DREAMS AND ETHEREAL PERCEPTIONS

A Thesis

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the degree Master of Fine Arts in the
Graduate School of the Ohio State University

by

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* * * * *

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This thesis is dedicated to my parents.

You remain in my dreams.

In memory of Dad: finder and giver.
VITA

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GLASS BUBBLE
I'm inside of a molten glass bubble.
It's hot and stuffy in here.
My hands and feet push to break out
but I merely stretch the sticky surface.
My eyes follow the single red line of glass
that wraps around the bubble.
There's no way out.
I call for help but no one hears me.

CRACKING STICKS
I walk through the woods
cracking sticks under my feet.
There's a lake at the clearing.
A duck as tall as me comes out of the water.
I walk into the cold water up to my knees.
The duck is curious about me
and tries to get close.
A small boy chases the duck away.
It smells like rain.
The earth is cold and damp.
We're trying to catch an airplane at 7:24.
They won't hurry.
I try to take a short cut.
I walk up a damp grassy hill
that leads to a tall chain link fence.
I turn back and follow the main road.
By then, they catch up to me.
I'm still looking for the quickest way to the airplane
but there are many fences, and bushes, and houses
that block me from taking a short cut.
They still poke along.
I think we'll miss the flight.
I'm nervous and anxious.
GLASS MUSIC
The tall beige grass reaches my elbows.
I'm running slowly.
The air is warm
and there's a cool breeze.
Clear glass bubbles
and pieces of red and yellow stained glass
are wrapped and tied with thin copper wire
which hangs from my body.
The glass makes beautiful music.

FLECKS OF LIGHT
I'm sitting in a dark blue room.
I'm not sure how big it is.
It feels warm.
There are flecks of light shimmering around me.
There's a small note on my left that reads:
"Place, Relationship, Feeling"
I'm happy to be alone with myself.
"This is beautiful."
MUDDY TERRYCLOTH

I walk barefoot on a narrow dirt path.
There are full green trees lining the sides.
The path forks to the right and to the left.
I follow the path on my left
and walk through a big mud puddle
with white terrycloth bathrobes in it.
Further down the path,
muddy white robes
hang over a wooden banister on my right.
I'm walking across a bridge.
The path ends.
I descend a metal ladder
that extends into muddy warm water.
A blue and white striped nylon rope hangs on my left.
I pull on it and hoist myself out of the warm water.
STICKY PINE NEEDLES

In the distance,
I see the sliding board from the balcony of the house
We both walk through the kitchen
and down one flight of curving wooden stairs.
There are horizontal slats of wood lining the walls.
We walk through the door
and outside into the forest.
It smells of pine trees
and there are sticky pine needles under our feet.
Two boys throw things at us.
We walk faster.
I smell chlorine
as we approach a large rectangular swimming pool.
There are stairs at one side of the pool
that descend into the water.
I notice the wide red stripes on the pool floor
as I slowly walk in.
The water is shallow and quiet.
There are people sitting on folding chairs in the water.
I squat and enjoy the warm softness of the water.
When I realize that they've left,
I quickly get out of the pool.
The shiny blue deck is slippery.
WIGGLING LIPS
I walk down a long corridor with yellow walls and floors.
Colorful child art is hanging on the walls.
I walk further.
I'm surrounded by small white styrofoam pieces.
There are silhouetted profiles
made of black paper on a white background.
The profiles face each other and have wiggling lips.
I walk quickly looking from side to side.
"How did I get in here?"
I pass down the stairs at the end of the corridor
and search for my friends on the lower floor.
There are at least four floors in this long building.
I walk up and down stairs and through the halls.
At the end of one hallway,
the orange plastic stairs are folded up.
The lower end of the staircase
contracts into the upper part where I'm standing.
I start to climb down
(knowing that I'll have to jump to the floor).
I notice a small group of people sitting at a table below.
Someone extends the staircase so I can walk down easily.
There's nothing down here.
The space is dark and there are no hallways.
I quickly climb back up the stairs
in search of a way out.
PICNIC TABLE
There's a dark wooden picnic table
outside in the morning sun.
My bare feet feel the cool green grass
as I slowly walk up to the vacant table.

