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Metamorphosis

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METAMORPHOSIS

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Masters in Fine Art

in

The Department of Art

by

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Abstract

“Metamorphosis” is a product of the symbiotic relationship between my paintings and written narrative and consists of large-scale paintings and written components informed by my research of children’s art, outsider art, Louisiana’s landscapes, performance, artists of influence, mythology, and spiritual texts. The paintings are informed by my own sensory experiences of local landscapes. I utilize these immersions in nature and subsequent studies to create a mode of communication for my narrative to unfold on the canvas. The exhibition consists of seven large scale mixed media paintings and one smaller study mounted on the walls of the gallery space.

METAMORPHOSIS. An Essay

August in Louisiana is like a smothering encounter from nature; Her moist body swaddles me in an embrace, her heavy breath swirls hot on my cheeks, and her loud hum buzzes through my ears and into my head. My thesis work depicts climactic moments that take place within the context of an allegorical tale about a woman born from a cypress tree in a swamp. She undergoes a metamorphosis while embarking on an odyssey riddled with the presence of internal and external forces. “Metamorphosis” is a product of the symbiotic relationship between my paintings and written narrative and consists of large-scale paintings and written components informed by my research of children’s art, outsider art, Louisiana’s landscapes, performance, artists of influence, mythology, and spiritual texts.

Seven large scale pieces depict elements of the written narrative which takes place within a fantastical landscape inspired by my own study of Louisiana swamps, bayous, rivers, and lakes. These diverse landscapes become the setting for the characters and the plot to play out the tale. The creation of the following narrative, “Metamorphosis” has served as an integral component in the fruition of my thesis research and work:

“The Serene Swamp hums with a symphony of sounds

A thick balmy air softens the boisterous chorus and shrouds its inhabitants in a dear embrace
Lustrous sunbeams filter through the lush canopies and flicker as they kiss the surface of the
pools below

The luscious and plentiful trees commune together

Singing and swaying along to the swamp’s orchestra

Decadent vines and mosses cascade from above like interwoven botanical chandeliers
The tranquil swamp floor is swaddled in a velvety chartreuse blanket of delicate vegetation
Prisms of light dance over the flora and fauna
Leisurely currents greet the sleepy waters in gentle swirls
Creatures of all forms gambol and bask about in their fertile paradise
Chattering and murmuring amidst each other
The occasional splashes and courses of spirited creatures paint the swamp floor with glimpses of
the turquoise pools which lay below the verdant surface
There is a dazzling harmony in the ebb and flow of the swamp
At the center of the flourishing paradise stands its magnificent Mother



Figure 1. *Mother*. 2019. Mixed Media, 7x19 feet.

Her deciduous body is majestic and firm

Her vibrant weathered skin marks the history of her perseverance through many floods and droughts

Her billowing base twists upwards to her tapered head in a series of deeply furrowed ruts and folds

Her brave, ancient arms provide shelter for her children

Her gentle elongated fingers are veiled in emerald tassels which sway lovingly over all who seek respite under her mantle

Her graceful knees burgeon up from her roots, anchored deep within the wet fertile soil

She is enchanting yet formidable

A rosy mist undulated over the swamp as the skies above grew heavy with plump clouds

A trickling rain began to shake downwards, sending the leaves into a quivering jig

Muttering thunder whirls through the bower as lightening careens down from above

The strikes of electric incandescence pulse through the air

Mother stood tall and unwavering amidst the clamor

A robust celestial bolt struck wildly down upon her trunk

Piercing her thick skin and singeing her wet flesh with a searing crackle

She weeps in antiphony to the loud jolt

Yet her weeping turn into elation as a sanguine stir emanates from deep within her ringed wise body

The storm relented, now waning on the horizon

A crackling and tapping sounds spring from Mother's trunk and frolic through the air

The children of light begin to wander out from refuge, clustering around Mother's knees, eyes
bright with curiosity

Her bark begins to peel from the inside out

Layers and layers flaying outwards, revealing an awakening form within

Behold, from deep within Mother emerges a luminous feminine figure

The woman springs forth from Mother and onto the damp, sumptuous swamp floor

Mother waxes with boundless joy, taking in the sight of her daughter and filling the swamp with
her cypress song



Figure 2. Origin, 2019. Mixed Media, 9x13 feet.

