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A Thesis

presented in partial fulfillment of requirements

for the degree of Master of Fine Arts

Department of Art

The University of Mississippi

Jacob Andrew Weigel

May 2013

ABSTRACT

The ontological curiosity of how “things” work and how our perceptions are shaped are two of the most innate and difficult questions to answer as there is a vast amount of information that is unknowable. The great void of this unknown is the driving force behind all mystical, alchemical and religious endeavors throughout human history, which seek to alleviate the discomfort of such nature. The art that I create is from a complex development of research and experience into this area of philosophy. It seeks to visualize the immaterial in order to have a better grasp on the difficult questions.

As daunting of a task as this investigation is, I look for underlying structures and elements that support the world as we know it. These driving forces include, but are not limited to, geometry and mathematics, quantum physics, logic and intuition. The various subjects appear to have a common thread throughout all of them though it can never be exactly located. In combining these areas with my subjective experience, I strive to make sense of what I do know and what is utterly unknowable.

My thesis research will lead to an art exhibition, entitled “[]”, in Gallery 130 at Meek Hall from April 29 to May 3, 2013. Various materials will be used including wood and metal sculptures with elements of plaster and wax, printmaking, drawing and sound, or lack thereof. The wide variety of materials is indicative of the seemingly disparate elements of experiences, but when placed together will draw from each other elements to compose a gestalt or holistic concept of the above statements.

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[]

The work in this thesis exhibition each has significance as a single work of art and also as part of a whole concept in the material form of an art installation. The following chapters detail the concepts within each work.



Parallelogram: Model for Finding the Center of Gravity
Pine, steel
48" x 96" x 48" each (installation size variable)
2013

[Plate 1]

Parallelogram: Model for Finding the Center of Gravity

The simple definition of a point is a place, though that hardly defines the scope of area or space that the point exists in. It also represents a meeting or juncture, the thousandth of a second, infinity and the like. The point is indefinable, unknowable singularity that lives at the bottom of a black hole and everywhere else for that matter. This thinking could cause obvious frustration but I find it to be refreshingly absurd, unfathomable to a state of comfort.

This sculpture is a scaled-up copy of a model located in the Millington-Barnard Collection of Scientific Instruments at The University of Mississippi Museum. Archimedes, also known for the invention of the screw, was the first documented scientist and mathematician to come up with the formula and model to find the center of an area or space. Although the “center of gravity” that he references is simply the center of a space or object, in this case a parallelogram, the idea of finding the center of gravity, in relationship to the earth was an interesting concept to me.



Abeyant II
Turned redwood
13" x 13" x 2"
2012

[Plate 2]

Abeyant II

“Abeyance” by definition is a state of temporary disuse or suspension. In civil law, the term abeyance is used to describe property that is in the position of being without, or waiting for, an owner or claimant.

This sculpture is from a single piece of redwood that was cut in half, put back together and turned into a vessel form. The negative space between the two pieces is meant to symbolize impermanence and also indicate the void of ownership as discussed above. The vessel is no longer a vessel as it hangs on the wall in two pieces but still has the potential to be a vessel.

A line is a natural progression from a point as two points can create a line and three points are needed to navigate any area and is itself a moving point. String Theory in physics uses a line instead of a physical point as the building blocks of the universe as an indication of perpetual movement. As a three-dimensional form, the line may be the most eloquent, demonstrating only the necessary elements to be a physical form in space. The line, similarly to the point, is an indication of an event as a threshold, event horizon or liminal space. It marks the end of one object or event while simultaneously defining the beginning of something else.



Reliquary for a Constellation (Capricornus)

Copper, steel, glass

20" x 10" x 5"

2012

[Plate 3]

Reliquary for a Constellation (Capricornus)

It is interesting to think of a constellation as a three-dimensional “object” since it is considered to be a two-dimensional drawing in the sky. I have calculated the distances between stars in certain constellations and made a model to get a sense of what is really in a constellation in terms of space. This investigation made me think of the absurdity in placing a constellation into a small space since they are so large.

The three points of the reliquary relate to three points in order to navigate any area of space, such as in a constellation. The constellation Capricornus is stamped into the bottom of the reliquary and can be seen from underneath the glass. The shape of the glass is a rough shape of Capricornus and the constellation is also etched into the glass itself. The ram horn shape on the lid further alludes to the Capricorn or goat. The reason for selecting this particular constellation was simply a personal choice as I am a Capricorn.