MUD PUDDLES
I'm in a park near a swingset.
The sky darkens quickly.
I hide in fear.
The ground is cold and slightly muddy.
I crouch near a swingset
with books in my arms.
There's no grass near the swingset.
Mud puddles are under the swings.
INTRODUCTION

The sharing of common experiences is a universal basis for communication. Our minds organize sensations and perceptions through experience. Our conscious minds bring these sensations back for us to experience again.

Some perceptions are universal. It is common for the sound of certain songs to evoke memories of particular people, places and associations. These perceptions are uniquely personal associations. Our senses can trigger mental images that reconstruct past experiences. For me, the smell of a particular type of plastic inevitably recalls new baby dolls on Christmas. I can't think of either the Mr. Ed television program or lemon meringue pie separately because I connect them to a particular memory of a situation in my childhood. The smell of sweet cherry tobacco is reminiscent of Dad's ritual of mixing tobacco for his hand rolled cigarettes. We comprehend our environment in a similar yet individual manner. This is the ethereal, unspoken language that is perceived through intimate dreams, memories and experiences of both our conscious and unconscious minds.
I am a dreamer. Sometimes my conscious life seems like more of an illusion than my dreams. Daydreaming, sleep dreaming and meditation are more delicate, ethereal states of consciousness than ordinary, waking consciousness. My logical waking mind seems more contrived than my nonverbal intuitive mind. My sleeping dreams are a mixture of anxieties, the day's activities, memories of the past, and uncertainty of the future. I dream about places and experiences that touch all of my senses. I make places that connect memories and experiences of both the conscious and unconscious.

A selection of my dreams is the impetus for my visual Thesis Exhibition. My dreams are vivid moments in my sleep which hold an array of feelings and sensations that I explore while conscious. People react to sensations on a uniquely personal level. My Thesis Environment: Dream Arena instigates reverie and evokes personal perceptions of memories, feelings and sensations.
DREAMS AND ETHEREAL PERCEPTIONS

The small clear glass dome that my brother gave me was broken so I repaired it. These mended crack lines were the seeds for lines and shapes of a hanging stained glass panel. The irregular edges of the glass shapes seemed to extend as if growing. The colors were primarily warm yellows, reds and oranges. Small glass nuggets, metal washers, nails, wires, and dots of solder were tacked repetitively to the edges of the curving shapes of glass. There were some clear glass shapes, mirror and negative spaces that altered the visual perception.

Dad found an old metal disc shape that had FIAT stamped on it. He gave it to me and I worked it into this expanding glass panel. The smooth undulating surface of a particular transparent yellow shard of blown glass that I found seemed to represent the life and growth that I wanted the work to have, so I integrated this glass shard into the panel, too. A pair of prisms from an old chandelier hung on small wire hooks from a space in the lower half of the panel.
I remember coming home at the end of the day and lying on the couch in the living room. The warm sunlight streamed through the west window and through this hanging stained glass panel that I made. I touched the prisms so the rainbows would dance on the walls, floor and ceiling. Lying on the couch, I waited for the yellow glow to move across my body. The powerful presence of the light inhabited the space. At sunset this room was transformed into a special place for me.

I've always enjoyed finding and receiving old treasures. The special ones find a home in my glass panels. I wanted to make glass screens that stood in a room and divided the space. I was intent on learning how to use hot glass so I could make my own flowing glass shapes that would reach out into the space.

In the summer of 1983 I spent two weeks at The Pilchuck Glass Center learning glass blowing in an intensive workshop. I spent day and night thinking about glass. While I was there, I had the following dream:

I'm inside of a molten glass bubble.
It's hot and stuffy in here.
My hands and feet push to break out of the bubble but I merely stretch the sticky surface.
My eyes follow the single red line of glass that wraps around the bubble.
There's no way out.
I call for help but no one hears me.

