



UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG

# Changing Perspectives

**An Artist's View of Manic Depression's  
interpolation into the creative process**

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**Thesis for the Degree of Master of Fine Arts with specialization in Digital Media**

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## **Abstract**

The goal of this thesis is to portray the manic depressive spectrum in individuals and families, as seen through the positive, negative, rational and dangerous aspects and its impact on the creative process through my Interpolations project. The project consists of three main works considered here; SELF (mania), melancholy (depression), and Caged (anger). For the most part, the conception of these works was based upon the process of and relate directly to manic depression itself. I also briefly comment on the moral discourse surrounding current and future genetic advancements and possibilities and the consequences thereof.

This thesis is a partial explanation of the creative process presented by personal example and experience of a creative with cyclothymia, as well as researched information on the subject. Cyclothymia is a “mild” form of manic-depressive disorder. Manic depression, known medically today as bipolar disorder is defined by manic or hypomanic episodes, alternating with depressive episodes; the severity and consequences of these episodes determine the actual diagnosis. The chapters are loosely based around the central theme typing the personal experiences and somewhat scattered fragments of life, research, and evidence of the links and other aspects of creativity and bipolar disorder. It is a curious blend of personal and research based work and the separate but connected artwork created over the course of a well documented year with excerpts from a personal journal and poetry containing the emotions, senses, and feelings contained therein.

## **Keywords**

manic, depression, bipolar, artwork, art, light, sculpture, led, creative, creativity

*To Bob -*

*I'm only just beginning and I already know I'm going to need to dedicate this to you.*

*Karen*

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# FOREWORD



Image 1: *SELF*, 2009



Image 2: *melancholy*, 2010

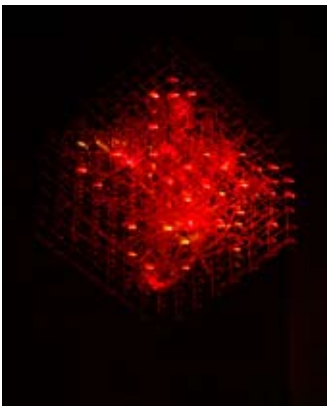


Image 3: *SELF*, 2010

To completely know a person requires a massive amount of time and commitment. In actual fact it may not be truly possible even over the course of a lifetime. Individuals are complex creatures, with many sides and angles to explore. Now imagine the personality fractured: viewpoints colored greatly by a varying degrees of ups and downs, a frame of mind beyond mere reaction. Directly multiplying the 'sides' reflected by these stages, the personality becomes exponentially more complex, more unpredictable, more unknowable.

Even knowing myself has been a lifetime's work. I have gone through distinct stages. Frustration. Denial. Control. Acceptance. During this last year, Education. And response.

Cyclothymia has its moments. There are some tough things to face even at the mildest end of the bipolar spectrum. For the most part life proceeds as normal (or at least is perceived as so by myself and my close friends and family). At times, unpredictable moments, things take a turn. These turns have resulted in a number of things, from successes and accomplishments to failures and difficulties. Yet, taking everything into account, I consider myself perfectly sane. I don't think there is a psychiatrist or physician out there who would claim otherwise, although some would probably be eager to medicate me and bring me more toward the middle. I don't need it, I don't want it. I do however reserve the right to change my mind in the future if my situation worsens.

As my "moods" color my interpretation of my surroundings, I am fortunate that lately they have strayed more towards the manic end, whereas most research shows that it is more common to have more frequent occurrences of depression. My phases would probably be considered to mostly be hypomanic, and mostly stay in that realm where manic "*merges with normalcy*" (D. Jablow Hershman & Julian Lieb 1998). Unfortunately, occasionally these phases are more severe, and are more difficult on those around me, as well as coming back to haunt me later.

On the depressive side – (almost inevitably the depressions follow), many times I find that if I recognize them in time I am able to keep them under control and not let them overwhelm me. During the manic end, I rarely recognize what is happening until it is actually present – or I am not sleeping for an extended amount of time. I have a rather poor sleep cycle and probably have spells almost monthly where I do not sleep more than a couple of hours for up to four days consecutively. Anything worse than that and I know I'm probably in a cycle. It's possible that a professional would consider even what I think of as normal as cyclic.

This thesis will be both research and practice based. I expect to ultimately show the advantages gained by the cyclic personality on the creative process, given the controls internal, external, and therapeutically available. Integral to

this will be the masters' art project which will be intensely personal.

The difference between this thesis and the many books and articles written on the subject will be the viewpoint. Presented from the inside, with personal works and writing the cycles and moods of my own version of Cyclothymia, as I myself learn and begin to live my life in a more knowledgeable fashion. Currently as I write this preface preceding all but the basic research and background of my subject, I ponder upon the implications of the personal information versus privacy issues, and the inclusion/non-inclusion of documents to reflect this.

Also as a part of the project will be writing, be it prose or poetry and a tracking of the cycles and changes that occur during the process of each piece. I am not an accomplished poet, but as an admirer of the form have played in it during times in my past. Compared to the many whose names are so familiar and whose words speak openly the thoughts so eloquently contained in the human soul, I consider myself an amateur at best. But perhaps my words will resonate with the cycles and bring some understanding of the feelings and personality of the cyclothymic.

The main portion of the project will be the artwork, where I hope to convey the feeling, the absolute joys and despair reflected in the different plains of existence available to or forced upon the manic depressive.

Although the subject matter of this paper is mainly Cyclothymia, the relationship between Cyclothymia and manic depression is a rather thin line drawn in the sand. Since current literature and study have focused more on manic-depressive conditions (Bipolar I and Bipolar II) than the lesser version of Cyclothymia, much of the information and work that is represented stems from the studies done on the previous, more serious conditions. Current studies focus on the genetic links to the disease suggest different forms of treatment with potential impact on a nearing future. Where possible, I will use studies of Cyclothymia itself or the milder manifestations of Bipolar where literature is not available for the former, showing the negatives and positives of a 'disorder' that affects the lives of so many successful and creative people.

My goal in this thesis is to emphasize and recreate the variety of attributes, advantages and disadvantages of the manic depressive spectrum in individuals and families, as seen through the intensely positive, negative, rational and dangerous aspects through its impact on the creative process – and to comment on the moral discourse surrounding current and future genetic advancements and possibilities and the consequences thereof.

I like my life and wouldn't trade my life for anything.

**Karen Niemczyk  
Gothenburg, Sweden**

# INTRODUCTION



Image 4: Karen Niemczyk, 2009

This thesis is meant to be a partial explanation of the creative process presented by personal example and experience of a creative with cyclothymia, as well as researched information on the subject. Cyclothymia is a “mild” form of manic-depressive disorder. The chapters are loosely based around the central theme typing the personal experiences and somewhat scattered fragments of life, research, and evidence of the links and other aspects of creativity and bipolar disorder. It is a curious blend of personal and research based work and the separate but connected artwork created over the course of a well documented year with excerpts from a personal journal and the emotions, senses, and levels contained therein. Links with both the inspiration and frustrations to the artwork itself are clearly delineated where possible. With the work itself being the known inspiration and subject, keeping the focus on the mind’s condition by its mere existence, this cannot be an easy year.

I knew last year when I created SELF that I needed to focus on manic depressive disorder. Even in its milder form it is a condition that has determined the course of much of my life. First diagnosed in a rather casual and callous manner by a university psychiatrist – I immediately began denying and forcing controls upon what deep inside myself I recognized. In many ways this was actually a successful strategy albeit at times a rather dangerous one. This thesis is not meant as a medical treatise or a suggestion of any kind of treatment – *in fact the only advice I care to emphasize for anyone going through the manic phases and deep depressions is that they need to seek help*. I have not been medicated properly and although I had many years of therapy, I was never totally honest about things. Rather, I avoided mention of the highs through both misunderstanding and with intent; I have since looked back with regret over the misdiagnosis and prescriptive messes that occurred several times as a result of this. It is possible that my continuing to live without medication may be a mistake. I do not want to discourage anyone from seeking treatment.

As I previously stated, I realized the need and importance of the subject in the spring of 2008 as I worked on a piece I eventually titled SELF. Originally the project was conceived as a political piece regarding global warming and migration, but the more I worked on it the more it became a familiar. Realized as a helix with an 8 x 64 tube of LEDs running down its center, these LED’s were programmed to set seeds on any side triggered by a viewer’s approach and engage in the “game of life” (GoL).

GoL programming originated back in the 1970’s and was created by John

Conway (**Gardner, 1970**). Essentially it was created to imitate life and death in a petri dish. A 'warring' effect with these lights occurs when there are surrounding viewers. So very appropriate to represent my feelings at the time.

Around mid-semester I suffered a period of depression accompanied by health difficulties – a stint in the hospital and the following fears sent me falling deeper into depression than I had been in several years. Suddenly the helix took on a far more personal and sinister aspect. Not only was I again fighting depression and feeling under attack by the world around me but now my own body was even betraying me. In the end I added a crystal 'heart' beating with a sound file of an echo-cardiogram. The work was therapeutic in itself and was also one of the most sincere pieces I had done in years. It seemed to strike a chord in others as well. I knew then that I would spend the following year in related work.



# ARTIST STATEMENT

April 22, 2010

*“The future of art is light.”  
Henri Matisse*

*I question myself. I consider my philosophy, will it ever be well enough considered, thought out, to even begin to approach as self imposed guidelines. I find myself transgressing lines, straying for all of the right or wrong reasons. Call it growth, greed, survival, or simply progress along a line of ever changing circumstances and opinion. A learning process. No matter how I want to, is it even possible for me to have the knowledge so sustain what may end up as a mythical agenda?*

*What I want. I want to be the artist of my own choice. Assuming I am human, post-modern, and alive, I want to effectively express myself and my vision through a literal toolbox of media. I don't want to say, well, I'm a painter - but my real work is in digital art. Or sculpture. Performance. Whatever. I want people to understand the gut meaning behind my work, but if they don't, so be it. I hope in that case that they find meaning in their own gut.*

*I do possess consistency. I am persistent in the acquisition of knowledge, of methods and ideas, knowledge enables my changing habits. Today I work with light. My projects over the last two years, the Interpolations projects, have all dealt with mood extremes and the effect of society on the individual. I can give you the reasons and inspirations for both the subject matter and the medium in a five minute blurb, but upon reflection of the work should you consider my circumstances, or your own?*

*I work within myself. I take the criticism of others, digest it, swallowing only those pieces making sense in a way important to me personally. Most I spit out like a bad taste. If I wanted to work for someone, to follow orders and take directions this isn't the path I would have chosen. If I become famous I will rewrite this and graciously thank those under whose guidance I became what I am. Until then, I'm on my own and I may as well enjoy the ride*

*Sometimes people inspire me with their thoughts and desires. Sometimes they frighten me. Most times they bore me with their analytical pigeonholing of who we are, where we are placed, what we deserve. More people need to spend more time in thought, carefully considering their actions and the resulting consequences. While it's not my job to judge or dictate others, it is important for me to reflect and compare my own thoughts with differing opinions, and portray my conclusions in*

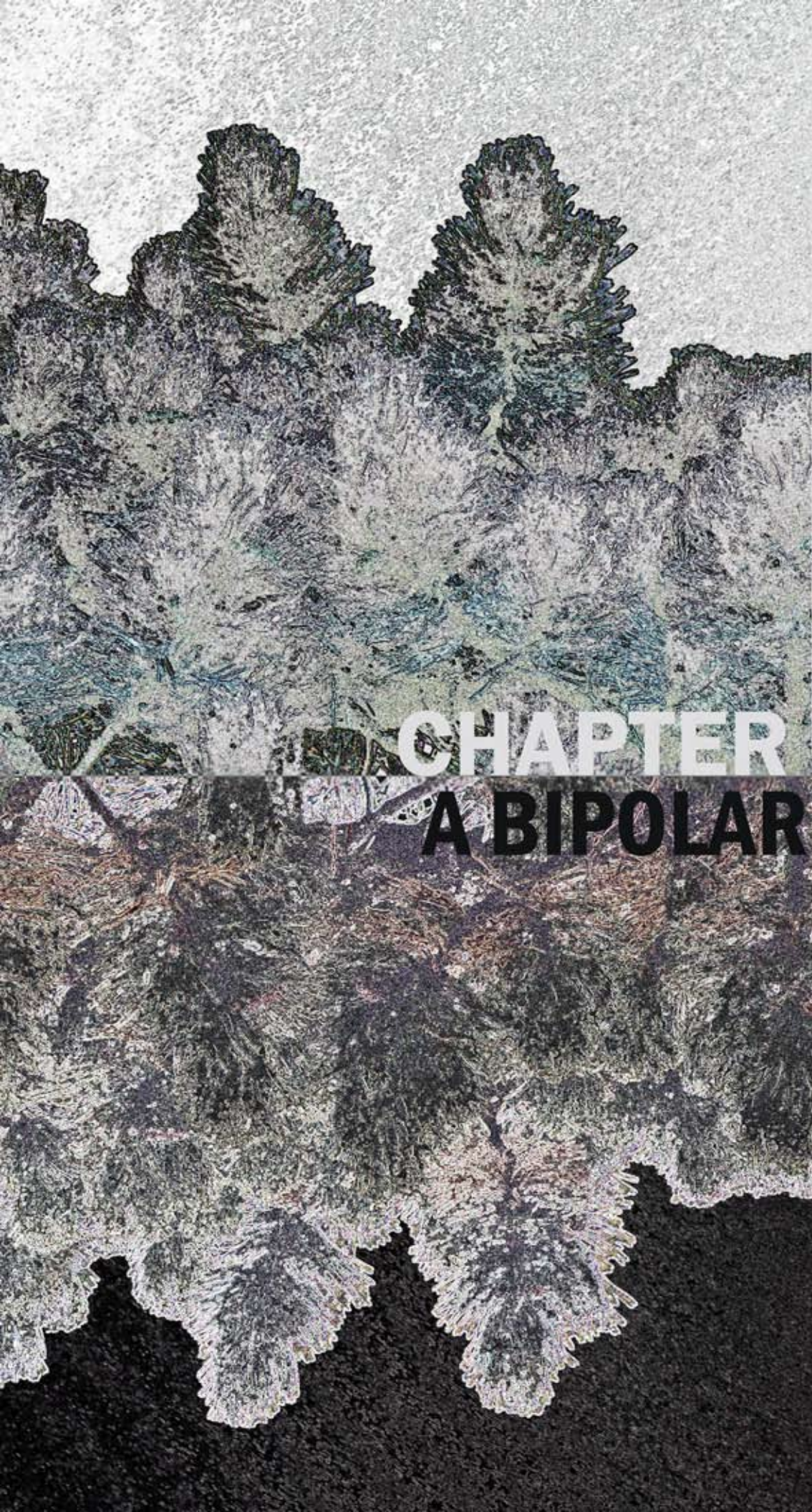
*my work. My Interpolations project has been my attempt to portray personality in a postmodern, digital manner. Separated into electrical pulses and impulses, coarse and beautiful. Personalities absorbing, personalities adjusting, personalities rejecting and responding. Human in essence. yet taking into account what programs us, motivates us. Myself - and in extension - us. Where there is one question, there are thousands. Just Google it, discover your lack of uniqueness. Art is repetition with an occasional new take on the same old story. I only try to lose myself in that vision, make it personal. Whatever that really is.*

*Do I even want to be part of the art world? With its boxing and categorizing. Do I want to be poked and prodded, in turn courageous and reluctant? Do I want to slog through the mud that sticks to so many, weighing their vision by necessity. Some days I want to get out and show them, conquer, many more days I want to roll into a ball and sleep.*

*So this is today's artist statement. I know it's not flattering. Only honest. And discouraging.*

*Perhaps I will have a better outlook on things tomorrow.*





**CHAPTER ONE**  
**A BIPOLAR WORLD**



Good

The melancholia, a remembered void  
a rush of spirit; absorbed,  
as sunshine through the skin.

My body its own universe;  
Extremities vibrating with the sense  
of the core.

Reaching out, encompassing that which is just beyond,  
engulfed in the knowledge of  
self unbridled,  
beautiful and complex.

Seeking a reason for the madness within  
hoping the end is delayed;  
the darkness incomplete.

# CHAPTER 1

## A BIPOLAR WORLD

### Art and Accomplishments in a Bipolar World A Media Artists Perspective (media art and how it fits into bipolarity)

*“My work is my body and soul,  
and for it I risk my life and my  
reason.”*

*Vincent Van Gogh*

*“Sensible people do not even  
consider undertaking the complex  
and difficult projects that manics  
conceive and execute. Very often  
the sensible people are right but  
occasionally the manic accomplishes  
what seemed impossible, and man-  
kind takes a leap forward.”*

*(Hershman, 1998, p. 15)*

*The paradox is really the pathos  
of intellectual life and just as only  
great souls are exposed to passions  
it is only the great thinker who is  
exposed to what I call paradoxes,  
which are . . . grandiose thoughts  
in embryo.*

*Søren Kierkegaard*

It seems that as soon as an art form acquires a name or a classification of its own there is a lot of fuss made in redefining the media. Media art has been no exception. In some cases the definition is narrow and focuses on strictly digital art, mainly internet based. The first time I was hit with that one it shocked me a bit. A visitor to our masters program in media art took one look at my work and denied it having any relation to media art. Mostly though, there is a broader and less defined viewpoint, at the very least media art has been described and defined in multiple ways. The variety of which bring me to my most immediate point.

Media art is unique in many ways, and its uniqueness puts it square into the realm of the ‘typical’ bipolar individual, if there is such a thing. Conceptual work is key – and as Hershman and Lieb point out in their book *manic depression and Creativity: “Depression leads people to ask ultimate questions about life, death, good, evil, the nature of man, of the universe and of God”* (Hershman, 1998, p. 16). Other common characteristics of a manic depressive individual include a propensity for change and multitasking, and no one would deny that success in media art requires just that. Media art requires general knowledge in everything from programming to hands-on skills of traditional art, creativity across media, time and space, and an extraordinary amount of insight which couldn’t be more appealing to the manic. The minute exactness of programming skills, the deep thought and obsession of the artistic melancholy would be a given for the depressive. Organization and the day to day activities that actually make up the project slide easily into the many hours that the condition spends in the normal spectrum. Indeed, it seems to be the exact fit for the personality. As Kay Jamison so succinctly points out: *“Work that may be inspired by, or partially executed in, a mild or even psychotically manic state may be significantly shaped or partially edited while its creator is depressed and put into final order when he or she is normal. It is the interaction, tension, and transition between changing mood states, as well as the sustenance and discipline drawn from periods of health, that is critically important; and it is these same tensions and transitions that ultimately give such power to the art that is born in this way.”* (Jamison 1993, 6)

Being that this has been a natural progression for me, I am approaching this work from a personal as well as a factual perspective. My personal feelings will be spelled out clearly so that there is no confusion between these and the

research I have attempted to quantify. The conclusions, however will necessarily reflect both the research and the personal experiences and reflections, hopefully adding a new dimension to the body of work currently available on this complicated and compelling subject.

Although I have matured and operated under mood swings for years now, as I have delved into the research involved with this project it was the first time I ever saw clearly the potential of working with the disorder. Could this be knowingly harnessed? Possibly, if a clear realization of the mood is achieved. Is there a way to even schedule life with this in mind? Probably not - unless the mood swings are related to other cycles, lunar, yearly, daylight/darkness or seasonal, daily patterns. In many cases manic depressive disorder is just that, a cyclic condition. Seasonal cycles are probably the most prevalent, and the strongest correlation I find personally with seasonal cycles would be a jittery period I experience during midsummer (and ironically enough sometimes midwinter). Excessive energy combines with the potential for serious insomnia for a lengthy period of time during the longest days of summer. It was during this time last summer that I began the research for this thesis, and the intensity of my studies surprised even myself. I wrote page after page of journal, read twelve books in the time span of only two weeks, taking meticulous notes and recording personal reactions. At the same time, I set out on a personal goal to conquer a long-standing fear of heights; spending hours driving along the cliffs of ΚΕΦΑΛΟΝΙΑ (Kefalonia), and climbing up and down ledges to visit beautiful beaches that I wouldn't have had the guts to approach before breaking through my phobia. It was a delicious summer, with a protracted highly active period proving beneficial in so many ways.

Decisions were made during those bright days that were to change the course of my life. Reflection on process, and determination on the structure and context of this thesis developed at a rapid speed alongside the research. Usual methods were abandoned. My structure formed in a series of images created by an active mind processing insight gained from research into data both exciting and deeply disturbing.

The first determination was that I would keep a journal - an honest reflection of the next number of months. I had kept journals before. They had been a part of my life for many years, but never before had the focus been so internal.... I needed to allow myself the space to work this through , and most of all to allow myself to my own emotions - to allow myself closer to that edge of sanity that I have played so closely with in the past but kept as tightly under a lid in the last number of years. Even so, sometimes it played with me unaware and disallowed the control itself. This usually happened under periods of stress, but I had also flirted with it during the solstice the summer before when my sleep became confused (my first Scandinavian summer). I also re-

remembered being disturbed when the winter nights began to close in - there was a certain disorientation and disassociation from early December on that I found difficult. I had my projects at the time, projects that occasionally, with that disorientation, became too much to handle.

I vowed to experiment with myself - let up a little on the control - while I researched others. To use myself as a canvas, document my creations, track my cycles. Originally I planned to have someone else do the actual documentation, thinking that it brought too much 'reality' to the process, but as I wrote page after page in those long days I realized that the documentation WAS the process, and the expression.

## PROCESS



Images 6-7: Cephalonia, 2009

### June 7, 2009

*... In the last 24 hours I have painted (badly), researched and made copious notes, come up with several ideas for my masters project. I've gone out on the cliffs twice – once to eat last night (I talked lots there and didn't get home until late) and once to town to buy art supplies and mail the six page letter I wrote to Kevin (oh yeah, I did that too). I took a long shower, swam twice, sat in the sun for a few minutes, toned two canvases. And if someone were to ask me "What did you do today?" I'd probably say not much.*

The process for the thesis began in earnest in June of 2009 when, inspired by the previous years work and discoveries, I began on a journey of research and discovery into myself and my process as it relates to the ups and downs in my personality. Blue skies and sunlight certainly contributed greatly to the energy of those fantastic Greek days. The motivation and the energy paired up to offer me a year of painful and rewarding work.

Ideas come in bunches. In flashes during periods of rest, following intense reflection. Sometimes the period of rest doesn't need to be lengthy. A couple of laps in the pool could easily culminate in an idea so intense in it's momentary beauty that I might forget to stop and run into the side of the pool. Sometimes an appreciation of the body's natural is appropriate, those defenses prevents the same from happening in times more critical, say for example when driving a car.

Essential to the ideas is the period of thought preceding them. In my own case, this can include research such as reading, time alone spent in silence and committed to a specific subject, or even focused conversation. During those June days I was blissfully alone for the long sunny days, only sometimes going into society at night – and then only after feeling a need to release – burning the evening away in the warm Mediterranean night with laughter and beer – only to return to my solitude and work even later with the evenings play a satisfying interlude. I was celebrating my bipolarity – encouraging my emotions to spill over.

Virginia Woolf once described what women need in order to achieve: financial security and a "room of one's own". What a perfect description of that time to myself.





