

Keywords: Abstraction, Spirituality, Realities

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Research in practice

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This is a Key word essay, this essay will explore three key words related to my personal art practice as well as my current interests in art. The keywords are Abstraction, Spirituality, and Realities. I will explore different artists, theorists and philosophers such as *Kazmier Malevich*, *Ed Moses*, *Garry Fabian Miller*, and *Wassily Kandisky*. I will consider how these artists relate to those words. While looking into these different artists and theorists I will also consider and analyze how my own artwork sits alongside these words and consider the influences of these artists and theorists on my own work. Through writing this essay and doing this research a question will arise in the conclusion paragraph which will be my guiding question for my dissertation next year.

Abstraction is an artform that does not attempt to give an accurate representation of the visual world but instead uses shapes, color and form to achieve its effect whatever the goal. Within the research of abstraction the first artist this essay will look at is *Kazimir Malevich*, *Malevich* was a Russian theorist and artist from the early 1900s who wrote extensively about creativity in art. This quote from the book *The Non-Objective World by Malevich* encapsulates his attitudes toward what abstraction is and what art was at this time. “*Artists of the third category, on the other hand, who are not endowed with the capacity to create original or composite works, are forced to content themselves with copying nature "as it is" (ills. 50, 51). The works of such artists are always comprehensible to the public (the majority of people) because they present nothing new, whereas the works of the creative artist contain new solutions of the eternal conflict between the subject and the object and bear little or no resemblance to accustomed reality.*” (Page 34). I think this quote portrays what abstraction is and where it falls in the world of art. To *Malevich* the “*creative artist*” is one who creates a new solution with their work, one who draws

from nature but does not attempt to copy it as it is seen. And this brings us to our first piece of work.



1. Kazimir Malevich

Black Square, 1913

This artwork is simple, its characteristics are two colors, black and white with textured cracking paint in the middle. The simplicity in this speaks volumes to me, the antithesis of the white border with the black square makes this work captivating, the simplicity in this painting has strong elements in minimalist design as well. But this work does more than this, it represents a disdain for what art had become at the time. When this work was made there was societal pressure to make artwork that imitated the reality of the world around the artist and in *Black Square Malevich* was going directly against that societal pressure which makes this work much more powerful to me. *Alexander Benois* once famously stated about this work “*This black square in a white frame—this is not a simple joke, not a simple dare, not a simple little episode which happened at the house at the Field of Mars. Rather, it’s an act of self-assertion of that entity called ‘the abomination of desolation,’ which boasts that through pride, through arrogance, through trampling of all that is loving and gentle it will lead all beings to death.*” Thus, this painting to me represents the end and the beginning. The end of what art was beforehand, the end of attempts to recreate the world exactly as it is and the beginning of freedom in the art. Where the creative act comes from the creation of something new, the artwork comes from the subconscious experience in one's life.

Malevich further states in *The Non-Objective World*, “*Two basic types of creation can be distinguished: one, initiated by the conscious mind, serves practical life, so-called, and deals with concrete visual phenomena; the other, stemming from the subconscious or superconscious mind, stands apart from all "practical utility" and treats abstract visual phenomena.*” (Page 11). What I understand from this quote is the differentiation between the forms of creation. As he states, the first form is that which

serves daily life. To me this is the creativity that is found in the world of an engineer, the design of a product that makes one's life easier such as a chair, shoes etc...these are all artistic creative endeavors, but they come from a place of utilitarian need. On the other hand is where the second form of creation lies. This form stands in the subconscious mind and is made up of everything we take in in our day to day lives. It holds our beliefs, values, and memories. When we create with this subjective form of creativity we allow ourselves to tap into this sub or superconscious mind state and create freely without binding ourselves to the world that surrounds us, we create with a mixture what's inside and outside of us rather than just attempting to recreate what we see around us and creating for the utility of an object. This idea of creation moves us into our next artwork.