An Attempt at Perpetuity

Pine

30" x 10" x 3"

2012

[Plate 4]

An Attempt at Perpetuity

The circle is another geometric symbol that I naturally find myself using often in my work. It is simply a line with no beginning or end, an infinite place of points both on the line and contained within the area of the circle. It represents the cyclical movements of the natural world and celestial realm. The circle is intuitive, as opposed to the harsh lines of the invented square or cube.

Although not a perfect circle, the idea of perpetual movement or energy is associated with nature in the seasons, astronomy and life forces. I have no idea whether true perpetual forces exist in the grand scheme of things. The material used in this sculpture is pine that was green enough to tie together into a chain. The tying of natural material together is symbolic of the notion that it exists as well as a symbolic gesture of natural forces.



Essence of a Cube
Embossed paper
23" x 20"
2013

[Plate 5]

Essence of a Cube

The cube is one of the most fundamental and simple geometric shapes. It is also has the ability to be used to demonstrate illusionistic space and perspective. I have created one by cutting out three pieces of wood. By embossing the paper with a woodblock, the image becomes physical, and three-dimensional much like the architecture already inherent in the cube.

In terms of geometric shapes, the cube is the most basic for construction, existing of equal sides or areas. The repetition of a cube, as a point or line can create an infinite number of configurations and forms. Just as a square, it is a definable area as a grid on a map, allowing navigation across a void and is inherent in the human mind. The cube is also used to map and measure the space we inhabit. Nobody says, “circular feet”.



Of Black Holes and Parallel Universes
Cherry, pine, plaster, mirror, graphite
Dimensions variable
2013

[Plate 6]

Of Black Holes and Parallel Universes

The cone is a symbol that is used regularly in my work in its simple form and often as a plumb bob. The simple geometric form is characterized as a geometric shape with a circular base that meets at an apex, or place of unity or singularity. It's a dynamic form that comes to a point. The joining of two cones at the apexes is indicative of infinity, a concept that again is impossible to entirely grasp.

The thought that there exists a parallel universe on the other side of a reflection is a playful idea. There are theories in physics, such as String Theory or M-Theory, that suggest the existence of multiple, parallel universes and so perhaps the idea is not as absurd as one would think. Usually, the notion is dismissed simply by seeing ourselves in the reflection and can recognize the other image as his or herself.

The height of the mirror and cone alludes to a celestial realm and since the viewer cannot see his or herself takes out the specific problem of denying the existence. The cone is symbolic of a black hole and is represented in the sculpture as a white counterpart of a black hole. The drawing on the wall is two-dimensional but so is the reflection, therefore setting up a complexity that questions to differences between the second and third dimensions.



Marginalization of Space & Time

Steel, wax
120" x 18" x 9"
2013

[Plate 7]

Marginalization of Space & Time

Most types of wax are natural products. The elasticity of wax is a characteristic I am drawn to as it is affected by gravity and over time moves and melts. The outline of a three-dimensionally drawn cube is a hexagon, which is the shape of a honeycomb, a significant architectural component.

This piece was conceived when considering the concept of space, time and interconnectedness involved with these concepts. This specific work takes into account that certain rhythms are established within an open system that are opposed to the preceding Western notion of change being additive, orderly or external along a linear path. This notion is represented abstractly in the form of wax in the sculpture. If one were to follow the changes in an open system they would see the re-occurrence of changes into cycles. These cycles are self-directing in which they “learn” from the past cycles. By absorbing its past movements, or changes, a system can maintain a dynamic, self-maintaining equilibrium. The point at which the cycle begins to repeat itself is called the attractor (Mazis 10).

Maurice Merleau-Ponty was a French modernist philosopher who expanded the idea of the sensorial or phenomenological experience as being the foundation for understanding the world around us. His thoughts on existence included these very ideas about the cyclical becoming and re-becoming; an existence layering back on its previous state of existence (Mazis 226). The use of wax is appropriate as it is rigid enough to hold a form but also malleable or fragile depending on environmental conditions.



Conversations with Stones (From Tishomingo)

Eight etchings

14" x 11" each

2012-13

[Plate 8]

Conversations with Stones (From Tishomingo)

Stones indicate the natural, earthbound world itself. The stone is also significant in some Native American tribes as the originator of the earth itself, the Great Creator, eternal, outlasting everything else while remaining a foundation (Walker 70).

This series of work is based on Annie Dillard's essay and subsequent book, *Teaching A Stone To Talk*. The stone is a metaphor for nature and the silence that comes from the stone is indicative of the imbalance and lost connection humans have with the natural environment. What once was may never be again. The prints are recordings of communication between eight rocks picked from Tishomingo County in northeast Mississippi.