# I am not a DSM number.

June 9, 2009

*“When you label me, you negate me.”*

*Soren Kierkegaard*

*“The capacity to blunder slightly is the real marvel of DNA. Without this special attribute, we would still be anaerobic bacteria and there would be no music.”*

*Lewis Thomas, Life of a Cell*

*Even before I enter into an explanation of the disorder I want to separate myself from a DSM number (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders number). While the practice of quantifying illness or conditions by DSM diagnostic criteria and assigning numbers to the diagnosis may save the medical and insurance industries from total confusion – the idea of quantifying my personality is deeply disturbing to me. Even in the simplest of scenarios quantifying something as easy to test for as, say, a strep throat, there is much more to consider than what the diagnostic test results show. An individual’s general health, allergies, age, and many other variables must be taken into account in the treatment scheme recommended. In the case of quantifying a personality there are innumerable variables and a lifetime of actions and experience to account for. I am physically repulsed by the idea of a number being attached to me by conclusions formed by outward observations and superficial knowledge. What about the rest of my life? My experiences, thoughts, accomplishments based on more than just an episode or who I am at a single given moment.*

*While there is no question that bipolar disorder exists, and that it can have negative effects on the lives it touches, I question the influence of these same DSM definitions. As Emily Martin points out in *Bipolar Expeditions*, historical figures commonly referred to as examples of bipolar individuals did not live the experience of today’s diagnosed patient (Martin, 2007, p. 231).*

*I can elaborate on this point from my own experience. While the diagnosis of manic depression was callously suggested while I was still at University, I have avoided the formal diagnosis of a specific form of bipolar disorder even today. During the college session I stayed only long enough to hear a brief description of what he saw as manic depressive behavior before I bolted from the room, and never returned. I never looked into it any further, however a couple of college psych classes briefly touched upon this, but in those days it was not a common topic in the child psychology I was mostly interested in. I ran ahead with life, scattering a mixture of roses and a trail of disaster behind me for years. I knew I was different. I knew I was more emotional than most people. I did not, however, consider myself to possess a box to fit into, a strictly defined definition such as the DSM presents to operate within. There were no confining strictures or behavioral codes to look to, no diagnosis to blame my problems on. I did not view myself as bipolar, I viewed myself as myself.*

*When someone close to me was diagnosed as bipolar, I began to look at the condition*



Image 8: *Self Portrait*, 2004

more critically and singularly. Even then I had a rather vague definition, mostly from the outside looking in. I began to recognize myself in some of the behaviors I observed, and it brought back the memory of that college appointment. At the time I was seeing a counselor, and had been diagnosed with depression, an easy fit as that's exactly where I was most of the time. Watching my loved one go through the pain and denial, the medication trial and error, and the loss of control to the system; I resolved to not mention the highs I sometimes experienced to my own counselor or peers for fear of the same. My radar was up though, and I began noticing the information and media coverage readily available to me regarding what I knew deep inside was my real problem.

Even so, it wasn't until I began the soul searching inspired by this last year and the research it engendered before I gained a true understanding of the accepted definition for bipolar disorder. For me, this information has been revolutionary and has provided the basis for a life altering shift in my perspective of myself, my life, and those surrounding me. But along with what I have gained in understanding instances, I am critical of the narrowly defined common criteria. In looking back over my lifetime, diagnosis after diagnosis could have potentially been issued, including at times a lack of diagnosis. Depending on what information is offered up, what level of honesty is put forth, or what reticence is exhibited as part of an evaluation could easily change a DSM code drastically. In many cases I have acted out of the box and been blissfully unaware of it. Many times this has been beneficial. I have learned methods to cope, and balance my life with quite a bit of success. I have never seen myself as a "Bipolar" through the lens of a diagnosis, and therefore never used my condition as an excuse, or seen bad behavior as part of an unalterable condition. In short, I have never viewed myself as a victim of a disorder.

In some ways this is a positive thing, in others very difficult. Okay, so I never saw myself as limited in any way. But with a diagnosis and the proper counseling or training, I could have had directed advice, saving me a lot of effort in working through things on my own. Another advantage would have been in the prescription of medicines. In fact, because I was never seen as bipolar and was treated for depression with medication, there were several instances where this caused massive problems. Certain antidepressants are not considered desirable in the bipolar, and can even trigger manic behavior. On being prescribed one of these I had a violent mixed episode that left me stunned and hesitant to try another drug for fear of a similar reaction. If the doctor had been aware of what my problem really was this would probably have never happened.

I don't think I would change the way things transpired even if I could. I suppose there's a certain amount of comfort in knowing why you behave as you do, but I'm not sure comfort would have inspired me creatively or have led me on as interesting a path as I have experienced.

So there is my setup. I am Karen Niemczyk. I am me.

# UNDERSTANDING MANIC DEPRESSION

## The Quantified Spectrum

### A Clinical Definition: Bipolar Disorder

*The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* or the *DSMIV* (2009) lists four basic types of bipolar disorder (American Psychiatric Association, 1994):

*“Those thinkers in whom all stars move in cyclic orbits are not the most profound – whoever looks into himself as a vast space and carries galaxies in himself also knows how irregular all galaxies are, they lead into the chaos and labyrinth of existence.” (Nietzsche, 1992, p. 175)*

*“The distinction between full-blown manic-depressive illness and cyclothymic temperament is often an arbitrary one; indeed, almost all medical and scientific evidence argues for including cyclothymia as an integral part of the spectrum of manic-depressive illness.” (Jamison, 1993, p.15)*

*“...approximately one out of three patients with cyclothymia eventually develops full syndromal depression, hypomania, or mania...” (Jamison, 1993, p. 16)*

**Bipolar I Disorder** is mainly defined by manic or mixed episodes that last at least seven days, or by manic symptoms that are so severe that the person needs immediate hospital care. Usually, the person also has depressive episodes, typically lasting at least two weeks. The symptoms of mania or depression must be a major change from the person’s normal behavior.

**Bipolar II Disorder** is defined by a pattern of depressive episodes shifting back and forth with hypomanic episodes, but no full-blown manic or mixed episodes.

**Bipolar Disorder Not Otherwise Specified (BP-NOS)** is diagnosed when a person has symptoms of the illness that do not meet diagnostic criteria for either bipolar I or II. The symptoms may not last long enough, or the person may have too few symptoms, to be diagnosed with bipolar I or II. However, the symptoms are clearly out of the person’s normal range of behavior.

**Cyclothymic Disorder, or Cyclothymia** is a mild form of bipolar disorder. People who have cyclothymia have episodes of hypomania that shift back and forth with mild depression for at least two years. However, the symptoms do not meet the diagnostic requirements for any other type of bipolar disorder.

## THE COLORS OF TEMPERAMENT

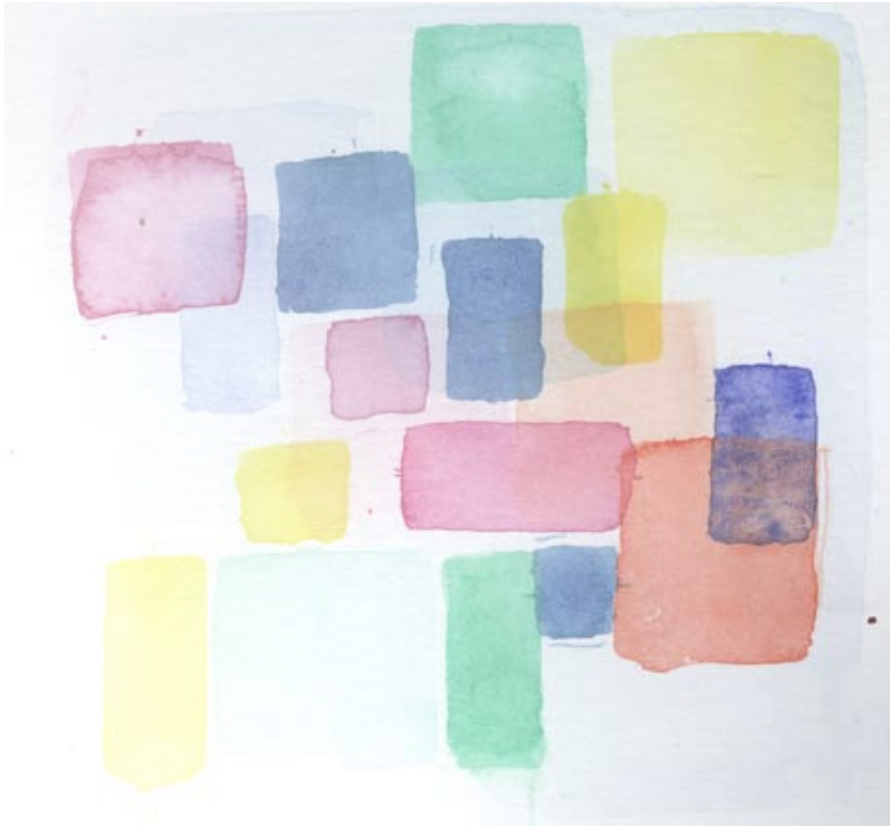


Image 9: *Squares*, 2010

There is a spectrum of elevated mood states that occur – some considered normal behavior and some dysfunctional. These stated boundaries are sometimes quite indistinct, and it is difficult to clearly distinguish them into separate categories.

Temperament refers to “*stable behavior traits with strong affective coloring*”. A person’s temperament is the normal behavior of an individual - a personality style. A hypothymic temperament would describe those seen as positive, strong, energetic, and productive (Doran, 2007, p.11). Many times hypothymic individuals are quite successful. A depressed temperament is fairly self explanatory - negative, critical, pessimistic, complaining, derogatory (Doran, 2007, p.12) . A middle ground, and the starting point for the purposes of this thesis, would be a cyclothymic temperament.

A person with a cyclothymic temperament generally is able to function within societal norms, yet varies between elevated and depressed moods and behaviors. Often described as temperamental, these individuals swing between the characteristics of hypothymic and depressed. The need for sleep may vary between short sleep patterns and long sleep, self-esteem swing between overconfidence and insecurity. Extroversion and introversion may alternate, over-optimism and pessimism, noisy and quiet. Changes in residence, or even geographic location may be frequent. Alcohol and drugs may be used to control moods. Most critical to this thesis would be the incidence of sharpened and creative thinking alternating with periods of slowness, and an unevenness in the quality and quantity of productivity.

# WHERE THE TWO SIDES MEET

## The Role of Normality

Normality reaches far into the wavy lines that currently define the bipolar disorders. In many cases, hypomania is part of the normal spectrum of personality, and it should be pointed out that it is not considered a clinical condition on its own. It is actually common in the non-clinical populations, including very high functioning persons. By definition, hypomania doesn't lead to clinically significant social impairment or hospitalization (American Psychiatric Association, 1994).

In many ways both mania and depression are a simple extension of normal. Every person experiences joy and excitement, as well as sadness as a part of a healthy existence. It is only when these emotions cross over what are often loosely defined borders and become 'extreme' that this becomes a condition noted and diagnosed. One problem with determining the line between what is normal and what is not is cultural. "A factor that has often interfered with the identification of manic-depressives is that culture and contemporary values strongly influence the way that people evaluate and judge behavior. Thus, behavior that is regarded as deviant in one area may not only be tolerated, but even extolled, in another." (D. Jablow Hershman & Julian Lieb 1998) Examples of this could be pulled from cultural stereotypes: examples such as the stereotypical image of southern Europe as possessing a propensity for elaborate gestures as well as verbosity in speaking, against the Scandic cultural tendency towards quiet and subdued motion. These could be interpreted as overly subdued (depression) or overly active (hypomania) if the perspective of specific culture is not included. An even more striking difference would be the acceptance of hallucinations in certain primitive societies, where contemporary western society would consider it a severe symptom of illness.



## THE DECISION TO WRITE In Considering Others

*“... work that may be inspired by, or partially executed in, a mild or even psychotically manic state may be significantly shaped or partially edited while its creator is depressed and put into final order when he or she is normal. It is the interaction, tension, and transition between changing mood states, as well as the sustenance and discipline drawn from periods of health, that is critically important; and it is these same tensions and transitions that ultimately give such power to the art that is born in this way.” (Jamison, 1993, p. 6)*

While there have been a number of books dedicated to Manic-Depression and its connection to creativity most concentrate on the past, using the posthumous information available to connect Manic-Depression with those geniuses whose lives were well documented.

There exist accounts of artists such as John Sell Cotman, Richard Dadd, Paul Gauguin, Vincent van Gogh, Michelangelo, Edvard Munch, Georgia O’Keefe, Jackson Pollock and Anders Zorn who have through research have been found to have suffered probable Cyclothymia, Major Depression, or Manic-Depressive Illness. (Jamison, 1993, pp. 269-70) I am not going to spend much time documenting this, book after book is available with biographies and information on these people. Current artists who have reached out past the social stigmatization often accompanying any taint of mental illness are fairly rare. Quite understandably, most creative people prefer to keep this quiet and avoid the problems that could ensue from public knowledge. Personally, I know of more than a few people who would qualify, and have been approached by a number of individuals during the course of this work for more information. In *Mirror of the World*, Julian Bell notes “From the early 1900s onwards, researchers had been opening their eyes to the art of children and of the mentally ill. A kind of empathy underlies the daft charm of a pen-and-watercolour experiment like the Twittering Machine; in a sense, anyone who chances their imagination on paper, whether skilled or unskilled, is risking absurdity” (Bell, 2007, p. 392). Unfortunately, this continues into the present.

This became an issue in this thesis during the months of December and January of 2009-2010 – when a confrontation with an aggressive individual triggered painful reflection on the consequences of making this document ‘official’ and public. I write in this paper about an incident that interfered with the project ultimately titled *melancholia*, it also, however worked out in other ways. I was accused of “using bipolarity as an excuse” and of subconscious determinism in the self-assumed security of the point of view that took mental illness as the sole basis for judgment. Ironically enough, since I have not had any more than mildly manic episodes and until following that incident my depression had been minimal for longer than I had known that person, the call made was invalid, yet still sent me into a period of self doubt and reflection that left painful scars but inspired a well of resistance and creativity of great benefit. My creative process both suffered and was confirmed by the experience – and the last project covered in this thesis was born of this upheaval.

While hypomania has in the distant past made me prickly, and has even in-

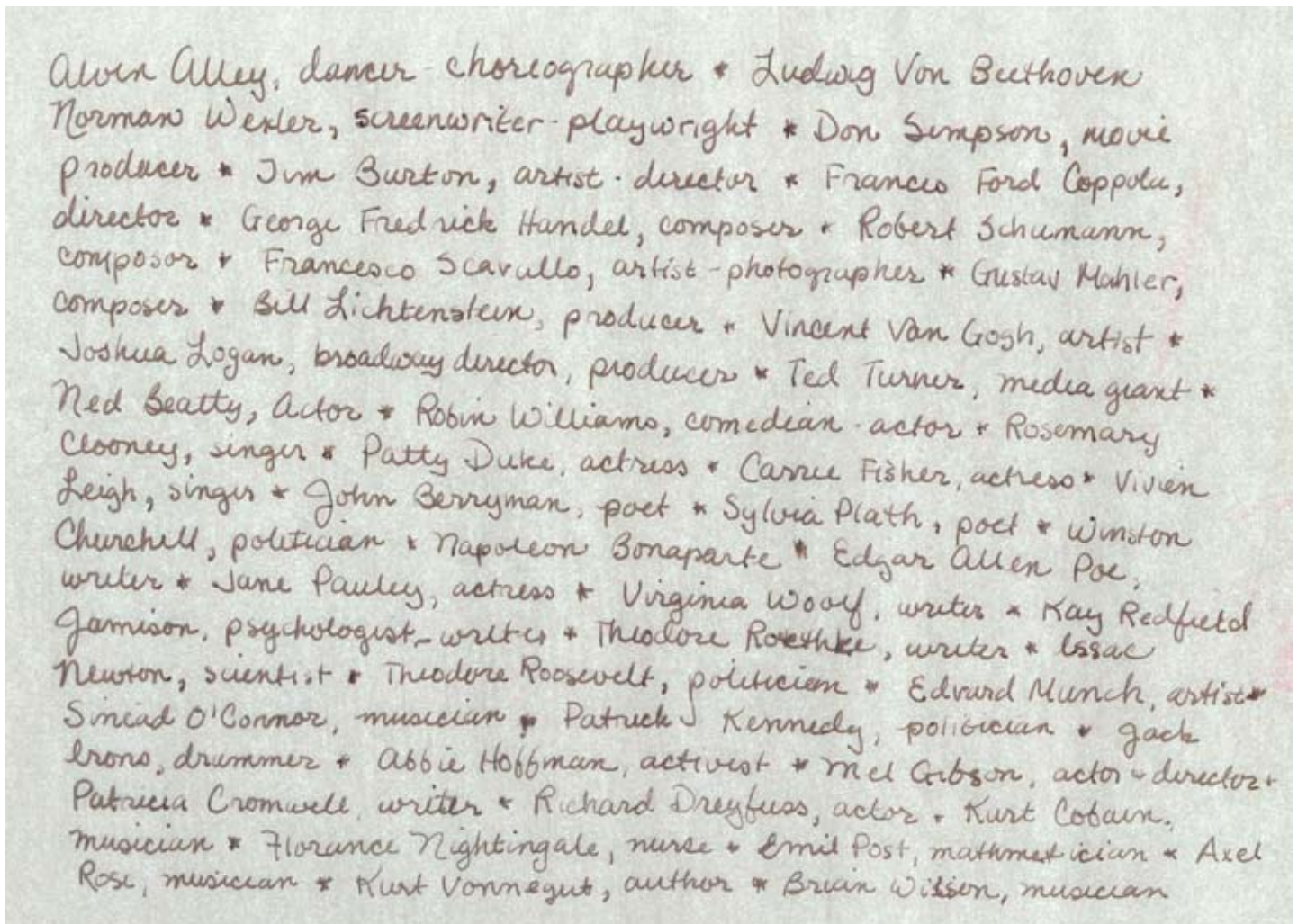


Image 10: Candidates, 2010

*"Why is it that all men who are outstanding in philosophy, poetry or the arts are melancholic?" Aristotle, Problems II: Books XXII-XXXVIII (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1936), 155-157.*

spired aggressive and defensive behavior on my part, over the years I have learned a rather severe form of self control, especially when it comes to my temper. When I was young I was a rather prickly sort, defensive by nature, and often demanding and unsympathetic to other personal positions. I have lost friends in the past by just not thinking or feeling before opening my mouth, and through these experiences learned valuable lessons. The main lesson so painfully taught to me over those years was to analyze any odd reactions people exhibit, and try - through empathy - to put myself into their position and understand where they were coming from. For the first number of weeks I analyzed the emotional turmoil caused by those thoughtless statements time and again. After getting nowhere and experiencing the pain of self doubt, I began to shut down work on this thesis in the fear of personal information being provided openly to a world teeming with prejudice. For a month I avoided even opening the file on the computer, changing not only my thesis plans but spinning into a quandary regarding the final project itself. After it became clear to me that the attacks were not the result of actions on my part, not only did I return to my thesis work, but combined both the project ideas that had tormented me so fiercely and the anger that I felt into a concept I could work with, and create with the fierce joy and determination I find so necessary for success. I found a core

*“The highest of all good things are given to us by the mania”. (Plato & Hamilton, 1973)*

*Socrates, in Plato’s Phaedrus*

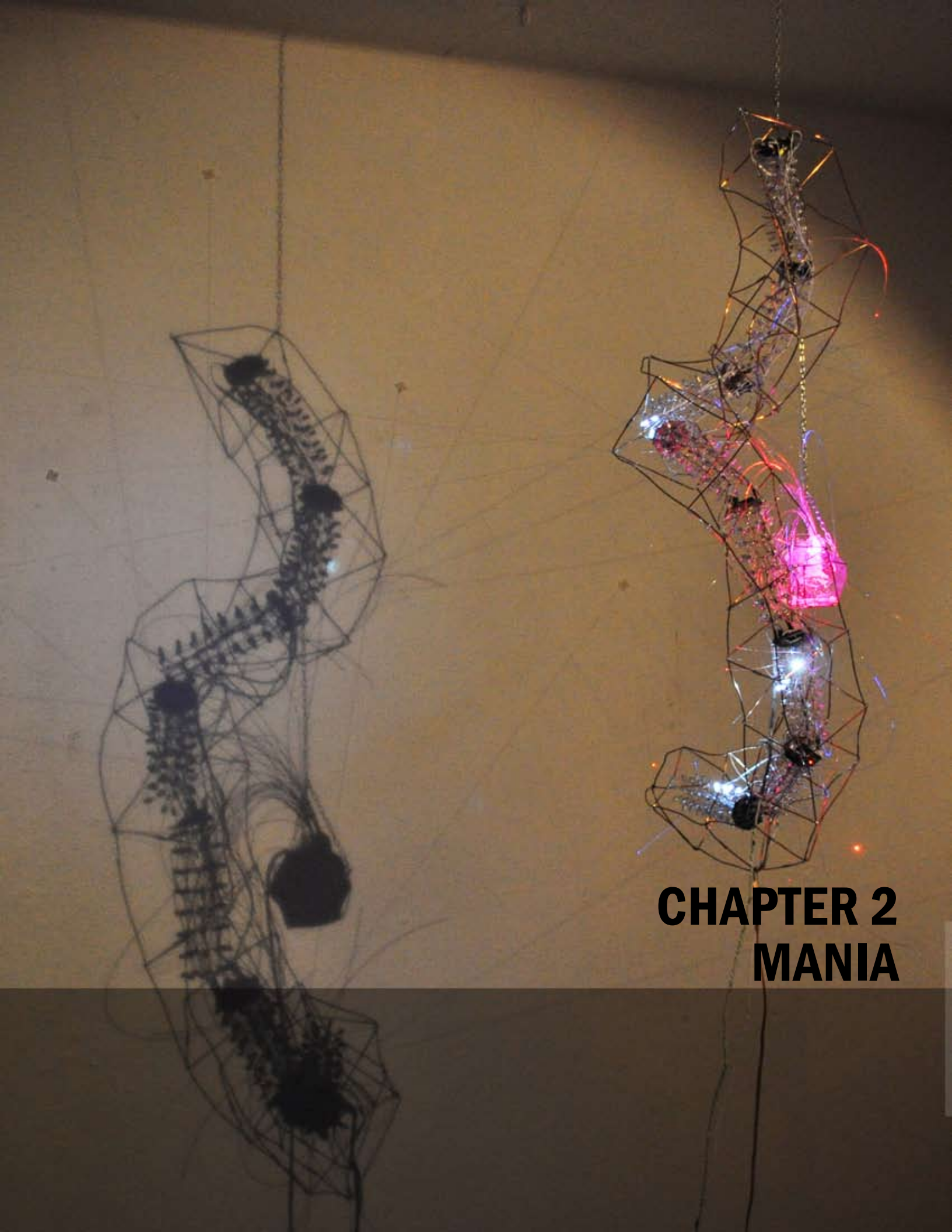
*“Madness, provided it comes as the gift of heaven, is the channel by which we receive the greatest blessings.... the men of old who gave things their names saw no disgrace or reproach in madness; otherwise they would not have connected it with the name of the noblest of all arts, the art of discerning the future, and called the manic art.... So, according to the evidence provided by our ancestors, madness is a nobler thing than sober sense... madness comes from God, whereas sober sense is merely human.” (Plato & Hamilton, 1973)*

*Socrates, in Plato’s Phaedrus*

of determination inside myself that has been essential to accomplishments, my endeavors without this have consistently failed. It is important for my survival, and is reflected in my work.