I woke up thrashing my arms and legs and had to run out of the tent. It was frightening but I would still like to
feel the sensations in that dream again.

When I entered graduate school, I started to make glass panels. I worked by finding and making glass shapes and fitting them together. Sometimes I would break pieces of glass and mend them back together. I continued to work with warm colors because I wanted to fill a space with warmth. I made some blown glass shapes that extended like outstretched fingers from the glass panel. I displayed this panel in a room with hanging glass bubbles that I made. The room was dark with flood lights on the pieces. While looking at one piece, the presence of others could be felt.

Dreams and ideas are similar in that they occur within the mind. As we think and dream we make mental pictures. Webster's Dictionary describes a dream as "a sequence of sensations, images, thoughts, etc. passing through a sleeping person's mind...a fanciful vision of the conscious mind; daydream; fantasy; reverie."1 Idea is defined as "something one thinks, knows, or imagines; a thought; mental conception or image; notion...a hazy perception; vague impression; fanciful notion; inkling."2 Ideas are conscious thoughts. Sleep dreams are unconscious and subconscious ideas. Lack of dreams and ideas has never been my problem.

"You can't have good ideas unless you have a lot of ideas."3

Dr. Linus Pauling
It's always been difficult not to add to my pieces. Sometimes more feels better. To subtract an element seems to eliminate it's worth. It's like saving old things. I've been finding and collecting stones, shells, seeds, metal pieces, glass shards and bits of old things for as long as I can remember. Old things have a sense of antiquated energy. There always seems to be some way to use it and relate it to the rest. However, I was not always confident that my pieces were ever finished. I built these pieces as though I was doodling with glass. They seemed to have an energy of their own to grow and cohere.

Having some concern for this infinity of product, I decided to simplify. I found one part of this stained glass panel that I liked and worked solely with that idea. At this point, I made two glass panels: one red and one green. Simple curving lines were cut into each panel, copper foiled, then soldered back into place. Some pieces of blown glass were soldered into the crack lines and had pointed extensions that reached out into the viewer's space. I sandblasted the blown pieces and sandblasted an image of them on the stained glass panels. I was intrigued at the curiousness of the image on the glass being a shadow, a reflection, or a repeated shape. These glass panels were mounted with brackets on a white wall. There was a space between the wall and the panels so the
reflection from the glass was apparent. Each panel had a characteristic glow of color that was meant to have a warm and cool sensation on the viewer. The blown glass pieces reached out into the viewer's space. I wanted people to be mentally encompassed by the planes of color and transparency in each glass panel.

My enthusiasm about hot glass and my obsession with doing my art full time continued. In my sleep I blew glass in the glowing face of my alarm clock, I ran through tall grass wearing my glass that made beautiful music, I crawled inside of some of my glass pieces, I went fishing with my glass class, I experienced prismatic light effects, and I awakened to the sound of a large sheet of red glass falling from my bedroom wall.

To facilitate the process of joining pieces of glass together, I began experimenting with fusing pieces of glass by heat in a kiln. The experiments began with strips of colored glass, overlapped and fused, then, controlled slumping of glass over forms in a kiln. In my dreams I watched the glass slump and fuse. It is sometimes difficult for me to distinguish my dreams from reality. When I was not asleep daydreams were recurrent. My subconscious and unconscious mind were housing experiences that were difficult to bring to awareness. I wanted to make these experiences part of my consciousness.
Because of the small size of the kiln, the fused glass pieces were used as motifs repeated in woven glass pieces. Hung on a white wall, the undulating surface of these glass weavings provided spaces between the wall and the weaving. I was fascinated by the colors, shadows and reflections in these small spaces.

I'm inside of a grey and yellow woven glass cylinder that hangs horizontally on the wall. It's warm and stuffy in here. My body is completely wrapped in twine. There are colored reflections and shadows on my body. I squirm toward an opening in a disintegrating part of the glass and peek out. The air is cooler and fresher outside. I want to jump out but it's a long way down to the floor.

