

THESIS

THE PATH OF THE INFINITE DREAM:  
CONSTRUCTING A PERSONAL MYTH THROUGH ART

Submitted by

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In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the Degree of Master of Fine Art

Colorado State University

Fort Collins, Colorado

Spring 2026

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## ABSTRACT

### THE PATH OF THE INFINITE DREAM: CONSTRUCTING A PERSONAL MYTH THROUGH ART

At its core, this thesis is not about mythology, dreams, or race as isolated subjects. It is about the process of finding and expressing an authentic self within a world structured by inherited systems of meaning. Myth, dreams, symbolism, and cultural context are not the subject of the work; they are the materials through which authenticity is pursued.

My artwork explores dreams, intuition, and abstraction as a means of constructing a personal mythology. I am interested in mythmaking as a process: how systems of meaning originate, how they take form through lived experience, and what happens when imagined worlds are rendered tangible. While myths have historically emerged from many sources including religion, nature, and collective ritual; this thesis focuses specifically on dreams and process as a catalyst for myth construction.

Through *The Path of the Infinite Dream*, I build a visual and philosophical framework fixed in a single question: *What do you see when you close your eyes?*

The closed-eye space functions primarily as a method; a site where perception turns inward and imagination becomes an act of being. It is the metaphorical condition that allows the *Infinity Planes* to emerge; an internal field where dream imagery, symbols, and archetypal forms both exist and are generated. It operates as an environment that can be accessed, but also as a system that produces and organizes what is encountered within it.

I treat dreams as real experiences: lived events that demonstrate the mind's capacity to create worlds. By closing my eyes, sometimes only for minutes, sometimes through brief naps. I am able to access ideas, scenarios, and compositions. Through watercolor, ink, and mixed

media, I record entoptic patterns, recurring symbols, and archetypes that emerge from this interior space, and translate them into material form.

My practice combines intuition, ritual, and automatic processes to bridge the conscious and unconscious, the seen and unseen. Through repetition and sustained engagement, six archetypal states emerged: *The Fall*, *The Void*, *The Cloud*, *The Lightning*, *The Star*, and *The Cosmos*. Together they form *The Path of the Infinite Dream*, a cyclical system of creation and destruction symbolically modeled after the life cycle of a star. Each state within the cycle corresponds to a core aspect of the self: desire, mind, emotion, body, spirit, and soul.

This thesis presents the core framework of that mythology: a generative symbolic system that will continue to expand beyond this project.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to thank Ajean and Erika for giving me the opportunity to pursue my Master of Fine Arts here at Colorado State University. It had been several years since I had made a painting, and this place saved me from a hole I was falling deeper and deeper into.

I also want to thank Dave and Dr. Black for being part of my committee. Even though I spent most of my time holed up in the studio, every conversation we had offered real insight. I am grateful for the words, knowledge, and feedback you both shared with me.

I especially want to thank Michelle Shu, because I would not be here in this program if it were not for her support, understanding, and friendship. She is the sole reason I am finishing my Master's at Colorado State University.

I also want to thank everyone who took the time to read my thesis and offer feedback. Revision after revision after revision, it finally became something coherent and comprehensible. Thank you.

And a shout out to my mom and dad, who tolerated my frustration and still helped me through it all.

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## PART 1: INTRODUCTION

I am an artist raised in Okinawa, Japan. I moved from one culture to another, creating new perspectives on my sense of self. I am Black but I did not come to understand myself primarily through race, nor was I taught that my identity came with a prescribed role. I existed among many kinds of people; different cultures, languages, beliefs, and I did not feel that my body determined how I was allowed to imagine, create, or exist. I simply was. The sense of self was fluid, situational, and relational, shaped by experience rather than through that of expectation.

Raised in a Christian household with open-minded parents, I was encouraged to explore a wide range of belief systems, cultures, fantasy, mythology, and religious traditions. While religion itself never became my calling, I was fascinated by the stories, symbols, and structures these systems produced. What stayed with me was the understanding that myths and belief systems are created by human beings through imagination, experience, and interpretation.

I have come to understand that myths have never died, leaving the path open to define my own mythology. If myths were formed by humans responding to their environments, dreams, and belief systems, then there is no reason they cannot be created in the present. As a human living in the contemporary world, shaped by layered cultural exposure, media, personal experience, and dreams, I began to consider how a mythology could emerge from my own conditions. Rather than drawing from ancient natural phenomena alone, my influences are formed through accumulated experiences in the present, prompting me to shape a system that reflects what it means to be human now.

Everything shifted when I moved back to the States from Japan when I was 18. Racism, along with other social forces imposed by the surrounding culture, reinforced a limited way of being. People began to expect me to exist in a certain way, to play a certain role, and to produce certain kinds of work. What I encountered and internalized at the time shaped how I

understood what I was allowed to make. I became increasingly aware of how social systems shape not only how people are seen, but what kinds of expressions are considered legible, acceptable, or real. My own creative work was shaped by what I believed others wanted to see, by what felt socially acceptable or offered legitimacy. During this period, I was not producing the work I wanted to make.

While this awareness of societal expectations influenced my development, it is not the foundation of my practice. The tension between authorship and expectation will be addressed later, but the primary movement of this work emerges from imagination and dreams.

After my first graduate semester review, I felt like my work did not align with the direction I wanted to go. That same night, I turned off all technology and sat in silence, realizing I was still creating from somewhere that did not feel fully mine. I began researching the artists I had always been drawn to from the Surrealist movement and other artists of interest. I studied how they accessed images through automatism, intuition, and sustained imaginative worlds. I closed my eyes and paid attention to what appeared. I wrote down what I saw. I began recording dreams, creating color palettes from memory, and tying recurring images together. I cut apart earlier works and collaged them into new forms, then painted over them in timed sessions or with material restrictions. If I felt the impulse to use red, I used red. If I felt compelled to close my eyes, I did. I removed photographic references, stepped away from technology and worked without shaping it for anyone else. Over time, this way of working began to generate flow. The work started to feel aligned with me rather than shaped around something outside of me.

Working from a more authentic mode of expression allowed the work to become more relatable, not less. What is most personal often reveals what makes us human.<sup>1</sup> The personal reflects the universal. My work reveals the most vulnerable parts of myself. By removing barriers

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<sup>1</sup> Carl R. Rogers, *On Becoming a Person: A Therapist's View of Psychotherapy* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1961), 26.

to my own expression, I open a door for viewers to connect with something that exists beyond social scripts and physical norms.

These realizations shaped the questions that guide this work:

*How can imagination and dreams create a language for authentic being?*

*How do you create yourself when the world has already written your role?*

*Is it possible to create new myths today?*

*How are these new myths created?*

These questions converge into a central focus: *What do you see when you close your eyes?* The mythology that emerges in this thesis begins from that question. The process through which this space is accessed and translated into material form will be examined in greater detail in the sections that follow.

In a period of uncertainty about what to create and how to create without external pressure shaping the outcome, I turned inward. The closed-eye space became that place; a space only I could see, describe, and navigate. I came to call it the *Infinity Planes*.

Through sustained engagement with dreams and the recurrence of certain symbols over time, six archetypal states emerged: *The Fall, The Void, The Cloud, The Lightning, The Star,* and *The Cosmos*. Together they form *The Path of the Infinite Dream*. Each state corresponds to a phase of transformation experienced both cosmically and bodily. This emergence is made visible through a wall-based arrangement of compositional sketches, written notes, and unfolding collage pages, where fragments are accumulated, layered, and reorganized (Figure 1). These states first appeared through sensation, imagery, and emotional intensity before taking conceptual form.

In the closed-eye space, light fractures, colors emerge, and forms take shape. Darkness functions as depth rather than absence: a generative space where galaxies form and dissolve, bodies become fluid, and the cosmos remains infinite. This is a space where viewers can

encounter a sense of openness and mental freedom, reconnecting with their imagination revealed through dreaming.

The closed-eye space became both my method and my metaphor, a place where imagination precedes categorization and experience comes before interpretation. It is the source experience, and the *Infinity Planes* is the system I construct from it. The metaphor lives in what that space stands for beyond the literal act of closing my eyes. I began accepting what emerged from me, building a world shaped through intuition and experience.

This thesis proposes *The Path of the Infinite Dream* as a personal mythology constructed through dreams and process, demonstrating that imagination fixed in inner perception can generate coherent symbolic worlds independent of external cultural or institutional validation.

## PART 2: HISTORICAL AND THEORETICAL CONTEXT

Joseph Campbell describes myths and dreams as emerging from the same psychological source. "Myths and dreams come from the same place, realizations from the same time, that find expression in symbolic form."<sup>2</sup> The exploration of dreams is not new to visual art. The Surrealists worked from similar ground. André Breton defined surrealism as "pure psychic automatism... the dictation of thought, in the absence of all control exercised by reason."<sup>3</sup> Breton's concept of automatism sought to bypass rational control in order to access subconscious thought.<sup>4</sup> I extend these traditions toward a sustained symbolic system fixed in dream and imagination. Repeated engagement with automatic and uncontrolled actions provides an entry point to the subconscious system of meaning.

I experience unconscious and conscious processes as equal and inseparable. The unconscious allows me to enter a state of flow, where actions occur without planning or justification. These first gestures feel authentic to me because they arrive before doubt or expectation. Conscious reflection follows, responding to what has already happened and opening new directions. Through this back-and-forth, the work evolves. Neither mode is complete on its own.