She names her daughter Light

For she embodies the fierce light from which she originated

Light's eyelids flutter with wonderment as she takes in her surroundings

The children of the swamp swirl about her in salutation

Light blossoms amidst the flora and the fauna in her early years

Yet begins to feel an emptiness masked in yearning and curiosity as she grows bored with her peaceful life in the swamp

Mother Cypress cautions her to never stray far from the verdant paradise

For on the edges of the Serene Swamp the light becomes dim and the cypress begin to rot

Their listless knees crowd together, resembling jagged fangs

The currents that lay beyond beckon wanderers into their black abyss

Light begs to know what lay on the other side of the swamps edge

The only response she ever got was,

'Never go There, it is full of Despair'

As Light grew older her curiosity to explore leads her further and further away from the Serene Swamp

She grows increasingly lackadaisical towards her home, and is enamored with the mystery of the unknown and yet-to-be

She begins to explore the unseen parts of the Swamp

On one of her excursions she is met by a faint pulsating melody which seemed to probe the emptiness in her heart

Failing to heed the many ominous warnings she follows the song, allowing it to tug her along

No human nor creature could spew forth such a tune

The reverberation stirs excitement deep within her gut

The increasingly burdensome canopies and creeping plants droop downwards, grazing the slimy floor and tickling her skin

The decaying cypress knees resemble the insides of a great beast's craggy jowls

The song beckons Light deeper down its gullet

She arrives at a rivers edge

Basking in its obsidian waters is a gargantuan beast singing its siren song

Its scales ranging in every hue

Its contorted body twisting through the murky space

It introduces itself as The King

He beckons her to come swim with him and take reprieve from the sweltering heat in his cool waters

His siren song is so alluring that she finds herself melting into the icy Black River

With a jagged, toothy smile he invites her to a swamp soiree

Promising music, dancing, and delight

Just on the other side of the river

He says he will guide her across the turbulent waters

She has never been to a soiree, nor has she ever met a king

She succumbs to his charming invitation

He slithers down into the water so Light can climb up onto his capricious spine

The King rears his head and emits an ear splitting, roaring cackle that echoes across the Black
River as he swiftly slithers through the viscous chops

Deep in her gut stirs a cauldron of foreboding



Figure 3. *The King*. 2019. Mixed Media, 13x 19.5 feet.

Upon reaching the other side she is met by a dense landscape sodden with a shuddersome clamor

Up and over the river bank they go

Crawling downwards into a soul consuming darkness

Their descent leads them into a swampy pit oozing with a florescent glow

The flora and fauna mutated into unrecognizable and fantastical forms

The King tells her they have arrived his kingdom, The Pit of Despair

He introduces her to his minions

Monster-like creatures that wriggle about in the sweltering pit

Through chattering teeth she begs him to take her back home

She wishes to return to the children of light and to Mother

He lets out a gurgling guffaw

And reveals himself as “the one who seeks to own you”

He unfurls a sallow hooked claw

And pierces it into her chest

Picking out a bit of her heart to feast on

To the delight of the King and his monstrous minions

Light’s bones begin to crack, her skin sloughs, and her form mutates

She cranes her neck forward and catches a glimpse of her new form in the waters reflection

She cries out in horror at the sight before her eyes

There towers a reptilian creature

With long jagged teeth

Sickle talons

Scales

The tyrannical King sauntered about
Smugly reveling in his triumphant trickery

The King and his minions take her to the sordid swamp soirée
Where a garish banner was strung from the rotting trees
‘Welcome to the Pit of Despair!’