There's a glass cocoon hanging from a wooden ceiling beam in the middle of the room. It's a little larger than the size of my head. There are shards of golden glass poking out from the interior. Dark brown fibers obsessively wrap around the glass to form the outer shell. Several loose fiber pieces hang from the surface.

The latter dream prompted a series of nests made of layers of colored glass weavings, ceramic shards, wires and threads (Plate I). The nests were human head size or slightly smaller. My intent was to create a chamber of layers which both concealed and exposed parts of the interior of the nests. Small pieces of sharp and smooth
glass fragments protruded from all sides of the bound threaded surface. These nests did not invite physical touch and appeared to be guarding the delicate interior against outside danger. Tightly wrapped threads physically bound the nest together. The Nest Series alluded to nature's nests because of the variety of materials intertwined to build a home for something. Yet, these nests were not meant to be replicas or imitations of actual animal homes, rather to symbolize a container of protection to hold a precious body. Security was emphasized by the elaborate layers of habitual wrapping. The layers created mystery because they obstructed the view of the unknown interior. The nests represent my armor of protection sheltering deep emotional feelings inside. I continued to project myself inside of these pieces through dreams and reverie. It seemed as important for me to be asleep as it was to be awake.

I started recording my dreams in detail. I also kept a file of sources and source words for my artwork. From these dream and word collections, I concluded that my art was about internal sensations and I needed to exploit this. I was not content with duplicating reality. I wanted to create something that touched people's souls. "Imagination must act upon material reality in order to translate it into a particular human surrealism."4
I began forming little glass bones from molten glass. This object came about from the idea of fragile old bones that might be found in a nest. I wrapped these with feathers threads and wires. The process of repetitious wrapping was meditative. It is this state of consciousness that I relish and would like to prolong. I wrapped these bones tightly because I was tense. The wrapping helped to release my tensions. The glass bones became a metaphor for people and the wrapping and grouping expressed feelings and relationships. I eliminated the nest and wrapped bones together in couples and triplets. I experimented with putting bones inside of glass containers. *Box of Relics* (Plate II) is a group of colored wrapped glass bones inside of test tubes and contained in a wooden box with a glass front. The box is set on a small marble shelf which is bracketed to the wall. There is one pair of wrapped glass bones on the shelf outside of the box.

People keep things in boxes to keep them safe. Since these bones are metaphors for people, I view them as people being contained together in a safe place as a family is in a home. The separated pair of wrapped bones on the marble shelf connotes isolation from the group. As wrapping signified my feeling of tension, the separation of one set of bones from the group is an expression of my personal loneliness and isolation.
Nestage consists of four sets of wrapped bones on small ceramic shard shelves, each loosely enclosed with strips of copper wire and mounted to the wall. Again, these sets of bones function as a metaphor for people and relationships. The sets exist independently as an entity and as part of a group. Like Box of Relics, Nestage paralleled my feeling about myself. In both pieces my inner feelings are manifested through physical manipulation of materials.

I imagined being inside of these pieces as in a Magritte or DeChirico painting. In the paintings, the juxtaposition of dissimilar objects, difference in scale, and use of strong dark and light effects, created an alluring mystery for me. I've always projected myself into these paintings and wanted people to do the same with the things that I made. My goal is to have others experience my feelings. Dreams, vision, and perceptions happen on a uniquely personal level. I search for a vocabulary of materials to express some of the feelings that I've experienced in my dreams. I also search for words to describe my mental dream images.

I constructed a small scale environment called Illusion to Success. A small glass casting with several indentations set on a marble shelf is bracketed to the wall. A glass doll head wrapped with cheesecloth and resting on one of the glass casted ledges represents some
of my dreams of entrapment. A miniature handmade ladder attached to the front of the casting signifies potential success. Mentally, I'm lead through the piece beginning with the sand, glass bones, and shells at the marble base through the copper stumbling blocks, the ladder rungs, and the special stones, shells and glass jewels. At the top, these special stones, shells and jewels now appear to be similar and just as important as the ones at the bottom. This small scale environment concerns a mixture of my feelings of being in places both in my waking and sleeping world.