My work exists in conversation with artists who developed self-defined visual and symbolic systems fixed in their own perception, cosmology, and worldview: William Blake, Leonora Carrington, Trenton Doyle Hancock, Hilma af Klint and Jack Whitten.

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<sup>2</sup> Joseph Campbell, *The Power of Myth*, with Bill Moyers (New York: Doubleday, 1988).

<sup>3</sup> André Breton, "Manifesto of Surrealism," 1924, in *Manifestoes of Surrealism*, trans. Richard Seaver and Helen R. Lane (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1969), 26–30.

<sup>4</sup> Breton, "Manifesto of Surrealism," 26–30.

## 2.1: INVISIBLE WORLDS

William Blake built symbolic universes through poetry with image and writing. Works such as *The Ancient of Days* (Figure 2) and his illuminated books present a complete mythic system populated by figures like Urizen and Los, operating within a self-generated cosmology.<sup>5</sup> His system was internally consistent, not externally validated – “I must Create a System, or be enslav’d by another Man’s.”<sup>6</sup> Blake proves that symbolic systems can originate from one individual’s inner vision and still can carry coherence and power.

Leonora Carrington created mythologies embedded in dream, alchemy, and transformation. Carrington demonstrates that dream-based work can have internal logic, not randomness. In works such as *The Giantess (The Guardian of the Egg)* (Figure 3), a monumental female figure holds an egg as a symbol of creation within a surreal, self-contained world, Carrington demonstrates how dreams can generate coherent cosmologies when treated as sustained exploration.<sup>7</sup> Carrington herself states: “The imagination has no limits and creates its own reality.”<sup>8</sup> Susan Aberth writes that Carrington understood dreams as a mode of knowledge available to all people, and that her art reflects a belief in imagination as an active, lived reality rather than fantasy or illusion.<sup>9</sup>

Hilma af Klint worked from spiritual visions and automatic processes, producing abstract symbolic paintings decades before abstraction entered the mainstream.<sup>10</sup> Works such as *Youth, The Ten Largest, No 3-4, Group IV* (Figure 4) emerged through what she described as

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<sup>5</sup> Northrop Frye, *Fearful Symmetry: A Study of William Blake* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947), 18.

<sup>6</sup> William Blake, *Jerusalem: The Emanation of the Giant Albion*, accessed January 1, 2026, [https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Jerusalem. The Emanation of the Giant Albion/Plate 10](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Jerusalem._The_Emanation_of_the_Giant_Albion/Plate_10).

<sup>7</sup> Susan Aberth, *Leonora Carrington: Surrealism, Alchemy and Art* (Burlington, VT: Lund Humphries, 2004), 14–22.

<sup>8</sup> Aberth, *Leonora Carrington: Surrealism, Alchemy and Art*, 72.

<sup>9</sup> Aberth, *Leonora Carrington: Surrealism, Alchemy and Art*, 70–78.

<sup>10</sup> Julia Voss, *Hilma af Klint: A Biography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020), 96–102.

<sup>11</sup> Voss, *Hilma af Klint*, 8–12.

spiritual transmission: “The pictures were painted directly through me.”<sup>12</sup> Both paintings feature egg-like forms that suggest beginnings or generative origins. The recurring yellow and blue shapes have been interpreted as symbolic of masculine and feminine principles.<sup>13</sup> Af Klint understood abstraction as a symbolic language capable of expressing realities inaccessible to rational or empirical representation.<sup>14</sup> Her work legitimizes inner vision as a source of abstraction.<sup>15</sup>

## 2.2: IDENTITY AND PRACTICE

Hancock and Whitten reject institutional expectations that narrow the imaginative scope of Black artists. One constructs mythic universes populated by monsters and archetypes, while the other dissolves form through abstraction and material experimentation. What connects their practices is not a shared visual language, but a shared insistence on expanding beyond prescribed limitations.

Trenton Doyle Hancock constructs an expansive narrative cosmology that he refers to as the “Moundverse,” an evolving mythic system developed across decades.<sup>16</sup> In *The Legend Is In Trouble* (Figure 5), he builds a densely layered visual world populated by invented characters and symbolic forms. The composition operates within this self-created system, where comics, grotesque figures, religion, humor, and absurdity coexist within a structured yet fluid universe. The Moundverse is not simply narrative, but a self-sustaining cosmology in which symbols and characters evolve over time.

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<sup>12</sup> Hilma af Klint, quoted in Tracey Bashkoff, ed., *Hilma af Klint: Paintings for the Future* (New York: Guggenheim Museum Publications, 2018), 32.

<sup>13</sup> Moderna Museet, Hilma af Klint, Youth, The Ten Largest, No. 3–4, collection guide.

<sup>14</sup> Voss, *Hilma af Klint*, 143–150.

<sup>15</sup> Voss, *Hilma af Klint*, 204.

<sup>16</sup> Maurice Carlos Ruffin, “Enter the Moundverse,” *Oxford American*, no. 104 (Spring 2019), accessed January 21, 2026, <https://oxfordamerican.org/magazine/issue-104-spring-2019/enter-the-moundverse>.

Hancock has stated that he grew up in a conservative Christian household, recognizing that myth and institutional structures have always existed.<sup>17</sup> What resonates is not only that Hancock is a Black artist, but that he allows himself to construct an entire world without asking permission for it to be legible within expectations of "Black art." Hancock expanded his world, leaning into monsters and superheroes precisely when they were not expected of him.<sup>18</sup>

His work demonstrates that mythology can be built from lived experience without being confined to prescribed narratives. As Hancock has stated, "Being a Black artist is inevitable. It bleeds through no matter what story I tell."<sup>19</sup> His refusal is not of identity, but of reduction. Blackness is present within the work because it is inseparable from the artist, yet it does not function as a limitation on what the work can become.

Jack Whitten approached this question through abstraction. Where Hancock builds narrative mythologies, Whitten pursued material experimentation as a site of expansion. In 1970, he began investigating the physical possibilities of paint, shifting away from imposed expectations of representation.<sup>20</sup> His work emphasizes process, surface, and structure, allowing the material itself to carry meaning.<sup>21</sup>

Whitten distinguished between race and identity, recognizing that race is often projected onto the body, while identity extends beyond that projection.<sup>22</sup> In a studio note he wrote, "HOW I PERCEIVE THE WORLD CONSTITUTES MY PERSONAL IDENTITY. MY PERSONAL

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<sup>17</sup> Bill Kartalopoulos, "Trenton Doyle Hancock," interview with Trenton Doyle Hancock, *BOMB Magazine*, no. 94 (Winter 2006), accessed January 6, 2026, <https://bombmagazine.org/articles/trenton-doyle-hancock/>.

<sup>18</sup> James Cohan Gallery, "Trenton Doyle Hancock: The Moundverse Chapter 2," 2020, accessed January 20, 2026, <https://www.jamescohan.com/artists/trenton-doyle-hancock>.

<sup>19</sup> Art21, "Storytelling—Characters and Colors," *Art21: Extended Play*, 2019, accessed January 6, 2026, <https://art21.org/watch/extended-play/trenton-doyle-hancock-storytelling-characters-and-colors-short/>.

<sup>20</sup> Jack Whitten, quoted in Henry Geldzahler, *Jack Whitten: Ten Years—1970–1980* (New York: The Studio Museum in Harlem, 1983), 8–15.

<sup>21</sup> Jack Whitten, in *Jack Whitten: Five Decades of Painting*, ed. Kathryn Kanjo (San Diego: Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, 2015), 18–25.

<sup>22</sup> Jack Whitten, in Jack Whitten and Katy Siegel, eds., *Jack Whitten: Notes from the Woodshed* (New York: Hauser & Wirth, 2018), 238–242.

IDENTITY IS THE TEMPLATE FOR WORLDVIEW."<sup>23</sup> His abstraction was not an escape from identity, but a refusal to let identity dictate form. This is evident in works such as *9.11.01* (Figure 6), where the surface is composed of thousands of acrylic tiles embedded with materials such as ash, dust, and blood. The work remains shaped by lived experience, but resists being interpreted through a single framework.

The shared move in both practices is a reorientation of authority – away from external frameworks and toward internal perception as the generative source. Dreams, in this context, are not a departure from that lineage but its furthest extension.

Together, these approaches reinforce a methodology that I extend through my own practice. Where internal perception, particularly through dreams and the closed-eye state, becomes the primary site for constructing a symbolic and evolving system.

I work in conversation with these artists, not by adopting their symbols, but by extending their commitment to building from internal vision. What distinguishes my practice is the use of dreams as a sustained generative method, serving as both source and structure for a symbolic system that develops over time.

Black art is not a fixed category. It is as expansive as the individuals who create it. Recognizing that freed me. Rather than working to meet expectations of what my work should look like or mean, I began to question those expectations, using the work to explore how identity is formed, imposed, and moved through.

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<sup>23</sup> Whitten, *Notes from the Woodshed*, 240.

### PART 3: THEMATIC EXPLORATION

The closed-eye space is the origin of the work and can also be referred to as the *Infinity Planes*. The *Infinity Planes* is the invisible world from which this mythology emerges. As Joseph Campbell suggests, myth arises from an unseen realm that supports and underlies the visible one, aligning with my understanding of this space.<sup>24</sup> I use the term mythology to describe a symbolic system that organizes experience through recurring archetypes, narrative structure, and transformation. The *Infinity Planes* is an internal spatial field accessed through drawing, recall, and process. This space feels unbound and limitless, full of movement, color, and shifting form.