Since I began this project I have had a number of artists approach me with questions about my material. Many of them have been searching themselves with the same questions as myself. With an empathy for those artists and other creatives currently alive and active in a world that is less than forgiving, I will next attempt to recreate a sampling of the Bipolar range through historical data and the writings of experts on the subject. Where it is common knowledge and openly admitted, I will write a little about current individuals. Unfortunately in most cases the milder, cyclothymic range were never documented historically, so almost all of the examples I am able to list would probably have been pushing the more extreme ends and do not at all represent the full spectrum. Most of the persons who confided in me would be recognized as gifted, talented, emotional – but certainly not crazy. I only wish I could reflect these personalities more clearly and with more variety than I am able to record using only my own experience.





**CHAPTER 2  
MANIA**

# CHAPTER 2

## MANIA

Alive

words adoring this feeling  
    of unassailable optimism and ideas  
    flow freely through my body.  
too many words to speak.  
they battle within me,  
    their brilliance a momentary flash, lost  
    before the onslaught.  
too far.  
the fine edge lies open; cutting through the many  
thicknesses of  
    fabric,    sanity  
    gathered writhing in the folds.  
    exposed to the sun: the knife's edge  
    cruelly reflects brilliance, lights the way for  
escape,  
    disallows the dull reflection necessary  
    for the gathering thoughts to coalesce.  
leaving only the inarticulate pattern and relationship  
to disarrange  
    and exhaust the soul.

# HYPOMANIA AND MANIA

## Readme

*“The essential feature is a distinct period when the predominant mood is elated, expansive or irritable and when there are associated symptoms of the manic syndrome. These symptoms include hyperactivity, pressure of speech, flight of ideas, inflated self-esteem, decreased need for sleep, distractibility, and excessive involvement in activities that have a high potential for painful consequences, which are not recognized.” (American Psychiatric Association, 1994)*

*“Most delusions are harmful to those who are misled by them; but one, the grandiose conviction that they have a special destiny, is the cornerstone of the careers of many people who become highly successful despite disadvantageous origins. Without that initially unproven faith in themselves, most people are unlikely to take the chances, make the sacrifices, and expend the effort needed to surpass the competition.” (Hershman, 1994)*  
*(note – this passage was part of an analysis of Adolph Hitler)*

Manic Depressive Disorder, including the Bipolar II Disorder, Bipolar I Disorder, and the milder cyclothymia, are all part of the bipolar spectrum. Essential to the disorder is mania. The difference between hypomania and mania is only in degree. Manic symptoms usually include psychosis, with delusions or even hallucinations. Ignoring reason, mania is out of control, most times requiring hospitalization. Hypomania is mania’s little sibling and may be present in episodes or even integrated into the personality.

This thesis is only dealing with hypomania and hypomanic temperament, and does not attempt to tackle the complicated issue of full blown mania. When Spinoza’s ‘purest virtue’, vitality, accelerates to the point where it is ‘inverted, and instead of flourishing, one is driven to eat oneself alive?’ (Greenberg, 2008), mania becomes a dark and dangerous condition, a form of insanity. *“Manic thought initially gallops along in a straight line, but chaos ensues as the mania progresses. Thoughts proliferate malignantly and race mindlessly about in the increasingly overloaded and cluttered brain; then they collide and splinter. All governance is lost. Madness settles in and swiftly obliterates whatever advantages mood may have given the mind. The wide-flung ideas of mania and the rush of their flight lead to a terror not imaginable to those who have not lost their minds in this particular way.”* (Jamison, 2005, p. 124). I’m not there.

I do not pretend to understand the severity of the extremes of the illness. Understand though, that manic-depression is a spectrum, and that the vast majority stay within the spectrum of normal most of the time. Hypomania, the focus of this thesis, often presents itself as an asset, with intense work habits and positive attitudes. Exuberance, quick thoughts, and a high interest level often makes the hypomanic popular. In the more acute stages this exuberance can turn to self indulgence or euphoria, seem hyperactive, and may quickly swing to irritation.

For the most part, the rapid reactions and insight typical of hypomania presents as an advantage to the creative. Projects that would deter a quieter personality are seen as a personal challenge are with hypomanic intensity often realized.



Images 12-15: *Nightlight 1-4*, 2009





That would be the positive side. The negative side of hypomania is also well represented. Impulsive, and extreme, they often seem on a mission for change: of jobs, partners, residence. Hyperactivity such as pacing is common. Irritability and frustration frequently contrast good spirits and make home and family life miserable. Manipulative and domineering at times - their insight often allows the hypomaniac to polarize a group. During the acute phases, hypomanics have difficulty seeing themselves and their motives and actions with clarity. Each show their own subset of traits, including, but not limited to the above examples. Seldom are two hypomanics alike.

Me? I have trouble sitting still. On a regular basis. I crave change, resulting in a series of moves that have dominated my life. I have lived in 14 separate places, not including college. At times I feel a buzzing inside, an anticipation, an energy. Other times I feel muffled in wool. Most of the time I am just myself, but the seductive craving for intensity haunts me. Much of what I describe is internal – yet the signs are there for a vigilant observer. Actually, keeping in mind the description of depression as a sickness for one's soul, and mania as a sickness for one's friends, vigilance probably isn't always necessary. The only reason I know for a fact that I do not experience true mania is that I have. Once. As a result of a reaction to an OTC (over the counter) allergy medication. I didn't know at the time what was happening, but I can look back now and recognize it for what it was. It was an absolutely terrifying experience, irrational and highly dangerous. There was no logic, no control. It was a benchmark experience - and one I never want to repeat. Compared to that, hypomania suits me. Whether or not it suits those close to me I'm not the right person to ask. For a further report on that you had probably best talk to my husband. He would know.

*Joy or exuberance is where the mood is elevated, and logic is a permanent resident. Hypomania would have the same characteristics with a periodic check in with logic, with true mania logic has 'left the building'.*

## **HISTORY AND DEFINITIONS Mania and Hypomania**

The spectrum of mania covers a lot of ground. In its basic definition, it is essentially elevated mood. Elevated mood was initially recognized as early as the 5th century BC as a mental condition by Hypocrites, who attributed it to a mental condition due to a biologic disorder - an increase in yellow bile. Aristotle blamed it on the heart instead of the brain. In the 2nd century AD Areteaus of Cappadocia put mania together with melancholia for the first time, describing a mental disease that alternates between periods of depression and mania.

Different modern definitions of the spectrum of elevated mood range from mania and hypomania (again from Greek, hierarchically beneath mania). These, on a scale of elevated mood, would fit above the more normal emotional states of joy and exuberance.

The first formal description of the illness termed "manic-depressive insanity" was proposed by Emil Kraepelin. A German psychiatrist, Kraepelin provided a near complete description of the moods, behavior, and thought patterns common to manic depressive illness in his 1889 publication *Lehrbuch der Psychiatrie* (Kraepelin & Diefendorf, 1921). Probably the most common source for a modern definition of Hypomania would come from the DSM-IV (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition). For the complete version of this definition see Appendix A.

The main features of a hypomanic episode are a period of persistently elevated, expansive, or irritable mood, possible inflated self-esteem, decreased need for sleep, talkativeness, flight of ideas, distractibility, increase in goal directed activity or psychomotor activity, and excessive involvement in high risk pleasure seeking activities. These changes are uncharacteristic of the person and observable by others (American Psychiatric Association, 1994).

When these symptoms (or possible symptoms) occur, but are not severe enough to cause impairment and are not directly caused by a medical condition or a physiologic effect of a substance, hypomania is suspected. There are clinical differences between hypomania and mania, which is not a subject of this thesis except in the sense of defining limitations.

The difference -or rather the distinction- between hypomania and mania is strictly defined by their severity' or 'the severity of the symptoms. Mania

causes impairment in work environments, social environments, or relationships. The symptoms are more intense, and the individual is not amenable to reason. Many times these symptoms require hospitalization either to prevent harm to oneself or others, or has blatant psychotic features.

Hypomania can present itself as an asset, either socially or financially. Many hypomanics channel excess energy and wakefulness into working long, hard, and intensely. In a hypomanic state thought is rapid, giving the appearance of intelligence. Many have high spirits and a lively interest in others. The down side would be in the more acute stages, where the hypomanic may suffer from distractibility, and appear forgetful or absentminded, often exhibiting irritation.

In joy or exuberance the mood is elevated, and logic is a permanent resident. Hypomania would present the same characteristics with a periodic check in with logic, while in occurrences of true mania logic has 'left the building'.



Image 16: *Carnival*, 2004



## ORIGINAL CONCEPT Process

Initially I wanted to do a piece centered on climate change. My interest in this subject as more than an interesting news story that effected myself only in creating a distant sense of responsibility for even more distant 'others' was shattered by the events following Katrina. I watched my nation go down to its knees in helplessness as the lack of planning, coordinating, and organization resulted in the suffering that followed. Suddenly the dire predictions of climatologists took on a more personal face. During that time I mourned, partly through my artwork, for a place I had never been, but was none the less a part of my heritage as an American. I opened my eyes, and the world entered.

It always seemed to me that with the widespread epidemic of ostrich-ism, along with the inability to guarantee to change the effects of hundreds of years of industrialization, a certain amount of damage is inevitable. Rising sea levels are already causing problems in isolated areas of the planet – this phenomenon will only grow worse over time, and many of the areas that will most likely see the deepest changes are highly populated and include both the developed and developing nations. Immigration, already such a heated issue across the planet will by necessity become more intense as the changes take place. But ostrich-ism, the ability of an individual, a society, or especially a nation/state to bury it's head in the sand and ignore the problems so clearly ahead of them may prevent a futuristic approach, and the chaos that the developed world reads about over the internet and watches on the news could easily become their own reality. Over time, as the water levels rise and the temperatures change, these storms and events will most likely become more frequent; the importance of a focused evaluation of the consequences is becoming more and more apparent.



Image 17: *Orleans*, 2004



# THE EVOLUTION OF SELF

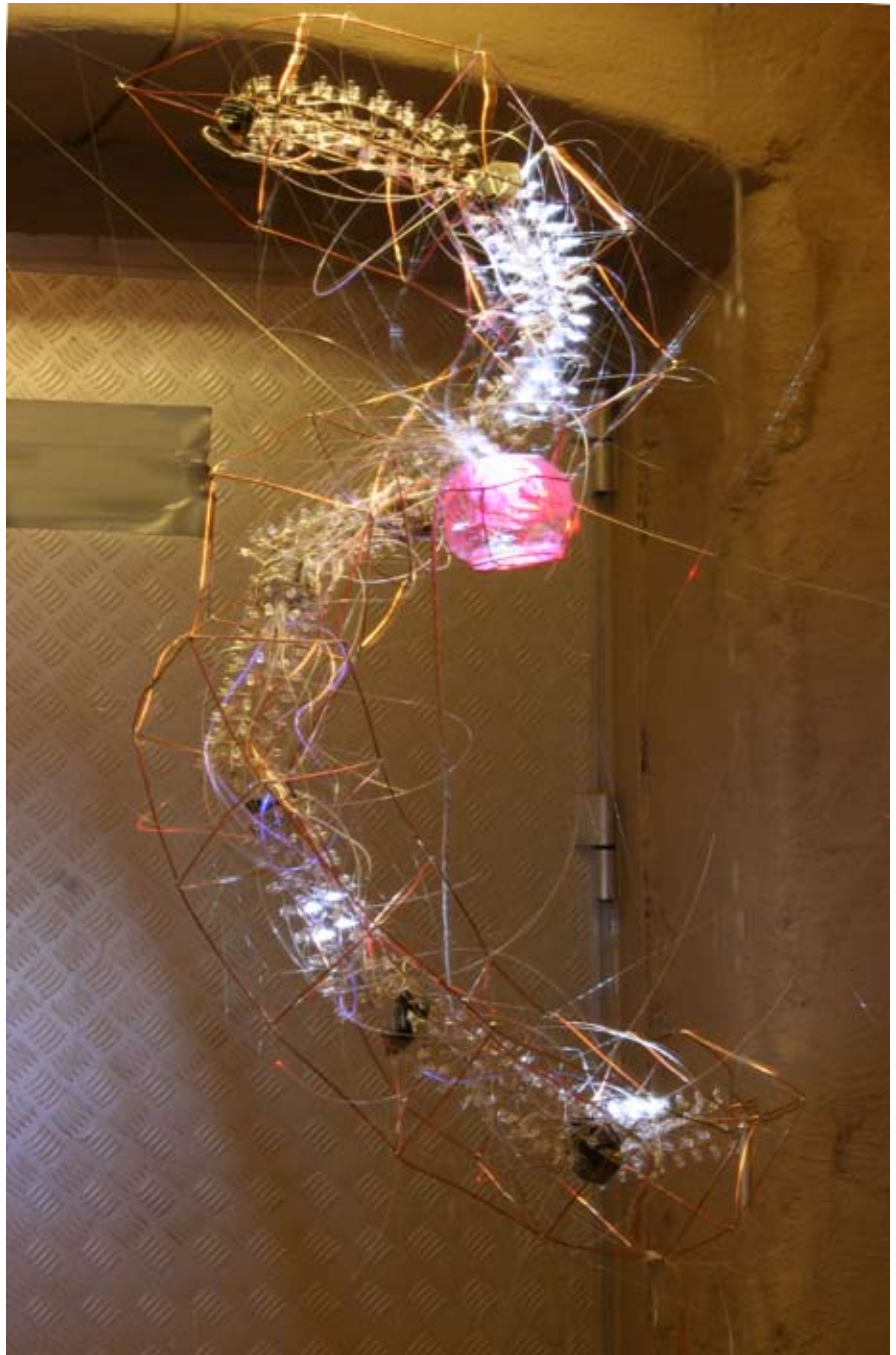
In my efforts to embrace conceptual art last year I embarked upon what ended up being a convoluted path that led to the creation of the piece I call SELF. As I went through the process of documentation and while writing about the piece, I realized its importance as the inspiration for my thesis work to come, and what's more, its importance in my development as an artist, more than anything that preceded it.

Other than an undeveloped idea surrounding the topic of climate change, the inspiration for SELF came from a number of sources. They include my instinctive reaction to the changing light in my host country of Sweden, a suggestion by a good friend stirring memories of a lifelong fascination with the helix, from exposure to a piece of artwork that introduced me to the Game of Life programming that has become so central in both the concept and the execution of my recent work, and with a sudden realization of the vulnerability of the body itself.

My involvement with the changing light in Sweden began the summer of 2008 before beginning the masters course that will end in this thesis. I had previously lived at a fairly northern latitude as I spent nearly four years residing outside Den Haag in the Netherlands. Upon my move to Sweden I did not anticipate the effect the changing light would have upon my life or my psyche. As it happened, the long days of midsummer were more difficult than I would have imagined, causing insomnia and leaving me irritable and agitated during the height of the daylight. Soon after this faded and the days began to lengthen I realized that the winter solstice would probably be difficult as well. Interested in the actual effects, I am afraid I was a bit obsessive over the changes both in myself and others, and kept close observations of the times of sunrise/sunset and hours of daylight (there are less than you might think, as cloud cover minimizes any small presence of the sun especially in the winter months). In addition to short winter days, the sun would barely break through the horizon, residing below the visor in my car even at high noon. During the fall of 2008, although my work conceptually did not involve the manic depressive theme at that early date, it was still heavily influenced by the northern light. My first physical computing project, a light table responding to voice was a digital expression countering my own reaction to the changing natural light around me. Always interested in communication (another issue that surrounded me in my moves overseas in every possible way), the table *Interpolation* ultimately became a representation of the importance of that communication, although the underlying personal expression was of light in a world that steadily darkened as the table progressed.

Work with light has been an important part of the art world for a number of years now. I would not be the first artist to work with light as a

tool, or even a concept. Shawn Brixey's work, *Eon* (Brixey, 2003) translated voice into ultrasound – the ultrasound modulated with water and created areas of light via sonoluminescence. Takuro Osaka's *Revelation by Cosmic Rays: Perpendicular* (Osaka, 2002) in 2002 used LED displays to flag incoming cosmic rays. It is not possible to list all the works done with light in this context, it would be an interesting and fulfilling subject for a book, or a dissertation. Probably the most important influence would have been Olafur Eliasson's work *The Weather Project* ("Tate Modern | Past Exhibitions | The Unilever Series: Olafur Eliasson," 2003), even if I didn't realize it right away, that incredible sun haunted me, and confirmed for me the possibilities of light's effect both on the psyche, and in the art world.



Images 19-20: *Interpolate I* (table), 2009

Image 18: *SELF*, 2009

# THE GAME OF LIFE

The Game of Life programming seemed to surround me. Links would show up from various sources on facebook, I ran across it in my initial adventures with programming the arduino (a small micro controller circuit used often by artists), and finally I saw a piece by the Canadian artist Bill Vorn called *Evil/Live 2* during Electrohype in Malmö, Sweden in 2008 that used it in a manner that really impressed me. Tucked away after a brief period of research, it was a natural fit when I began to look for an interactive response for *SELF*. My original concept for the helix to present a simulation of human migration due to global warming screamed for a version of cellular automata to be used.

When the time came to really sit down and write the code it was a very frustrating experience. I found that it really was true, that the hardware was only 25% of the time necessary in the development of the piece, and as complicated as electronics had been, the code completely overshadowed things. Unfortunately I was on an upturn at the time. It was one time when a little of the detail work so suited for depression would have come in handy. I struggled for weeks with the code, at times ready to chuck the entire mess, helix and computer alike, over the balcony to watch it splatter on the pavement below. In the end things did work out (as they usually do). The first time I was able to send a simple pattern of lights up the arrays was such an anticlimax, after so many tries and failures I had only made a tiny change when it just worked. I almost forgot to cheer - I was so shocked that I'm not certain I even recognized my success.

When I finally realized that it worked I ran to get a video camera to save it for posterity – or to prove to myself that things really had worked if I woke up the next day and it had reverted back to its previous rather confused state.

I am certainly not a professional coder.

The code itself for the GoL is a rather elegant piece of work. The version that I used, based upon the original by Conway (**Gardner, 1970**) but modified for the piece itself is copied onto the following page. So simple and clean for such a complex and beautiful pattern - it appeals to the very core of me. Unfortunately, there was a good bit of coding that had to be accomplished in order to insert the game into the helix. It was a learning process, frustrating and seemingly impossible at times, but when it was finally written the fun began, and I began to 'play' with seeds, half researching and half experimenting with particular seeds and patterns and their placements.

That was when it happened and my focus took a radical shift. The whole concept of life adjustment – of the light patterns moving, adjusting according to human interaction, responding to offenses, intentions, obligations, dispensations. In my life the mere fact that I am an American living overseas has been the root of many jabs as of late... the politics of the United States is always grabbing headlines. I've spent days defending the defenseless, taking on a collective guilt probably accentuated by depression. I've always had a fondness for the word *buffeted*... Suddenly my migration concept was

**The rules for the standard Game of Life developed by John Conway in 1970 (Gardner, 1970) are actually quite simple.**

**1.A living cell with fewer than two live neighbors dies, as if caused by under population.**

**2.A living cell with more than three live neighbors dies, as if by overcrowding.**

**3.A cell with two or three live neighbors lives on to the next generation.**

**4.A dead cell with exactly three live neighbors becomes a live cell.**

mutating, moving inside. Instead of an application for others it became an application of myself, the pain and adjustment of human interaction. My own life, and the constant striving to accept the many things that interpolate into my person, causing constant reassessment. Almost frenzied, the lights start, migrate, and sputter. I began to relate in an intensely personal way, and it caused a radical shift in the very basis of the project. During that time *SELF* was born.

```
void BirthAndDeath()
{
    // Birth and death cycle
    for (int x = 0; x < ROWS; x++) {
        for (int y = 0; y < COLUMNS; y++) {
            // Default is for cell to stay the same
            worldcopy[x][y] = world[x][y];
            int count = neighbours(x, y);
            if (count == 3 && world[x][y] == 0) {
                // A new cell is born if there are three neigh-
bours
                worldcopy[x][y] = 1;
            }
            if ((count < 2 || count > 3) && world[x][y] == 1) {
                // Cell dies if there are less than two or more
than three neighbors
                worldcopy[x][y] = 0;
            }
        }
    }
}
(Gardner, 1970)
```

March 26, 2009

*The sudden dip - I feel distant tonight – nothing really new - it seems like Sweden is on the top of the world – so far from where I belong that it could be the dark side of the moon. Being a visual person, this whole project started with a dream of light in the darkness of December. I turn on the television as I settle into evening – an evening that at times begins mid-afternoon and the images that follow disturb the harmony that candlelit evenings should inspire. Blame – whether it be imposed from outside or self imposed by a personality that takes responsibility for the actions of the collective personally caused a cycle of repression and frantic effort. Turning it aside and to those close to me doesn't help as it should, like so many other souls I am so far away, what is reality here doesn't even touch the consciousness of those I love. My lifeline is a cold piece of metal, plastic, and silicon; without a personality or warmth of its own it rarely transmits emotion beyond the statement, even the outstanding frequencies of the sound it transmits and garbled and reduced, leaving you to guess the specific words. Touch is a cold key or mouse click.*

*So I am creating in my mind my project for tomorrow but at the moment I have no great enthusiasm. Perhaps that's the point; how pointless it is. I'm a bunch of cells and static electricity bombarded by the world around it. Surrounded by walls and connected through the vagueness of a computer.*

*When I presented my project a couple of weeks ago I probably didn't do the best job of expressing myself as I was pretty shook about the whole hospital thing. I tried to start with my initial thought pattern from way back and used examples from Hurricane Katrina, and didn't get to my purpose clearly. Anyway, one person grasped onto the game of life programming bit like a dog onto a bone and questioned its validity and use in the project, strongly suggesting that I do a substantial amount of research on the subject. I do understand that this is not an accurate representation of human migration, nor do I expect it to be. No one in their right mind would consider that such a simple concept could truly represent something as ultimately complex as emergency migration patterns. Another helpful soul adds the structure as an issue, I should come up with alternatives. That it competes with the game of life patterns. I feel as though the entire thing is under attack, and by extension, I myself am being bombarded. I need to decide whether to keep the independence that I am quite accustomed to and take my chances on my own judgment, or to give up and turn everything upside down based on others opinions. If I were to do the letter, what will I end up with? And with the changes, would the result even then meet with the barest semblance of approval I would have changed it for?*

*I'm feeling like the helix – an example of life given to me anonymously. I float in a rather random way, never being either home or away, surrounded by creature comforts in a flimsy façade without control. When the project hiccups and things don't work I am taking it personally now. Failure to light causes pain.*

*Things are getting to me. I'm confused, jumpy, and depressed all at once. The whole global warming thing isn't working for me. I don't have commitment I need to sustain interest.*

*I need a change. I think I 'm finally onto it, I wrote it already, a few minutes ago. I am the helix. I have felt bombarded by the outside world for years, for my art, for being American, for being me... now I feel bombarded from within as well. I am certain that this will pass, for the time being it has made me selfish in a way I haven't felt in years. As I progress on the concept, it is mutating inward. I'm not seeing society or a whole, I am seeing myself.*

*The light sculpture will be a self portrait. The game of life programming that I have planned may or may not happen, I will be quite pleased if it does, especially in the particularly warlike form I imagine it to be in; it feels right. In my experiments I have found several behaviors that appealed to how I feel – I will play over the next month until I get it right. I will try to get the file from the ultrasound they did of my heart, the sounds were amazing and deep, they are perfect. They will crystallize the personal importance and significance (read obsession) of everything that has been happening inside.*