A mechanical device was constructed which allowed rocks selected to move, make noise, have a conversation and leave marking on copper plates used for printmaking processes of etching. The process is also similar to analog recording on magnetic tape. These prints are the results of the conversation and I have attempted to restore a dialogue between the various natural materials. These prints are a record of the conversation recognized as *apriori*, or understood intuitively.



Noumenal
Wood, drywall, light
32' x 8' at a six degree angle
2013

[Plate 9]

Noumenal

Immanuel Kant was a German philosopher who became a large part of the 18th century Enlightenment movement. Kant recognized, after years of research into a scientific description of the world, that the human mind filters the phenomenal senses and categorizes them. This ultimately breaks sense and experiential data into groups, leaving gaps in our perception of the world. Kant claims that there must exist an irreducible gap between perceived reality and a “true” reality. He argues that humans can never know the true being or essence of “things-in-themselves” simply because of the way our brain is wired. We are observers of a world that from which we simply cannot disconnect and observe objectively (Kant iii-iv).

“Things-in-themselves” are unknowable for the simple reason that nothing can exist outside the boundaries of space and time. There is a distinction between things-in-themselves and noumenon, which means “a thing of thought” or an idea in a being’s mind. To Kant it formed the antithesis to phenomena. Noumenon can never be independent of cognition and are never a material object. The noumenal world is the world of ideals. The things that they represent in the world of phenomena are real. Since thoughts are not independent of perception and phenomena but are directly related to subjective experience of the world around us, it seems that there exists a liminal space between phenomena and noumenon where the two intersect (Kant).



Phase Space

Graphite and wax on paper, drywall, wood, florescent lighting

96'' x 48'' x 24''