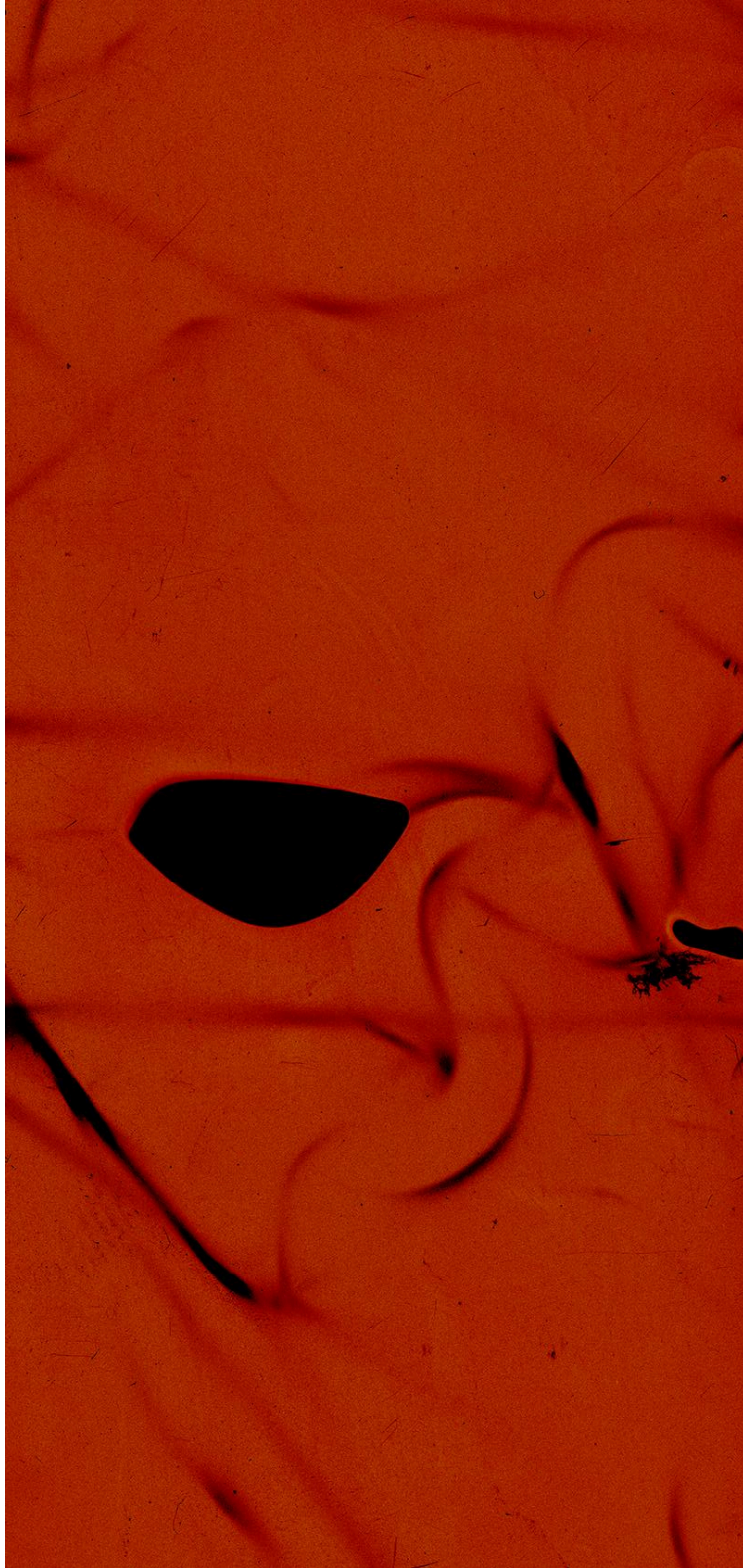


2. *Ed Moses I Am Not, 2007*

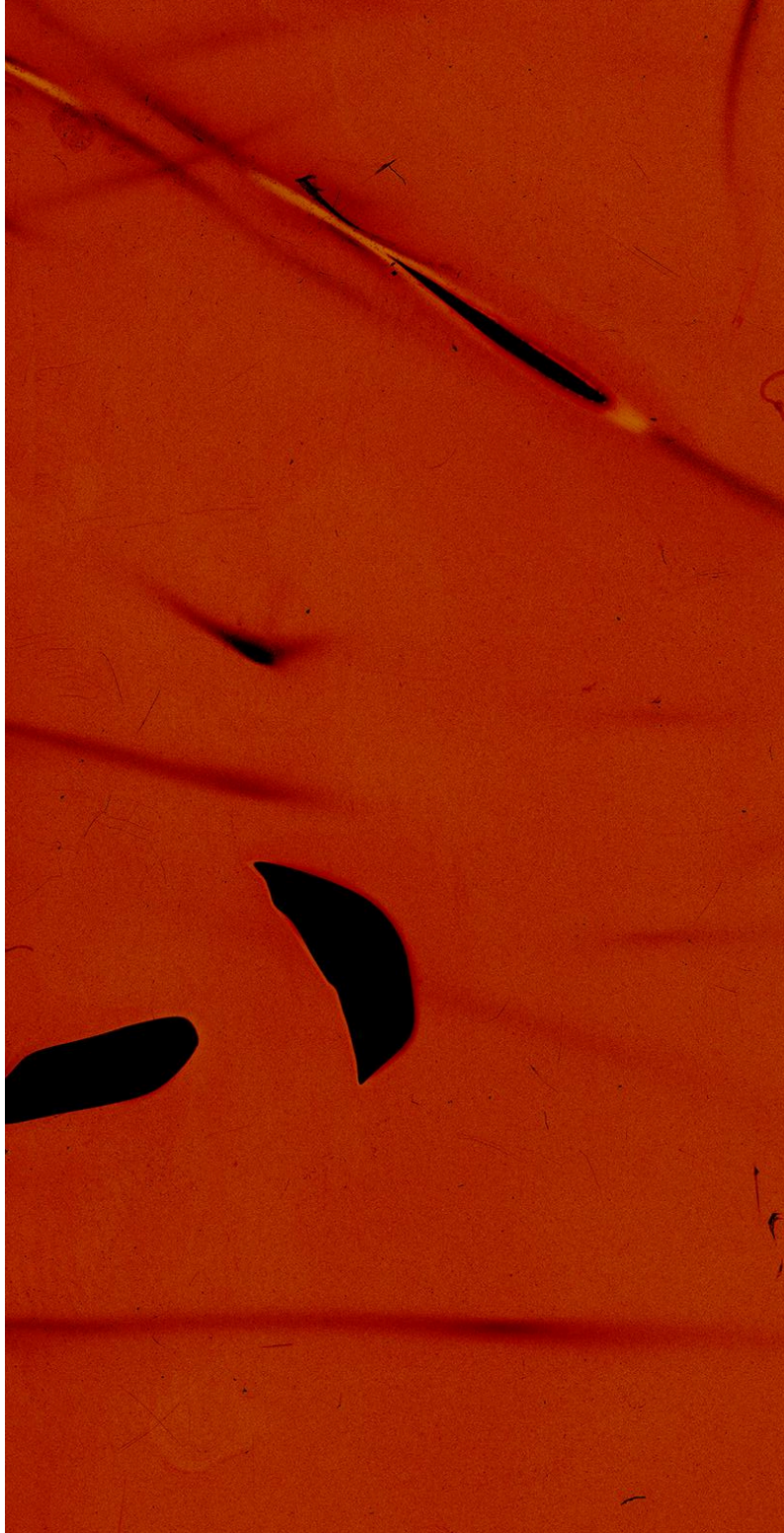
Ed Moses is a Los Angeles based artist who refused categorization within his art and was constantly redefining his work. Throughout this constant reinvention and redefinition his work would typically have abstract elements. The work above *I Am Not* is particularly aweing and striking to me, the lines are placed simply and the work is understated, but within the simplicity of this work there is a lot of detail. The red and yellow lines feel as if they are holding each other while the black and blue lines make the work feel dynamic and make me keep looking in an attempt to question what I am looking at. The texture around the blue line makes the work feel soft and organic while

