

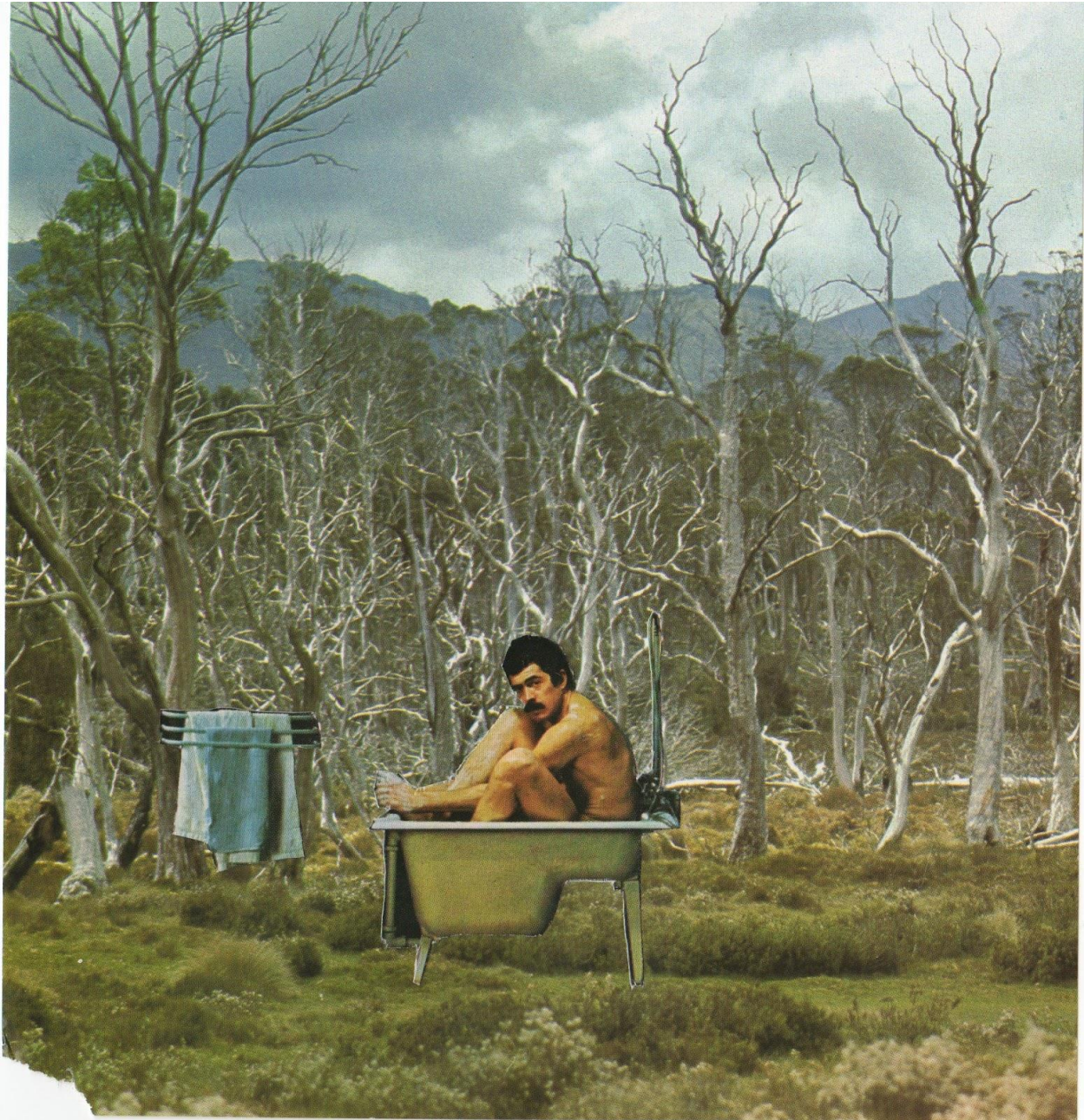
A Comparative essay: 5 accomplished Artists and

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1) Geert Goiris: Photographer, Teacher

The Lecture given by Geert Goiris at the Royal Academy last semester captured my intrigue for many reasons. He mentioned music history as a source of inspiration as well as Kolt films, articles and having a curious approach to the world. I appreciated his philosophical approach to expression, and I believe the references which inspire Goiris translate through his photographs.ⁱⁱ

Goiris introduced the idea of “Nachtragli” which means differed action in German. This phrase alludes however to a deeper meaning: a wound that is created which is only realized after it has been struck again later, as a scar. The trauma is not the initial wound itself but the reinforcement of that wound by a later occurrence.ⁱⁱⁱ

Goiris related this theory in context to art: we see trends repeated and re-edited through the ages and this causes an appreciation for the original thought and its future representations. In most cases retroactive writing can^{iv} have such prolific effect it can overcome the importance of its reference. This relationship is noticeable in music and cinema trends as well. In music lyrics and melodies are repeated and passed down through different trends and styles. As are plots and jokes in drama are appropriated and referenced to the point where the audience can no longer trace the original background.