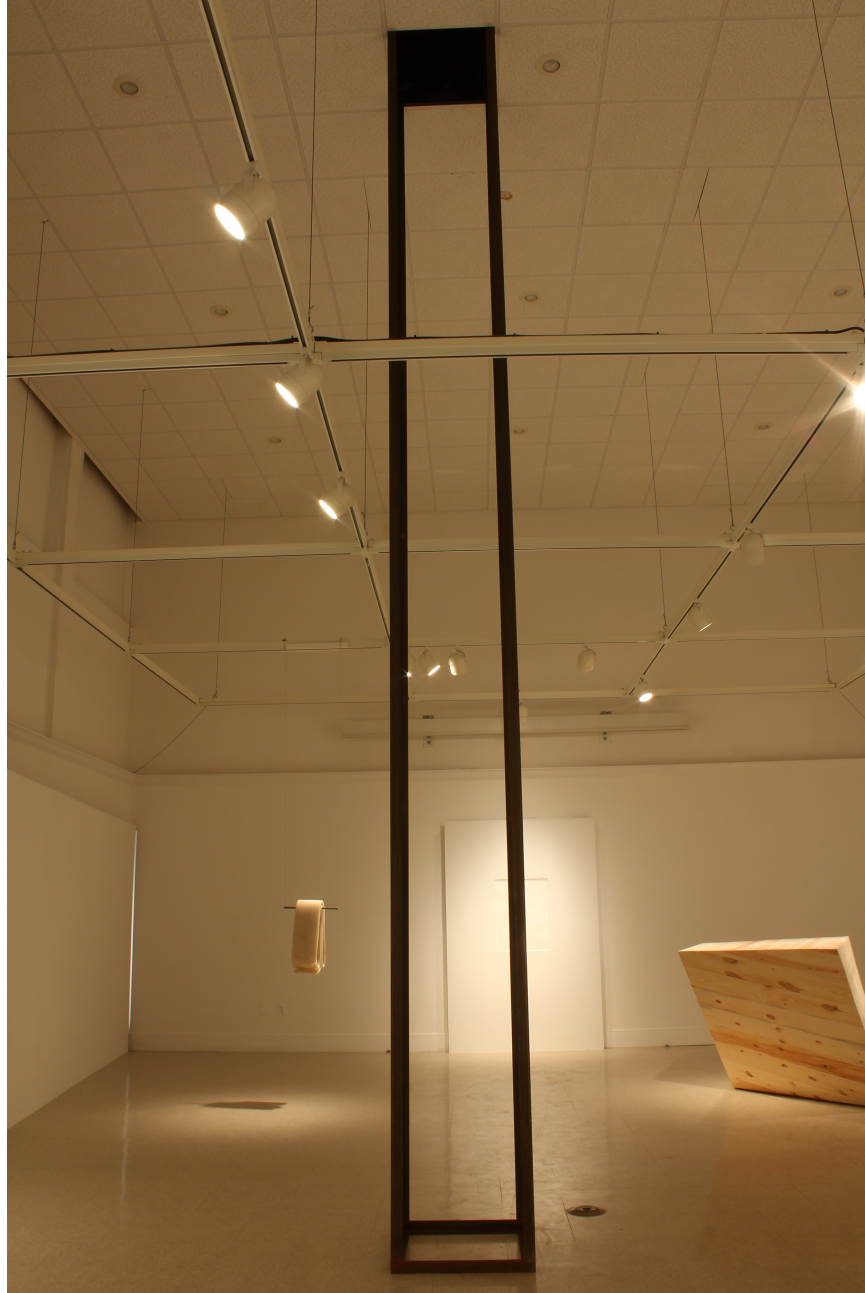
2013

[Plate 10]

Phase Space

Scientifically, any movement or change can be represented in space by the duration of time and variables that are plotted on a graph. A “phase space” is thereby created where the space used in the transpiration of an event is shown. Quite simply, an event is mapped on a three dimensional graph with an x , y and z axis. When one thinks of the infinite number of variables and complex, interconnected relationships involved with just one person’s daily life, the concept of phase space suddenly becomes marvelously overwhelming.

The use of a cube and components of it are used in this piece. These elements build from each consecutive image. In the final image, on the bottom, the center of the cube is only shown. As in *Parallelogram: Model for Finding the Center of Gravity* [Plate 1], the central area is the focus, but part of the phase space. The wax used on the paper is also indicative of movement, both by showing the brushstrokes and by its physical properties of malleability.



Reliquary for a Negative Space

Steel

20' x 2' x 2'

2013

[Plate 11]

Reliquary for a Negative Space

“We become aware of the void as we fill it.”

-Antonio Porchia

This sculpture is simply a means of confining a space to acknowledge the idea of negative space. It is difficult to see the connections between objects and ideas without understanding the space that is in between these and the space in which they exist. Not only does this sculpture contain negative space, it also forces the viewer to look up at the ceiling of the gallery; ultimately experiencing the entire space of the gallery. From this, my goal is to have the viewer get a better sense of the space in which they are occupying at the current moment as well as the realizing themselves in that space. This concept is related to interconnectedness and “emptiness” discussed in later chapters.



Installation view

[Plate 12]



Installation view

[Plate 13]



Installation view

[Plate 14]



Installation view

[Plate 15]



Installation view

[Plate 16]

It may be space that explains more than what fills it.

AN ACCOUNT FOR MAKING ART

The making of art has become my philosophy on life; as “ways of happening”. Although my ideas and making are a deeply personal process it should remain recognizable to the viewer, at least in fragments. The art contains facets of a larger space, one indicative of multiplicities and the realm of thoughts. It alludes to the story of its own creation as metaphors for a time passing, the act of creation itself and underlying structures. Each object stands in as a physical manifestation of the immaterial, the forces and processes that are constantly occurring, though hardly noticeable in most circumstances. They intervene in the collective reality as personal points of singularity in a dynamic and chaotic world.

The space where these signs and symbols occur, that which contains and is also between each event, is at the same time a physical, abstract and metaphorical space. This is a key area of what I am interested in. It is a void and impossible to define. The ability to catch glimpses of this space and the results of the various actions within are brought forth in the work. The complex nature of ideas influencing my art and concept can be found throughout the entire body of work, connecting seemingly disparate objects or images together. Each piece reveals internalized experiences that range from cosmological inquiries and the relationship of humans with nature, architecture, an interweaving of philosophies and even the role of craft in art. The ultimate condition of unknowingness is also at play in the exhibition of the work. Connections between each piece may not be directly recognized but realized as a whole.

The dualities that exist between rational and irrational, material and immaterial, microcosm and macrocosm, and so forth, all come into play with perception and knowledge. Though judgment and categorization come from the rational mind, so do the absurdities and contradictions. My artwork, in addition to the process of thinking and making it, is a meditation that allows me to go beyond dualities, beyond the paradox and unknowable to simply acknowledge different perspectives and thought patterns. Art is the intervention, as a visual strategy, between the two extremes that helps garner some semblance of truth in a diverse system of philosophies, even if only subjective. To use the imagination and creativity is to bridge the gap between the unknown with the realm of ideas with something that is concrete. The process of making, the “ways of happening” is the art, ways of experiencing the world and making some sense of it all.