The *Infinity Planes* (Figure 7) functions as a mapped visualization of this space. It operates as a symbolic diagram where forms, fragments, and structures represent the internal logic of the space. Cubes appear as containers of dreams, holding fragments of imagery and perception. Surrounding symbols act as markers of recurring ideas and archetypal forces within the work. At the center, a self-defined symbol of infinity represents a continuous cycle of generation, where fragments, forms, and what I describe as a pool of souls are in constant motion, circulating and re-emerging without end. The space is composed of broken parts, static-like energy, large looming figures, and constantly shifting forms, yet spatially akin to outer space.

When I close my eyes, figures retain afterimages, almost like auras. In this space, distinctions such as race dissolve at the skeletal or x-ray level. Beneath surface identity, bodies become light, structure, and energy. This space informs how I imagine the body, the cosmos, and the dream as interconnected.

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<sup>24</sup> Joseph Campbell, interview by Bill Moyers, "The First Storytellers," in *The Power of Myth*, audio recording, BillMoyers.com, accessed March 18, 2026, <https://billmoyers.com/content/ep-3-joseph-campbell-and-the-power-of-myth-the-first-storytellers-audio/>

Recurring themes in my work include transformation, the merging of dream and waking life, and the search for authenticity within systems that define identity from the outside. These themes are not imposed in advance but emerge through repetition and sustained attention to the work itself. Across different pieces and formats, the imagery returns to moments of transformed states in which form, identity, and meaning are unstable and in motion.

In this work, Blackness functions as a thematic and metaphorical condition, emerging through darkness as a generative and infinite space where form, identity, and possibility take shape, reimagining what has often been framed as absence or limitation. The *Infinity Planes* consistently appear in dark or prismatic-like fields – sometimes it is all black and luminous, sometimes filled with colors or a single color. Fractals, ripples and liquid galaxies weave through and across forms while broken planes, mirrors, cubes, and large, otherworldly presences occupy the space. Here space behaves as both solid and fluid, shifting between containment and expansion.

Bodies within this space often appear fractured, translucent, or x-ray-like, sometimes contained within cubes, split apart, or dissolving into liquid forms as seen in (Figure 8). These visual conditions reflect a persistent tension between internal and external worlds. While the interior space of the work feels expansive, infinite, and generative, the external world remains structured and fixed. As I became more comfortable working within the closed-eye space, allowing myself to go back and forth between complete darkness without interruption, an avatar began to appear. In that state of flow, *Altensien Skybreaker* (Figure 9) materializes, not as something I construct, but as something that emerges through repetition, where recurring forms – wings, cubes, and shifting structures – accumulate and begin to stabilize into a recognizable figure.

*Altensien Skybreaker* exists in multiple forms and variations across my experience in the *Infinity Planes* and dreams. The entity appears in multiple ways – some more defined – featuring different cubes for a head, wings emerging from the eyes, hair and eyes composed of

clouds, and a body constructed entirely in black, flowing cosmic energy. Skybreaker's cube elements tend to shift in form. At times it is complete darkness, all black, a complete void. At others it contains galaxies, or the Earth held at its center. The entity is both myself and not myself at the same time. It is an extension of my perception, a way of entering dreams from different positions: as observer, participant, or instigator of events. Through Skybreaker, I experience dreams from shifting perspectives, allowing narrative insight to form through association.

Altensien Skybreaker is not just a symbolic figure but is a functional working state: the self that operates within the closed-eye space during the act of making. This working state feels like entering flow. Everything outside of the art fades and the visualization of the *Infinity Planes* becomes much clearer. I don't think about outside influences. I just act. It feels like stepping into complete utter darkness. In this compositional study, Altensien Skybreaker is depicted with a cube for a head, a form I relate to directly by imagining myself within it. The cube becomes a point of identification, where the figure is no longer separate from my own presence. The phrase "black is comfortable" (Figure 10) reflects this condition, where darkness is experienced as a space of ease that allows me to remain and create.

It feels immersive, as if I can sense actions before I perform them. When I return from that state, I come back as myself, carrying fragments of imagery that I later translate into physical form through drawing, painting, writing, and material experimentation. With continued practice, the transitions between these states become clearer, and the dream imagery more vivid.

This work is intended to be encountered openly, without a single prescribed reading. I want viewers to engage with their own experiences and associations, while allowing meaning to form through relation that can foster explanation. Interpretation is not fixed in advance but emerges through time and attention. The work invites viewers to move slowly, to notice repetition, layering, and symbolic recurrence, and to locate themselves within what they

encounter.

At the same time, the mythology exists across multiple forms. The paintings operate spatially and intuitively, while sketches, automatic studies, and written fragments function as a parallel layer where symbols, language, and understanding emerge simultaneously within the development of *The Path of the Infinite Dream* and the archetypes. For some viewers, immersion in imagery may be primary. For others, the written and representational material offers another point of access. The system is layered, allowing different audiences to enter at different depths.

Imagination functions here as a form of salvation, not from reality, but within it. The work does not deny social context, but it also does not allow that context to fully determine meaning. Carl Jung's concept of the collective unconscious informs this approach. Jung identified recurring dream images as expressions of the collective unconscious; symbols that surface because they speak to shared human experience.<sup>25</sup> My focus, however, is not on illustrating universal archetypes. Instead, I discover personal archetypes through lived experience and repetition, trusting that representations of my personal experience can be interpreted and resonate across diverse audiences. As Carl Rogers writes, "What is most personal and unique in each one of us is probably the very element which would, if shared, speak most deeply to others."<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Carl G. Jung, *Man and His Symbols* (New York: Doubleday, 1964), 22–29.

<sup>26</sup> Rogers, *On Becoming a Person*, 25–26.

## PART 4: THE PATH OF THE INFINITE DREAM

*The Path of the Infinite Dream* is structured as a cyclical system, intuitively organized through sequences drawn from recurring dreams, lived experience, and long-term observation of patterns that have followed me since childhood. I understand the system first and foremost as a circle of six archetypal states: *The Fall*, *The Void*, *The Cloud*, *The Lightning*, *The Star*, and *The Cosmos*, relating to transformations of the body and spirit, and experienced viscerally through dreams. These states did not emerge as concepts first, but as sensations, images, and events: falling, suspension, transformation, rupture, ignition, and dissolution.

These states reflect my belief that humans are akin to stars: bodies shaped through cycles of pressure, collapse, ignition, and expansion. This connection is reflected in accompanying sketches and notes, where the relationship between the human body and stellar transformation begins to take form (Figure 11). Through dreams, Altensien Skybreaker experiences these transformations directly. Each archetype names a specific state of being: how the body feels, how it moves, what space it occupies, and what it becomes. Over time, these experiences formed a path: not linear, but cyclical, returning in different forms and intensities.

Altensien Skybreaker is the entity that moves through *The Path of the Infinite Dream*, undergoing transformation that grants access to the *Infinity Planes*. The following text is an excerpt developed through automatic writing within the closed-eye space, channeled through Skybreaker and later refined into a fragment that reflects what was seen and experienced. It functions as a foundational articulation of *The Path of the Infinite Dream* and is presented here as a primary source rather than an explanation.

Fall through the glass of liminal space,  
The void opens, heavy yet frictionless.  
The void breathes its nothingness,  
Light and dark cease to hold meaning.

Clouds swirl, their edges vibrating,  
Thunder resonates in a language I almost understand.  
Lightning carves its mark, splitting the air,  
Flesh dissolves into shards of prismatic light.

A star erupts, scattering fragments of self,  
Eyes burn, twin stars igniting a forgotten path.  
The cosmos stretches infinitely,  
A realm of rippling energy and latent silence.

Positive and negative dissolve and reform,  
A scale tipping, yet never settling.  
To ascend is to unravel completely,  
The Infinity Plane pulls, infinite and ineffable.

#### 4.1: THE SIX ARCHETYPAL STATES

*The Path of the Infinite Dream* is structured through six archetypal states. Each state corresponds to a core aspect of the self and is represented by a color that appeared through first-thought association. *Altensien* falls, the body spiraling through pressure and desire until it collapses into a void, enclosed within its own mind. From that enclosure, form begins to dissolve, and the body gives way to the clouds, where thought and emotion overtake structure. Struck by lightning, the body is broken and reformed, expanding into a star, where it is stretched across the cosmos before being drawn toward a distant cube that marks the entrance to the *Infinity Planes*.

All imagery and compositions are constructed from experiences within dreams, the closed-eye space, and writing, then translated into visual form. Each piece carries its associated color as a defining accent or hue, reinforcing the presence of each archetype within the system.

*The Fall* begins with descent. (Associated Color: Red) The sensation is centered in the gut as the body spirals downward, flames erupting from the flesh as gravity pulls endlessly into darkness. This leads into *The Void*: a boxed-in black space with translucent walls, eyes watching from all sides, a state of mental enclosure. (Associated Color: Purple) From within the Void emerges *The Cloud*, where understanding forms. (Associated Color: Blue) Clouds pour from the body, through eyes, ears, skin, until the body dissolves into the atmosphere. This gives

way to *The Lightning*, marked by sudden energy and violent transformation, as electricity courses through blackened flesh and the body's structure resembles swirling galaxies. (Associated Color: Yellow) *The Star* follows, where the body is pierced by infinite light, splitting apart as spirit stretches across the cosmos. (Associated Color: Orange) Finally, *The Cosmos* represents the formation of soul: slow movement, footsteps shaping energy, and the approach toward distant cubes that function as portals to other dreams. (Associated Color: Green) The cycle then repeats.