the white of the canvas left in the background makes the colors pop and the shapes that live in the background of the canvas apparent. Furthermore this work does not demonstrate reality, it is an internal fountain of *Moses's* subconscious that is creating this work, Ed Moses would often state in interviews that in his making of art he is attempting to leave marks of himself and leave traces of his own expression and personality in his work. To quote *Malevich* once more in *The Non-Objective World* he states "*This was expressed by a black square on a white square. "The square of the Suprematists . . . can be compared," he said, "to the symbols of primitive men. It was not their intent to produce ornaments but to express the feeling of rhythm."* (Page 8) And it is that same feeling of rhythm I feel from *Moses's* work, he didn't care for the ornamental or symbolic nature of his work, he wanted to create and express that rhythm that all humans feel within themselves. And that inspires me because I often struggle in my own work as to why it matters, its meaning, or what it is in relation to the world around it, but if you remove all of those questions and begin to create solely in a attempt to create rhythm and express feeling all of those doubts begin to slip away.

This moves to my own practice and the importance of abstraction in my own work. The first pieces of my work I will show here are *ACCELERATED ENTROPY 1 & 2*. They are shown below



3. Karsten Obrietan *ACCELERATED ENTROPY 1*, 2023



4. Karsten Obrietan *ACCELERATED ENTROPY 2*, 2023

This project was made using multiple rolls of expired 35mm film. The process of making this work started out with the expiration of film. I found 8 rolls of film that expired a couple years beforehand and after shooting a couple rolls of photos with a normal camera I became very curious about the opportunity of having an unpredictable medium that could develop in infinite different ways. The next step in the making of this work began with the experimentation, the first experiment was taking the film out of the roll and in darkness I would crumpling the film. I would do this in an attempt to create textures at the surface level and give the work more depth. I then flashed the film with light in the dark room to expose it. After this I developed the film and looked at what came out of the experimentation, I then realized whilst scanning the film I could further change the texture if I scratched the emulsion of the film so I began to do this and scan the work in. After all of this experimentation I wanted to expire the film further to increase the unpredictability of the film so I began hanging the expired film in a bag above my radiator with the idea that the heat of my radiation would further change the chemical composition of the film and change the colors. The work above are two pieces of work that came from the many rolls of film.

This work was made in 2023, it was inspired by many things. But the biggest influence in this work was a question that I kept asking myself. *“What is the balance between creation and destruction as the process of entropy takes place?”*. In asking this question I was attempting to dig deeper into human interaction with the land around us and our relationship with consumption. This question was further informed by the essay *The Obligation to Endure* written by *Rachel Carson*. In this essay she states, *“The most*

alarming of all man's assaults upon the environment is the contamination of air, earth, rivers, and sea with dangerous and even lethal materials. This pollution is for the most part irrecoverable" (Page 1 Paragraph 2). As she states *"the pollution is irrecoverable"*, in the irrecoverability and destruction of something a new thing is always made and in making of this work I wanted to dig deeper into the balance between creation and destruction, While I as artist might not know what is actually created from the destruction of our environment I do have the ability to create something based on how I interpret the of the destruction of our environment. So, the slow destruction and manipulation of the film became a representation for how I interpreted the destruction of nature. When I started making the project *ACCELERATED ENTROPY* I didn't know it would have this meaning, but through the process of making the work and my subconscious mind the meaning began to come out of the work. So referring back to the ideas *Malevich* in the making this work I was allowing myself to be the mirror of my subconscious mind to freely create artwork, I was attempting to internalize the natural world and create based off that feeling rather than than attempting to exactly recreate photographically what happens to land when chemicals are introduced or when a tree is cut down.