I make art because it communicates something that cannot be expressed in words. Just as the Southern Sung artists were aware that the immaterial could not be represented in the material. The world around us is too extraordinary to be able to fully communicate experiences and ideas in words, or even art for that matter. Art, and definitely music, come the closest to that threshold of the immaterial and material. What I read, experience and think about the world all come into play in the work with the combinations and overlapping of all this information, especially in the ever-increasing rapidity of technology, information and communication. My work is not there to tell anyone what to think or how to think. There is no specific sociopolitical, economic or religious statement in the work beyond that which is inherent, but it contains a small purpose of attempting to get the viewer to realize their immediate place in the space of the gallery.

Epistemology and cosmological questions of the ways “things” work and the spaces that are involved with these events have been something that I have had a strong interest in since I

can remember. The ambiguity of this statement is necessary as the number of “things” and events are infinite and complex without being able to physically sense a vast majority of it all. Even though the futility in trying to grasp any substantial amount of knowledge is great, the drive for research and knowledge is ever-present. To even attempt to comprehend this means to compartmentalize, make assumptions and to generalize. So my work is dedicated to the generalized assumptions of underlying structures in the world around us; to bring some form and meaning to what is otherwise unknowable.

The indeterminate or ambiguous nature of the art and subsequent exhibition is deliberate and serious. Meaning in the sculpture, prints, and drawings are meant to reach the viewer at that intuitive level. The work has complex layering that the viewer can investigate further. It takes the conceptual and philosophical approaches to drive the art making, the “ways of happening”, while also acknowledging the unknowable nature of a complete understanding. This leaves a somewhat awkward shift between an attempt at meaning and the unlearning of meaning in the objects. When trying to explain all of this it is quite contradictory but that is also how it makes so much sense to me. Whether the objects are a point of singularity or a gap of knowledge in a vast unknown, each of the physical representations are a space for the viewer to approach and gain some awareness of the viewer’s own self in the void.

My search for foundations, principles and underlying structure to existence is the most basic way of interpreting why I make art. I notice the tendency of relatedness between subjects more often than I notice the differences. This is why I follow Minimalist principles to a large extent, to capture an essence. Subjects of geometry and mathematics, logic, quantum physics, along with art, are all inherent in the human mind and therefore carry strong research potential when thinking about my work. This research invokes a memory or glimpse of sensations, those

that are present when really seeing and contemplating the natural world of forces, movement, ideas, time and space in which essentials plays a role. I also realize the banality of those principles and aesthetics, which leaves me to bring my own hand into the work, a subjectivity that matters just as much as the objective nature of the core elements. Although my research is broad and complex, I view this exhibition and paper as a foundation for future studies where much more detail may be discussed.

THE VOID AND UNKNOWINGNESS

The simple idea that physicists only know roughly one-fifth of what the universe is made of is both unfathomable and exciting. That makes for a lot of unknown. The void can be simply stated as a “space” or vacuum lacking anything, unknowable and paradoxical in nature. Cultures from the onset of human thought have been transfixed with the idea of a void, something that seems to exist but cannot be traced exactly. The rational mind has barriers that cause the concept simply to never be able to comprehend. These concepts of space, void and ultimately of the unknown, create a sense of mystery and magic that has been the driving force behind all mystical, alchemical, religious and scientific endeavors throughout human history.

The focus of this concept in my work is to proffer information not easily grasped, instilling a longing for more information or answers while giving none. This can further be achieved by a continuous play between the revelation and concealment of object and illusion, existence and essence. Ultimately, the negative space and lack of information is intended to relate directly to being and questions the profound human condition of unknowingness. The scarcity of meaning or information allows the viewer to directly confront this condition through the actual absence of material or meaning.

The ancient Greek philosophers, especially Thales, debated that there could be no existence of “no-thing” because it is impossible for anything to come from “no-thing” nor can something go into “no-thing”. According to Thales, even the concept of “no-thing” requires its existence by contemplation. This argument set up the definition of nothing as being the absence

of something for the last 3,000 years (Close 5).

Due to Thales negation of something from nothing, many philosophers, scientists and alchemists sought to find the essence of everything or “ur-matter”. This argument set the path for Western rationalistic approaches to science and philosophy. To alchemists, “*materia prima*”, or prime matter, the mysterious source of all matter that is manifested through opposites and forms. The four earth elements of water, fire, earth and air are the four basic constructs or classic elements of the universe according to the ancient Greeks, Indian, and East Asian cultures. There is also a fifth element in many cultures, that recognized as unknowable.