In *The Fall* (Figure 12), Altensien Skybreaker descends from a sky into an interior space understood as the cube, which functions as an entry into *The Void*. The body spirals inward, with forms emerging from the gut and extending outward. The upper half dissolves into cloud-like forms, suggesting a state between descent and ascension.

In *The Void* (Figure 13), Skybreaker appears within a black, undefined space after entering the cube. The cube emerges directly in front of the figure, looming over Skybreaker, marking a moment of encounter. Cloud forms begin to seep into the body, signaling the transition into the next state as perception shifts and the body begins to change.

In *The Cloud* (Figure 14), Skybreaker accepts this condition as clouds surround and merge with the body. Subtle hands and pulling forces emerge within the composition, suggesting entities that reach and swarm around the figure. Color begins to appear within the clouds, becoming warped and unstable as the state builds toward the next transformation.

In *The Lightning* (Figure 15), this buildup is released as Skybreaker undergoes a visceral state of change. The body is broken open and struck repeatedly, while clouds shift downward into the edges of the composition. Vivid, swirling color intensifies the impact, and the figure appears exposed and fragmented, with a core emerging where the right hand would be.

In *The Star* (Figure 16), this moment transitions into its aftermath as Skybreaker is pulled into a star-like formation where light interacts directly with the body. The figure is caught within this force, suggesting both breakdown and reformation as it moves through this state.

In *The Cosmos* (Figure 17), Skybreaker emerges into a more stabilized form following the previous transformations, entering what becomes the *Infinity Planes*. Traces of earlier states extend from the body into the surrounding space as the figure moves along a path. In the distance, black cosmic hands hold a cube emitting its own energy, marking a point of transition into the next state.

In (Figure 18), Altensien Skybreaker appears in a cosmic state, where the body extends into its surrounding environment. A winged mask emits cloud-like forms that expand outward, while the black body dissolves into color that bleeds into the atmosphere. The figure is continuous with the space, not separate from it. The figure is rendered in a deep, absorbing black, extending through the hand and lower portion of the surface, reinforcing Blackness as a generative space that both contains and produces form.

A hand emerges from the lower portion of the panel, holding a black cube. The hand is my own, existing in real space while extending from within the image. This creates a point of contact between the *Infinity Planes* and the physical world. The cube is presented as a contained fragment of this space, something that can be held and brought outward.

In (Figure 19), Altensien Skybreaker appears as a suspended body within a sphere, with cubes functioning as extensions of the form. These cubes divide the avatar into distinct sections, suggesting that the body is being shaped and restructured through the archetypes. The figure becomes an abstracted representation of the six-path system.

All states share the recurring symbols of wings, liquid galaxies, exoskeletal bodies, transparency, cubes, circles, portals, falling, light fractures, static, and prismatic color. These elements emerged through repetition in dreams and automatic drawing. By recording, revisiting, and comparing these images over time, I began to recognize patterns and translate them into a structured mythical system. Through this process, I am able to construct different forms and compositional approaches to depict each archetypal state.

## PART 5: METHODOLOGY

Dreams were the first place where I consistently experienced freedom from externally imposed forces. Over time, this freedom extended beyond sleep into a method that is now the closed-eye space and the *Infinity Planes*. This allows images, symbols, and sensations to emerge without control. Whether entered through sleep or during brief waking intervals, this state brings me closer to myself.

For a long time, dreams existed separately from my creative practice. I used sleep as a way to escape the real world, but I did not act on dreams as a source for art. The change occurred when I began to create from my own inner experience rather than force work to fit external expectations. Through this shift in my graduate studies, I found the bridge between dreams and my practice. I developed a way to produce work that reflects dreams and the *Infinity Planes*. From this space, I can construct meaning fixed in my own lived experience. Not only as a Black person, but as a human being shaped by relationships, environments, and dreams.

This method allows me to give physical form to what is otherwise intangible, creating worlds, myths, and systems that originate internally but can be shared. Gaston Bachelard describes a threshold between night dreams and waking reverie, a state in which imagination moves freely while the body remains present.<sup>27</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty situates the body as the medium through which we have a world.<sup>28</sup> My practice operates within this threshold, accessing the closed-eye space through bodily engagement, ritual, and material process.

This method is expressed directly through my imagery. Figures appear breaking from chains, warping and transforming, pushing beyond boxes and boundaries into states of infinite expansion. These visual elements are not symbolic indications alone, but reflections of an inner experience, moments where identity, form, and limitation dissolve.

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<sup>27</sup> Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Reverie* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), 62.

<sup>28</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962), 146.

## 5.1: PROCESS

Beginning after my first graduate semester review, I began treating my studio practice like a lab. Each piece, and often each series of pieces, became an experiment. Rather than refining a single method, I intentionally altered my approach from work to work in order to force evolution. I wanted to push myself further into the closed-eye space, testing different ways of working that might more effectively translate onto tangible surfaces.

This meant deliberately experimenting with process, restriction, and material. I stepped outside of habitual mark-making and imposed new challenges to disrupt comfort. By constantly trying unfamiliar methods, I was able to observe what felt authentic, what resisted me, what succeeded, and what failed. Discoveries made in one piece were carried into the next. If a gesture, limitation, or structural decision revealed something closer to the inner experience I sought to translate, I incorporated it into future work. In this way, the practice became cumulative, each piece building upon the previous one.

Through this sustained experimentation, I gradually developed comfort with how I naturally draw, paint, and construct marks. From there, I work through automatic and intuitive methods, including dream documentation, collage, automatic drawing, blind contour drawing, and non-erasure. These approaches remove the controlling hand and suspend premeditated composition, allowing the image to come rather than be constructed.

The following sequence shows how imagery is translated from the closed-eye space into a finished work. I begin with an initial blind drawing (Figure 20), which may be brief or extended; in this case, it was quick. This is followed by an automatic drawing (Figure 21), where marks and forms continue to emerge without direct control. Between these stages, I add written notes, capturing impressions, symbols, and language as they surface.

Using these studies, I develop a compositional sketch (Figure 22) that translates the blind and automatic marks into a more structured form while still operating within the logic of

automatism. This stage reflects the interplay between image and language as they begin to align.

From these accumulated elements, I construct a compositional study (Figure 23) that organizes the fragments into a unified image. This leads into the final painting, where the composition is fully rendered (Figure 19). This sequence demonstrates how the process moves from internal perception to a resolved visual form.

#### 5.1.1: DREAMS AS REFERENCE

Through dreams and the closed-eye space, I construct narratives drawn from what I witness internally and bring back into the physical world. These stories are my way of translating that experience; tying together memory, imagination, and observation into a visual language that is my own. I document dreams immediately upon waking through writing, voice recording, or rapid drawing. These initial recordings are not meant to be representational, but to preserve the immediacy of the experience before conscious interpretation intervenes.

#### 5.1.2: COLLAGE

Collage operates thematically as an analogue to dreaming. Like dreams, it is shaped by absorption, repetition, memory, and influence. The six-path system functions as a collage of lived experience, assembled over time through intuitive construction. Fractals, circles, exoskeletal figures, and cubes recur across works, their meanings shifting through context and reappearance. In my work, text and image function together as a unified symbolic language, allowing meaning to emerge through selection.

The entire body of work operates as one expanding collage. Sketches, compositions, notes, conversations, readings, and lived experiences are all absorbed into it. Everything becomes material. I collect these fragments and layer them into my world, allowing them to merge and evolve within the *Infinity Planes*.

### *5.1.3: AUTOMATIC DRAWING*

When working from automatic drawing, I allow myself to draw freely without conscious decision-making. I draw continuously without looking or planning. Sometimes I set timed intervals between one to five minutes to work. After each interval, I pause to observe what emerges and record written notes in response to what I see. At times, I close my eyes again and recall the image internally before reopening them, noting the shift between the closed-eye image and the physical drawing. This back-and-forth process allows perception, memory, and material to inform one another.

Through this process, I accumulate large quantities of automatic studies (Figure 24), where patterns, symbols, and recurring forms begin to emerge over time.

Producing through automatic tendencies deeply influences my work. I found comfort by working through impulse and intuitive movement. When I allow myself to move without overthinking, the work becomes true to me.

By trusting instinct, I learned through the act of making itself. New ideas surface constantly, and certain motions become muscle memory. The repetition builds, increasing my confidence. Control is not lost in this process, but continuously shifted between impulse, observation, and reflection. In many ways, automatism saved me. It allows me to create without fear of being wrong.

### *5.1.4: AUTOMATIC WRITING*

As the image develops through repetition and build up, patterns and associations begin to surface. In some instances, these visual relationships suggest narratives, which I document through automatic writing or short descriptive texts. These narratives may originate directly from the closed-eye space or emerge in response to the drawing itself. Writing functions as an extension of the drawing process, expanding without intentional structure (Figure 25).

Automatic writing is a way for me to release thoughts and ideas without filtering them. Whatever comes first – the initial phrase, the instinctive image – is written down exactly as it appears. I trust that if it emerges, it belongs there. Later, I return to those words and build from them.

This practice strengthens flow and gives language an important role in my work. Words are not separate from the visual pieces; they function as symbols and connective themes between them. I use language to generate metaphors that give form to the *Infinity Planes*.

Sometimes I close my eyes and write freely, allowing the story to form. Other times, I begin with words and then close my eyes to translate them visually. The change between writing and image allows each to inform the other.