*I have made a decision. Finally.*

## THE HELIX

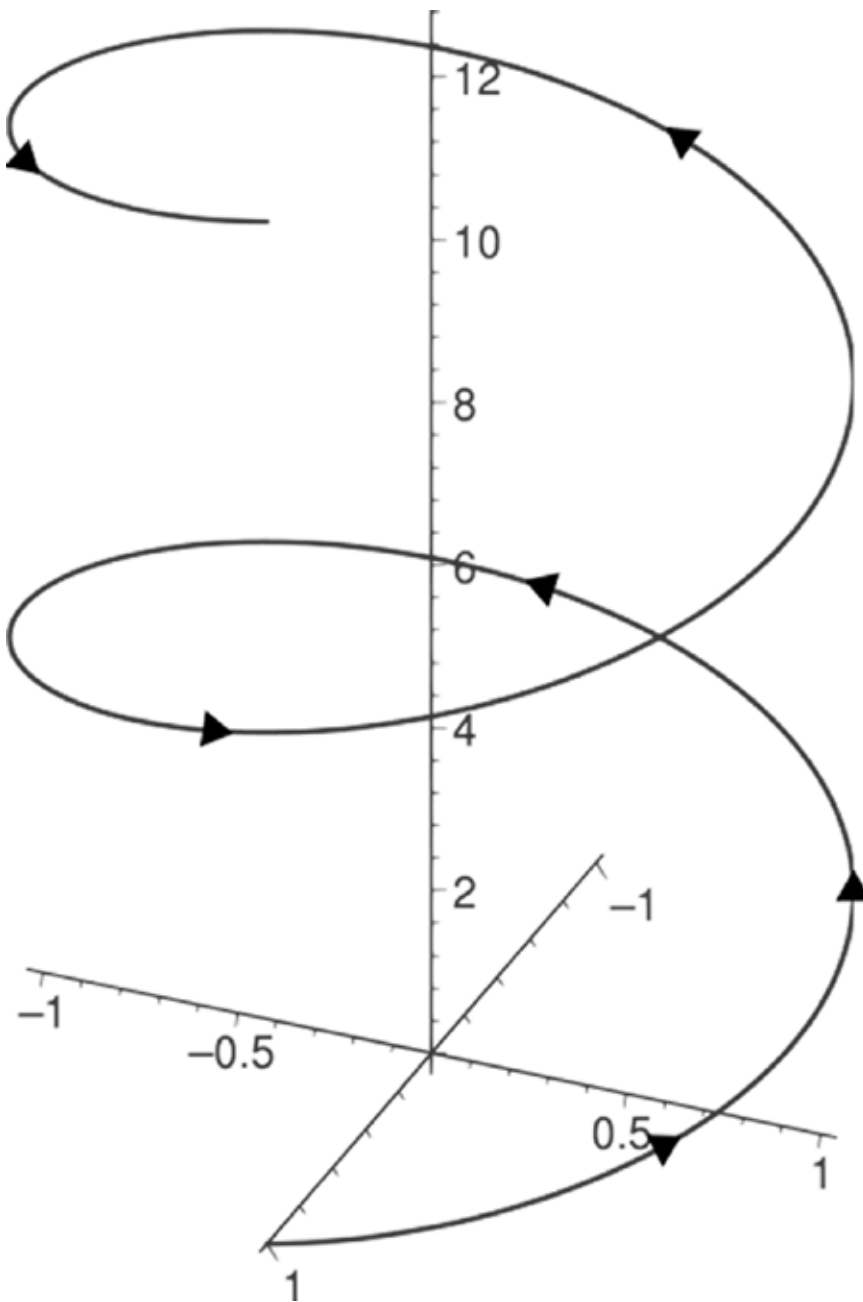


Image 21: *The helix  $(\cos t, \sin t, t)$  from  $t = 0$  to  $4\pi$  with arrowheads showing direction of increasing  $t$ . RobHar, n.d.*

In a visit back to the United States I had the occasion to meet with several artist friends from my not-so-distant past, and somewhere in the conversation a reference was made to a possible Rube Goldberg type sculpture of a helix, and an optimistic plan to someday work together on a large scale project idea of that sort. Ultimately I want to actually go through with those ideas so casually discussed for my fascination with the helix has not yet been satisfied, and I plan to return and work with my friend Tom Charlebois and manifest the great mechanical wonder we spoke of that night. The idea of the helix stuck with me and grew, changing forms, twisting and turning throughout the remainder of my travels, and ultimately merging in with my light work. Out of all that inspired me Tom was the most important, and I owe a debt of appreciation to him for the path I ended up taking.

Conceptually, the helix represents a number of symbols important in the work. Notwithstanding the obvious symbol of life in its representation of the DNA structure, there are a number of common artifacts in the helix form. Probably the most familiar would be the common screw, with its use as a connector. Better even would be the spring, which also works as a connector and separator of opposing objects, yet also demonstrates the flexibility inherent in its makeup and function. Symbolically both of these are important, in both the fixed

and flexible forms – in life these are essential in the day to day dealings of the individual. The tornado is most commonly drawn as a modification of a helix as well – growing up as I did in the American Midwest my experience with this weather phenomena is typical of the region and my respect runs deep for their strength and violence. A simple line drawing of a twister can bring back all the memory, excitement and horror of the real thing. As a symbol there is deep power there, the threat of uncontrolled madness and destruction underlying every storm, or even the mugginess of a slow summer afternoon's sudden potential to whip into frenzy, correlates well with the manic depressive's potential for the same. The deep symbolism of the helix as life itself that contains the essential core, the building blocks that along with experience and environment determine the individuality of life





Image 22: View of LED matrices, SELF, 2009

$$\begin{aligned}
 x(t) &= \cos(t), \\
 y(t) &= \sin(t), \\
 z(t) &= t.
 \end{aligned}$$

Image 23: Helix Equation

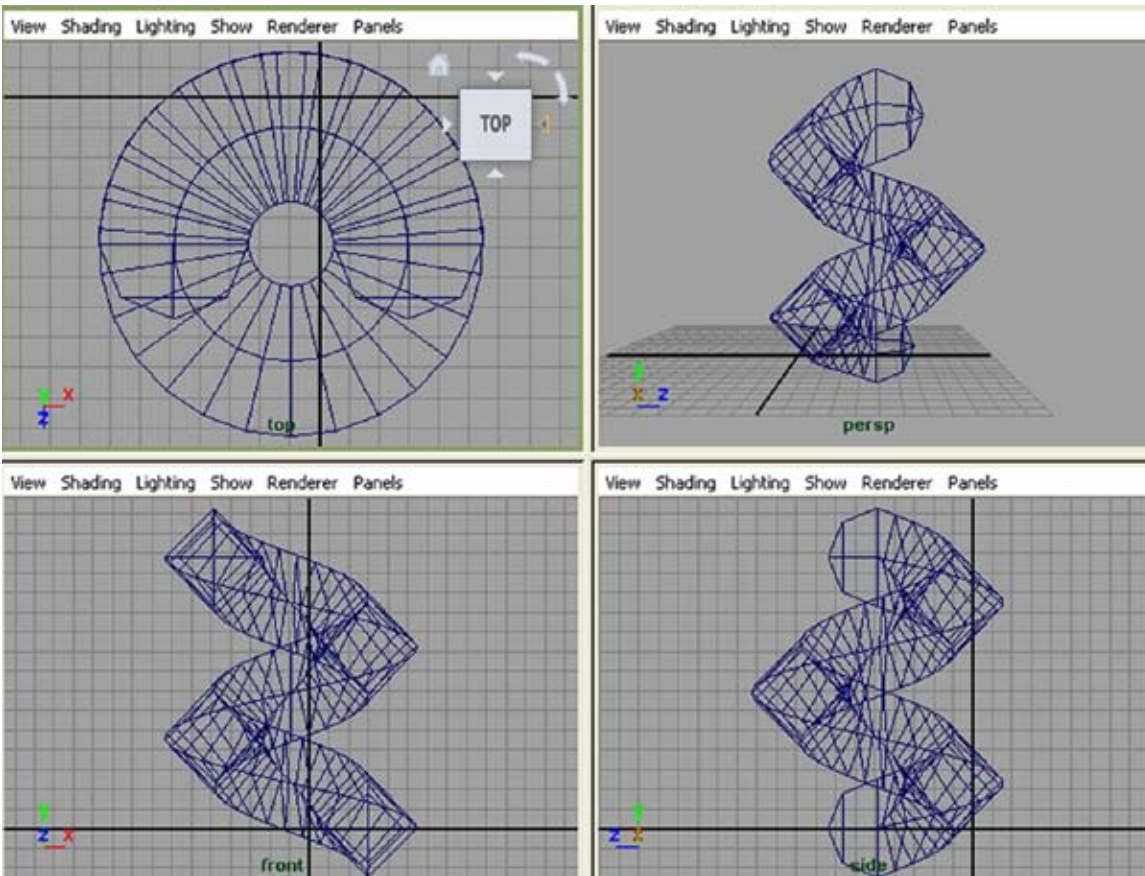


Image 24: Three dimensional helix views, 2009.



*There are no good quotes about the helix, at least that I can find. There should be.*

*Me*

itself. The fixed body of the artwork absorbs the input of the outside world, and the internal movement of the lights are the representation of ultimate flexibility and adjustment. Not only does the helix suggest life but also the potential positive and negative possibilities inherent in the current trend of research and medicine with the bipolar disorder based on the genetic code itself.

The helix was the first piece of the puzzle to stick in my mind. I pictured it in so many forms, pulsing, simple, complex – in the end I had to set it aside as indecisiveness frustrated my desire to make something concrete from the weighty symbol.

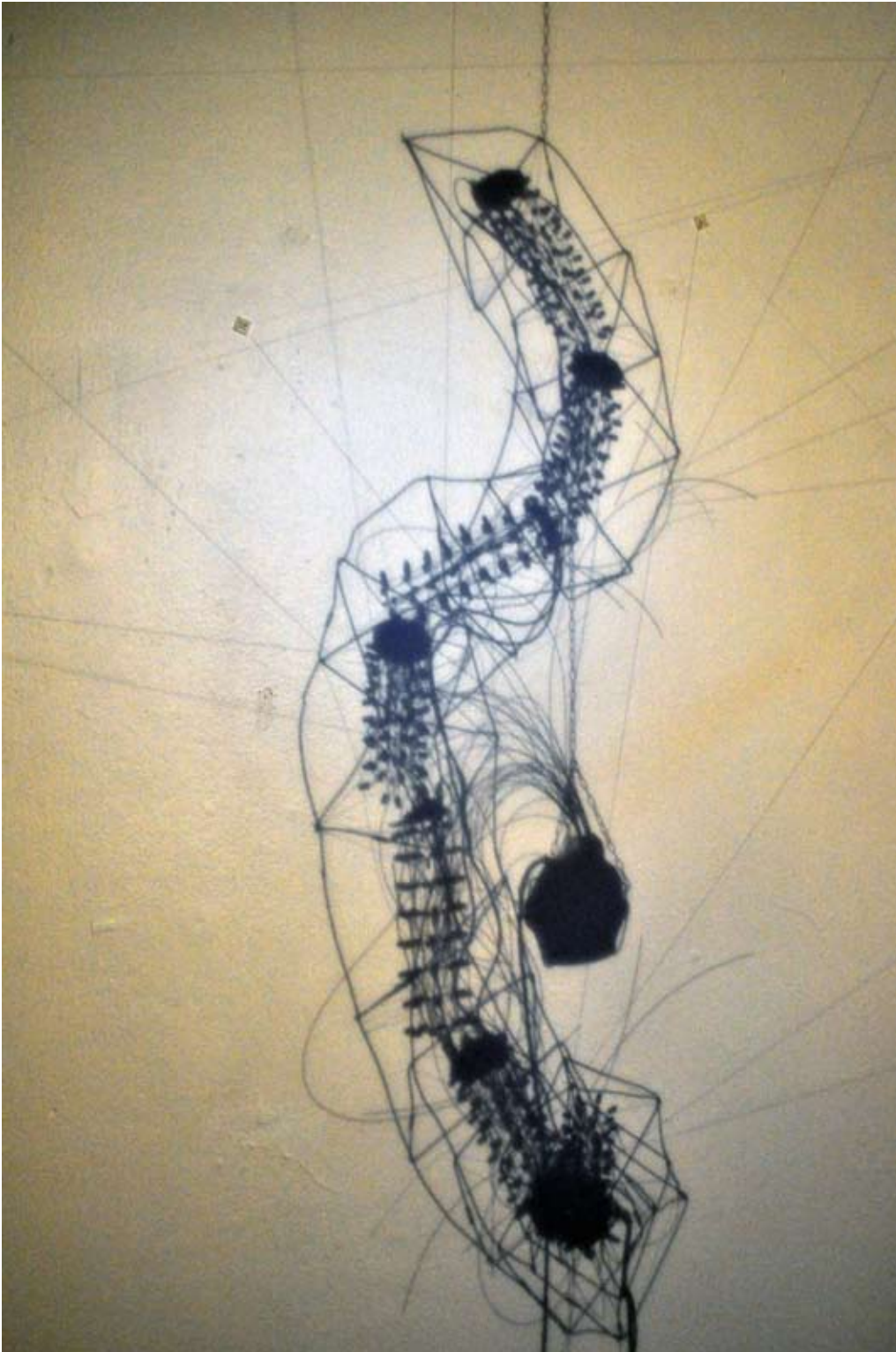


Image 25: *SELF*, 2009

The shadow is almost more beautiful than the piece.

## THE HEART

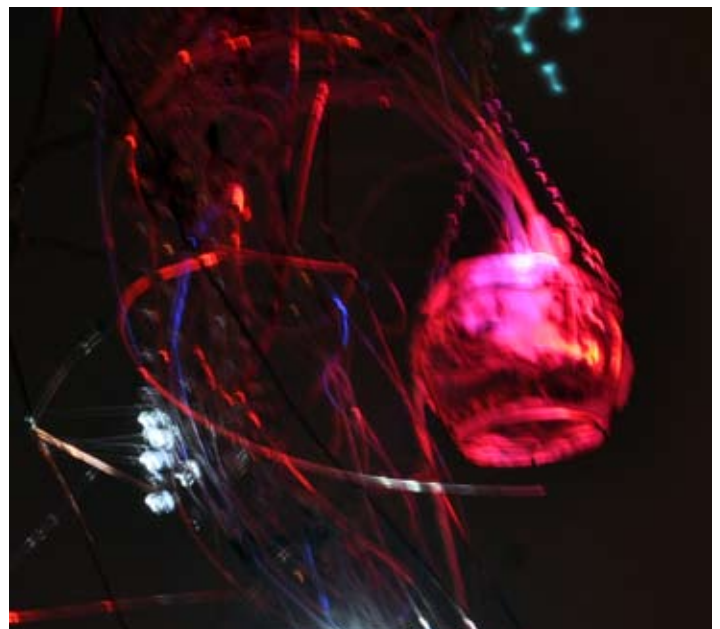
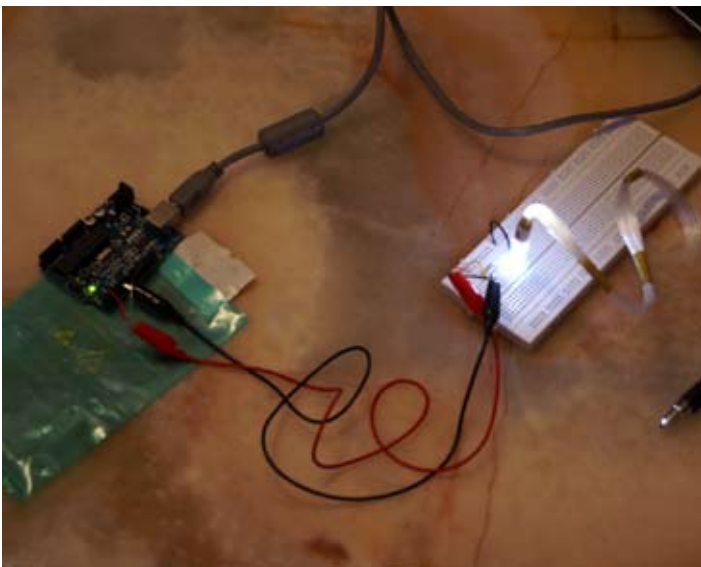
Halfway through the construction of SELF I had a health problem. Normally a healthy person, chest pains turned my world sideways. It all turned out to be insignificant yet it alarmed me enough to pay a visit to the local ER, and alarmed the local ER enough to see me immediately.

After being admitted into cardiac intensive care, I was put through countless tests and exams without resolution. Released a week later with several scary medications, I was brought back for the final test a few weeks later. During the cardiac ultrasound, the test that finally cleared me in the cardiologists eyes, I heard and saw my own heart beating clearly and was amazed by both the images and the sounds being recorded. The images were almost frightening in the delicacy of the valves and the structure responsible for life. The sounds were what grabbed me the most - they were clear and graphic. Blood could be heard sloshing from chamber to chamber. The beat was totally clear, very unlike the thumping sound heard through the common stethoscope. I recognized immediately that I wanted to incorporate those sounds into SELF. That the sound, combined with the emotional turmoil that the mere thought of my body attacking itself aroused, was essential in the piece. So I went home and went to work.

With a crystal snowball (my nod to Sweden and all the work I have done here) that fit the size and shape I was looking for, a few red and blue LEDs and some fiber optic filament, I fashioned a 'heart'. Using a program written for a previous project that visually registered the decibel level of the sound file, the heart 'beat' with the reds, blues and purples of the lights - lights which also passed down through the fiber optics winding loosely throughout the helix. Ultimately the combination of sound and color became a rather graphic representation of the body, and both its tenacity and its ability to turn upon itself.

Image 27: *Crystal heart and fiber optic details in SELF, 2009*

Image 26: *Testing, 2010*



# MY STANDARD FOR JOY

*“There is a great deal of evidence to suggest that, compared to normal: individuals, artists, writers, and creative people in general, are both psychologically “sicker” –that is, they score higher on a wide variety of measures of psychopathology– and psychologically healthier (for example, they show quite elevated scores on measures of self-confidence and ego strength)” (Jamison, 1993, p. 97)*

*“The essential feature (of a manic episode) is a distinct period when the predominant mood is either elevated, expansive or irritable and when there are associated symptoms of the manic syndrome. These symptoms include hyperactivity, pressure of speech, flight of ideas, inflated self-esteem, decreased need for sleep, distractibility, and excessive involvement in activities that have a high potential for painful consequences, which are not recognized.” (American Psychiatric Association, 1994)*

After spending most of my life either in denial of that early off-the-cuff diagnosis so callously delivered by a psychiatrist at the university I attended in my early twenties, or in simply repressing with puritan severity the energy and sometimes overwhelming urges and desires native to my personality to allow myself access to what was inside was both exhilarating and frightening. That I was delving into territory well into the realm of hypomania is made clear by reading my journal entries recording the time.

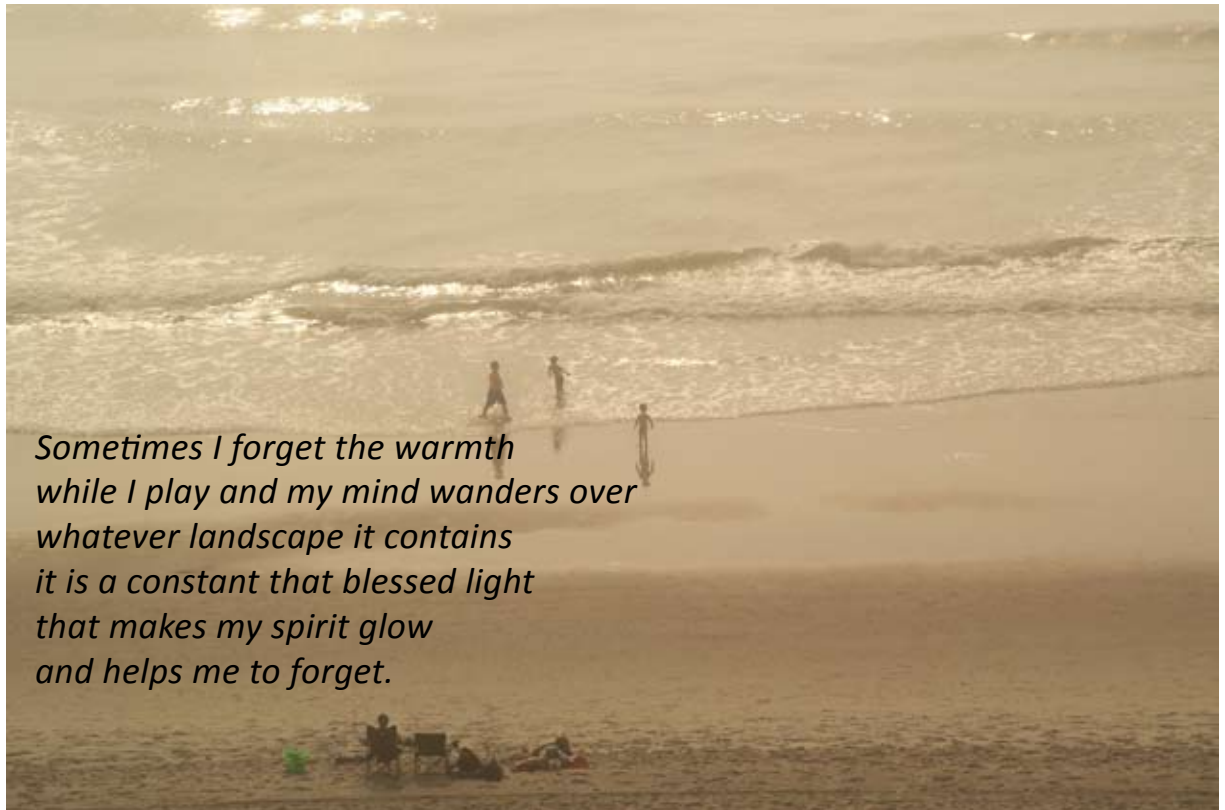
Probably the biggest drawback to mania is that it, (or at least its predecessor, hypomania) is such an exhilarating experience. It becomes the standard for joy in the life of the one that possesses it, no matter what the payback is, and in my case all but the deepest darkness I can plunge into, there is always the knowledge and desire of the upper edge. After all, who wouldn't want to exist in a time where ideas are fluent, where energy seems endless, knowledge absorbs easily and every view and moment offers up new potential. Hypomania for me is the buzz of expectation and a willingness to commit to and strive for things that probably seem a bit crazy to others. It's a wonderful state to experience, at least for the individual experiencing it, but it can have varied effects on others. At times I know I have been difficult to be around, even unpleasant when the state is most agreeable internally. What begins as agreeable may turn rapidly to irritation or even aggression and may cause great distress for those around me. I learned that early, and with some success have worked to keep my Mr. Hyde tucked away. In the milder forms of the disorder this is more or less possible, in the more severe forms where hypomania turns to full out mania those controls vanish.