Figure 4. *Sordid Swamp Soiree*, 2018. Mixed Media, 9x12 feet.

A band of beasts played a macabre tune

Eerie creatures twist their limbs about in a frenzied jitter
Chops gnash along to the beat of the raging band
Their movements growing more and more frenzied as the pestilent party progressed
Light's former self flickered out in the Pit of Despair
The King's talon had left a gaping hole in her soul that no swamp soir  e could ever fill
In the midst of the thousandth soiree
The Minions quivered in trepidation as an opaque pewter mist crept over the abyss, licking
their skins with an icy breath
It had been centuries since the last rain in the desolate Pit
Booms of crackling thunder echoed between the trees
Flickers of lightening squirmed through the canopies,
Its sharp tongues lashing
Rain cleaved groundward

A gushing wall of water roared over the kingdom
Consuming all those that wriggled about in the pit of despair
The screeching cries of the King and his minions were drowned by the deluge
The rising waters engulfed Light
It was sink or swim and she was sinking
Descending deeper and deeper into the floodwaters
She thought she had met her fate
To drown in this Pit of Despair

From the tempestuous deep Light felt her rough scaly skin and reptilian head begin to loosen and molt

A flicker of hope ignites within Light

With her hooked claws she peeled off the skins and head that had long enslaved her

In her fist she clutched the remnants of the soggy reptilian carcass shell

She ascends from the depths of her serous demise



Figure 5. *Flood*. 2019. Mixed Media, 9x15 feet.

Light surfaced, gasping in air

And was swept about in the wild currents as the flood swelled

Her body struck against an immense and familiar form

Behold! The flood had carried her up from the Pit of Despair, over the Black River, and back to
Mother cypress and the Serene Swamp



Figure 6. *Metamorphosis*. 2018. Mixed Media, 9 x10 feet.

Mother creaked with joy for the return of her beloved daughter
Light's grip around her trunk weakened as the spattering currents besieged them
Mother brushes her emerald fingers over Light's face
With a great rumble and creak she uproots herself, offering her form as a vessel

Light climbs into the remnants of the hollowed nook that she had sprung forth from long ago
Her fist still clutching the skins of the beast that the King had turned her into
Mother cradles Light until the floodwaters recede
Together they shore onto a sodden embankment

They are gleefully met by the other children of light who had taken shelter high up in the
canopies of the sister cypresses during the flood
Mother tells Light to leave the skins and head in her vessel
She bids farewell to her children, telling them she will always be with them
She must protect the children of the light and defeat the King
For when he consumed bits of Light and changed her form
with the pierce of his talon he had linked their souls

Clinging to her magnificent supine trunk, the children sorrowfully send her out onto the waters
Mother bravely sails over the tranquil marsh
Her body bursting into flames
She becomes a pyre for the fall of the King
Her beautiful bark burns off in embers that flicker across the waters
The ashes rise upwards, painting the sky with a blush hue
The distant howls of disdain mark the death of The King

Mother had slain him by sacrificing herself and burning the remnants of The King's tyranny over Light

Mother's spirit still lived in the swamp in the form of her children and in her floating, flickering embers which never extinguished."



Figure 7. *Child of Light*, 2019. Mixed Media, 12 x14.5 feet.

I utilize my narrative to direct my process and use of materials. I use large rolls of raw, un-stretched canvas as a surface for my paintings to evolve upon. Each piece ranges in size from 8 to 18 feet in width and 6 to 11 feet in height. I choose to create large paintings to express each scene in a theatrical way, similar to a scene unfolding on a stage. It also allows for more

expressive movements in exploring the physicality of the paint and my own body's movements. The raw canvas allows for abnormalities such as warping, variation in absorption, and texture. I prepare the large canvas sheets with gesso and choose either a warm or cool tint for the ground depending on the tone of the scene in the narrative I am in dialogue with. I employ layers of acrylics with varying levels of viscosity to explore the physicality of the paint and the endless possibilities of interaction between layers and textures. As I work I cut away sections, adhere new forms that seem to mushroom out from the edges, allowing for more movement inside of the composition. I choose to continuously expand my edges with irregular pieces of canvas to allow the piece to breathe, move, and retain a sense of formal balance. I collage both raw canvas and painted canvas shapes on top of the work using acrylic paint to push and pull the space, build texture, create delineation between the colors that surround the added piece, and to enjoy the dynamism of the added forms and their grounding. I discovered that with canvas I can achieve dense and visually stimulating imagery evocative of my time spent in local natural landscapes and swamps.