The next artist and theorist this essay will look at is *Wassily Kandinsky*. *Kandinsky* was a Russian painter and theorist from the late 1800s, he was a large component in the growth of abstract art and was an artist who was heavily inspired by forms and color. He was an artist who was constantly attempting to express his soul through his work. This brings us to the first quote from his book *On the Spiritual in Art* *"In an obscure and puzzling way, the artist develops a work of art. As it gains a life of its*

own, it becomes an entity, an independent spiritual life(...) It lives, has power, and actively forms the above-mentioned spiritual atmosphere. From an innermost point of view, the question finally should be answered as to whether creation is strong or weak. If too weak in its form, it is impotent to cause any kind of spiritual vibration.” (Page 91).

This concept which *Kandisky* touches on here of creating a spiritual atmosphere within an artist's work is astounding to me and the thought process that an artwork if “*strong*” enough can give off certain vibrations and hold their own world within themselves connects with me heavily as this is often the feeling I am trying to achieve whilst making work.. This sense of awe-inspiring work leads me to the next piece of work this essay will look at.

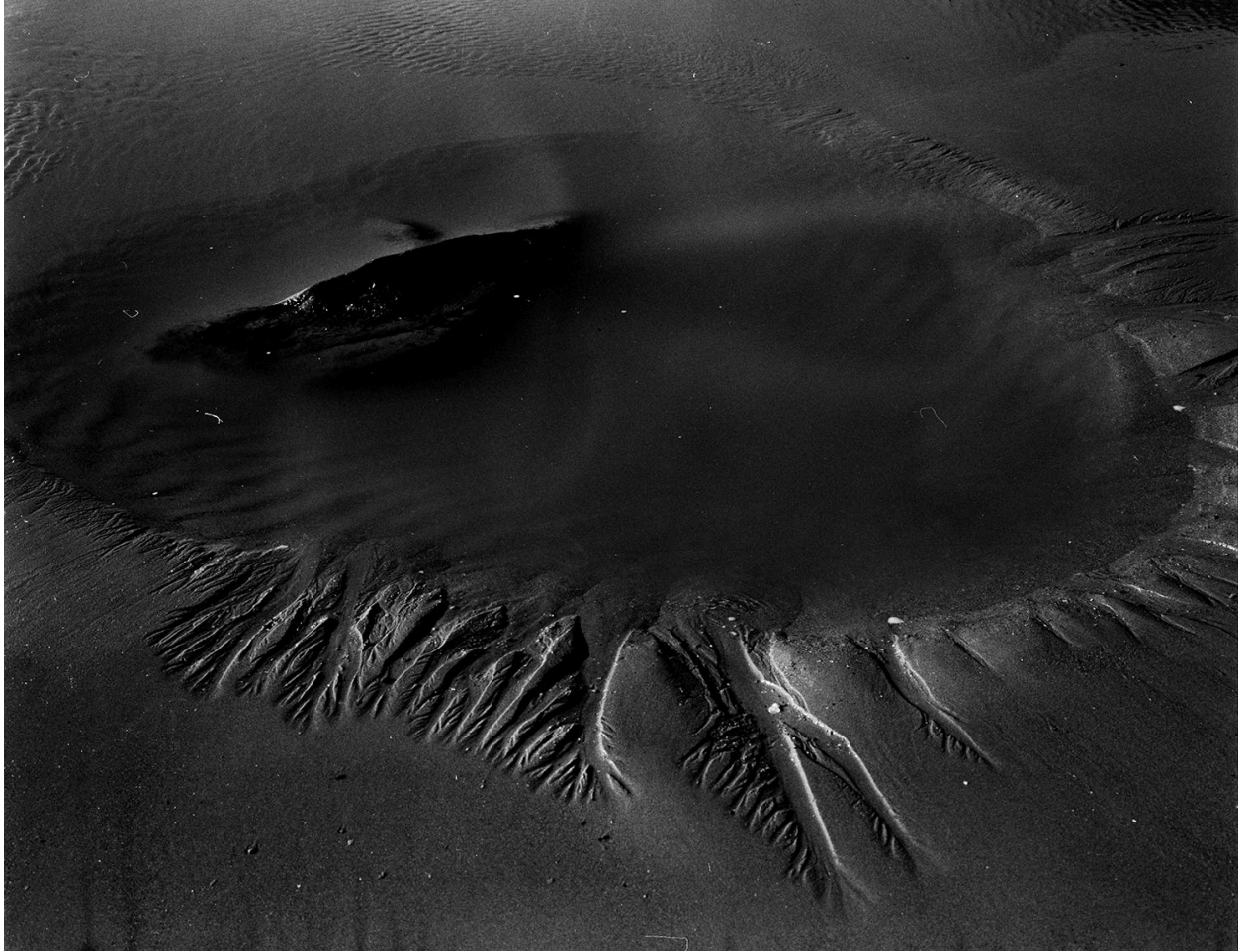


5. *Colour Seed No. 9* Garry Fabian Miller, 2001

When I see this work as well as other works of *Miller* I am in awe. The structural movement of the shapes, the dynamics of the colors and the textural simplicity that I feel while looking at this work as well as others works of *Miller* makes me feel a strong vibration and a sense of spirituality in the work. I understand this work might not directly say anything, but while looking at it. It draws me in and gives me mental clarity. While looking at these works I feel as if I am in another world. It is that awe-inspiring calm that I am often attempting to achieve in my own work. This leads me to the last artworks this essay will look at.



6. *Karsten Obrietan Land/Sea* ,2024



7. Karsten Obrietan *Land/Sea*, 2024

The project Land/Sea aims to address where I live, connection to the land that surrounds me and humans' animalistic connection to nature as I understand it in my subconscious mind. The process of making this work came from numerous walks and meditations on the Gower AONB, a natural area that holds a moving coastline and a natural energy that I can feel. I wanted to reflect how I internalized that natural energy. I would sit for