Still, I wanted people to be inside of my pieces. The next group of work are small architectural places. Meditative Shelter (Plates III and IV) is made of sticks which are wired and woven together. It is a six foot tall vessel shape that has a crawl-in entrance which accepts the morning sun and a top that opens to the sky. The base of this nest-like shelter is three feet in diameter and the top is five feet across. Situated in a grove of trees, it is made for one person to sit in. The interior has smooth colored glass pieces, wrapped with cloth, wires and strings, and attached with mud from the land.

I made this place for myself to be alone in and to think. The glass bones attached to the interior symbolized memories and relics of the past. The shelter is a reliquary for reflections and serious thought about the
past, present and future. The tactile organic quality of the woven sticks conformed to the outside environment. The small spaces between the sticks provided a space to peer into and out of. The height of the shelter concealed the meditator from outsiders. Finally, I could be inside of a nest without having to dream it! Now, others could physically enter my piece and experience being inside of this enclosure, too.

*Place of Reflections* (Plate V) is an eight foot tall indoor enclosure made of eight wooden framed rice paper panels and two narrow panels of clear fused glass. The airy, calligraphic quality of the rice paper walls is imitated in the two panels of controlled scribbles of clear glass. Hinged together, they form a spiraling enclosure to walk into. Inside, a light source changes the color, mood, reflections and shadows of the place. The existing lighting system competed with the light inside the piece. Some people wanted more of a reward when they walked inside. For a small group of people, I managed to eliminate the existing lights so the power of the piece was apparent. The light inhabited the interior space. Inside that space, I became part of the spirit of the piece. Bachelard refers to this as "intimate immensity" when he explains: "When a relaxed spirit meditates and dreams, immensity seems to expect images of immensity. The mind sees and continues to see objects while the spirit finds
the nest of immensity in an object." This was my reward. I wanted this feeling to become more universal.

Outside on a small hill, **Glass Hut** is a five foot tall structure without walls. Three white metal legs support a four foot wide circular roof made of clear glass tubes that have been bent to simulate thatching. Just as a roof protects people in a building, and an umbrella protects a person from the rain, this glass roof provides shelter for thoughts, and feelings of the person within. A three foot wide white circular metal ring marks a place for one person to sit.

Set in a hollow, **Lean-to** is an outdoor shelter made of sticks and clear stick-like glass tubes. The sandstone painted metal rod frame has a twelve foot long roof that slants from seven feet tall on one side to four feet on the opposite end. The taller side of the slanted roof has a five foot wide entrance and gradually narrows on the shorter and more intimate side of the shelter. Sticks are tied to the roof and the walls on the shorter side of the Lean-to. There is a tree stump seat in the short enclosed side of the shelter. Bent glass tubes are tied to the walls behind the seated area and on the ceiling above the seat. This allows the single seated viewer to look up and out through the glass tubes. Combining both the materials and concerns of **Meditative Shelter** and **Glass Hut**, Lean-to lures the viewer into this place of contemplation.
In these four small architectural places my goal was to make people feel enclosed but not confined. The purpose of them was for people to contact their inner personal feelings. The smell, touch and sight of these pieces evoked personal perceptions for me. These pieces are a blend of my dreams and memories of being in places. All my life I come back to my memories in daydreams and sleep dreams.

I remember feeling as though I was part of the space when I walked into the empty room of an old Louis Sullivant building in Newark, Ohio. The setting sunlight raced through the large leaded clear glass windows and into this musty unlit room. An illusive film on the yellowing walls wiggled like ripples on a lake. The ethereal presence in this room was synonymous to some of the feelings in my dreams. It is this sense of presence that I want to create. I want to make something that triggers this same sort of feeling. I need to choose physical materials to do this.