Getting creative with work space has been essential in creating these large works. I begin preparing works outside, underneath a home-made tarp tent in my backyard. This allowed for more space to develop the surfaces and better ventilation. My backyard is a lush, green environment where I use the variations in natural light to view my progress and draw from the sensory feedback of my surroundings. I lay the canvas on the ground where I use my body's sweeping movements to gesso, prepare the underpainting, and add in the base colors. I throw, splash, drip, spill the paint and use a playful combination of moving my sock-covered feet, gloved hands, large brushes, and rags over the surface. In my process, I found there to be a sense

of play. “There can be a kind of amnesia about the seriousness of playing, especially when we played by ourselves. Or we looked like we were playing by ourselves. I believe a kid who is playing is not alone. There is something brought alive during the play, and this something, when played with, seems to play back” (p. 51 Barry). My playfulness in engaging with the materials allows them to take on a role where they seem to play back.

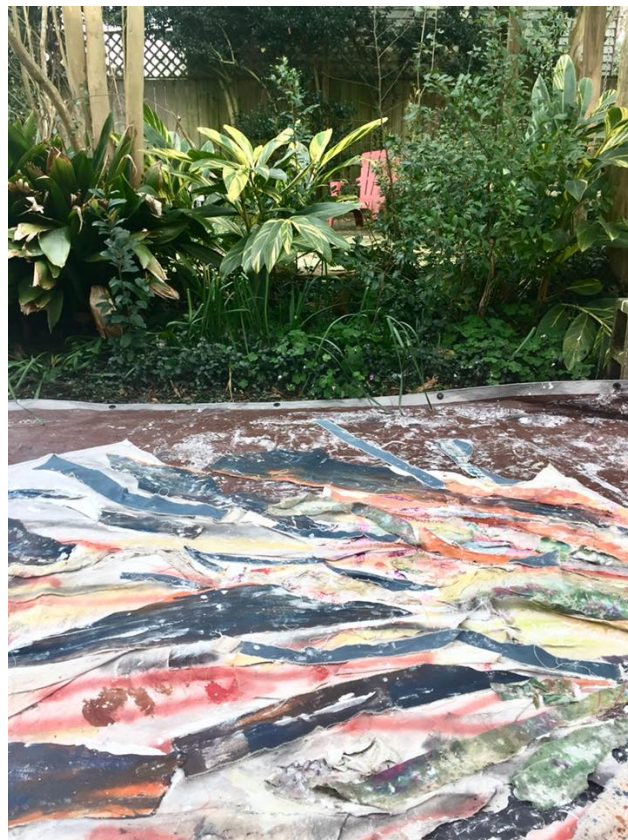


Figure 8. Process for “Mother” and backyard studio.

To get a better vantage of the composition I climb into a nook of a myrtle tree or use a ladder. After the surface dries, I carry it inside my house to my studio space where I have a 15 foot wide and 10 foot tall wall space to continue to develop the image. I begin to pull out forms

and engage in a conversation between my written narrative and painting. I remain fluid in allowing the paintings to inform the narrative allowing myself to be free from depicting the narrative literally in the works in order to leave room for new discoveries.

The last step in finishing a piece involves taking it off the wall and bringing it outside once again. It is here that I make compositional decisions adding or subtracting forms from within the painting or on the edges. The natural light assists me in assessing color and textures from a new perspective.