Goiris is intrigued by alternative societies as a point for research and inspiration. During his lecture he mentioned an indigenous group of people living in several countries in South America called Aymara. Their philosophical notion of time is almost the opposite to that of most of the population in the world. In their system of beliefs, the past is what is in front of you, because that is what you know; what you have seen and who you have become.



And everyone's future lies behind them as it is unknown. To me this ideology creates the image that all of us are just falling backwards through life with only hope and plans to create order in the vague, unknown reality of our future. This very feeling is something that I have attempted to capture in my visual and literary work.

I have always had a strong connection with the indigenous cultures of the North and Central America which I have come into contact with. Many of these cultures embrace living in alignment with the planet and constellations and have ceremonial practices which I find beautiful and moving. I believe that my work is heavily influenced by spirituality and intuition, and it seems to me that Goiris is operating in a similar way.

Geert Goiris and myself have quite different mediums as he is a photographer and although I enjoy taking photos my work is not limited to one medium. I express myself with installations and drawing, writing, collaging, sewing, modeling and singing. I am not sure whether I will eventually focus on one form or continue to search for new ways to create.

The moment I knew I wanted to include Goiris in my essay was when he discussed our ability to see patterns in seemingly random objects. Which is pareidolia, the visual apophenia, which is the perception of patterns within random data. This phenomenon has always fascinated me as I was never sure if it was something only some people had or if everyone could imagine even see images within images. I am glad I attended the lecture to learn that pareidolia is a term and is a common intellectual strength among artists.

This heightened sense of observation seems to be the paramount theme in his research. In my opinion it alludes to the possibility of premonition and the idea that the premonition is only accountable after other events referenced it or reassure its importance.



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2) Nick Andrews: Painter

Another guest lecture at the Royal Academy I chose for this paper was given by a former student, Nick Andrews. He began his monologue with travel as a main source of influence and inspiration for his work. Andrews mentioned visiting USA, Italy, China, Cuba and other places in between. I feel likewise inspired by travel and I see it as a necessary tool for my creativity.

He observes different ways of thinking and living which inspire sketches which evolve into fantasy compositions. He references symbols and myths from divergent cultural origins. A common vein within his works is water, in vast quantities; that is, swimming pools rivers and lakes. Recurrent in this theme is his lyrical perspective rivers which swerve back and forth as they disappear beyond the horizon or edge of the canvas.

He likes to place figures in nature and depict manmade spaces left vacant. I found this juxtaposition playful and interesting; which also describes his use of color and texture. His style varies between expressionist, impressionist, and surreal, he himself referenced Surin. but there is a genuine signature and modernity in his use of color and texture which stands beyond these predispositioned genres. "The flamboyant palette of complementary colors gives the paintings an undertone that balances between euphoria and melancholy. "

His research also greatly involves searching through old photographs in the archives. He then plays with their composition and content in many paint mediums until he has found a composition, he is happy with.

Using long perspective and harmonious geometrical patterns of circles, squares, and triangles, Andrews can create tension and depth beyond the canvas. His titles for his paintings are as playful and symbolic as his works. In both French and English, they refer to other works of art and music which are indications to his personal metaphor for the work. He referenced not only ancient mythologies and symbols but also the current economic crisis in his *Champagne Charlie* series, which I find particularly compelling. The intention of the collections indicates the facade of wealth, status and the lonely obscurity that these masks insure.

I admire his work greatly and his timeless signature which screams his passion for composition and craft. It is also affecting that he has acclaimed success in his work and brought recognition and pride to the Academy which is an aim of mine. I also appreciate how he manages to capture cultural statements in one seamless metaphorical image.



3) Robert Rauschenberg: Multimedia, Installation

In the 20th century we saw art leap forth from the canvas as old traditions were broken, and new ones formed. Robert Rauschenberg (October 22, 1925- May 12, 2008) an American artist took found objects; like 'ready-made' from Duchamp, into 2 dimensional paintings and called them 'Combines'. This way of collaging found trash into his creations evoked an enveloping juxtaposition between his ideas and the world around him. This way of calling forth consumer culture and commodification in an abstraction became a very provocative trend emulated in art to present day.

I feel compelled by the oeuvre of work Rauschenberg created in his lifetime as he succeeded in a variety of art practices. It seems to me that Rauschenberg was intent on combining art and real life: a motif that still serves as inspiration for many artists today including myself.

"Rauschenberg evinces a blend of Action Painting elements with Neo-Dadaism, especially echoes of Kurt Schwitters's collages of diverse materials and Duchamps' Ready-Mades. It also

reveals Surrealist influences in the use of existing things (Objects Trouves) and the exploitation of absurd confrontations.”^{vi}

Rauschenberg had an expressive way of using popular culture icons in a personal context or transversely: captivating an ordinary object in an iconic demonstration. He enjoyed filling his works to the brim with cultural references so the viewer would not be able to perceive one important message. He would prefer the viewer draw out their own focus and meaning for the piece rather than accept an imposed meaning by the artist. “I only consider myself successful when I create a work which reflects the lack of order that I sense.” - Rauschenberg.^{vii}

This feeling of information overload is something I like in certain contexts. Rauschenberg accomplishes this in a way which speaks to me and his ideas about his creations hold similarities to my views.