June 11, 2009

*“Too much sun today. It has affected my mind. I spent an hour working out a poem, then took two hours dozing, reading and dreaming in the shade but the damage was done as I am now burning and shivering alike. Even the paper is twisting in front of my eyes. But someone's cow is moaning and the church bells ringing five has woken the rooster and the town. I too should come out of my stupor and perhaps show a little more caution tomorrow.*

*I feel buzzy inside - like something is about to happen...”*





*Sometimes I forget the warmth  
while I play and my mind wanders over  
whatever landscape it contains  
it is a constant that blessed light  
that makes my spirit glow  
and helps me to forget.*

Image 28: Topsail Island, N.C., 2008

June 12, 2009

*The blanket only hints of the  
pleasures  
in its glowing blue dome  
so separate  
from the warm glowing  
light of my skin  
my face absorbs the brightness  
and sends it to the soul  
where it replenishes life, and  
screams hopelessly  
for permanence.*

*"I'm going to paint sunlight."*

June 13, 2009

*"This trip has been good for me. Mentally I couldn't be better.  
If I could print this on a white stone or something then shatter it - something  
perhaps not stone but drill-able so that fiber optics could play a role - and mirror  
creating endless reflections.  
Study how a kaleidoscope works.  
Flies are so annoying.  
I wonder if this is manic. Splinters into darkness.  
...perhaps a black sun suspended over the one in the painting. There needs to be  
a black element there.*

*I can hear the obvious. The truck on the curves below, the driver impatient,  
accelerates at the edge of town. The neighbor opens a door. Someone is  
repairing things, a number of tools have been used from above. Below is the  
chicken - soon the rooster will wake from his afternoon doze again and begin  
crowing. Crickets, or grasshoppers - birds. It's all so vibrant. The rhythms vary in  
the sun."*

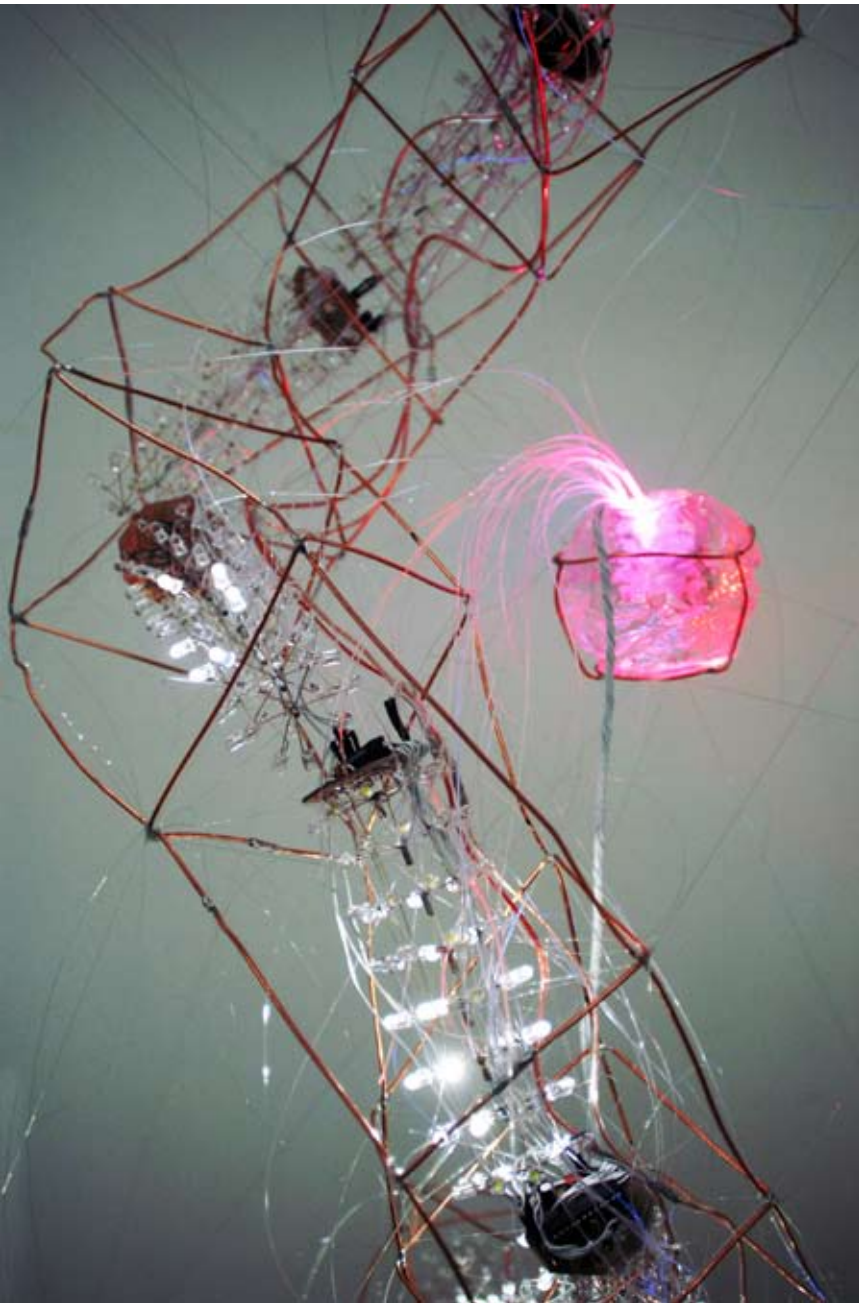


Image 29: *SELF*, 2009

## AFTERTHOUGHTS What It Became

*SELF* was pivotal in my development over the last year. Although the concept for the piece changed radically during its development, that change was an integral part of my focus. Simply put – the conceptual change made the project, but the project itself forced the conceptual change.

Shown for the first time in May of 2009, it was during that time that I was obligated to leave town. Aware of this well ahead, I had prepared a display case of sorts. On wheels, it could be rolled easily into place and plugged in. After that everything was on autopilot. I had information written and submitted to the curators of the show to be posted with the identifying card. I actually thought I would be back before the opening and able to see to any small changes, but a few weeks before the show the dates were moved forward by just enough time that I would have to miss the opening. I had to just close my eyes and walk away from what felt like another child, leaving it to fate and hoping for the best.

For the most part things went well. The piece was positioned as I had requested and everything functioned as planned. The volume of the sound piece was adjusted incorrectly – as the fiber optics depended on the decibel levels they were not lighting correctly. This was probably my own fault as my last adjustments were made late at night in darker conditions; under these the light would have been far more visible. The most difficult thing though was that the explanation had not been posted, and most people did not know what they were looking

at. Aesthetically this wasn't really a problem, but I would have preferred it otherwise.

I missed the feedback from the opening but was able to pick quite a bit up afterwards. Filter out the fact that people try to say something positive just to be nice, many people actually sought me out and the response was quite positive even without the explanation. After the explanation it was even more so. The interactivity seemed to fascinate some – they would move from side to side to see their effect on the patterns. I took this well; the outside effect on the self was what I was trying to portray. A few people had an almost visceral reaction to the very graphic sound of the heartbeat.



This also worked for me: again, the effect on the self of the body was my intention.

What I didn't like was the frame. It looked almost like a museum case that would be used to display a stuffed bear in a museum exhibit. It was enclosed, a container. What I wanted was to expose

the self. During the next exhibits I removed the box, I have hung the helix suspended with multiple transparent nylon filaments from many directions. Both aesthetically and conceptually this works far better, reflecting my intention more accurately. The only other change I have made is to shine a dim spotlight on one side and create a shadow on a nearby wall. This accentuates everything – the loneliness and vulnerability: sometimes I think the piece could be the shadow.

*SELF* made a profound impression on me and sent me headlong into the research that has culminated in this thesis and my following works.



Image 30: *SELF* Construction, 2009

**From the wall plaque at the interpolations show (January, 2010):**

*SELF represents the energized feelings of the individual under siege by the world's surroundings, causing an almost frenzied effort to adjust. The fiber optics that surround and intertwine with the LED structures pulse with light in subtle colors of reds, blues, and purples in response to low ultrasonic heartbeat sounds, representing the internal siege of the body itself. SELF is a three dimensional helix made from copper wire. Visible in the open structure are arrays of light consisting of 512 white LEDs, constructed delicately in a tubular manner. These arrays interact with the viewer, triggering sequences of light movement (based on a modification of John Conway's Game of Life) in different places depending on the location and movement of the viewers. More viewers will trigger more seeds and an interesting play of lights "battling" for space will occur. The helix floats in apparently open space, emphasizing its exposure and vulnerability to the world around it.*





**Melancholia**

insignificant

the patter of innumerable drops exploding against the  
glass;

    separating grey rooms,  
    leaving behind only echoing static that swallows  
the small sounds of life.  
a candle bravely lit; a feeble attempt against the cold  
grey,

    but masking the collective sacrifice  
    to sustain life.

I am lost - faded,

    barren and nameless - my pen records only futile  
phrases

    shedding little light past that of the candle  
    on the spreading gloom.

only one of billions... more.

made insignificant

    by the promise and hopelessness of the stars and a drop  
of rain.

a written scream.

expression lost

in the momentary static.



# CHAPTER 3

## DEPRESSION

*“What is more pleasant than to walk alone in some solitary grove, betwixt Wood and Water, by a Brook side, to meditate upon some delightsome and pleasant subject... A most incomparable delight it is to melancholize, & build castles in the air... they could spend whole days and nights without sleep, even whole years alone in such contemplations, and phantastical meditations.”*

*Robert Burton, The Anatomy of Melancholy (London, 1628)*

*Two thirds of suicides are suffered from depression or manic-depressive illness, one fifth of manic-depressive patients die by suicide. (M.D. & Jamison, 1990, pp. 227-244)*



Image 33: Blue, 2010

# Depression doesn't speak, it doesn't listen, it doesn't play, it doesn't care. Or it cries in pain. I'm not sure which is worse. TO MEDICATE OR

*“The definition, and thus the diagnosis, of melancholia in the DSM is problematic, not least because it seeks to objectify something which is strongly coloured by subjectivity. The dilemma is the same as that embedded in the very origins of definitions of melancholia: who is to judge when sadness is disproportionate? Added to the are the flaws in definition that let to such situations as American and British psychiatrists using identical versions of the DSM, with exactly the same group of patients, making completely different diagnoses.” (Bowring, 2008, p. 30)*

*The essential feature (of a depressive episode) is either a dysphonic mood, usually depression, or loss of interest or pleasure in almost all usual activities and pastimes. This disturbance is prominent, relatively persistent, and associated with other symptoms of the depressive syndrome. These symptoms include appetite disturbance, change in weight, sleep disturbance, psychomotor agitation or retardation, decreased energy, feelings of worthlessness or guilt, difficulty concentrating or thinking, and thoughts of death or suicide or suicidal attempts.”*

*The American Psychiatric Association's DSM of mental disorders*

If there ever has been a reason to seek help it is depression. There are very few personal upsides to the depressive end of bipolar disorder – and none in a mixed episode. Depression is bleak and despairing – it's the state of mind that precipitates suicide. Anyone who claims nobility through depression in my opinion is just plain wrong.

In the depths of depression life is a fog, hope is non-existent. The smallest criticism justifies flagellation of self esteem. Depression is not only identified by mood, and attitude, but physical components are being identified. Depression leaves physical damage in the brain. Research in the last ten years has shown evidence of several areas of difference. First, in 1999 the journal Biological Psychiatry, Grazyna Rajkowska issued a report that provided the first real histopathological evidence to support prior neuroimaging findings of decreased volume and altered metabolism in the frontal cortex in major depressive disorder. She and her colleagues examined the brain tissue of depressed patients who had died suddenly. She focused specifically on the prefrontal cortex, part of the brain that is essential to social function. She found what looked much like brain damage in the depressed patients – decreases in cortical thickness, cell size and density. Most importantly however, she found a lack of glia, the cells that act as caretakers of the neurons themselves. (Rajkowska et al., 1999)

Unfortunately, depression is the flip side of mania. Fortunately though it is not always deep. Depression itself is variable, ranging from a rather 'sweet lethargy' to a total loss of interest in life itself and an all encompassing misery. In the milder states depression encourages deep reflection (often rather depressing in itself) and often a certain patience with detail that has the potential to benefit a creative person greatly.

In my case I have been lucky. In the last few years my time outside the norm has been weighted heavily to the hypomanic, and for at least the last five years the spells of depression, although sometimes intense, have not been long lived.

In breezing through Kramer's *Against Depression* I read a line that struck home deeply. In the passage discussing a depressed patient who is 'morally scrupulous' he notes that "We have not adopted this criterion in the United States, but certain German psychiatrists consider scrupulosity-excessive conscientiousness to be the *one* feature of depression, the one that gives rise to every other symptom." (Kramer, 2005, pp. 74-75) That was it! We see moral scruples as a positive thing, but taken too far they cause much of the guilt and frustration leading to depression. My whole life has been an

# NOT TO MEDICATE

December 1, 2009

*I just looked back at what I painted earlier. It's crap – immature and crude – like so much of the artwork I see around me. I don't mind a little rawness – but I want skill, quality. I don't believe people when they announce that craftsmanship is back? Back where?*

*I don't have the energy for this.*

December 2, 2009

*Today has been terrible. I had trouble sleeping again last night. Had to leave the television on all night – and I really dislike television. It finally let me sleep about 5 AM. I'm tired of the whole thing. I wake up late and feel old and tired – I have no enthusiasm for anything when I'm like this. My life ahead of me is no longer interesting – yet hiding at home, gossiping on the phone, getting fat is an anathema. Why go on? When I'm like this even waiting it out is intolerable.*

*The clock ticking is driving me nuts. I don't have the energy to get up and stop it – but I hear each individual tick. It's like they pile up in my memory – instead of proceeding onwards they get stuck, adding up until I'm overwhelmed.*

*How do I ignore them? It seems so impossible. They are marching through the room overshadowing everything else.*

*I feel absolutely incompetent.*

attempt to find the good in everyone and everything, find understanding in what is irrational or even evil, what is blatantly immoral. I also internalize responsibility that vastly exceeds my domain, guilt over the actions of politicians, bad luck visited upon friends and family that has no relation to me at all, even the irresponsibility of certain makers of art and documentaries. It is stretched all out of proportion, this urge to be perfect and fix everything. I even take on the responsibility of the wars instigated by both my own and other countries, and the pain and suffering resulting from them; feeling as though I have to do the right thing, find a way to fix them, pay for them emotionally.

Depression stops me. It wraps itself around me, distracting and discouraging me. Because I cannot possibly achieve the unrealistic goals that being 'morally scrupulous' lay upon me, I treat my everyday tasks with apathy. Certain tasks seem to set themselves up as more difficult than others. Making necessary phone calls, mailing Christmas cards, going to the bank. Writing – not a good thing when you are working on a thesis. Painting – that one kills me. Why dread what makes me happy?

That is my depression.

I have been on medication for depression in the past. I spent a number of years fighting terrible outside stress and horrible lows – the medication was a life saver. After a while though I realized that there were parts of me that had been dulled, and where that had been a blessing in the beginning I no longer wanted my life to be restricted by a drug. The stress had lifted, I was ready to try and quit the medication and move on without its help. It took a couple of tries, when I first went off it rather abruptly (according to my doctor at the time, this was perfectly safe) it was an unmitigated disaster. The emotions came flooding back, dark and bright and so intense that it frightened me. The second try was a success, and I have been medication free for around 7 years now.

There have been times when it was tempting to return to the medication, but as I said before, the periods of depression have been more short lived, and by the time I was desperate enough to consider going in to the doctor things were beginning to ease. There is usually a trigger. I have learned through painful experience that I need to prioritize these things and carefully evaluate whether or not exposure to a particular person or situation is worth the price I will pay. I force myself to write and sort out my life at those times of distress – sometimes just putting it on paper relieves some of the stress and allows me to begin healing. Regular sleep, rather than giving in to the temptation of sleeping too much, or even interrupted sleep helps. While researching for this thesis I ran across an article by a group at UC-Irvine confirming what I have found and actually opening up the possibility of the use of “three established circadian-related treatments (SD, bright light [BL]), sleep phase advance [SPA]) as adjunctive treatment to lithium

*“SMR:s for all patients with a hospital diagnosis of bipolar or unipolar disorder in Sweden for all causes of death were 2.5 for males and 2.7 for females in bipolar disorder, and 2.0 for both sexes in unipolar disorder. SMR:s for suicide in bipolar disorder were 15.0 for males and 22.4 for females, and in unipolar disorder 20.9 and 27.0 respectively. In bipolar disorder, most extra deaths were caused by natural causes, while in unipolar disorder, unnatural causes caused most extra deaths. Time trends for suicide mortality increased, both for bipolar and unipolar disorder.” (Urban 2000)*

*“... work that may be inspired by, or partially executed in, a mild or even psychotically manic state may be significantly shaped or partially edited while its creator is depressed and put into final order when he or she is normal. It is the interaction,, tension, and transition between changing mood states, as well as the sustenance and discipline drawn from periods of health, that is critically important; and it is these same tensions and transitions that ultimately give such power to the art that is born in this way.” (Jamison, 1993, p. 6)*

and antidepressants” (Wu et al., 2009) (sleep deprivation, light therapy, and a regime of sleep control over a short period of time) as a treatment option. The article discusses it as an adjunctive treatment to medication, but in my experience I consider the possibilities to be more extensive than that. While I have never attempted all three as a regime, just a portion helps my mood to lift, and gives me the extra boost I need to recover.

*“Tis not alone my inky cloak, good mother,  
Nor customary suits of solemn black,  
Nor windy suspiration of forced breath,  
No, nor the fruitful river in the eye,  
Nor the dejected behavior of the visage,  
Together with all forms, moods and shapes of grief,  
That can denote me truly...”*

*HAMLET  
William Shakespeare*

January 5, 2010

*I found a way to present something in the vein of what I was looking so desperately – I found a reference in a book today to different ways to say melancholia – ways that all describe one portion or another of the rather vague definition I deal with in different languages. I really didn't want to use an unfinished piece of poetry, and I'm finding that in my own photography I really don't use a lot of color and in the drives and drives of photos none has either struck me as right or had the colors necessary to demonstrate technically what I want. I still like the books – but they present another technical problem in that you have to get right up in front of them to understand what they say and then you'd block out the light. Plus there's still the issue of the unfinished poem. I woke up early this morning so I took up the book Danai gave me and started reading again. It's had so much that was interesting in it so far. It's actually one of those books that I will read once before I even begin to take notes. But when I hit the chapter "From Apea to Weltschmerz" it sort of clicked (Bowring, 2008).*

*So there are all these variations of cultural melancholia, and a number of words with fairly specific definitions from nine languages. I especially like the one from Finland. Actually there are two – but one of them, kaiho, reminds me of the connection between the 'depression' and the energy. They describe it as a 'tangible poignancy' (Bowring, 2008, p. 121)*

*Wow. I need to use these words. It's how I will do it. I'm not sure of the way – maybe I'll continue with the books – maybe I'll paint on the floor or something. I will figure it out though – and I'm a lot closer now than I was yesterday.*

*The sculpture will be the nod toward melancholia. The helix is obviously mania.*

February 2010

*I cannot honestly say where I am emotionally right now. I know that I have been depressed – more depressed than I have been in several years. I know that the holidays this year were spent in a state of obsession: distraction and frenzied work alternating with a deep distrust of myself and the world around me. Emotionally draining and physically exhausting, my head felt as though it was swimming as I realized a project I felt completely connected with, its beauty my only real connection during that period with the world around me and the path I have chosen. Upon its completion and showing I dropped into a void deeper than even I expected (I knew ahead of time it would happen as I was burning with an exhausting intensity) – where I floundered for a grasp on my mind. Somehow I continue to function. This was the first real incidence of recognizable instability that I have gone through in years, and I am not completely certain I am out of it even now. At the very least though I see a path through my doubts, and am working towards clearing it.*



# MELANCHOLIA

## The original concept



Melancholia was a natural development over a period of time. In some senses I consider the project a complete failure. At best I see it as incomplete, only a small fraction of what it should have been. But most importantly, it should represent something completely different.

Melancholy needs to go back to its original intentions.

During the halcyon days of summer I would lie there and let my ideas float – sometimes for hours. There were so many, it was such an amazing task. My thought was to demonstrate the variety and extremes of emotion, from the gray flatness of depression to the reactive, sometimes shattering moments of hypomania. So many scenarios floated through my mind in those days, none of which quite pinpointed exactly what I wanted to portray.

One bit I considered did interest me – the consideration of color. Listen to the common descriptions of depression; gray, black, bleak... rarely (at least from my own cultural standpoint) was any true color used in the explanation of the depressive state. As for mania, quite the opposite applies. Vivid, even saturated color comes up often in individual accounts. Sometimes I wonder if mania is actually a stripping of the filtering capacity humans normally possess and use, that which enables us to concentrate on the task at hand and exclude the unnecessary stimuli that would flood our every moment. Just open your eyes; if the brain were to process everything it sees at once the objects, perspective, color simultaneously would normally be overwhelming and remove any semblance of concentration. Hypomania and mania on the other hand could be an opening in that perception; hypomania being at a level where the brain is near its processing limit but able



Images 34-37: *Gothenburg, 2010*

My original experiments with color consisting of photographs taken of Gothenburg. Some were more effective than others but none captured the feelings I wanted to portray.





to check into logic. More of the colors, the stimuli, would be allowed to process, sending the mind racing along what are probably rather unusual pathways. In this scenario full blown mania would push past the capabilities of the brain, forcing utilization of areas not possessing the connections to reason. Perhaps overwhelming release of some of the brains chemicals blocks the same. Or could there actually be a 'disk full' condition where the connection enabling the reality checks necessary are closed?

This is a purely personal take on the matter, a personal hypothesis of sorts. But the saturation of stimuli was an appealing place to begin, no matter what the cause is. The greyness of depression plays heavily against this saturation – it was my intention to portray this contrast in my work.

## THE PROCESS



Beginning in September I began to investigate ways to work with color and the absence of color in my art. I took a series of photographs of local scenes in the rain and deliberately distorted them, playing with color and mood. The photos were fun, but not concentrated enough – they were too aimless for my purposes. I spent time with a particular piece of cloth, a length of black wool, flat and patternless. I use this piece as a photography aid – it is a wonderful background as it sucks the light right out of the surrounding area. I considered its use in the representation of depression but ultimately discarded the notion as I realized that, at least for me, depression is more of a series of clouded grays; black is a feeling that is usually rich with mixed, much stronger emotions. The emotions such as resentment or guilt are in my mind commonly associated with black. Even working with ideas of the color contrast was problematic, as black is so commonly used to accent artwork, many times meant to simply disappear and not to provoke thought on its own.



It wasn't until I came across a disabled video projector and took it apart that I began to find that thread of relation and real enthusiasm set its seed in the concept. I lifted the cover to view the inside working of the projector. At first it was dark, just black plastic and slivers of glass with the merest hint of reflection (the room itself wasn't bright). As I leaned my halogen desk lamp over it was as though a crystal paradise opened up before me. The absence of light versus a world saturated with color. I had found my source, the source I would use to color and temper the world around it.

Shortly after that I took part in an installation art workshop where we were asked to bring our ideas and a physical item representing them. After admittedly brief thought I brought a poem, one of the many that I had produced in the months of writing since the early summer. Printed in the beginning of the chapter, insignificant carried many words that I thought decent descriptions of moods.