#### 5.1.5: *BLIND DRAWING*

Blindfold drawing developed from the question: *what do I see when I close my eyes?* I found that the most direct way to access this space was to remove sight altogether. By blindfolding myself or even working in complete darkness, I guide my hand according to what I perceive in the closed-eye space, allowing the image to emerge without visual control.

After removing the blindfold, I begin piecing together what has appeared. This creates a back-and-forth rhythm between drawing, reflection, and note-taking. Through repetition, I have learned not only to perceive this space more clearly, but to construct scenarios and environments within it. Over time, this process allows new compositions to emerge and expands the ways I can translate internal imagery into visual form.

#### 5.1.6: *NON-ERASURE*

I intentionally removed erasure from my practice once I recognized it as unnecessary. Marks are not corrected or undone; instead, each piece is allowed to evolve through accumulation, alteration, and transformation. A work may shift direction, be cut apart, or

reassembled into another form. This approach prioritizes continuation over correction, allowing the work to remain responsive.

By choosing not to erase and instead building directly from what occurs, I remove much of my overthinking. The work grows from what happens first, and I allow it to develop from those initial marks. I begin with automatic gestures and let compositional ideas emerge from them.

This process also extends through material interaction. At times, water or ink is introduced in ways that are not fully controlled: spilling, bleeding, or drying unpredictably. Instead of correcting these moments, I observe their outcomes and incorporate them into the work, allowing these incidental events to influence future decisions.

The relationship also works in reverse: something introduced in a more developed stage of a piece can be brought back into earlier stages of drawing and sketching. The process moves back and forth, where studies inform larger works and those works, in turn, reshape how future sketches are approached.

Through non-erasure and experimentation, new symbols begin to emerge. Different ways of seeing the image develop through the act of building rather than refining.

## 5.2: MATERIAL

Watercolor is my primary medium, often applied on wood rather than paper. I am drawn to watercolor because it resists control, but working on wood introduces an additional temporal dimension. Over time, water and pigment seep into the surface, altering the image even after I believe a piece is complete. Two weeks later, a work may look different as the material continues to absorb, deepen, and settle. This slow change adds an erosive quality to the surface that can be seen in detail in (Figure 26), where layers interact beneath visibility.

I apply watercolor in dense, repeated layers, often to the point where viewers mistake the work for oil paint due to its saturation and depth. This process requires extensive time and patience. I spend long hours in the studio, building layer upon layer, allowing each to dry before

returning to the surface. Texture and depth emerge through repetition, pushing watercolor beyond its typical use.

A lot of mixed media is involved in my work. I experiment with ink, watercolor, pens, and pencils, pushing the boundaries of each material to see how they can recreate what I experience in closed-eye space: embodying the *Infinity Planes*. The space itself is fluid, composed of shifting particles and warping cosmic colors that feel alive with energy.

I want the audience to imagine what it would feel like if infinity passed through their body – how visceral, how overwhelming, how cosmically haunting it would be to be torn open and reshaped into something like a star.

### 5.3: RITUAL AND DURATION

Being raised in Japan exposed me to visual practices that emphasized process, restraint, and duration, shaping how I came to understand making as something that develops over time. My studio practice is structured through self-imposed rituals that shape outcome without predetermining it. I often limit sessions by restrictions. Examples include: working only in darkness on one day, using only white watercolor on another, or restricting myself to a single layer per session. At times, I rotate between multiple pieces, applying different colors or layers in sequence, allowing each work to develop at its own pace.

These rituals create a rhythm of making that balances intuition with discipline. While the initial motions emerge automatically, the accumulation of layers is purposeful and meticulous. Time becomes a material in itself, embedded within the surface through repeated engagement.

This was one of the most important things I learned about art, process, and time. Letting go of overthinking – releasing the need to analyze every decision before making it – and instead acting intuitively allowed the work to build itself.

#### 5.4: COMPLETION

A piece is considered finished when it reaches a state that feels aligned with the closed-eye space and reflects the *Infinity Planes*. Completion is determined by materialization. It is the point at which continuing to alter the work would begin to conceal the very process that brought it into being. I remain aware that overworking is a risk and determining when to stop is an ongoing discussion within an intuitive process.

The point of completion I have reached can be understood in multiple ways. Depending on the aesthetic, narrative, symbol, or meaning occupying the *Infinity Planes*, the work may take different forms of intention. At times, a simple automatic sketch can function as an act of channeling: a witnessing of something without prior knowledge of what the *Infinity Planes* are, as though encountered in a dream. I return from these experiences with fragments of what was seen, and in experiencing the dreams of others, I perceive them as extensions of myself. Through this process, I channel multiple perspectives within the lens of Skybreaker. These dissociative experiences foster varying degrees of completion, allowing the mythology to continue evolving and reshaping itself.

Ultimately, I want my audience to feel a sense of limitlessness. I want them to think about what it means to be infinite. The work is meant to offer a kind of mental freedom, to encourage people to look at their own dreams and remember the endless possibilities that can emerge from them.

A piece feels complete to me when it truly reflects the *Infinity Planes* – when the space I describe in writing is visibly present in the image itself. The text and the visual work are not separate; they inform each other. As more pieces are created, they evolve together, building on one another and expanding the mythology. Art became a reflection of my thoughts and inner experiences, and that is what I want the completed works to hold: that sense of transformation, expansion, and becoming.

## CONCLUSION

What emerges through *The Path of the Infinite Dream* is not a finished mythology, but a process of becoming. The work traces how an authentic self can be discovered and articulated through internal experience when external systems of meaning attempt to define what is real, legible, or allowed.

Through this thesis, I came to understand how I enjoy creating and what generates the strongest sense of flow for me. World-building, time, method, rituals and treating art as a system capable of infinite growth have become central to my practice. Through continuous attention to what recurs across these internal perceptual states, symbols and archetypes revealed themselves over time. The six archetypal states: *The Fall, The Void, The Cloud, The Lightning, The Star, and The Cosmos*. Together, they form a cyclical and symbolic understanding of becoming that reflects both psychological transformation and cosmic formation.

Meaning, within this framework, does not require external validation to be real. If an experience is lived; if it is seen, felt, and carried, it possesses reality. Through watercolor, collage, and writing, these inner experiences are rendered tangible, allowing a symbolic language to take shape. *Altensien Skybreaker* moves through these states as part of an ongoing process of becoming.

I make art to discover who I am, not to prove who I already think I am. The work does not aim toward completion, but toward continued evolution. The myth is not fixed. It builds as I build. It grows as I grow.

The world constructed here stands alongside existing myths as an evolving system of its own. It demonstrates that new myths can be formed from individual consciousness, and that imagination remains an innate human capacity. What has been established is a core system: a closed-eye methodology, a symbolic language, and a cyclical path of archetypes that will continue to evolve.

The question remains clear: *What do you see when you close your eyes?* This thesis proposes that the answer, when pursued with discipline and attention, can generate coherent worlds. Imagination is not separate from reality; it is one of its generative forces. *The Path of the Infinite Dream* is not an escape from the world, but a way of reshaping how it can be perceived.

As Jack Whitten said, "I can build anything I want to build."<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Adrianna Campbell, "Jack Whitten Talks About Process and His Touring Retrospective," *Artforum*, October 20, 2015, <https://www.artforum.com/columns/jack-whitten-talks-about-process-and-his-touring-retrospective-226268/>.

## FIGURES



Figure 1. Preston Harris, Wall-based arrangement of compositional sketches, written notes, and unfolding collage pages demonstrating the emergence, layering, and reorganization of forms into archetypal structures, 2026, photograph.



Figure 2. William Blake, *The Ancient of Days*, 1794, relief etching with watercolor, 23.3 × 16.8 cm.



Figure 3. Leonora Carrington, *The Giantess (The Guardian of the Egg)*, 1947, oil on canvas, 81.3 × 65.4 cm.



Figure 4. Hilma af Klint, Youth, *The Ten Largest, No. 3-4, Group IV*, 1907, tempera on paper mounted on canvas, 320 × 240 cm.



Figure 5. Trenton Doyle Hancock, *The Legend Is in Trouble*, 2006, acrylic and mixed media on canvas, approx. 213.4 × 304.8 cm (84 × 120 in).

