Seeing Beauty
A Visual Exploration of Transformative Experience.

by
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Abstract

This thesis is concerned with developing a visual language to explore the concept of immaterial reality as encountered through transformative experience.

Many individuals have had unique, and often profound, transformative experiences which have made them aware of a different order of reality. Following the experience, there is a certainty within the individual that an intangible aspect of reality exists, traditionally referred to as the immaterial or spiritual. The experiences are not exclusive to, or necessarily associated with, traditional forms of institutionalised religion and they are not automatically related to the occult. They can occur to any individual, regardless of age, sex, race or their location in time and space. The experiences are imbued with an archetypal form of beauty which permeates the individual’s vision of existence. This deepened vision becomes part of their daily experience of reality.

Utilising archetypal imagery, light, pattern, symmetry, and geometry, I visually explore my transformative experiences. The exploration of the archetypal concepts of transformation, duality and the immaterial, has resulted in a body of work comprised of installations that incorporate video, photography and sound. Each of the seven works draws from my own subjective experience of reality, creating a highly personal, meditative, and immersive environment.

Personal transformative experience has prompted me to examine the metaphysical questions surrounding the human condition. This has resulted in a multidisciplinary theoretical framework for my art practise. I have engaged with writings from psychology, philosophy, mythology, modern physics and comparative religion, including the works of C.G. Jung, Joseph Campbell, Fritjof Capra and Paul Davies.

The same questions of existence stimulated by my transformative experiences have inspired artists throughout recorded history. My research is contextualised by contemporary artists who explore matters pertaining to the immaterial aspects of reality. Video artists, Bill Viola and Jordan Belson, explore their own subjective
transformative experiences, while others explore humanity’s spiritual connection with nature, or imbue their work with an invisible presence through an engagement with human perception.

I seek to contribute to my field through an examination of ancient archetypal symbols and ideas using new technologies. Thus I have utilised, computer generated imagery and digitally generated audio to represent the experience of revelation and create a metaphor for spiritual transformation. Additionally, my work links the idea of transformation and revelation to experiences of childhood; both through the recreation of experiences from my childhood as well as drawing on more recent events with my own children. These aspects combine to render an individual vision of a universal experience.
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