Images 38-40: Gothenburg, 2010



# ALL WRONG Start again

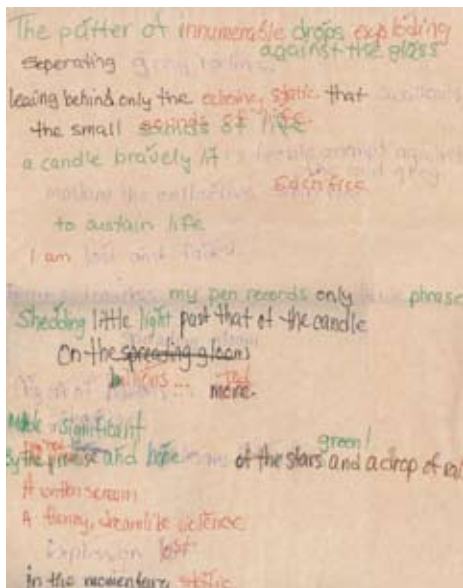


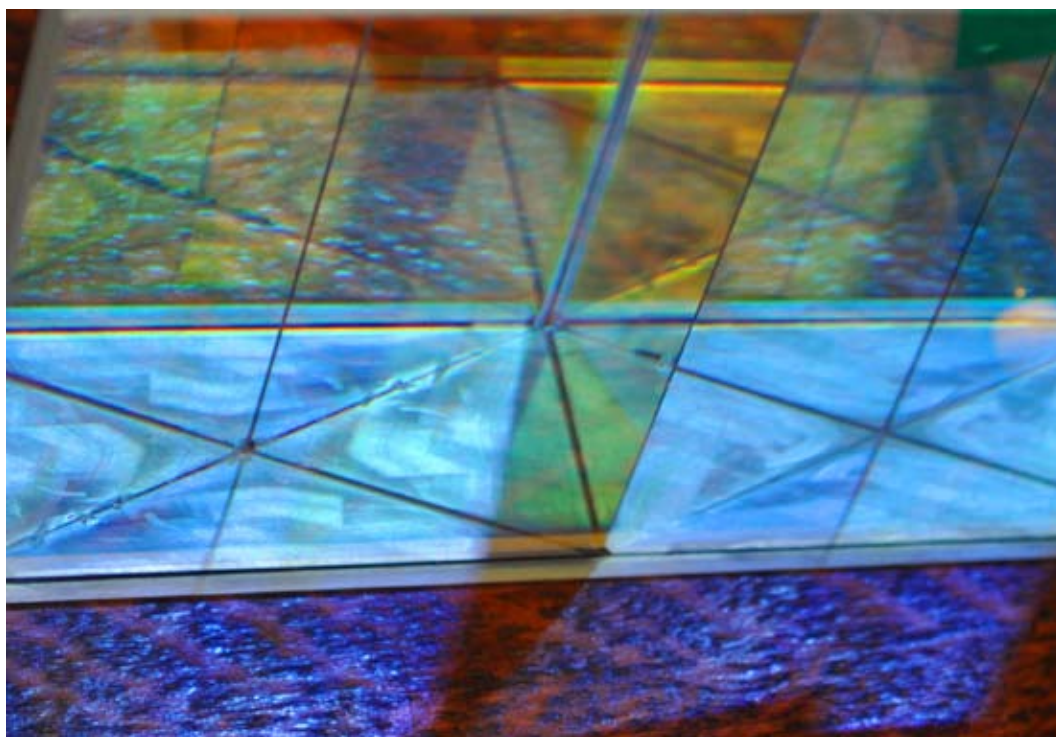
Image 41: *Original thought*, 2009  
The initial intention with *melancholy* was to represent a spectrum of moods using a poem.

My first real test of the project took place later that week. I built a box of mirrors facing internally on all but two sides. Inside the box was a series of transparent black cloths meant to pick up the light from a working video projector that was placed in another more ordinary cardboard box and was shown through one of the open side of the mirrored box. A person could look down through the open top and the layers of material. On the material, scribbled in oil pastel was the poem, different words in different colors on various layers. The structure of the mirrored box itself was covered in a manner to make it appear as a cardboard box and was placed in a storage room along with other boxes. There was the sound of people in a cafe, life incongruous with the setting of boxes on a palette.

The project was very quickly conceived over the course of only two weeks. It taught me a few things and helped to direct me. I am still taking some of that direction now.

The fact that I was using a working computer and projector instead of my envisioned light sculpture was both interesting and problematic. It was interesting in the sense that I learned how specific the colors must actually be in order to effectively light the colored words, important both in the color composition of the projected light and of the crayon itself. It was problematic in the sense that the projector spilled an awful lot of white light, essentially dimly lighting everything and seriously diluting the whole. Even this, however was a teaching device; its points were well taken later in the project.

Image 42: Lens used in *melancholy*, 2010



The composition of the piece was all wrong. I tried to include too much, boxes representing moves and therefore changes, storage of emotion, etc..., this was much too scattered. The piece needed to be more concentrated, more focused. I scrapped much of the work and went back to the thought process, scaling it down to essentials.

I still was very attached to the light sculpture that I intended to build from the projector glass. I had been searching for some time for materials that were strong but delicate enough for the rather floaty construction I envisioned. This took longer than I expected, but I finally

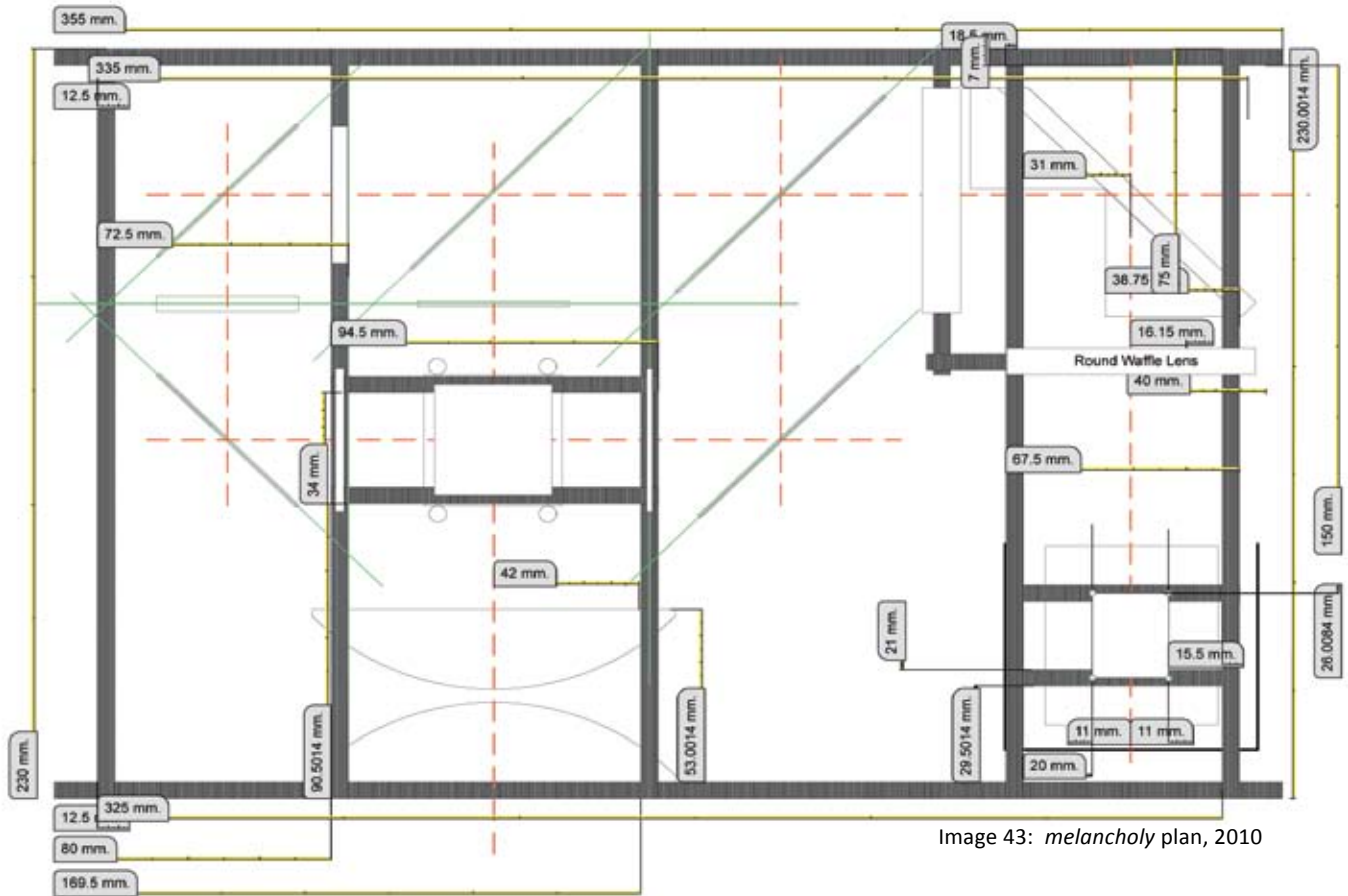


Image 43: *melancholy* plan, 2010

Image 44: *Construction*, 2010



settled on delicate metal rods and thread to hold the mirrors. Instead of a single light source such as the original projector utilized, it turned out to be far easier for me to incorporate three separate sources where I could independently control the RGB light mixtures. For size and simplicity I built banks of high intensity LEDs of the appropriate colors instead of using white light (such as that from an automobile head lamp), reflective casing and filter gels to provide the light/color. In some ways the color may have been easier to control had I used the latter- gels come in very specified color wavelengths, whereas even though LED manufacturers give specifications for each lamp type including wavelength I find them to be more difficult to manage than I would have expected. Despite that the banks of lights were aesthetically more appealing and did the job effectively and efficiently. There was a certain joy for me in the fact that the wavelength was specific and little light was wasted.

One incident while I was gathering parts for the piece struck me as a little funny, at least after the fact. When I went from the single to the triple light source I needed another prism in addition to the one used in the original projector. Unwilling to pay the price to have one made to spec – I got on Ebay and purchased a broken one sold by a company in Texas for only \$15. Since I was going to be in the US anyway a few weeks later to speak at a conference, instead of paying the enormous freight necessary to ship it to Sweden I had it delivered to my mother-in-law's



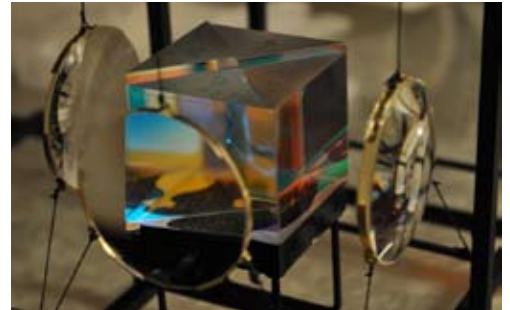
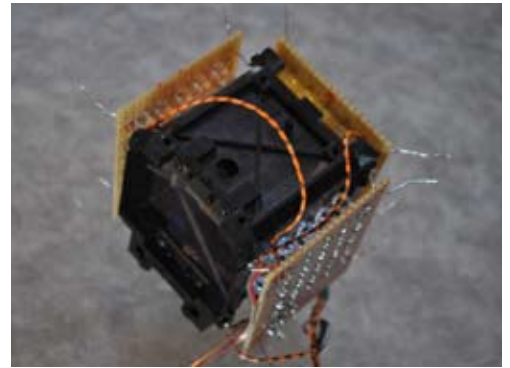
home in suburban Chicago and arranged to meet her during my short layover at O'hare on my way back to Sweden. I intended to simply drop it in my carry on and continue on my journey.

While I was still at the conference I received a rather skeptical e-mail informing me that the box had arrived at my in-laws, but it was big. She followed up by writing that she may be able to bring it on the roof of her car. As she drives a Suburban (IE huge SUV), something seemed seriously wrong. What exactly had I ordered? And how exactly was I going to get it on an airplane in a world of ever more restricted service and customer support? Not to mention through airport security.

I began making alternative plans, mainly limited to deconstructing the thing at O'Hare Field. This wasn't going to be popular with security either, but I was determined to retrieve the prism and any interesting glass or crystal in the giant projector.

It turned out (as these things usually do) to be no problem. An over enthusiastic employee at the firm in Texas had wrapped it in enough bubble wrap to build a mattress with, then put it into a box that could have shipped a compact car inside of it. It did fit, barely, into my carry on, and I was on my way with a minimum of fuss.

I was riding on a high those days, and excited to get started. I had the parts, and had even found an ultra transparent silk to do the paintings on that didn't reflect light. This had been an issue with all of the other fabrics I had experimented with. I didn't yet know the exact layout of how the silks would hang or the precise composition of the paintings, but did know what I wanted them to represent. I was certain that the details would flesh out as I worked on the piece.



Images 45-48: *Construction, 2010*  
Different views of the light sculpture during construction.





# PROGRESSION THROUGH A rough period

Two things combined to derail me and change the focus of the work, radically altering the very concept. First, I had a solo gallery show scheduled in mid-January and was rather uncertain about what I would exhibit. More importantly though there was an incident in my life during early December that sent me (from the highs I had operated under for some time) over the cliff emotionally. I ended up in a state that swung wildly between deep depression and hypomania, even crossing at times through a mixture of the two. It was the worst time I'd experienced in many years and affected my perception of the work drastically.

I cannot begin to blame the upheaval itself for my own personal reaction to it. Insignificant in the end, it was an unreasonable annoyance, and that is how I should have treated it the entire time. That is how a more stable personality would have handled it, dealing with the series of emotions and disturbing events far more effectively. Instead of the number of days or even the week it would have taken without the manic-depressive symptoms, it took me about six weeks rotation between deep depression, anger, etc. Much of that time was spent in the overactive conscientiousness phase, trying to find logical reasons for the illogical, or even fault within myself to explain things. All in all it was a very dark period, and the need to express that darkness and despair where my mind took itself ultimately took up the project and concept at hand, and played actively with it as the sculpture progressed.

Instead of the silks, which I began to see as impossible and even ill-conceived, I found a reference to the colors of melancholy in a beautiful little book written by Dr. Jacky Bowring (Bowring, 2008). The book devoted an entire chapter to colors of melancholia and their culturally different presentations. Another chapter discussed different terms used in a number of languages across the world. All of the words translated in English to melancholy (actually a Greek original), yet the subtle differences in the cultural interpretation were sometimes quite striking. Suddenly my project was taking on a much more limited scope, one of depression versus the entire spectrum.

One very late addition to the exhibit was the painting *Carnival* from several years back. Painted as a study for a much larger work, *Carnival* is a simple painting of a mask in mainly primary colors. It worked well with the project in the representation of the barrier between the public and the personal, and even played nicely with the changing lights.



My husband Bobs help and expertise proved valuable during the construction of melancholy. Without his assistance the frustration level with building what was essentially a high level model from scratch would have been extraordinarily high.

The book covers were used to display the different linguistic representations of melancholy. These reflected differently in the changing colors.



Image 49: Photograph of the book (covers), 2010

## AFTERWARDS

The books displayed were the direct result of my interpretation of the cultural aspects of depression, and the terms that had been discussed in the Bowring book (Bowring, 2008). The projection lens illuminated the titles of ennui, *toska*, *saldude*, ..., and lit them color by color. The effect was almost too subtle though, yet the people that took the time to observe carefully seemed to find it quite compelling.

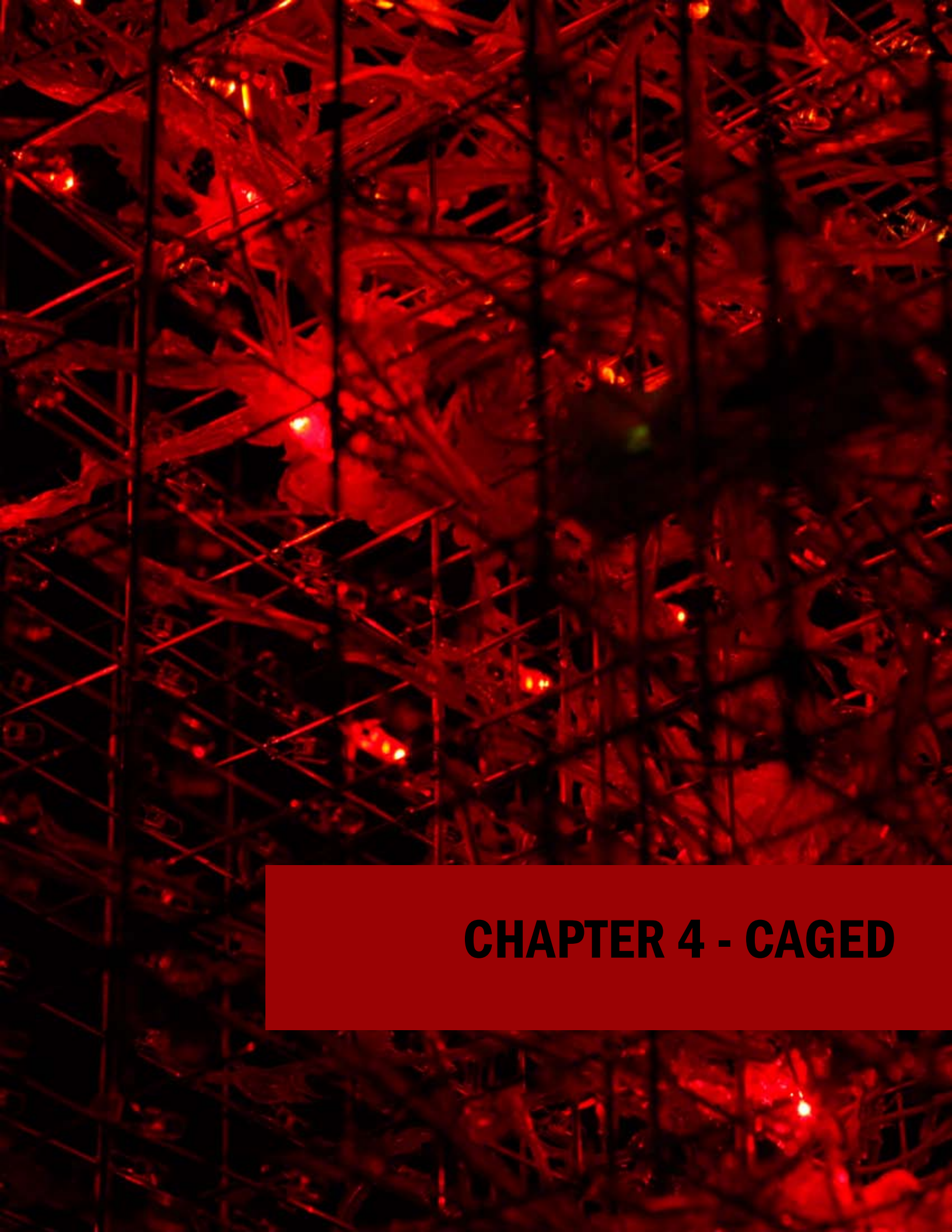
In the end there were pieces of *melancholy* that I didn't care for. It has taken a distance both physically and emotionally to realize this, a distance I try to provide with most of my work before showing with only limited success. In this case, time would have told me that I should have stuck to my concept of a reflection of the spectrum of mood and not just depression. It was a change under the influence of a disordered mood - my decision making process was at the very least flawed. A project I am currently working on, one that will probably not complete until after this thesis is finished, reuses the sculpture in a manner true to my original intentions. I look forward to the day of seeing my concept healthy and complete.



Images 50-53: Views from the *Interpolations Show, Rotor II, 2010*







## **CHAPTER 4 - CAGED**

ANGER

hollow echo of the clocks movements  
darkness regulates small motion  
watch outside  
indoors  
a single light starkly lights the ceiling;  
a television flickers madly.  
Buzz of electricity permeates my space  
Buzz of brain  
Clear voices streaming  
chopped thoughts as energy  
jerk uncomfortably through the night  
feeling foreign  
great distance  
strips logic  
heightens passion  
filters sleep.





## CHAPTER 4 CAGED

It's a different thing altogether to write about anger in the cold light of day, months after the heat of the experience. Of course, I can still remember – who can't identify anger whether or not they are actively participant in the emotion, but the memory and the actual experience are severed irrevocably by detachment inviolate. There is no true compromise to the fact that a later recital is no more than a shadow of a facsimile of the true emotion; no more related than a beach photograph is to the bodily experience of standing near the sea.

Even considering this, there are glimmers of truth to be found here. Entries from my journal, written in the heat of the moment are clear indicators of the language of my own anger. Poems thrown together during these times may not be well crafted or necessarily coherent, yet reflect



Images 55-56: *Caged*, 2010

feeling. While these reflections are confined strictly to language and only describe in limited scope the feeling, they do convey the pathways, logic and direction in which my mind sorts its process. More important to this telling though and more real, is the artwork *Caged*. As a representation of the vision of that anger, it is an attempt to characterize the actual possession of anger, an attempt to explain visually the color, feeling; the internal scream of anger.

As I worked on the piece I would occasionally catch a glimpse of the emotion of anger. As I built upon the nervous structure encased in silicon, I felt the connection and energy that anger incurs – fleeting, violent, rational and irrational.

I have always found anger to be inclusive in manic depression. Many of the negatives associated in the disorder have the potential to result in anger rather than laughter or tears. Frustration, rapidity of thought, and lack of patience often result in the flash of red hot annoyance. Despair and anguish

turn to a range of anger from a resentful anger to a lashing out at the world. Anger has been the bane of many an extreme personality, including my own; whether in expression or concealment. Although many times I would be seen as intense or passionate in my arguments, I am (in my own cultural context) generally civil, and don't snap often. Sometimes I am surprised to hear people call me easy going or positive; perhaps I may come off that way occasionally; but internally nothing could be farther from the truth. To me, anger is a daily companion that requires watchful management, only let out of it's box occasionally and when reason admits its necessity or there is no witness. That however, is the everyday anger, probably best termed annoyance. Bad drivers. Inefficient systems. Being on hold. Cable television operators. Unclear directions. People who leave cabinets and drawers open. Airlines. These are the ingredients of everyday anger, and I have been informed that for most people many of these items would be nothing more than a minor irritation. At times, they can be a bit more than that for me but I cope.

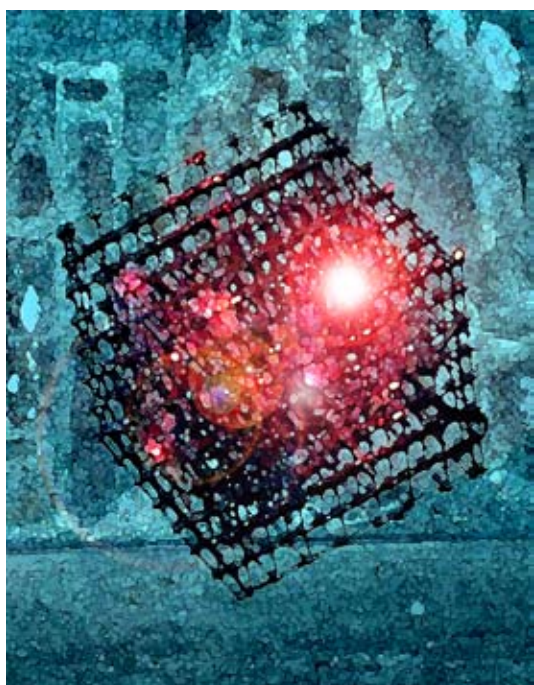


Image 57: *Caged*, 2010

The anger that inspired *Caged* would be at a whole new level – the kind of anger that burns and grows, remaining internal but flashing dangerously at the smallest provocation. When those occurrences happen that interfere with the basic methods and structure of life, challenging basic self esteem and eroding confidence in native ability – the resulting rage can either extend the damage or heal the soul. That is the anger *Caged* is to portray; the state where the smallest incident provokes a response.