In Buddhist cultures the elements were not considered as substances but rather sensory experiences (Strathern 20). In Japanese culture the term *wuji* or “void” was a fifth basic element. The term was understood, especially in Taoism, as ultimate, boundless or infinite. The root of this understanding probably stems from the Vedic influence on Japanese Buddhism. The equivalent word in Sanskrit is *akasha*, meaning “ether” or “space” as the fundamental and undisclosed element that is essential for everything else. Other concepts surrounding are broken down according to sects but this is the fundamental definition or understanding (Iannone 30). These cultures knew of an unknown but insisted it was not definable, allowing them to account for this additional aspect of the unknown universe.

CONCEPTS OF SPACE(S)

Although I have split the concept of space into categories of the physical, abstract and metaphorical, the very nature of the concept remains paradoxical in that many of these spaces overlap and may occur at the same time and place beyond an exact definition. They are, essentially, different aspects of a single space. The idea of categorization in the artwork is something I try to mitigate or transcend.

The concept of negative space could certainly be in the realm of the physical but is often viewed as an abstract notion that is most likely not demonstrated widely outside of the art department. The same goes with “phase space” that I have listed under metaphorical. It seems to be a very real space, one that everything else exists in, but it is so complex and encompassing that the idea is difficult to grasp and talk about as a physical state.

Physical Space

Space itself has become an important element and symbol in my work. Besides the obvious use of space in my work and the final exhibition, it has been used as a place of tension and balance. I also use space in abstract and metaphorical ways to reference where ways of happening occur. The concept of negative space has importance in Eastern philosophies and as a meaning of emptiness and interconnectedness.

Physical space is quite obviously the realm of the seen in addition to the knowable or tangible. What exists as the world of phenomenal experience mostly accounts for the physical,

although the boundaries begin to fade and cross over, especially when referring to the unconscious, dreams and the like. Most of what we recognize as material world can be found in the natural landscape including ourselves and our creations, such as architecture.

The human body is physical, but the other point to bring up is the sensing of the physical world around us. The senses themselves are material and even the impulses that connect the senses to our recognition of them are material. There are also so many spaces or things that our senses cannot perceive which accounts for our unknowingness. The relationship between humans and nature has been a subject of interest throughout my undergraduate and graduate studies. I believe, after much reading and thought, that it is one, if not the most crucial, aspect of our own being. Whether this is true or not, writers and philosophers have long argued that perfection lies in nature, from fractals and the Golden Mean to rotation of planets. Nature has been the core influence of art making from the very beginning.

The landscape has existed well before humans and continues to be the most influential aspect of our collective identity. It is such a fundamental role in our identification as a species and as individuals, much more than is most likely perceived, especially in our technology-driven realities. Of course, the recent geopolitical trends involving global warming, resource scarcities and all runoffs of this have brought the landscape back into our peripheries, but I seriously doubt that many people really think about the landscape and how it has shaped their experiences.

Within the landscape and as a mimicry of such is architecture. Architecture is about a memory of the landscape itself. It is about constructing the void where we can see, feel and cross empty space in a transition into the ineffable. Although structure is essential, the role of architecture as art and design is something that further constructs and defines our reality. It is a cultural practice that speaks to the mindset of the person and culture of its creation.

Numerous cultures, from Mesoamerica through Europe and into Asia, all constructed temples in coordination with natural or astronomical events. Symbolic of cosmic mountains, axis mundi, the tree of life and other cultural stories and histories, temples are founded as the focal point of the earthly realm. This is how these cultures dealt with the unknown. The temple is a mimicry of the landscape and exists as a sacred meeting point between heaven and earth, eternity and mortality, micro and macrocosm among many other dualities.

One very specific and important architectural element in my work is the Japanese Tea Room or “abode of vacancy”. Origins of the Tea Room can be traced to Ch’an Buddhism where there was a strong emphasis for understanding how the physicality of art can represent the immaterial nature of things (Murase 19). Ch’an art relies on metaphors and natural phenomena to describe the events of the immaterial, the manifestation of the hidden forces of our existence and the inner workings of both the individual and collective mind (Murase 20, 27, 34). The Tea Room serves as a gateway to a place where everything is balanced and ideal for contemplation of art and life. No colors, sounds, words or gestures are out of place to disturb the simple and natural setting. The aesthetics of the Tea Room owe a large part to Taoism, or “the art of being in the world”, because it focuses on the present (Okakura 17-18).