long periods of time, meditate and reflect on my thoughts, feelings and surroundings. In doing this my work then began to feel like a meditation and that meditation was my expression in this work. That expression came in the form of analog photographs. While making this project I wanted to try to make the work in a similar way to how *Kandisky* sees art, I wanted to become an outlet for my internal feelings to express themselves. The desired goal for this work was to create a powerful feeling, the feeling he describes as a vibration or spirituality. To quote *Kandinsky* again he states "*It is its language which speaks to the soul.*" (Page 93).

Through this research I have formed a question that I will use for my dissertation. This question is "How can I as an artist make work that grabs the soul, creates new realities and is awe-inspiring for myself and others? And why is it important to make work in that way/ why does it matter? This question is informed by all of the artists and theories I have researched. I want to make great and impactful art and I believe following this question as a guide will help me in my pursuit of making art that can grab the soul.

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“Artists of the third category, on the other hand, who are not endowed with the capacity to create original or composite works, are forced to content themselves with copying nature “as it is” (ills. 50, 51). The works of such artists are always comprehensible to the public (the majority of people) because they present nothing new, whereas the works of the creative artist contain new solutions of the eternal conflict between the subject and the object and bear little or no resemblance to accustomed reality.” (Page 34).

“This was expressed by a black square on a white square. “The square of the Suprematists . . . can be compared,” he said, “to the symbols of primitive men. It was not their intent to produce ornaments but to express the feeling of rhythm.” (Page 8)

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“The most alarming of all man's assaults upon the environment is the contamination of air, earth, rivers, and sea with dangerous and even lethal materials. This pollution is for the most part irrecoverable” (Page 1 Paragraph 2).

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“In an obscure and puzzling way, the artist develops a work of art. As it gains a life of its own, it becomes an entity, an independent spiritual life(...) It lives, has power,

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