Just as some incidents in life divide time others flow seamlessly without notice. Without the anger and emotion of the former to stir up the status quo, would life be dull? Or would the field be more open to creative thought and contemplation? Even considering the consequences, I prefer the former – change inspires creativity. However, follow up in time and space providing a period of tranquility is necessary for the creativity to surface. A time separate from stress is important for the mind to filter between the acts of madness that life can present, and begin to simplify or streamline thoughts. Images and ideas are the by-products of these times – spit out of a reorganizing mind structure almost as an afterthought of the turmoil being processed.

# TEXT

***“Make me mad. Piss me off. Shout me down. Let it ALL out. Throw a fit. Lose your temper. Insult me. Let me have it. Go on, get shitty. Scream. Take your ball and go home. Vent. Try and stop me. That’s right, have a temper tantrum. Bitch me out. Yell at me. Anger me. But beware... I have a temper too.”***

*Anger is power. Anger is motive. Anger is trapped. Or not.*

*Red, focused anger. Responsive, lashing back. My projects over the last two years have all dealt with mood extremes and the effect of society on the individual. I can give you the reasons and inspirations for both the subject matter and the medium in a five minute blurb, but upon reflection of the work should you consider my circumstances, or your own?*

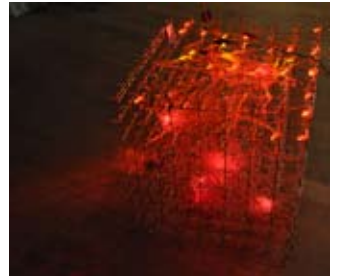
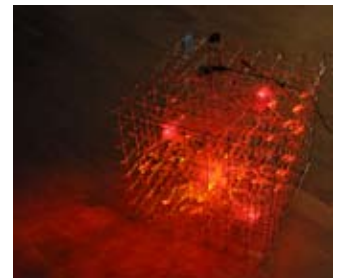
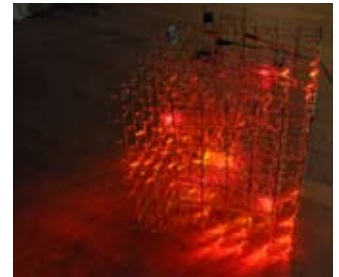
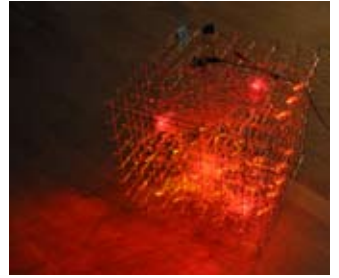
*Look within yourself. Take criticism, digest it, swallowing only those pieces making sense in a way important to you personally. Spit the rest out like a bad taste. Personally, if I wanted to work for someone, to follow orders and take directions, this isn’t the path I would have chosen. When I become famous I will rewrite this and graciously thank those under whose guidance I became what I am. Until then it’s mine to hold or to crush.*

*Some people inspire with their thoughts and desires. Sometimes they frighten. Most times they bore or anger with their analytical pigeonholing of who we are, where we are placed, what we deserve. More people need to spend more time in thought, carefully considering their actions and the resulting consequences. While it’s not my job to judge or dictate others, it is important for me to reflect and compare my own thoughts with differing opinions, and portray my conclusions in my work. Caged, as part of my Interpolations project has been an attempt to portray personality in a digital manner. Separated into electrical pulses and impulses, coarse and beautiful. Personalities absorbing, personalities adjusting, personalities rejecting and responding. Human in essence. yet taking into account what programs us, motivates us. Myself - and by extension - us. Where there is one question, one spark of rage, there are thousands. Just Google it, discover your lack of uniqueness. Art is repetition with an occasional new take on the same old story. Myself, I try to lose myself in that vision, make it personal. Whatever that really is.*

*Do I even want to be part of the art world? With its boxing and categorizing. Do I want to be poked and prodded, in turn courageous and reluctant? Do I want to slog through the mud that sticks to so many, weighing their vision by necessity. Some days I want to get out and show them, conquer, many more days I want to roll into a ball and sleep. Often, I want to scream.*

*That’s my story. What’s yours?*

***“Gör mig förbannad. Brülle mich nieder. Избичуй ме. Desfógate conmigo. Gjør meg pissesur. Ξεκούφανέ. ریگب و مولج ینوت یم هگا. Yürü git işine! Anna tulla kaikki vaan. Skitförbannad. Versuch’s und stopp mich. Tokförbannad. Δώστου να καταλάβει. Delirtme beni! Дери се на мене. Anger me.”***



Images 58-63: Caged, 2010

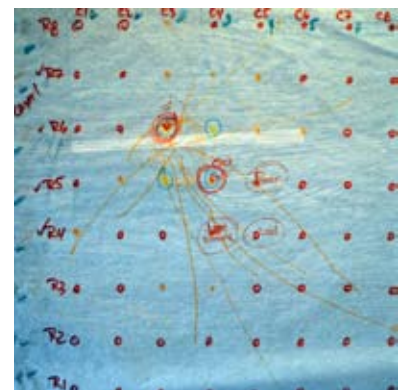
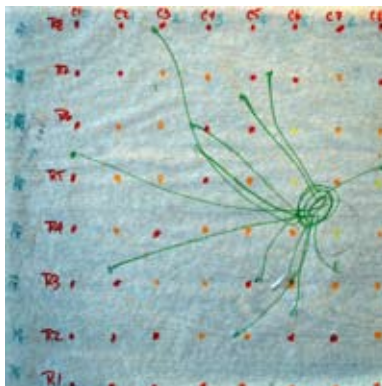


This doesn't happen (at least to me) while the adrenaline is flowing wildly, but when I separate and find the place to absorb. I have to recognize the by-products of absorption, and in many cases record the inside as my mind races to accept the outside – or I lose the thoughts and ideas as fast as they came.

After a month of turmoil and tension a period of peace and clarity opened up in late January resulting in the acceptance of my thesis material within my self, including the possibility of negative consequences. A small decision over a lengthy process– it opened the floodgates and allowed me to think in a different, less critical manner of my self and my methods. This was partially allowed by the formation of a new seed, a satisfying kernel of concept. Able to relax, sleep... instead of being plagued by insecurities and those minor daily difficulties that absorbed so much energy, I could turn my thoughts to my real work, work I poured much of my soul into. Work that, in a period of anger, had taken a backseat for over a month. As I wrote the kernel slowly begins to grow and grab hold of my heart in the background. Anger is a part of life. Unfairness, injustice, inequity, malice and bad intent are a part of life. Hatred and disgust are a part of life. No matter how much you try and shove all the negatives away, they creep in occasionally, disruptive and uncomfortable. From inside, from outside. I would reflect these actions and emotions. From the inside, from the outside. I would build my cage, and my release.

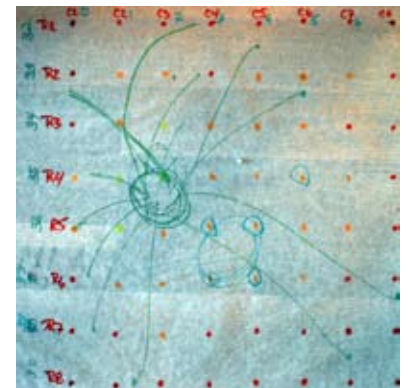
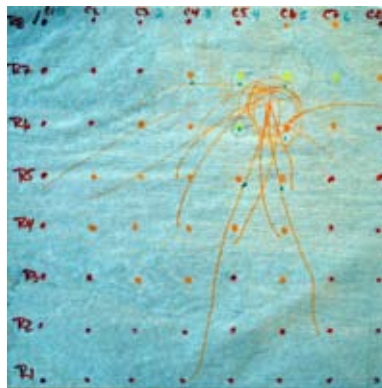
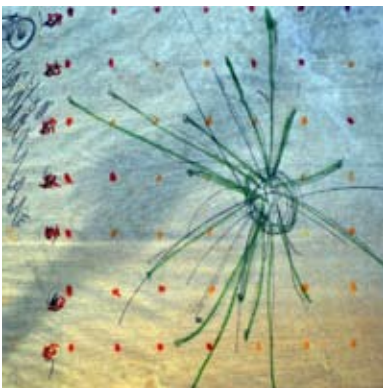
*Caged* is a wire-framed cube of red lights, well structured, confining. In direct contrast to the highly organized light matrix, the inner depths portray a complex and organic neural system, responding to its environment with ever changing patterns of light.

*Caged* was built from LEDs. Using copper wire stripped from cable and straightened carefully, the only connections between the wires themselves would be that of the LEDs. The actual process of putting it together, although made easier by the creation of a fixture was tediously slow but methodical. When I initially envisioned the project I saw it as much larger. The progression on this was very different from my other projects though, and as I thought more and more about the anger itself, it became for me something compressed, something to hide. Something that would fit within a small space, confin-



ing, burning silently. Not generally something that would remain exposed in a large open area, That kind of exposure may cause a flash of violence, but would burn out too quickly, it needed nurturing, and careful feeding to stoke it to a constant burn.

To reflect on the anger and cherish it within is the purpose of *Caged*. The program feeds it regular morsels to keep it alive, focus it's attention. Occasional thoughts transmitted to the structure flare activity independently of it's environment. Who among us has not felt anger from the simple memories of an earlier event, changing our attitude or expression enough that those close to us will question if we are alright? Or lain in bed rehashing the weeks events and frustrations? But the real action, or could it be called reaction would be to outside stress. Others, not aware of the situation, who intrude within our anger, our anger taking itself out upon the innocent. The simple sound of conversation causing a flash of irritation. *Caged* reacts to this directly – but only for a short period of time, calming down, quieting quickly. Direct interruption or interrogation, loud reprimands, direct anger directed to the work prolongs the activity proportionately, even exponentially. Even so, an occasional random break will occur, resetting the emotion, like a stroke of reason or rational thought; a reality check.





# THE PHYSICAL PROCESS



The aesthetics needed to be worked out first – a complicated system of negotiation between technical reality and aesthetic determination ensued. My husband, an engineer specializing in electronics, spent what seemed like vast amounts of time putting my artistic aspirations into place. After hours of analysis, bargaining, even fights, we were able to come to grips with a design that realized the essential elements of the work I had initially laid out. In the end, the difference between what I intended and the final project were slight; demonstrating an improvement in my skills and understanding a big part in the process, and his adjustment to working in an art environment.

It became readily apparent that the 512 LEDs would compromise over 1000 solder joints (I wanted them spaced further apart in this project so they would not work out in a simplistic design as they had in the helix). Separation between the vertical and horizontal conductors had to be maintained. Special care had to be taken in the numbering and tracking of rows and columns due to the way the hardware was to interface with the micro-processor and the software, and also to track and enable the placement of the different colors in specific positions. The only practical way to do this was with a fixture. The fixture had a rather simple design, nails in a board, spaced to allow the wires to lie in ‘tracks’, with spare metal from a previous project propping up the vertical wires above the horizontal to allow for the regular attachment of the LEDs to each wire. Ultimately the LEDs were the glue that attached the wires into the grid.

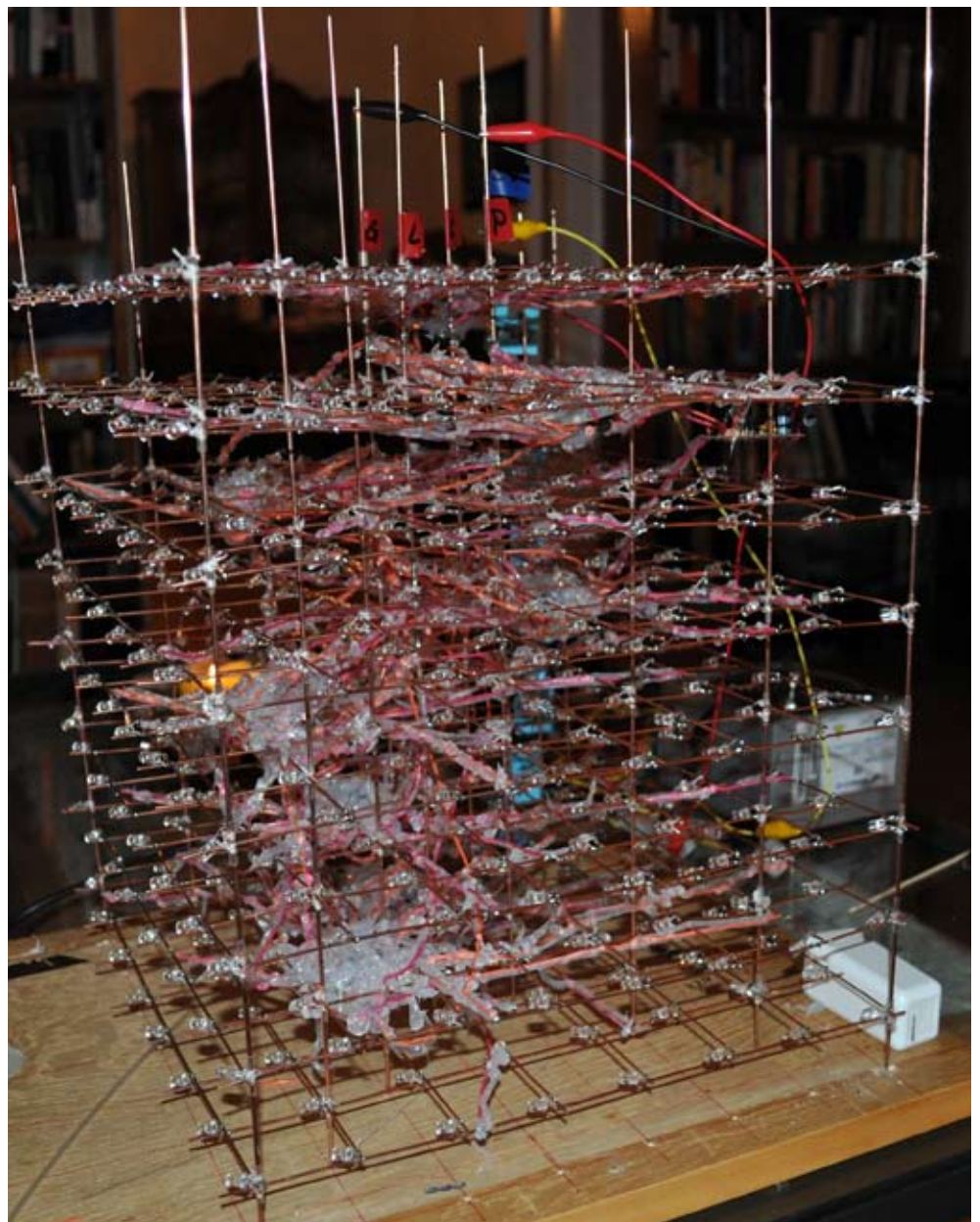
Once the individual matrices were complete the circuit boards were designed to fit within the small spaces available. After the layout of the circuit board is designed, a negative copy is printed onto transparent plastic (such as that used in the past on overhead projectors). Once the printout is ready, the process for making circuit boards is identical to the process used to burn and etch copper plates for printing, in fact, the material commonly used for copperplate is actually manufactured for printing circuit boards. The essential difference is the depth of the etching. After they were attached to the layers and the wiring arranged and soldered the first tests of the electronics were run – a process that brought out remarkably few problems and adjustments.

Next came the process of attachment of the layers together. Another fixture had to be built to accomplish this. This fixture was slightly more complicated; it needed to allow the for successive layers to maintain equal spacing yet maintain accessibility for the detailed work that would need to be done as the process progressed. The design for this fixture took a little more time, but in the end worked beautifully.

Before the attachment began, however, the process of adding the silicon began. In comparison to the process so far, this was fun. Able to play, I got a little carried away, and as I found out later, prematurely covering the boards that had been made (and tested) earlier.

For support in the cube, welding rods were used vertically, and heat shrink

tubing was used to prevent shorts. The levels were attached one by one, and dental floss was used to attach the heat shrunk support rods. Dental floss was used due to its maintenance of the knots in the tying process... all together there were 320 knots tied; a complex and time consuming project made somewhat simpler by its waxed surface. 16 support rods were used in the initial process. The original plans called for a complete set of 64, but for the sake of what would come next only an X pattern was used to allow accessibility. As each layer was tied on the software was modified to test the current number of layers, this prevented having to go back and work in-between densely fitted layers to repair any flaws. Unfortunately this didn't fix the one major problem when I later blew a chip by shorting 12 v to a 5 v layer wire late in the process. After each layer was attached the addition of silicon was completed. After all eight layers were on and the problems fixed, an additional 24 were added for both aesthetics and mechanical support.



Images 69-70 : Construction, 2010



It should be noted here that to reduce the amount of wires required for power, ground, signal, etc... four of the support rods were used to carry them. Ground, power, clock and data load, as well as 12 v to drive the LEDs themselves were carried through the center-most rods.

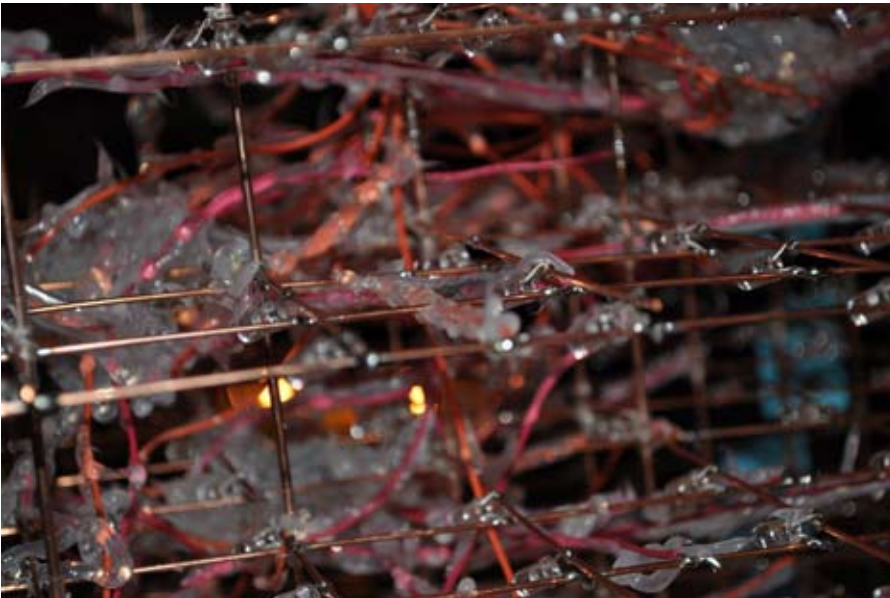
Next came the software. The program that I had modified was mainly successful – with one exception – a rather dumb one. I had assigned a different pin to the load function and simply forgot to make the very simple change – this caused random flashing and all kinds of weirdness. After much annoyance and a short session of possibly bipolar overreaction, I figured out what was wrong and made the necessary change. Voila. It was beautiful.

Problems with clip leads going to the power supply caused several shorts. I referred to the blown chip earlier, it was buried deep in the structure and

caused a lot of grief when the time came to replace it. Once was enough and I should have learned my lesson. But I did it a second time – at least this one lay near the surface. Another hair raising incident.

*Caged* includes 44.8 meters of 1.5 mm square copper wire, 28.8 m copper brazing rod, 73 m small gauge wire for the signal wires from the boards, to the LEDs, 528 LEDs, 80 m dental floss, 5.5 m shrink tubing, 1100 solder connections, 8 LM3915 matrix drivers, 4 microphones, an assortment of capacitors, resistors, and various other electronic components, 2 transistor sound level circuits, 1 boarduino, and surprisingly little blood loss.

All in all it was a rather smooth ride.



Images 71-72 : *Construction at Röda Sten, 2010*

## AFTERWARDS

As I spent time in Röda Sten, where *Caged* went up for display in the “*Clouds of Witness*” show (2010), I could hear another piece of work moaning in the distance, and I watched people wander by. It was a good location for the show, and the work itself. A woman stands in front of *Caged*, trying out different languages, coughing, clearing her throat, even singing to the piece. Finally she shouts. *Caged* responds well – this is what the work is all about.

As with several of the works I have previously went over in this thesis, I feel that *Caged* needs a bit of explanation. The curator for the show disallowed text – this caused a dilemma on my part – how to encourage vocalization. In the end the issue was solved rather simply with the addition of an arrow directing traffic up the stairs. *Klagokör* (see following page) translates to *Complaint Choir*, a phenomenon originating from Stockholm – it is exactly what it sounds like. Under the Swedish name was the English Complaints. After watching the confusion of the opening, I did add a couple of graffiti type words to emphasize the vocal aspect to those not familiar with the choir. This, especially when combined with the text in the brochure ended up being fairly effective – although I strongly prefer text being allowed.

The setting itself, at the top of a steel staircase, along a worn concrete and brick wall and tucked into a dark stairwell was ideal. Normally closed off, the ‘dead end’ staircase invited exploration. The darkness of the stairwell emphasized the lights in the cube. During its creation, as the piece got smaller and more condensed in size I had always pictured a small, tucked away area, dim or dark – the interior recesses of an individual. That particular stairway itself at Röda Sten had intrigued me from the beginning – I originally planned for the work to go under the metal stairs but soon realized that the space was actually too cramped and people would have to crouch to really get at it. Upon a closer inspection the top was much better alternative. The only problem I ran into was the echo created by the large masonry and concrete areas of the building – even with program adjustments to raise the sound thresholds it still picked up typical life sounds that in a more deadened involvement would not register. I will look into some sort of acoustic tile to absorb this type of sound if I am presented with a similar problem in the future.

These reflections have all been on the installation itself – as far as *Caged* goes, I am quite pleased with the piece. On a personal basis I look at its structure and the silicon within, and for now, I am satisfied.



Image 73 : Construction at Röda Sten, 2010



← COMPLAINTS  
SCREAM KLAGOKÖR →

Image 74-75 : Exhibition at Röda Sten, 2010





# **CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSIONS**

## Final Thoughts

I'm afraid this last bit isn't very academic. But this whole process has been about the emotions, and the finishing of this process hasn't been exempt from analysis. I am ready to move on, but not without some final reflections.

It's difficult to know where to begin. I sit in Paris, across the fountain directly in front of the Louvre. It's a warm spring evening only a week before the due date for the thesis. Every cliché conceivable has floated through my mind as I walked through the park to get here. My placement here and now was no accident – although there was no predetermined plan to sit here and it's almost as though I was drawn here to write.

I spent the last few hours on a park bench overlooking a children's carousel and a cafe. I thumbed through my journals from this winter, pulling passages and quotes to add into this thesis, searching for overlooked notes and references. What I found instead was evidence. Evidence of instability and doubt, success and excitement. Perhaps personality – but also that added edge of extremes. But mostly I found commitment and ideas. Even in the lowest lows there was an expression of frustration in myself and my world. Frustration in my inability to communicate – in words – in art. Why be frustrated if there is no desire? Why frustration if there is no hope? And the ideas – ideas are the making of a future.

I didn't go in the Louvre this trip. I didn't have to, I'd been there before, overwhelmed by history. Instead, I concentrated on more contemporary museums and galleries, the Centre George Pompidou, the Fondation Cartier. As artists, we represent history – from cave paintings in the Louvre to the new work in the Foundation. Much of the work of that long history lies before me in this grand palace, this Louvre. The art that lies within transcends time, in most cases better remembered even than the historical events and times that inspired or motivated them. Certainly they have outlived the era of kings that built the building before me – I like to think that they will outlive capitalism, socialism ... outlive any of our current day systems or ideals in the same manner.