Modernists like Mondrian, and later Judd, spoke of relationships between parts of a whole in space and time in similar tangents to Eastern philosophies. The aesthetic philosophies of Taoism accept the mundane of life, transforming the worry of unknown and daily life into something of beauty. In order to maintain a balance in relationships, the concept of gestalt or a whole is never be lost on the individual by acknowledgement of the unknown. (Okakura 23-25).

Abstract and Metaphorical Space

I think of this space as more of a negative space based on the idea that it may be the crossover between the phenomenological and realm or space of ideas, something that Immanuel Kant referred to as the “noumenal”. This “place” seems to be a transitional point where the noumenal are beginning to manifest in a material sense or properties. The imagination is what the ancient Greek Proclus and Kant both argued as the mediator between the dualities of the intuition and the analytical. Henri Bergson argues the memory is the space or passage where the material and immaterial meet (Rawes 132). As the balance for two dualities, it offers the characteristics of both, familiar but not easily discernable.

Negative space becomes the background for which all other activities can be realized and understood. It is of the utmost importance and the essential existence to connect everything else. In Oriental cultures, the term “emptiness” equals absolute silence as concrete and part of life, a physical space. In the Western mind, this idea refers to a type of abstract silence (Pearlman 52). But “emptiness” is still one of the most important, but also difficult concepts to comprehend in Mahayana or Zen Buddhism. Rather than meaning “nothingness” the idea is linked to a transcendental nature of an absolute or ultimate reality that cannot be reached by logic or reason (Suzuki 29). There is an interesting link between Eastern philosophy and physics in regards to the term of “emptiness”, especially when gazing out into the black void beyond Earth’s atmosphere. What was intuitively recognized over a thousand years ago in Buddhism has been described, in more descriptive detail, from Western scientists such as Newton and Einstein.

Einstein’s “Theory of Relativity” paved the way for many of the current theories that attempt to explain the unknown of space and the universe including String Theory, dark matter and the Higgs-Boson, or God Particle. Physics studies matter and forces and is at such at such a

level to become abstract, especially when delving into relativity. The term “quantum” refers the minimum amount of any physical entity involved in an interaction and when applied to physics, means the smallest most essential forces and parts of matter.

The current scientific understanding of the composition of the universe is broken into four elements of electromagnetism, gravity, strong nuclear force and weak nuclear force. A fifth element is dark matter (dark energy or anti-matter), something we have almost no understanding of, yet it accounts for 94 to 96 percent of the entire universe. That’s a lot of unknown, even after the discovery of the four “new” elements of the universe (Gates 12). An atom itself has been found to be 99.9999999999999999 percent empty space but is held together with an electromagnetic field (Close 26).

Although physics may seem disconnected from the work in “[]”, the exploration of underlying forces and structures is one way to link the subjects. Another is simply by referring to titles of the art work in the exhibition such as *Of Black Holes and Parallel Universes* [Plate 6] and *The Marginalization of Space & Time* [Plate 7] for two specific examples. A third reason is the actual space itself in work like *Abeyant II* [Plate 2] and *Parallelogram* [Plate 1] but more importantly, in the overall room itself. The making of objects and specific arrangements in “[]” are supposed to, in part, relay a concept of the void and an absence of information. The unknown is inherent in the show in an indiscernible place or liminal space.

Liminal space is placed under the abstract category for the simple reason that it is a passageway between the other two categories. Liminal or limbo seem to represent the world as it truly is. According to Buddhist thought we live and die every second and are never the same person we once were or will become. The term *bardo* is a Tibetan Buddhist term for the intermediate space between death and rebirth. Between these two extremes, and all other

dualities, exists the current moment. It seems simple enough to understand, yet is allusive and difficult to grasp conceptually if not impossible through material means. Although in a constant state of tension and flux, the events that shape our existence or essence are constantly balanced between dualities.

In many Eastern philosophies, the only truth that can be found exists beyond dualities in paradox, contradictions and enigmatic riddles. Characteristics include tension, balance, ambiguity and a sense of timelessness. This infinite “space” where these truths and events occur can be considered a liminal space and has become of the utmost interest to me. The Western notion of essence is perhaps the most closely related term to this idea though it still seems incomplete and far off. Work in “[]” contains at least partial characteristics of this liminal space as indeterminate, in balance and with tension.