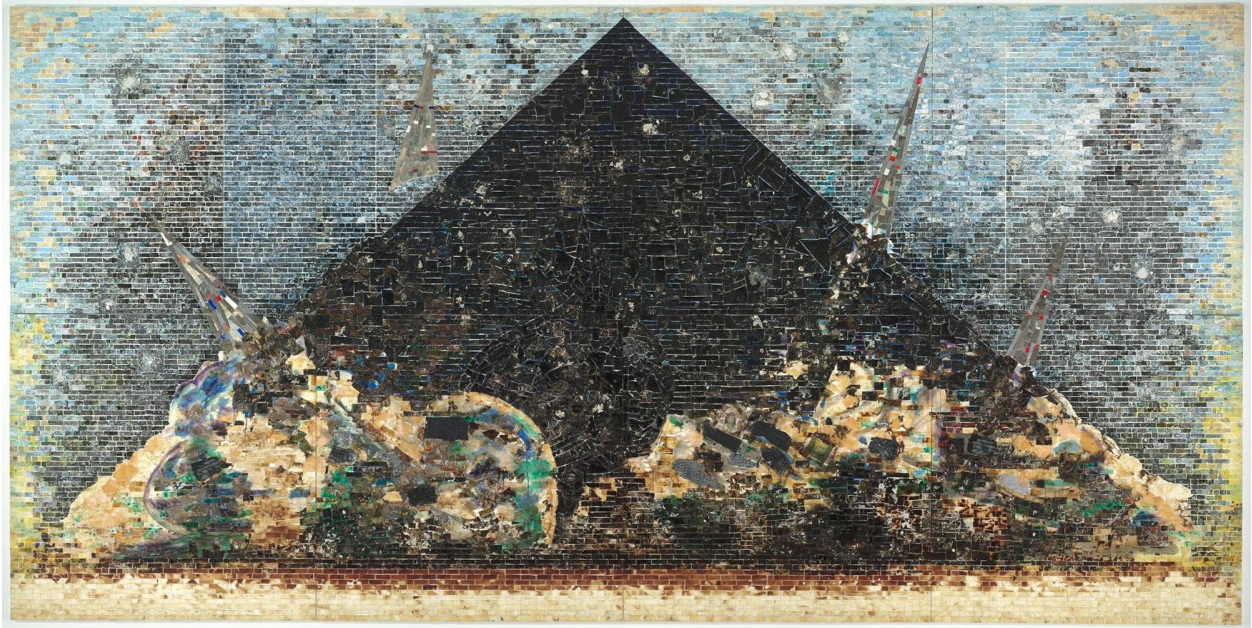


Figure 6. Jack Whitten, *9.11.01*, 2006, acrylic on canvas (tesserae technique), 304.8 × 243.8 cm (120 × 96 in).



Figure 7. *The Infinity Planes (Map)*, 2026, mixed media on wood, 24 × 36 in.

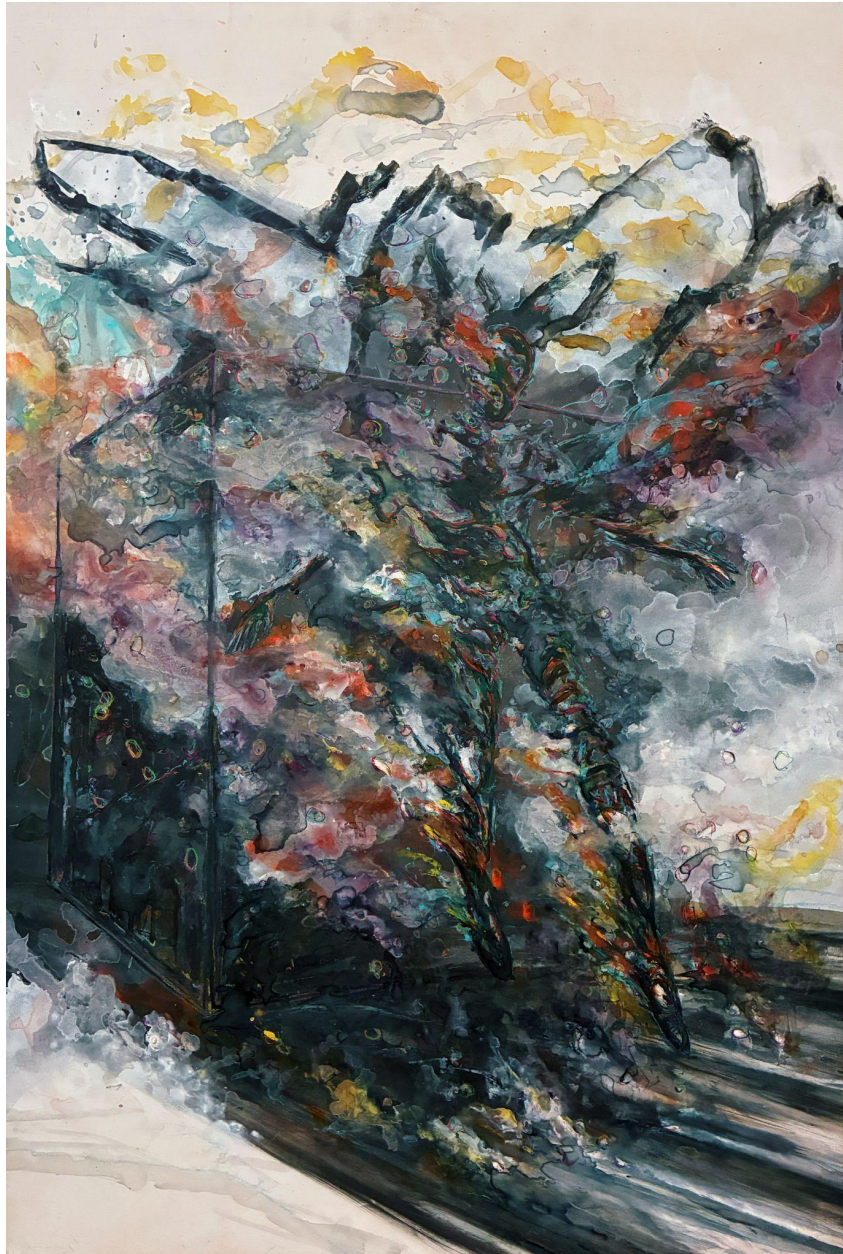


Figure 8. *Breaking from the Dream*, 2025, mixed media on wood, 36 × 24 in.



Figure 9. Accumulation of sketches depicting the emergence of Altensien Skybreaker through repeated forms, including wings, cubes, and shifting structures, 2023-26, mixed media on paper, 11.5 × 9 in.

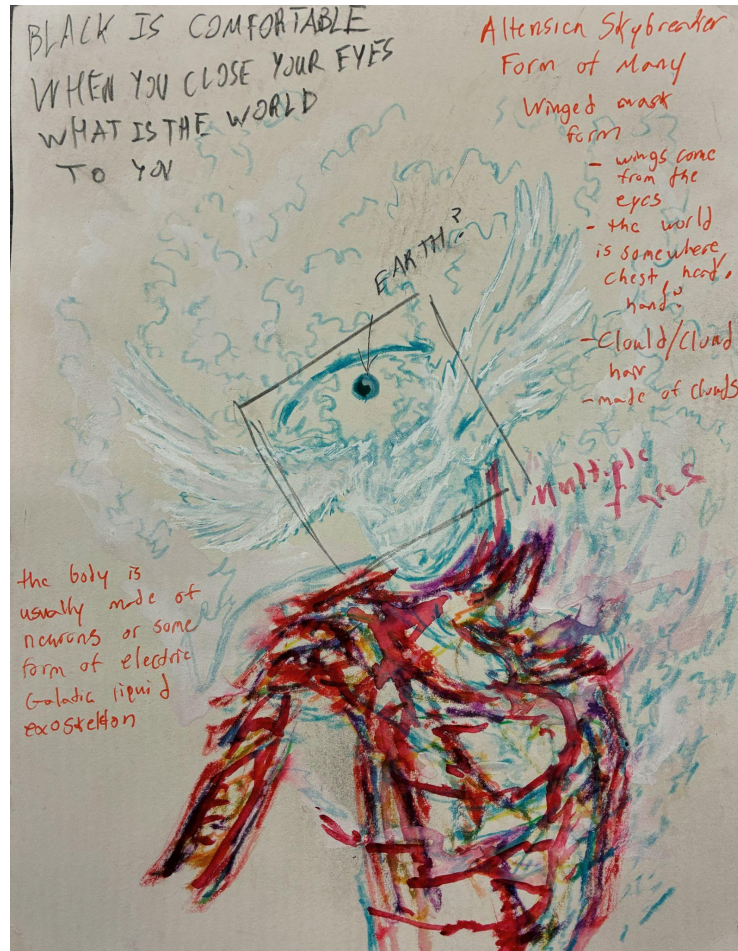


Figure 10. Automatic and compositional study of Altensien Skybreaker with accompanying notes, exploring form and structure prior to the final painting (A-Skybreaker), 2026, mixed media on paper, 11.5 × 9 in.

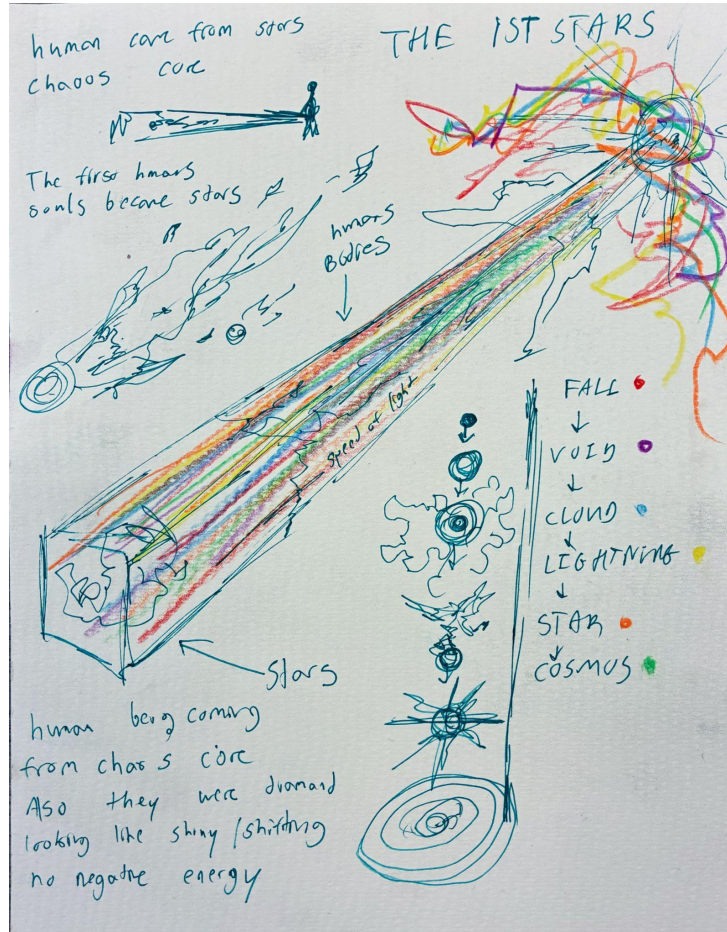


Figure 11. Sketches and written notes exploring the relationship between the human body and stellar transformation, including pressure, collapse, ignition, and expansion, 2024-26, mixed media on paper, 11.5 × 9 in.