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4) Cindy Sherman: Photographer, Model

In the late 70's when contemporary movements had been revolving around painting and installation art, Cindy Sherman (born January 19, 1954) developed a collection that introduced her career as a successful artist (69 photographs *Untitled Film Stills 1977-80*).^{ix} It was initially perceived that she was a feminist due to the fact that she used herself as her main subject in the entire collection and the majority of her work sense. This, however, was not her intention. She is more interested in portraying different people at various points in time and life as a way of identifying with that memory. Her ability to personify and metamorphose her own image is intriguing to say the least.

^xSherman was mostly influenced by fashion and cinema culture which is a direct reflection of her childhood watching TV and playing dress-up.^{xi}



I share those memories and influences with Sherman. I often find more inspiration in film and fashion for my creativity than much in contemporary art.

It seems that there is a deep fascination with the dark and the grotesque in Sherman's work. There are many artists who were expressing similar themes after WWII especially in painting and photography,^{xii} but Sherman had a special way of delivering it with a bit of laughter thrown in. In some of her photographs you can almost see her cracking up on the inside with laughter.

One thing that Sherman and I do not agree on in terms of work is that she prefers to leave things untitled. She feels that she is not talented in diction and would rather leave her work to the eyes of the beholder.^{xiii} I feel that titles and even poetry are essential combines for my visual work. I may not present the piece with a title, but I certainly have one for almost every piece, if not a whole story of meaning and metaphor. This is something I relate more to Nick Andrews with: He uses different languages and creates title's that relate to the time, place or incident which his composition alludes to.



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What I relate to most in Sherman's' work is the fine line between ugly and decorative, edge and kitch. This lack of shame for taboos is something I wish to exemplify in art and life and general. Nothing is too ugly or too provocative. This is the world I perceive in Cindy Sherman's work and would hope that people could interpret the same from my collages and sculptures.

5) Conclusion

I found it challenging to choose 5 artists as it is hard to find exactly what information I relate to about 5 different people who research differently and consequently relate to my work for different reasons. I have been and continue to be influenced by countless artists in visual and performative and philosophical fields; Dali, Frida, Bob Marley, Emilio Pucci, Quentin Tarantino, Stephan King, Ghandhi, Niki De Saint Phalle, Jeff Koons, Magritte, Alexander McQueen, Candy My Beautiful Darling and others.

In some way it is strange to imagine all of these different styles having a relationship. Nonetheless, they do, and that is that each has inspired me to continue creating. The mystical philosophies which inspire Gioris as well as his interest in observing possible patterns in coincidences speak to my process as much as Nick Andrew's need for travel and confronting new inspiration.

Robert Rauschenberg has a gritty, handmade approach to installation which I believe is an effect I employ in my own work. Transversely Cindy Sherman's signature is much more manufactured with her "Ready-Made" fake portraits. There is a level of cleanliness which is apparent in

Sherman's work which is not cohesive with mine but there are influences and undertones to her research which are shared between us.

I enjoy art which is other worldly and commands attention. Objects that not only inspire but relate a question or a sense of emotion. I feel that all of the artists who I relate the most to have the will to make a large impact on the world with their choices. I get the feeling that their work is in the vain of freedom propaganda: creations which encapsulate an imaginative vision of boundaryless expression.

i "Cool Breeze" Collage by Kaya Birch 2014

ii "Artist Talk | Geert Goiris." We Are Public. N.p., n.d. Web. 21 May 2015.

<http://wearepublic.nl/event/artist-talk-geert-goiris/>

iv "Galerie Zwart Huis | Zeedijk 635, Knokke | Exhibitions - Tentoonstellingen." Galerie Zwart Huis | Zeedijk 635, Knokke | Exhibitions - Tentoonstellingen. N.p., n.d. Web. 21 May 2015. <http://galeriezwarthuis.be/nl/tentoonstellingen/champagne-charlie>

v "We Are All Connected" A free hand drawing by Kaya Birch spring 2014

vi Ruhrberg, Schneckenburger, Fricke, Honnef. 1998 Art of the 20th Century vol I. Taschen: Koln Losbo London New York Paris Tokyo. p 313

vii Ruhrberg, Schneckenburger, Fricke, Honnef. 1998 Art of the 20th Century vol I. Taschen: Koln Losbo London New York Paris Tokyo. p 314

viii Rauschenberg, Robert "Express" 1963 www.museothyssen.org "Robert Rauschenberg" Port, A. 1925-Captiva Island, 2008

ix "Cindy Sherman: Untitled Horrors." Cindy Sherman Untitled Horrors ARTBOOK. N.p., n.d. Web. 19 May 2015

x "Tessellated Dimple" Collage by Kaya Birch 2015

xii Farthing, Stephen. Art: The Whole Story. London: Thames & Hudson, 2010. Print. p 492

xiii Cindy Sherman - Nobody's Here But Me (1994)." YouTube. YouTube, n.d. Web. 19 May 2015.

xiv "Working Legs" Sculpture by Kaya Birch 2015