In summation, my process is extremely physical, and instills a sense of intimacy between my work and myself in both subject matter and execution. I use the movement of my whole body and make choices based on intuition. I discovered that pursuing a balance between this creative impulsivity and order is essential for making stylistic choices to rein in the chaos; Employing elements of order and rest assist in achieving more balanced compositions. Ultimately, I have accepted the chaotic, high key, saturated busyness in my work as both a language to communicate my story, and a means to express my creative energies. I have found that I am enamored with both the process involved in working large scale and the use of vivid colors on raw un-stretched canvas.

My background in teaching early childhood special education and children's art classes has influenced my approach to creating work. I was able to further enrich my teaching background through an internship at LSU Museum of Art through their Neighborhood Art Project, which brings pop-up art camps to children in underserved areas of Baton Rouge. "When kids draw they make sound effects or start talking out a story that seems to be happening live, as

they draw. There is a change of place and time. Another world contained by this one. They seem to be both in it and watching it” (p. 104 Barry).

I encounter this same exuberance and imaginative art making processes during my position as a volunteer art teacher. I teach for the One Stop Artist Group, a grant-based art class offered free of charge to individuals experiencing homelessness in Baton Rouge, located at Capital Area Alliance for the Homeless. The group includes many talented artists who all come to class to create, have an outlet, and encounter fellowship. I have seen remarkable work informed by the lenses through which these marginalized artists see the world. The art from One Stop Artist Group reflects the qualities of self-taught art and its overlap with outsider art. The paintings I have the opportunity to see in this class are raw, idiosyncratic, personal, and retain a sense of naivety which is arguably achieved best by artists with no formal training. I was able to have a private tour of a collection of self-taught artist Clementine Hunter’s paintings at the LSU Museum of Art at the beginning of my thesis year, which spurred my interest in emulating outsider artists and their ability to create worlds, spaces, and times stemming from their own and often peculiar lens and imagination.

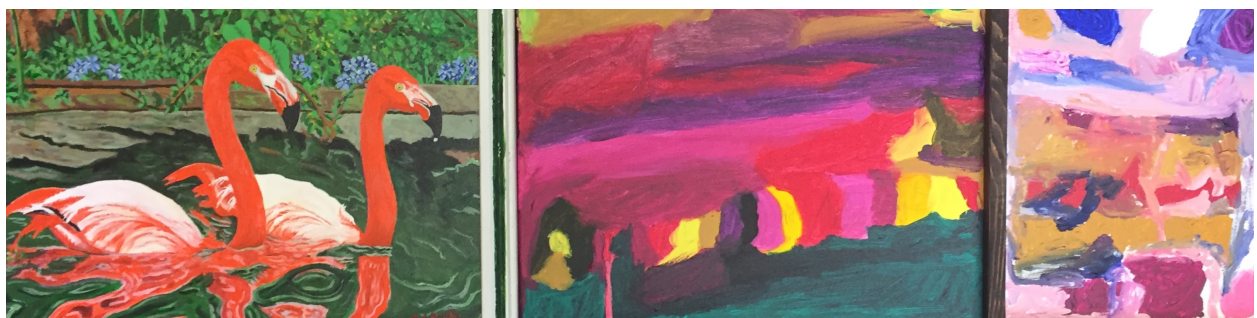


Figure 9. One Stop Artist Group Art Show Paintings



Figure 10. Driftwood collection excursion to the Mississippi River Levee, Baton Rouge

The paintings are informed by my own sensory experiences of local landscapes. Being a city slicker from San Francisco, California and attending college in Spokane, Washington, I had never been anywhere in the south. I arrived in Baton Rouge mid-August to attend graduate school at LSU and underwent a major shock, culturally and environmentally. Once the shock subsided, I felt as though Louisiana had the ability to envelop me in an embrace on all sensory fronts. The people and humid air are warm, the critters sing and buzz, the food is immensely rich and flavorful, and the landscape is excessively lush and green.

