and emotionally. The abuse and over reliance on our electronic mobile devices has led to an impatient, inattentive, distracted, and disconnected society. My thesis exhibition serves as an articulation of what I am observing and a call to current and future generations to be cautious of the path upon which we are headed.

“I call heaven and earth to witness this day against you that I have set before you life and death, the blessings and the curses; therefore choose life...” –Deuteronomy 30:1

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APPENDIX (FIGURES)

SELECTIONS FROM *TUNNEL VISION* SERIES
2013-2014

Mixed media works: canvas, panel, oil, graphite, charcoal
48" x 48" (each)



Figure 1. 242 Miles



Figure 2. 203 Miles



Figure 3. 201 Miles



Figure 4. 3.2 Miles



Figure 5. 159 Miles



Figure 6. 141 Miles



Figure 7. Home?

INSTALLATION: *TUNNEL VISION*
Design on Main Gallery
203 Main Street, Ames, Iowa
April 14-27, 2014



Figure 8. View from the end of the tunnel towards the front entrance.



Figure 9. View from back half of the gallery towards the front.



Figure 10. Detail of projections cast onto the floor within the tunnel.



Figure 11. View from outside of the tunnel.



Figure 12. Detail of mapping painted on plastic sheets at the beginning of the tunnel.



Figure 13. Final plastic painted map at the end of the tunnel.



Figure 14. Entrance of the tunnel.



Figure 15. Back half of the gallery.