Figure 12. *The Fall*, 2026, mixed media on wood, 36 × 24 in.



Figure 13. *The Void*, 2026, mixed media on wood, 36 × 24 in.



Figure 14. *The Cloud*, 2026, mixed media on wood, 36 × 24 in



Figure 15. *The Lightning*, 2026, mixed media on wood, 36 × 24 in.

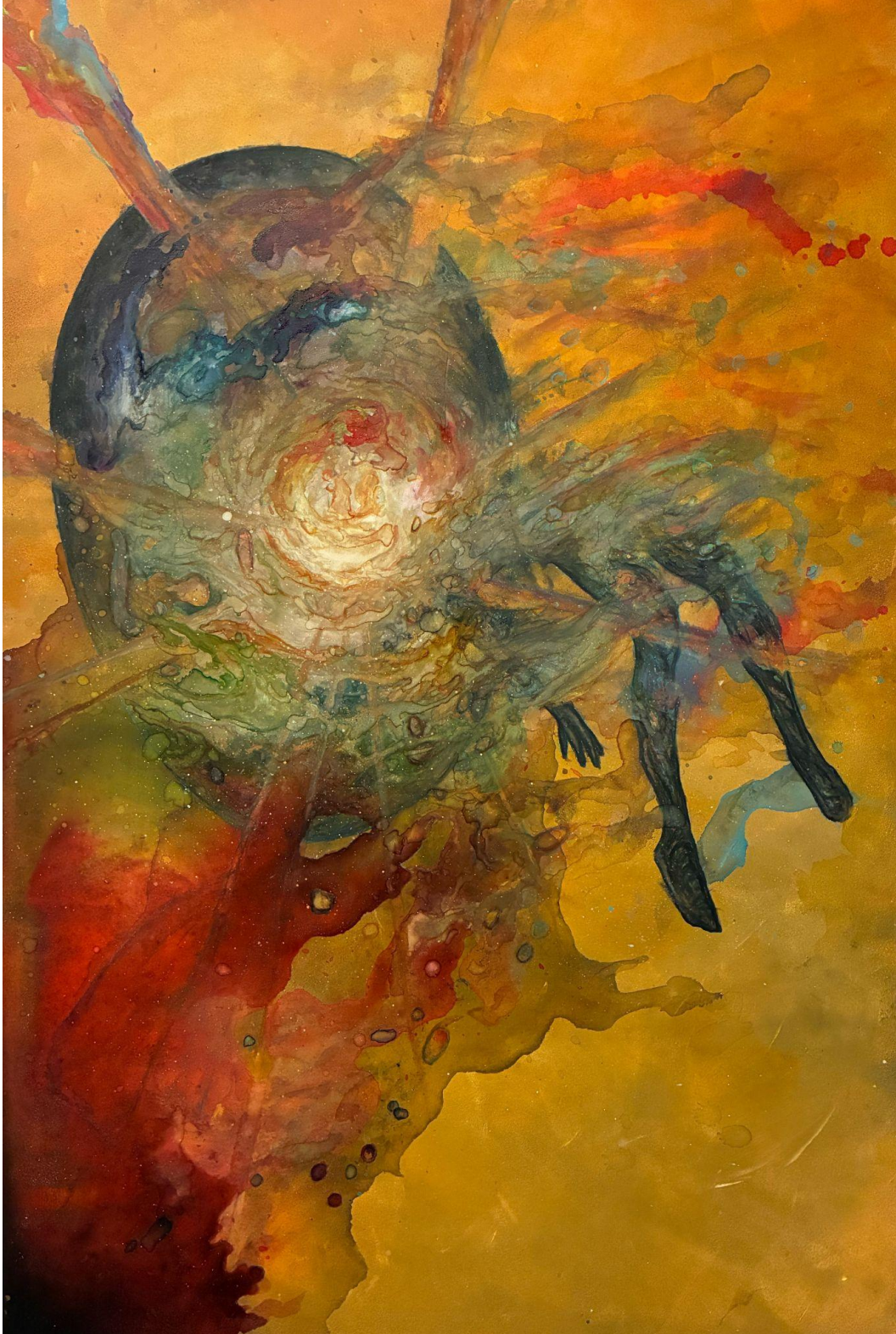


Figure 16. *The Star*, 2026, mixed media on wood, 36 × 24 in.

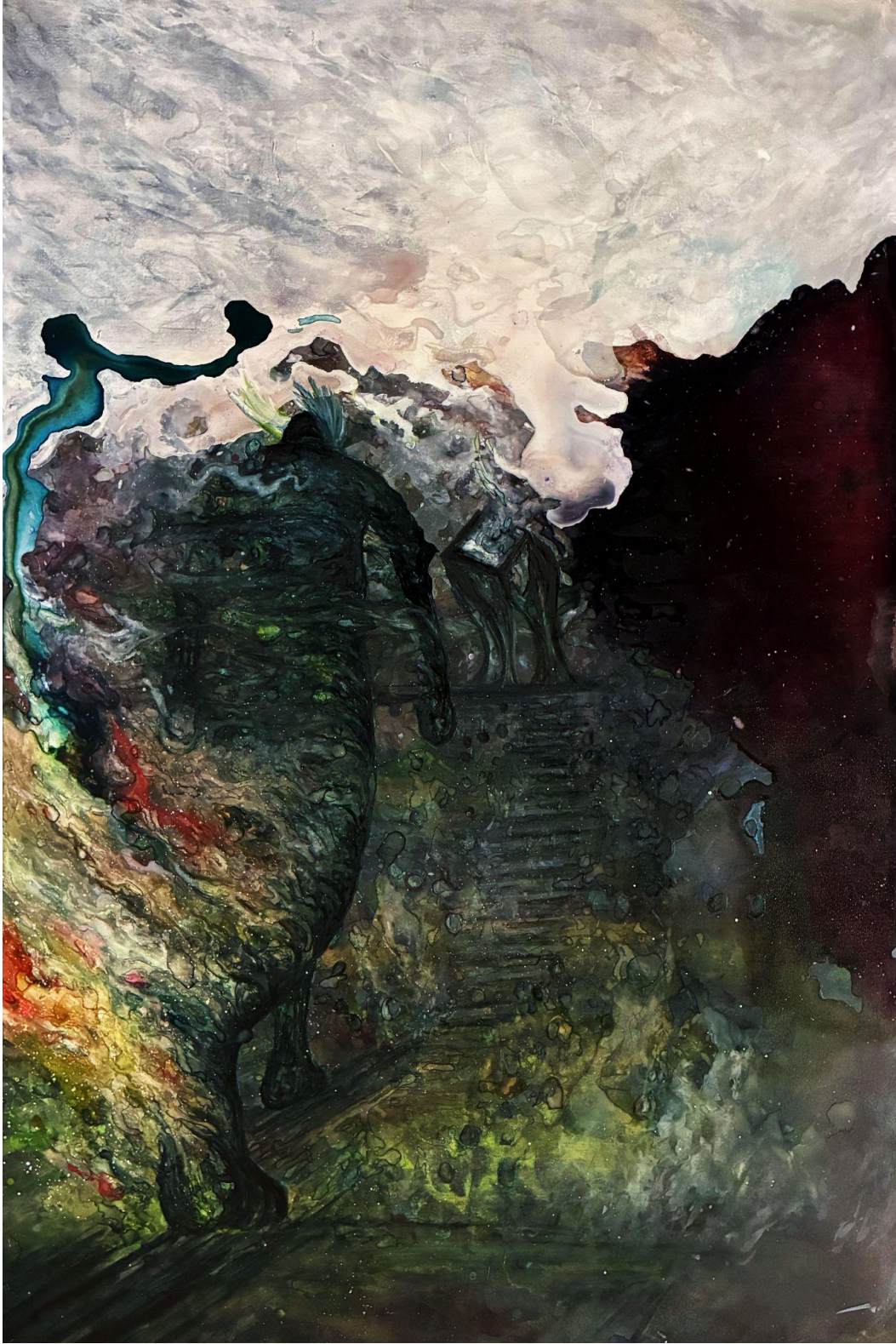


Figure 17. *The Cosmos*, 2026, mixed media on wood, 36 × 24 in.



Figure 18. *A-Skybreaker*, 2026, Hydrocal with mixed media (watercolor, acrylic ink, acrylic, watercolor pencil, ink) on wood, 36 × 24 in.



Figure 19. *Reconfiguration*, 2026, mixed media on wood, 48 × 32 in.