I began to seek out and experience the local landscape which was so foreign, so prehistoric, and so captivating. I first went down to the Mississippi River levee in Baton Rouge and collected large pieces of driftwood, finding inspiration from their gnarled and knotted forms.



Figure 11. Outdoor studio at Adam's Cypress Swamp Driftwood Family Museum and Art Gallery located on the Belle River in Pierre Part, LA.



Figure 12. Kayaking excursion to Lake Martin located In Breaux Bridge, LA to view the bird sanctuaries during the frenetic fledgling season.

I visited Pierre Part, LA where I met a local Cajun man, Mr. Adam Morales, who has been a driftwood artist for over 60 years. His home seconds as “Adam's Cypress Swamp

Driftwood Family Museum and Art Gallery”. and in his outdoor swamp studio he makes symbolic sculptural pieces, including a replica of Noah’s Ark, fantastical beasts such as the Rougarou, and other animal forms native to Louisiana. I saw the dense swamps, slow moving bayous, and lazy Belle River by boat during my trip in Pierre Part, and was even brave enough to jump into the vast, warm lake (after seeing alligators the whole ride there).

I have also taken several trips to Lake Martin in Breaux Bridge, LA where I have embarked on numerous “Champagne’s Cajun Swamp Tours”. The humorous guide tells the group the fascinating history of the area, talks about the plants and animals in detail, and motors the passengers through the waters. I eventually gathered the courage to rent kayaks and venture into the swamps, bayous, bird sanctuary, and lake without a guide. I encountered nutria, alligators, pink spoonbills, Great Blue Herons, Great Egrets, snapping turtles, abundant and vivid plant life, and the oldest cypress of the swamp standing tall at the age of 500 years old. A memorable and adrenaline-inducing happening occurred when an alligator swam directly underneath my tiny kayak, resurfacing with a clump of hyacinth flowers attached to its back just five feet away from me. It is experiences such as this that assisted the development of the climactic elements within the narrative where emotion, adrenaline, and intensity spur the written and painted imagery. Every time I immerse myself in Louisiana’s nature I experience an overwhelming sense of awe and infatuation similar to the feelings I encountered during my studies in Florence, Italy and would be met by the sight of a magnificent cathedral or work of art.

I utilize these immersions in nature and subsequent studies to create a mode of communication for my narrative to unfold on the canvas. *Poetics of Space* by Gaston Bachelard discusses symbiotic relationship between the dreamer and nature, “the tree needs you to give it

your super-abundant images, nurtured in your intimate space, in ‘this space that has its being in you.’ Then, together, the tree and the dreamer, take their places, grow tall. Never, in the dream world, does a tree appear as a completed being... it seeks its soul” (p. 200 Bachelard). It is in this process of encountering nature, studying it, and depicting it from a dreamer’s lens that I have found a way to imbue my imagery of natural forms with fantastical elements and heightened colors.



Figure 13. Kayaking excursion to Lake Martin located In Breaux Bridge, LA to find the oldest cypress in the nature preserve.

In my final semester I took a performance art course where I was able to make a deeper connection to my thesis work. In one piece I created a symbolic multimedia piece that incorporated my own research photos of the swamp, sound and voice recordings, paintings, and video. I used my entire body to dance and spread the paint around the canvas.



Figure 14. Live painting in front of projected video and sound piece during narrative performance for Performance Art course.

The live performance took place in Foster Gallery in front of the projected video piece, where I became the female protagonist Light. I donned several hand-crafted costumes to live out the various stages of Light's metamorphosis during her odyssey, ending with a ritualistic live painting on raw canvas laid flat on the ground. In another piece I hosted an informal "Swamp Soiree" at my home. I used the "Metamorphosis" section from my story to narrate and lead the class on a trip down my hallway which I transformed into the Pit of Despair using torn bits of my paintings and recorded swamp sounds. We then walked on top of my painting of the uprooted Mother cypress and emerged into my studio space which I decorated as the Serene Swamp by using my paintings and recorded bird sounds. These modes of expressing and probing my thesis work concepts led me to make new discoveries in my thesis work.