And we will continue to add to the body of work. Where a little voice inside me says "Stay low – you are insignificant" a big voice argues "Why not?"

Outside of a few academics, no one really gives a damn if Michelangelo was bipolar. The focus on Da Vinci is on his breadth of work, not the mental state behind it. Okay, so there are works like *Scream* that, well, scream in anguish, there's little mistaking Edvard Munch's pain. (Okay – so that's not in the Louvre – wrong era, wrong country). But even upon viewing *Scream*, don't more people see themselves, recognizing the possibilities, rather than only picturing the artist?

I see my work as a mirror. Let the viewer take their own impression; they will anyway. One thing I noticed as I looked through the year's journals

was that, with small exception, the most joyful entries were those in which I felt a connection, a communion with my work. The three pieces I have written about; *SELF*, *melancholy*, and *Caged*, have all struck chords deep within myself. Taking this into account it is impossible for me to judge them impartially. Although I feel right in the work I have done, all I can do is to let them go, to sink or swim on their own.

*SELF* was a revelation – an unexpected shock. It began the process of self awareness. I'm older than most students and having had a rather practical university education (biochemistry), then a family, it never seemed the right time to reflect on myself and my differences. *SELF* opened up the distant perspective within; it's different seeing from without, even when a person you love is bipolar – it is a different experience to look internally. Even after the projects creation it took a withdrawal during a period of isolation to discover what I had done and open me up to the following year's work.

Although I consider melancholy a failure in the way it has been so far displayed, I don't consider the project finished. In envision something more – an installation to create moods. I see painted silks that will brush across the viewer. The projector will be a center point – it's own beauty adding the essence of melancholy – the sweetness of sadness, of mood.

*Caged* reflected something more specific, sidetracking for the moment the original purpose of the project. As I stated earlier, anger is not an essential part of bipolar disorder in the same sense as mania and depression, but it is a necessary by-product. It's difficult though to judge an individual on their anger – it is a reflection of so many things. The irrationality of schizophrenia, the self absorption of Azpergers, a just and rational response to an unfair or offending situation. It almost felt wrong to include it in the project – yet anger is another extension of mood. It was playing a large part in my life at the time and was therefore important.

My fourth piece, and every bit as important to me, is this thesis. Where people will take with them what they will from the artwork, weak or strong, the emotions will be their own. This thesis is an expression of myself. It is a permanent recording of an emotive soul reaching out in hope and despair. Where I would have dismissed a line such as that as dramatic and over-inflated a few years ago, I have now come to accept it in full. After all, I am dramatic and over inflated. High and low. Normal and mad. Discouraged and driven.

Turning my back on the Louvre, I look towards the Arch de Triumph. Napoleon Bonaparte's accomplishments could certainly be seen in a broad spectrum – from the sheer beauty of his contributions to Paris, leaving behind an even stronger 'City of Light'; to the horrors of wars he waged, inflicting misery across several continents. Napoleon was most likely Bipolar (Hershman, 1994).

In no way am I trying to paint myself for good or evil in the light of such as Napoleon Bonaparte. What I am attempting to get across though, is my ability to create and contribute; not despite, but *inclusive* of extreme moods and their attributes. Considering that the last couple of months have been firmly centered in the 'normal' zone, at times I have missed the concentration of life on either end. As the park closes and I leave my inspir-

ing seat between art and Napoleon, I have to smile at my path against the setting sun. As small as I am in the face of that grand and inspired setting my shadow is huge.

After a much belated period of self introspection I am realizing a new beginning armed with not only a new set of tools; but a vast self knowledge to help in visualizing my art and my life. It's like wearing glasses – take them off and the world is vague and cloudy – even a little comforting. But put them on and you can see the leaves on the tree – the dirt on the street – or the lights in Paris. Through my new lenses, I can see myself and my world clearer now, a new way of living art, and I will embrace my new vision.

My next works will simply be created as an artist. This chapter in my life is now complete and I will be moving on - back to the United States - back to my studio. Although the last two years will influence me, I can focus now on the causes and conditions near and dear to me and create freely using my new set of tools alongside more traditional means. I hope to continue with sculpture - one thing I know is that my next project will involve vast amounts of water and sunshine. I will continue with my artwork - eyes wide open and self fully engaged.

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# ELIMINATION OR CELEBRATION

## A Culture of Fear

Where clinical depression has gained widespread recognition, knowledge and acceptance throughout most of western culture, manic-depression, or bipolar disorder still remains relatively unknown, or at the least, widely misunderstood. In many cases, the general perception is of debilitating insanity. This condition is sometimes so generally feared that at times there have been attempts to 'breed' it out. During the misguided Eugenics phase in the US sterilization was common practice in many of the country's asylums (Kevles 1985). In Germany "*Tens of thousands of mentally ill individuals, including many with manic-depressive illness, were sterilized or killed during the Third Reich*" (Jamison 1993, 8). Even today in some provinces of China involuntary sterilization of those diagnosed with hereditary mental illness is the law (Kristof 1991). And now, more indirectly, the growing emergence of genetic testing along with the new-found genetic markers could very well end up having the same effect of eventually eliminating the manic-depressive gene pool.

The current treatment schemes are a vast improvement over past methods, but still have drawbacks. Medication is the primary line of defense, and along with psychotherapy does help a majority of patients. Drug therapy is used to regulate and stabilize mood swings, whereas psychotherapy works on acceptance of past actions and consequences and to deal with taking the medicine itself.

One major problem with creative personalities is spelled out rather clearly by Jamison:

*"The fact that lithium, antidepressants, and anticonvulsants are now the standard of care for manic-depressive illness (and psychotherapy or psychoanalysis alone, without medication, is usually considered to be malpractice) raises particularly interesting questions about the treatment of writers and artists. Some artists resist entirely the idea of taking medication to control their mood swings and behaviors; interestingly, however, there is some evidence that, as a group, artists and writers disproportionately seek out psychiatric care; certainly many-including Byron, Shumann, Tennyson, van Gogh, Fitzgerald, and Lowell-repeatedly sought help from their physicians. Other writers and artists stop taking their medications because they miss the highs or the emotional intensity associated with their illness, or because they feel that drug side effects interfere with the clarity and rapidity of their thought or diminish their levels of enthusiasm, emotion, and energy."* (Jamison 1993, 7-8).

Another such drawback is the diagnosis itself. Where Bipolar I is fairly obvious and usually requires hospitalization, Bipolar II and cyclothymia are not as easy to define. The difference between the bipolar disorders and clinical depression are only in the identification of the manic or hypomanic phases, and since most people don't seek medical help for being 'up', this is often overlooked and there is a misdiagnosis made. The medications for each problem is different, and at times the misdiagnosis can actually be dangerous.

A third and probably the most important problem is the reliability of medi-

*“Preimplantation genetic diagnosis (PID) is often seen as an improvement upon prenatal testing. I argue that PID may exacerbate the eugenic features of prenatal testing and make possible an expanded form of free-market eugenics. The current practice of prenatal testing is eugenic in that its aim is to reduce the numbers of people with genetic disorders. Due to social pressures and eugenic attitudes held by clinical geneticists in most countries, it results in eugenic outcomes even though no state coercion is involved. I argue that technological advances may soon make PID widely accessible. Because abortion is not involved, and multiple embryos are available, PID is radically more effective as a tool of genetic selection. It will also make possible selection on the basis of non-pathological characteristics, leading, potentially, to a full-blown free-market eugenics. For these reasons, I argue that PID should be strictly regulated.”(David S. King 1999)*

cation in individual cases. In most cases it takes vast amounts of time to adjust and medicate properly, and the need for certain combinations and amounts can change due to many factors, some quite unpredictable.

## **New Treatment Possibilities**

The possibilities for new treatments have been opened up by the Human Genome Project, and subsequent research. The Human Genome Project was a 15 year effort coordinated by the US Department of Energy and The National Institutes of Health. The project goals were wide sweeping, and the fast development of technology allowed for its early completion in 2003. Since then sweeping advances have been made in genetic research, and genetics constitute the new frontiers of medicine.

Once researchers identify the genes that cause bipolar disorder (and I need to point out that at least four of these have already been identified, making it an incredibly complex job in comparison with a ‘single gene’ condition even in the unlikely event that there were no more links discovered) there are several ways to influence genetics to prevent the disease. The first would be in simple prediction by screening, something already being done for a number of conditions and probably, in the case of bipolar, not far in the future. Second would be to manipulate the genes in the individuals themselves. Third, and most dangerous, would be manipulation of the sex genes. This would not only change the individual itself, but all successive generations. While science is still a ways from this scenario, research has continued at a staggering rate into the identification of the genes thought to control many diseases/disorders, including bipolar disorder. In a 2001 paper, then Senator Tom Daschle addressed the potential pitfalls of genetic screening:

*“One of the most challenging areas of policy development involves genetic testing in the reproductive sciences. Research advances in this area have been remarkable, but are fraught with controversy. Couples considering pregnancy now have many options for genetic screening. In fact, those undergoing in vitro fertilization may now opt to have their embryos genetically screened before implantation. This can be helpful to couples whose offspring are known to be at risk for an inherited disease. Although some view this technology as a wonderful breakthrough, critics argue that it borders on eugenics.” (Daschle 2001)*

From some perspectives, eliminating the manic-depressive from the gene pool would be a victory over an important mental illness. One can easily imagine parents choosing against a condition such as bipolar disorder, after all, many bipolar children and individuals are different, often hard to raise people with a lasting mental condition that could even end in a painful tragedy such as suicide.

It is only when the research is over and the facts become more common knowledge than they are currently that these questions will be raised and solutions sought by more than a few ethicists. Simply a closer look will reveal the obvious dark side of these practices. Wholly apart from religious or moral convictions, evidence points toward discouraging elimination of

Manic-Depression, once consideration of the varying degrees, the cultural and life benefits than can be a part of this disorder and the development of treatments to help those caught in the more dangerous and damaging ends of the bipolar spectrum.

On the more personal side – my research into manic depression last summer actually began with the work being done in genetics, and the complexities of the Post-Human Genome Project world. Although I abandoned it as a main topic rather early in the process, I have always known where I stand on the issues involved. The decision I made on these issues was a foregone conclusion, but even so it is not as simple a problem nor solution as it would seem on the surface. For myself, this thesis would not be complete unless I included this topic.

Other artists have expressed their concerns with the current trends in their artwork. Brian Ballengee's work *Species Reclamation* is using genetic breeding techniques to show the results of habitat degradation (Ballengée, 1999).

One particularly significant project is Eduardo Kac's project *Genesis*. "*Scientists may underestimate their lack of knowledge, be diverted by the profit motive, and move into controversial fields...*" (Wilson, 2010, p. 21)

Back in the early 1980s Eduardo Kac and Joe Davis were the first to modify DNA to carry messages. In their case, the organism used was E. Coli, and it spurred much resistance at the time, although it is accepted scientific practice today. In 1999 Kac portrayed the artist-modified bacteria in a wonderful piece of artwork, *Genesis*. "*The key element of Genesis is an "artist's gene," a synthetic gene created by translating a sentence from the biblical book of Genesis into Morse Code, and converting the Morse Code into DNA base pairs. The sentence reads: "Let man have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." This sentence was chosen for what it implies about the dubious notion--divinely sanctioned--of supremacy over nature. Crucial in Genesis is the way Kac interpreted the meaning of the word "dominion" from the biblical passage, creating, through viewer participation, a powerful symbol for change. According to Kac, Morse code was chosen because, as the first example of the use of radiotelegraphy, it represents the dawn of the information age--the genesis of global communication. The "Genesis" gene is incorporated into glowing bacteria and projected as live video in the gallery and streams over the Internet, where the public is encouraged to intervene and monitor the evolution of the work.*" (Osthoff, 2001)

In my own case, this entire sequence has been my personal expression of my feelings, and a defense of my individuality.

I am afraid of where the current research trends will lead. Although I would never even attempt to talk a person out of treatment, the potential to remove what for myself has been not only a curse but a blessing, the driving force of much of my personality and my achievements, from not only myself but my descendents would be appalling. Forever is forever.

For myself, of course I would choose life rather than death, or non existence. But even that has loopholes so big a semi could roll through them.



So many manic depressives do choose death. For them , suicide is an attractive alternative to the hell that manic depressives sometimes endure. Treatment is good. Changing an individual life for the better is wonderful. But manic depression comes in many forms and flavors, and presents itself in varying degrees. Forever is forever.

But what about being different. Still alive, but taking away the extremes. First of all, I could do this with drugs. I am certain it would be a more comfortable existence. For the time though I am doing fine on my own. Personally, even an option to change my own personal genes would be frightening. But perhaps this scenario would in severe cases eliminate so much pain. I actually have no objections there – I think there are times when it would be very appropriate and life saving. But forever is forever.

A major piece left out of this thesis due to privacy concerns has been my familial closeness to another individual person diagnosed with Bipolar I. So I have been on the other side of the coin, the side that I actually see as more painful and frustrating at times than anything I have spoke about regarding my own personality. Yet I would NEVER give up the love, the connection, the highs and the lows, the experience of my relationship with my bipolar loved one. To remove individuals like my family member, change them irreparably, give them NO CHOICE in the matter, is deeply disturbing. Forever is forever.

At times while I was writing this these I was about to dive off a cliff emotionally. During the writing and the creation of the artwork I had dark moments, questioning the validity of my work, even of my self. But even during those moments, I still wanted to be who I am. Perhaps in the future I may require medication again, just like a diabetic or an asthmatic. But I always want to come back to who I am, and live my life producing work that comes from my own heart and soul. This thesis, these projects, have offered me the priceless opportunity to learn, explore, and digest my own uniqueness, and my differences. If there is ever any advice that I would offer to others, it would be to educate yourself thoroughly in current knowledge (both medical and critical), the experience of others, and the exploration of self. This has been one of the most important times of my life personally; I only wish I had done it sooner. In choosing life on my terms, I wish to experience life as who and what I am, in all its variety. I celebrate my choice.

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## Appendix A - Definitions & Diagnostic Criteria

1 (Doran, 2007, p. 12)

Hypothymic temperament is characterized by a personality style or set of personality traits that include:

- increased energy and productivity
- short sleep patterns
- vivid, active, extroverted
- self assured/self confident
- strong willed
- risk taking/sensation seeking
- breaking social norms
- generous and spendthrift
- cheerful and jovial
- unusual warmth
- expansive
- robust and tireless
- irrepressible, infectious quality.

2 (Doran, 2007, p. 13)

Depressed temperament features a pattern of depressive cognitions and behavior. The depressive temperament type is:

- complaining, humorless
- critical, blaming, and derogatory toward self and others
- brooding and given to worry
- negativistic, critical, and judgmental toward others
- pessimistic, preoccupied with failure
- prone to feeling guilty and remorseful
- sluggish, passive, and has few interests
- a habitual long sleeper.

Persons with this temperament also have:

- a mood often dominated by dejection, gloominess, cheerlessness, joylessness, or unhappiness
- a poor self-concept that includes feelings of inadequacy, worthlessness, and low self-esteem.

3 (Doran, 2007, pp. 12-13)

Cyclothymic temperament is characterized by a pattern of alternation between elevated and depressive/irritable moods, cognitions, and behaviors. The individual with cyclothymic temperament normally manages to function within societal norms albeit with varying consistency and success. This temperamental type evidences some of the following traits:

- Decreased need for sleep alternating with hypersomnia
- Shaky self-esteem: naive, grandiose overconfidence alternating with periods of mental confusion
- Periods of sharpened and creative thinking alternating with periods of apathy
- Marked unevenness in the quantity and quality of productivity, often associated with unusual working hours
- Uninhibited people-seeking alternating with more introverted self-absorption
- Excessive involvement in pleasurable activities with concern for potentially painful consequences alternating with restriction of involvement in pleasurable activities and guilt over past activities
- Alternation between over optimism or exaggeration of past achievement and a pessimistic attitude toward the future, or brooding about past events
- Talkative with inappropriate laughing, joking, and punning; then, less talkative, even tearfulness or crying
- Frequent shifts in work, study, interest, or future plans
- Occasional financial extravagance
- Frequent changes in residence or geographic location
- Tendency toward promiscuity with repeated conjugal or romantic failure
- Alcohol or drugs used to control moods or to augment excitement.

4 (DSM-IV, p. 350)

### Bipolar I Disorder--Diagnostic Features

The essential feature of Bipolar I Disorder is a clinical course that is characterized by the occurrence of one or more Manic Episodes or Mixed Episodes. Often individuals have also had one or more Major Depressive Episodes. Episodes of Substance-Induced Mood Disorder (due to the direct effects of a medication, or other somatic treatments for depression, a drug of abuse, or toxin exposure) or of Mood Disorder Due to a General Medical Condition do not count toward a diagnosis of Bipolar I Disorder. In addition, the episodes are not better accounted for by Schizoaffective Disorder and are not superimposed on Schizophrenia, Schizophreniform Disorder, Delusional Disorder, or



Psychotic Disorder Not Otherwise Specified. . . .

**Bipolar II Disorder--Diagnostic Features (DSM-IV, p. 359)**

The essential feature of Bipolar II Disorder is a clinical course that is characterized by the occurrence of one or more Major Depressive Episodes accompanied by at least one Hypomanic Episode. Hypomanic Episodes should not be confused with the several days of euthymia that may follow remission of a Major Depressive Episode. Episodes of Substance- Induced Mood Disorder (due to the direct effects of a medication, or other somatic treatments for depression, a drug of abuse, or toxin exposure) or of Mood Disorder Due to a General Medical Condition do not count toward a diagnosis of Bipolar I Disorder. In addition, the episodes are not better accounted for by Schizoaffective Disorder and are not superimposed on Schizophrenia, Schizophreniform Disorder, Delusional Disorder, or Psychotic Disorder Not Otherwise Specified.

**Criteria for Major Depressive Episode (DSM-IV, p. 327)**

A. Five (or more) of the following symptoms have been present during the same 2-week period and represent a change from previous functioning; at least one of the symptoms is either (1) depressed mood or (2) loss of interest or pleasure.

Note: Do not include symptoms that are clearly due to a general medical condition, or mood-incongruent delusions or hallucinations.

1. depressed mood most of the day, nearly every day, as indicated by either subjective report (e.g., feels sad or empty) or observation made by others (e.g. appears tearful). Note: In children and adolescents, can be irritable mood.
2. markedly diminished interest or pleasure in all, or almost all, activities most of the day, nearly every day (as indicated by either subjective account or observation made by others)
3. significant weight loss when not dieting or weight gain (e.g., a change of more than 5% of body weight in a month), or decrease or increase in appetite nearly every day. Note: In children, consider failure to make expected weight gains.
4. insomnia or hypersomnia nearly every day

5. psychomotor agitation or retardation nearly every day (observable by others, not merely subjective feelings of restlessness or being slowed down)
  6. fatigue or loss of energy nearly every day
  7. feelings of worthlessness or excessive or inappropriate guilt (which may be delusional) nearly every day (not merely self-reproach or guilt about being sick)
  8. diminished ability to think or concentrate, or indecisiveness, nearly every day (either by subjective account or as observed by others)
  9. recurrent thoughts of death (not just fear of dying), recurrent suicidal ideation without a specific plan, or a suicide attempt or a specific plan for committing suicide
- B. The symptoms do not meet criteria for a Mixed Episode.
- C. The symptoms cause clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning.
- D. The symptoms are not due to the direct physiological effects of a substance (e.g., a drug of abuse, a medication) or a general medical condition (e.g., hypothyroidism).
- E. The symptoms are not better accounted for by bereavement, i.e., after the loss of a loved one, the symptoms persist for longer than 2 months or are characterized by marked functional impairment, morbid preoccupation with worthlessness, suicidal ideation, psychotic symptoms, or psychomotor retardation.

**Criteria for Manic Episode (DSM-IV, p. 332)**

- A. A distinct period of abnormally and persistently elevated, expansive, or irritable mood, lasting at least 1 week (or any duration if hospitalization is necessary).
- B. During the period of mood disturbance, three (or more) of the following symptoms have persisted (four if the mood is only irritable) and have been present to a significant degree:
1. inflated self-esteem or grandiosity
  2. decreased need for sleep (e.g., feels rested after only 3 hours of sleep)
  3. more talkative than usual or pressure to keep talking
  4. flight of ideas or subjective experience that thoughts are racing
  5. distractibility (i.e., attention too easily drawn to unimportant or irrelevant external stimuli)
  6. increase in goal-directed activity (either socially,

at work or school, or sexually) or psychomotor agitation

7. excessive involvement in pleasurable activities that have a high potential for painful consequences (e.g., engaging in unrestrained buying sprees, sexual indiscretions, or foolish business investments)

C. The symptoms do not meet criteria for a Mixed Episode.

D. The mood disturbance is sufficiently severe to cause marked impairment in occupational functioning or in usual social activities or relationships with others, or to necessitate hospitalization to prevent harm to self or others, or there are psychotic features.

E. The symptoms are not due to the direct physiological effects of a substance (e.g., a drug of abuse, a medication, or other treatments) or a general medical condition (e.g., hyperthyroidism).

Note: Manic-like episodes that are clearly caused by somatic antidepressant treatment (e.g., medication, electroconvulsive therapy, light therapy) should not count toward a diagnosis of Bipolar I Disorder.

#### **Criteria for Mixed Episode (DSM-IV, p. 335)**

A. The criteria are met both for a Manic Episode and for a Major Depressive Episode (except for duration) nearly every day during at least a 1-week period.

B. The mood disturbance is sufficiently severe to cause marked impairment in occupational functioning or in usual social activities or relationships with others, or to necessitate hospitalization to prevent harm to self or others, or there are psychotic features.

C. The symptoms are not due to the direct physiological effects of a substance (e.g., a drug of abuse, a medication, or other treatment) or a general medical condition (e.g., hyperthyroidism).

#### **Criteria for Hypomanic Episode (DSM-IV, p. 338)**

A. A distinct period of persistently elevated, expansive, or irritable mood, lasting throughout at least 4 days, that is clearly different from the usual nondepressed mood.

B. During the period of mood disturbance, three (or more) of the following symptoms have persisted (four if the mood is only irritable) and have been present to a significant degree:

1. inflated self-esteem or grandiosity
2. decreased need for sleep (e.g., feels rested after only three hours of sleep)
3. more talkative than usual or pressure to keep talking
4. flight of ideas or subjective experience that thoughts are racing

5. distractibility (i.e., attention too easily drawn to unimportant or irrelevant external stimuli)

6. increase in goal-directed activity (either socially, at work or school, or sexually) or psychomotor agitation

7. excessive involvement in pleasurable activities that have a high potential for painful consequences (e.g., engaging in unrestrained buying sprees, sexual indiscretions, or foolish business investments)

C. The episode is associated with an unequivocal change in functioning that is uncharacteristic of the person when not symptomatic.

D. The disturbance in mood and the change in functioning are observable by others.

E. The episode is not severe enough to cause marked impairment in social or occupational functioning, or to necessitate hospitalization, and there are no psychotic features.

F. The symptoms are not due to the direct physiological effects of a substance (e.g., a drug of abuse, a medication, or other treatment) or a general medical condition (e.g., hyperthyroidism).

Note: Hypomanic-like episodes that are clearly caused by somatic antidepressant treatment (e.g., medication, electroconvulsive therapy, light therapy) should not count toward a diagnosis of Bipolar II Disorder.

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