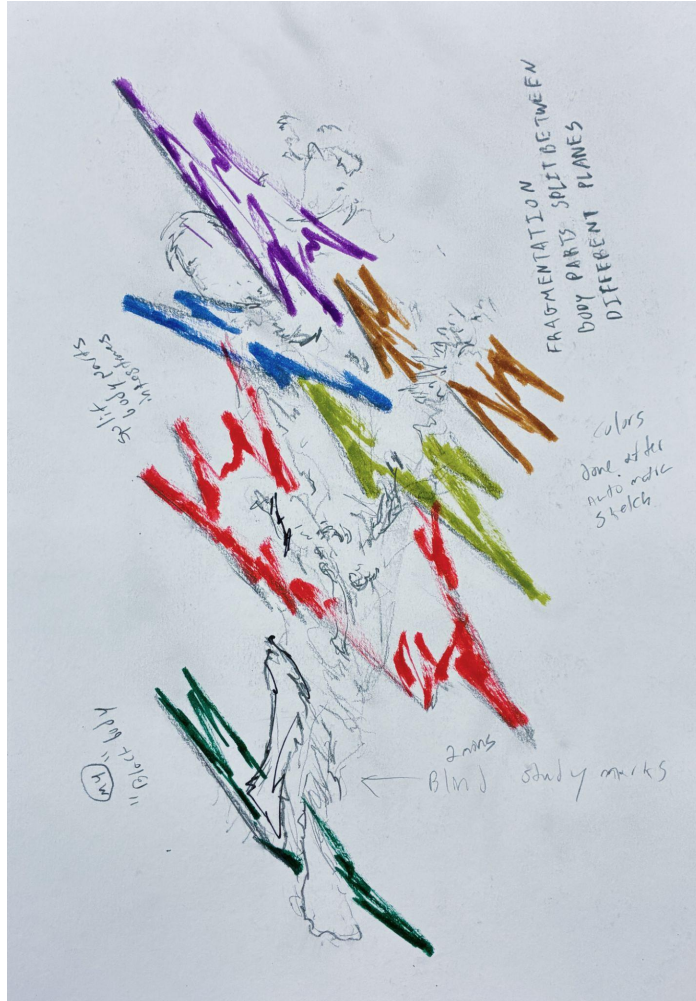


Figure 20. *Blind Study*, 2024, mixed media on paper, 11.5 × 9 in.



Figure 21. *Automatic Study*, 2024, mixed media on paper, 11.5 × 9 in.

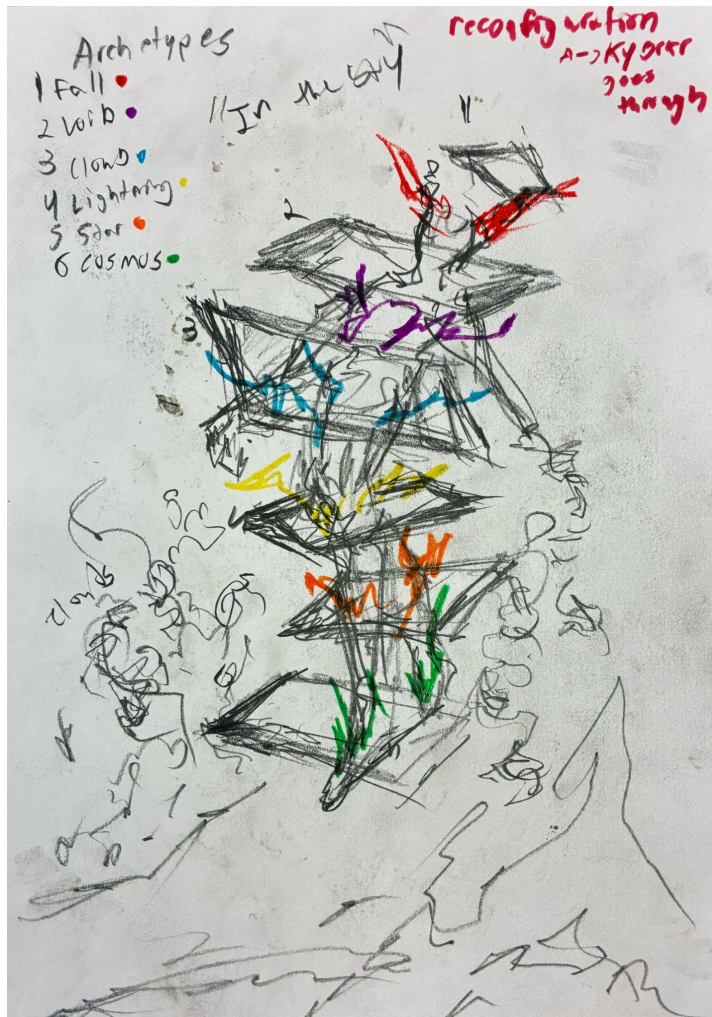


Figure 22. *Compositional Sketch*, 2025, mixed media on paper, 11.5 × 9 in

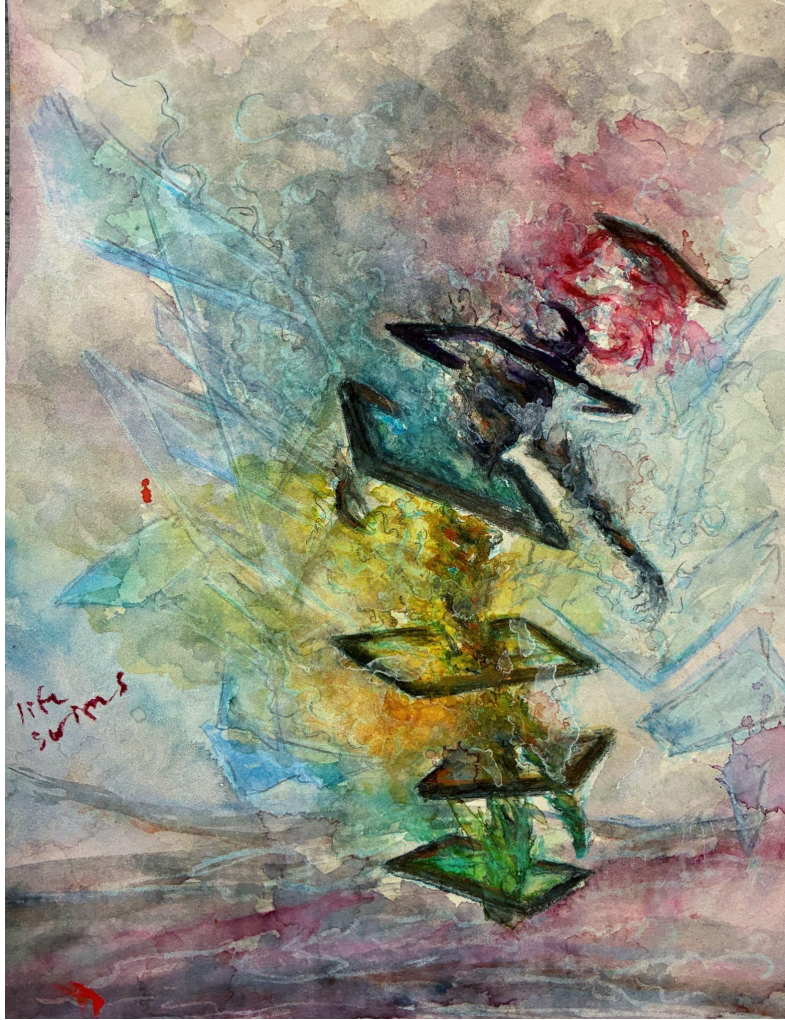


Figure 23. *Compositional Study*, 2025, mixed media on paper, 11.5 × 9 in.



Figure 24. Studio workspace showing accumulation of automatic studies, blind drawings, and notes in the development of the Infinity Planes, 2026, photograph.

CAN YOU IMAGINE THE FIRST, THE FIRST  
THOUGHT, THE FIRST DREAM, THE FIRST MAN? THATS THE PARADOX, THERE EXISTED  
THE FIRST DREAM, A BEING MADE UP OF  
EVERYTHING AWAKE, ONLY TO FIND ITSELF  
LOST AND CONFUSED, THE FIRST DREAM BECAME  
MANY, THATS WHAT CAUSED TURMOIL AND  
CONFUSION. HOW COULD IT BE SO MANY  
THINGS? IT ASKED AND THOSE QUESTIONS  
ANSWERED, IT BECAME THOSE DREAMS,  
THE DREAMS MUST POWERFUL SPLIT, THEY  
WANTED THEIR OWN IDENTITY, TO FOLLOW  
THEIR OWN BALANCE. THE SCALE BROKE  
APART AS SPACE ITSELF BROKE. THE  
UNIVERSE WAS BIRTHED AS POSITIVE AND  
NEGATIVE UNPAIRED. THE TWO ENTITIES  
WHO ATTRACT AND PROPEL, THEY WERE  
MADE FOR EACH OTHER BUT NEGATIVELY  
WANTING NOTHING TO DO WITH POSITIVITY.  
FROM THE BEING ALSO CAME THE DUTY  
DUTIES, ENTITIES SO POWERFUL, THEIR DREAMS  
BROKE THEM FREE. AS YOU CAN SEE, DREAMS  
ARE ALL POWERFUL. LIFE, DEATH, TIME,  
LIGHT AND DARKNESS, THESE WERENT  
THEIR NAMES BUT THIS IS HOW I SHALL  
PRESENT THEM. WHEN THESE CORE  
ASPECTS BROKE FREE, THE BEING, CHAS

Figure 25. Automatic Writing, 2023, ink on paper.



Figure 26. Detail of *The Cloud*, 2026, mixed media on wood.

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