Figure 15. Live costume change in front of projected video and sound piece during narrative performance for Performance Art course.

The use of the nude female figure placed within fantastical landscapes is a means for me to explore the figure from my own feminine perspective and confront the nature of representation of women in art. Most classical masterpieces containing the nude female figure have been rendered by males, creating a problematic history of the representation of women in art, through the male gaze. In my work I seek to paint the figure in a more abstracted form, basing the poses on classical works such as Botticelli's *Birth of Venus* through a female lens. I use a tall mirror to study and play with my own figure and work to distort and exaggerate my form through heightening the undulating curves of the body and rendering the figure in high key colors on the canvas.

Frida Kahlo depicts the female figure in her work in a manner that reflects the realities of the feminine experience and departs from the idealized forms seen throughout history. She draws from her own life and universal realities of women to shine light on truths that have remained

invisible or hidden such as childbirth, physical pain, psychological suffering, anger, and political or religious stances while infusing her work with iconography and symbolism.



Figure 16. Khatibi, Sanam. *With the Valour of my Tongue*. 2016. Oil and pencil on canvas, 150 x180 cm.

The contemporary Sanam Khatibi paints nude female figures within the context of lush and often swampy landscapes to reveal humanity's primal and animalistic nature, power dynamics, and the dualistic nature of triumph and loss. Her paintings pursue the interrelatedness of fear and desire, which I have discovered as a source of interest in my story development. These two artists illustrate my own purpose and methods for including the nude female figure in my thesis imagery.

My depiction of the central female character in my work also illustrates my own coming of age experience. I use the character as an allegorical figure to parallel and dramatize the odysseys, trials, and tribulations that many of us embark upon in this chaotic world. For example, my youthful angst found outlets in the loud, pulsing electronic music of my generation. These raves seemed to provide an escape from the world, a sense of adventure, and an assault of the senses; the venue took the crowd into another world where the air was saturated with bass, electric flashing lights, and wildly thrashing bodies. In my work, I have tapped into these experiences and let them infuse my choices in color, composition, and imagery.

I found the short stories, painted works, and life of Leonora Carrington to be influential in my own writing and painting. Her surrealist work helped to reshape the depiction and symbolism of the female in art. She found a way to link her dream life and imagination to reality through the use of symbolism, fantastical animals, and myth. She drew upon her tumultuous and colorful life, her upbringing in an Irish-Catholic family, and constantly imbued her work with the themes of identity and transformation.

Carrington's short story, "House of Fear" illustrates an ability to paint vivid and surreal imagery with words, "The horses all shivered. Their teeth chattered like castanets. I had the impression that all the horses in the world had come to this party. Each one with bulging eyes, fixed straight ahead, and each one with foam frozen around its lips. I didn't dare speak, I was too terrified" (p.36 Carrington). She achieves a bold sense of humor, fantasy fearsomeness, and bizarreness in each narrative. These are qualities that I seek to infuse my own paintings and writing with.



Figure 17. Carrington, Leonora. Pastoral. 1950. Oil on Canvas, 21x29 in.

Several other texts influenced my thesis work. Dante animates his epic poem, “The Inferno”, with vivid symbolism. His writing references religious themes and mythologies. The “Inferno’s” character Geryon, a great mythical and dragon-like serpentine beast, alludes to the Herculean myth and “embodies the corruption of the Appetite, of the Will, and of the Intellect” (p. 39 Alighieri). I chose to model my narrative’s antagonist after these recurring depictions of dragon-like beasts from universal myths and fairytales which often symbolize the darker aspects of human nature and the supernatural world.