I continue to record my dreams. A selection of these dreams are the impetus for my Thesis Exhibition: Dream Arena (Plates VI, VII, VIII, IX, X, XI). In this exhibit, the sound of my voice reading ten of my dreams (see Preface) is recorded on a continuous twelve minute audio tape. Pine needles and small pieces of colored glass cover the projection tables of two overhead projectors and project a
nest-like image into the white walled room. In front of each projector lens, three small panes of clear glass are faceted together to produce a secondary lens that splits and repeats the projected light image. Translucent white screens partition the space. Three more overhead projectors with pine needles positioned behind the screens, project onto the white fabric. The light encompasses the environment. A drop ceiling made of unfinished wooden lattice suspended by monofilament line appears to be floating eight feet over the space. The lattice accentuates the intimacy of the environment.

The entrance door into the room is white and opens to a white wooden slatted walkway that extends across the room to the opposite wall. Short white wooden fences border the walkway almost to the end. Fragments of mirror are glued to the face of the fence on the left of the path. These mirrors reflect the movement of people passing as well as the walkway and the opposite fence. At the end of the walkway the fences open to spaces on the right and left. A thick layer of pine needles covers the remainder of the floor and satiates the room with a rich aroma that recalls the out-of-doors. An unfinished wooden picnic bench is placed in each of the two fenced in areas. In one corner of the room, a swing with mirrors on the seat hangs in a fenced-in area. There's an opening in this fence to allow someone to walk into the space and move the mirrored swing,
consequently moving fragments of the light.

The simplicity of the objects in the Dream Arena are to evoke personal associations. Childhood recollections and memories are inherent in all of us. The low white fences are reminiscent of fences skirting the backyards where I grew up, fences bordering our garden and the gangway fence at my grandmother's that I often poked my child nose through. The hanging lattice is much like grapevine supports and outdoor patio roofs. The height of this false ceiling makes the space a more intimate enclosure.

Reflections and shadows on the walls in Dream Arena, stir memories of light that I caught many times creeping across my wall, floor and ceiling and the light that I tried to interrupt as it streamed through my grandmother's shady grapevine onto the dirt floor. You cannot escape the light that fills this environment because it falls on you as it fills the room and it moves as you move through the environment. This light has a strange quality reminiscent of both indoors and outdoors at the same time. People become part of this environment and part of the dreams as their consciousness flickers into a personal subconscious level.

Like the light, the dreams carry people from indoors to outdoors and back again. Our minds experience this in dreams all the time. The dreams are written to induce the
listener into this sense-rich environment. "And we should not forget that these dream values communicate poetically from soul to soul. To read poetry is essentially to daydream."6 This environment transports the listener outside the immediate world and absorbs each person in their own intimacy. It unlocks the door to daydreaming.

People can never experience my dreams in exactly the same way as I do. I am providing an opportunity for others to see and think in a similar way. Josef Albers calls this a "stimulus to have fantasy to see more than the things are by their names and their physical or biological fact."7 He says: "The origin of art is the discrepancy between physical fact and psychic effect....The aim of art is to reveal and to evoke vision.... The content of art is the visual formulation of our reaction to life....Art is not an object, but art is an experience."8 My dream experiences are the source of my art. Dream Arena shares those dreams with others.
ENDNOTES

1 Webster's New World Dictionary, Second College Edition, s.v. "dream".

2 Ibid., s.v. "idea".

3 The Phil Donahue Show, WCMH-TV Channel 4, Columbus, Ohio, 3 March 1986.


6 Ibid, p.17.

7 Josef Albers, To Open Eyes, a film on Josef Albers, Produced by Educational Communications, State University of New York at Albany, an ACI release, 1969.

8 Ibid.


APPENDIX:

PLATES
I. M. Body
II. Box of Relics
III. Meditative Shelter
IV. **Meditative Shelter** (detail)
V. *Place of Reflections*
VI. Dream Arena (detail)
VII. Dream Arena (detail)
VIII. Dream Arena (detail)
IX.  Dream Arena (detail)
X. **Dream Arena** (detail)
XI. *Dream Arena* (detail)