Scientifically, any movement or change can be represented in space by the duration of time and variables that are plotted on a graph. A “phase space” is thereby created where the space used in the transpiration of an event is shown. Quite simply, an event is mapped on a three dimensional graph with an x , y and z axis. When one thinks of the infinite number of variables and complex, interconnected relationships involved with just one person’s daily life, the concept of phase space suddenly becomes marvelously overwhelming.

This idea of interdependence within a system can be found in other philosophical writings, especially those of Eastern origin. The Chinese term *mu* can be translated to “void”. This empty space relates to the absence of inherent existence or existence that is unrelated to anything else. Another way of thinking about the concept is the denial of existence in a vacuum. This emptiness or “thusness” is a way of conveying the idea that all objects or events rely upon the occurrence of multiple objects or events at different levels and perspectives, more than just a

two axes graph.

Once again, in physics, the assumptions and hypotheses are termed “probabilities” is used as explanatory principles, a way of representing the idea that “entities” are processes, interwoven into the fabric of space and time rather than substances. They are irregular in their unfolding, open to other events, fluctuating in identity with knowing of indeterminacy or liminal space. Since entities are never really anywhere, as discrete, self-founding beings, “things-in-themselves”, the concept of probabilities represents the gaps in their substantiality and in the Cartesian world, rather than a lack of knowledge about the system described (Mazis 226). String Theory takes this into consideration as a physical point is impossible to define, but a moving point can be represented as a line or string of movement.

This concept is very intriguing and comforting even though it tends to confuse one’s basic perception and idea of daily life. With these basic ideas, explorations and definitions of “space(s)”, I believe it assists in my continual search for connections and underlying actions of life in general. It also allows for an understanding that is more profound than compartmentalization and generalities because the concept accounts for unknowable answers.

CONCLUSION

What makes up the 80 percent of the universe may very well be the extension of our “physical” reality; simply a place consisting of energy that is in flux and knowable in abstraction but never really physical and able to pin down. The purpose of using the designs, materials, symbols and ideas that show up in “[]” is to find tools or methods to understand what we can about the void and on a simple level. With such complexity of relationships, ambiguity through simplicity allows the viewer to make more connections from basic elements. Just as language begins with simple letters, leading to words, sentences, paragraphs, and so on, the essence of art can be found in design and symbols that can create deeper understanding and visual language.

This thesis paper has been the culmination of years of research prior to and during my enrollment at The University of Mississippi and will continue forth. It is broad and I have touched on concepts I believe to be essential to the understanding of a core idea. Ultimately I wish the viewer to at least take away intrigue if not a further grasp of some sort of introspection. I want them to confront the space and unknowingness. It is the mysterious and unknown that keeps the human population going, looking out for what is next; out of fear or simple awe. As the sole creatures known to have the capacity of logical thought, it may be a paradoxical blessing and curse.

From the artists, cultures, philosophies and scientific discoveries that have preceded me, the particular details that have inspired the creation of the work in “[]” have been

recognized being connected to each other. My interest in is discovering more about the connections and creating a fusion of seemingly disparate studies. Blended with my personal experiences, the work is extremely personal as an attempt to explain the world around me and its interconnectedness.

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VITA

Jake Weigel was born and raised in Marshfield, Wisconsin. He attended the University of Wisconsin – Fox Valley where his studies covered a broad interest in the humanities. He received an Associate Degree of Arts and Science in May of 2006. Weigel transferred to the University of Minnesota – Twin Cities in Minneapolis where he graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts with an emphasis in Sculpture in May of 2008.

Weigel spent time after his undergraduate studies working and traveling extensively, covering nearly all of the states west of the Mississippi River, visiting the southern United States and had an in-depth look into his home state of Wisconsin. These largely solo expeditions further influenced Weigel's interest in the relationship between humans and nature, concepts involving landscape as space and the void. In the summer of 2011, Weigel traveled to Europe which further informed his work through various interactions, specifically in Iceland, Sweden and Spain.

In August of 2010, Weigel moved to Oxford, Mississippi to attend The University of Mississippi in preparation for his Master of Fine Arts in Studio Art with an emphasis in Sculpture. His previous studies, paired with an interest in multimedia production, allowed him to explore new concepts of space through several mediums.

Weigel received his MFA from The University of Mississippi in May of 2013. At the time of completion, Weigel has had art shown nationally and internationally including in Memphis, Minneapolis, New York, United Kingdom, Sweden, Spain and Hungary.