The Bible’s “Letter to the Ephesians” inspires elements of my character and plot development, “For you were once darkness, but now you are light...Live as children of the light...take no part in the fruitless works of darkness; rather expose them... everything exposed

by the light becomes visible, for everything that becomes visible is light” (Ephesians 5: 8-14). In my painting practice I incorporate the opposing forces of darkness and light, and work to expose the darker segments of the plot through depicting them in a high key, whimsical manner.

In researching spiritual texts, I found that many reference the power of a mother’s love, which I chose to represent in my narrative through the self-sacrificing Mother cypress character. My own spiritual experience and veneration for the Virgin Mary have led me on pilgrimages to visit the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City and to Medjugorje in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In my travels and studies of Mary I found inspiration and strength, “In the end, of course, the most holy Virgin tramples the serpent’s head. She triumphs over evil by her tenderness and goodness” (p.129 Badde).



Figure 18. Witness: Saint Juan Diego. *Marian Apparition*. 1531. Tepeyac Hill, Mexico City.

Several of the teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha honor the nature of a mother’s love, “As a mother watches over her only child, willing to risk her own life to protect her only child, so with a boundless heart, cherish all living beings...” (p. 95 Makransky). Louisiana’s flag also

references the sacrificial nature of motherhood in its depiction of the “pelican in her piety” which is a common thread in Heraldic imagery and medieval bestiaries. The symbolic image shows the mother pelican vulning, or using her bill to draw blood from her breast to feed her young. Ultimately, my research has involved a broad range of sources both from tangible experiences and literary works.



Figure 19. Gessner, Conrad. A Vulning Pelican in *Historia animalium*. 1555.

The exhibition consists of seven large scale pieces and one smaller study mounted on the wall. In assessing the gallery space, measuring the walls, and considering the logistics of accommodating my pieces, I chose to install one painting per wall and include the study adjacent to its corresponding larger image that it informed. The space consists of two large rooms which serve as excellent spaces to house my work for the show. The work that I chose to install on the

floor is meant to be walked on, as it was in my performance art piece “Swamp Soiree”. This “Mother”, is installed at the entrance into the gallery, with the top of the tree serving as a pathway for the attendees of the show to walk upon and follow into the space as her roots twist and flow out into the space, where they will encounter the first room of work.

In each room, there is a speaker playing nature sounds that I recorded in the swamp and local landscapes. These include the symphonies of bug, bird, and frog sounds as well as the stormy weather that Louisiana is notorious for. The auditory elements allow the viewer to become immersed in the sounds that inspired my paintings, pulled me deeper into the swamps, and led me to fall in love with Louisiana. They are the alluring and eerie sounds that stir my curiosity in the creatures emitting the melodies and ignite a sense of wonderment in my soul.

My experience as an MFA graduate student at LSU and living in Baton Rouge has been transformative and allowed me to create a body of work that drew upon these life changing experiences. “Metamorphosis” drove me to create paintings larger than I had ever thought I could create, engage in a process where I departed from self-doubt and began to move into a practice of freedom and boldness, and use my imagination to write a narrative to engage with through painting. Moving forward as an artist, I am eager to pursue working on an even larger scale, remain tied in to the local art and community and outreach scenes, and continue to immerse myself in the vibrant Louisiana culture and breathtaking landscapes. Ultimately, this thesis year has helped me to uncover and develop my interests, influences, processes, and practice- and myself. I am blessed to have had the opportunity to experiment and overcome challenges during my masters program and three years here in Louisiana. Ultimately, my time at

LSU as a graduate student and in Baton Rouge have helped me embark on on my own artistic and personal metamorphoses.

METAMORPHOSIS

Paintings by Claire Marie Kane

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Vita

Claire Marie Kane, Born in San Francisco, California received her two bachelor's degrees in Fine Art and Special Education from Gonzaga University in Washington state. Her passion and pursuit in growing as an artist led her to the opportunity to attend Louisiana State University's MFA program, where she became so enamored with Louisiana that she chose to stay. Upon completion of her master's degree, she will begin her job in higher education as an LSU employee and continue to paint.