

*Evolution of the Soul: A Study of the Collaborative Nature of Creative Expression
Through Visionary Art*

by
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**In loving memory of Ciara Louise Meyer
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Table of Contents

Acknowledgments	3
List of Figures.....	5
Summary.....	6
Introduction.....	7
Art vs. Design: Light As a Creative Medium	11
Introduction to Visionary Art & Culture	16
Why <i>Waking Life</i>?.....	26
<i>Evolution of the Soul: Creative Process</i>	35
Conclusion	48
References	51
Appendices.....	58
Appendix A: Lighting Design Research Images	58
Appendix B: Lighting Design Storyboard	71
Appendix C: Lighting Design Cue Sheet	81
Appendix D: Miscellaneous Creative Process Documents	83
Appendix E: Images of <i>Evolution of the Soul</i>	86

List of Figures

Figure 1: <i>The Doors of Perception</i> , Ernst Fuchs	18
Figure 2: <i>Dissectional Art</i> , Alex Grey	21
Figure 3: <i>Gaia</i> , Alex Grey	22
Figure 4: <i>Blessing</i> , Alex Grey.....	37
Figure 5: Lighting design research image, Simon Haiduk	42
Figure 6: Lighting design storyboard example	43
Figure 7: <i>Evolution of the Soul</i> cue sheet	44
Figure 8: <i>Serenity</i> , Olivia Curry and Susan Allan	59
Figure 9: <i>Shaman Light</i> , Amanda Clark	59
Figure 10: <i>The Alchemist</i> , Emily Kell	60
Figure 11: <i>Spirit Wolf</i> , Simon Haiduk	60
Figure 12: <i>Manifestation</i> , Jonathon Solter	61
Figure 13: <i>Forward Escape</i> , Android Jones	61
Figure 14: <i>Inside My Spirituality</i> , Noa Knafo	62
Figure 15: <i>Origins</i> , Eduardo Rodriguez Calzado	62
Figure 16: <i>Wonder</i> , Alex Grey	63
Figure 17: <i>Gaia</i> , Alex Grey	63
Figure 18: <i>River to Infinity</i> , Krystleyez	64
Figure 19: <i>Sunray</i> , josefontheroad	64
Figure 20: <i>Divine Encounter</i> , Simon Haiduk	65
Figure 21: <i>Citrine Skies</i> , Olivia Curry	65
Figure 22: <i>Ab Uno Floriosum</i> , Elizabeth Banker	66
Figure 23: <i>Light of Kabbalah</i> , Emma Watkinson	66

Figure 24: <i>The Gates of Knowledge</i> , Nao Knafo	67
Figure 25: <i>Love Is a Cosmic Force</i> , Alex Grey	67
Figure 26: <i>Shri Yantra</i> , Emma Watkinson	68
Figure 27: <i>Spirit Bear</i> , Simon Haiduk	68
Figure 28: <i>Inner Harmony</i> , Olivia Curry	69
Figure 29: <i>Self Portrait</i> by Noa Knafo	69
Figure 30: <i>Shadowlight</i> , Elizabeth Banker	70
Figure 31: <i>The Soul Finds Its Way Back Home</i> , Alex Grey	70
Figure 32: <i>Evolution of the Soul</i> Still 1, Darren Levin	87
Figure 33: <i>Evolution of the Soul</i> Still 2, Darren Levin	87
Figure 34: <i>Evolution of the Soul</i> Still 3, Darren Levin	88
Figure 35: <i>Evolution of the Soul</i> Still 4, Darren Levin	88

Summary

I managed and executed a collaborative design concept for a dance piece presented as a part of *Collage*, the Fall 2015 dance concert at Middle Tennessee State University. I was the lead collaborator and lighting designer for this piece. I worked with a choreographer (Rachel Miller) and a sound designer (Elijah Graham) to make this project come to fruition. We incorporated elements from other disciplines such as philosophy, film, and visual art into the overall design concept and by doing so were able to showcase the spirit of creative collaboration through the artistic lens of visionary art. We were able to empower viewers to empathize with *The Evolution of the Soul* through the multiple stages of its evolution expressed in dance and the words of *Waking Life* characters.

Introduction

What is it that cements the separation between science and art? Perhaps there is no clear cut answer, but what often strikes me about this puzzling conundrum is the ability of artist-scientists to demonstrate through their integrative work what both disciplines stand to gain from bridging this divide. Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung built upon elements of Plato's and Immanuel Kant's philosophies to develop what he refers to as Jungian archetypes. Jung describes these as universal patterns derivative of the collective unconscious realm that is shared between all members of the same species. Jung argues that archetypes are able to manifest as the individual carries out its life cycle (Papadopoulos). One of the most rare archetypes, according to Jungian psychology, is that of the artist-scientist. Some prominent examples of this archetype include the polymaths Leonardo da Vinci, Blaise Pascal, and Benjamin Franklin who each made invaluable contributions to the various scientific and artistic disciplines within which they operated.

For most individuals, the level of creative productivity of the artist-scientist archetype may just remain a level of excellence to which they merely aspire to achieve. While few individuals are ever able to achieve this highest quality of intuitive improvisation, artists such as Alex Grey can still serve as inspiration to individuals like me who also dream of transcending the science-art boundary. Alex Grey's visionary artwork has long been a source of inspiration to me as a scientist and an artist. What drew me to his artistry was the marriage of very physical anatomical representations of the human body with spiritual and fantastical tributes to the magnificence of the human experience. Alex Grey's artistic evolution from training at Harvard as a medical

illustrator to experiencing alternative states of consciousness so profound they completely altered his artistic voice inspired me to research the artistic movement he is a part of as well as its associated culture (“Biography”). Seeing an artist masterfully combining the intricate beauty of human anatomy with the ethereal beauty of surrealistic spiritual experiences led to my interest in creating art that wholly encompasses some of the most awe-inspiring aspects of science.

I am an aspiring medical microbiologist by trade but my creative passions in poetry, songwriting, and predominately theatrical lighting design also play a significant role in my life. Visionary art presents itself as the perfect artistic platform to integrate both my scientific curiosities and creative aspirations in a way that no other movement or academic discipline has to date in my experience. I am a scientist because I desire both to understand the manner in which the universe works and our relationship with it as humans. I choose to create art to pay homage to the beautiful and “infinitely precious nature of life on Earth” (*War on Consciousness*). Basing my thesis in an artistic movement that incorporates both of these intentions has allowed me to create a collaborative and integrative exploration into the human relationship with the universe and what role creativity plays in this relationship.

The collaborative creative project I have orchestrated for this thesis involves the presentation of a ten-minute dance piece as part of Middle Tennessee State University’s fall 2015 dance concert, *Collage*. I worked with our sound designer, Elijah Graham, to formulate a music compilation including several quotes from the Richard Linklater film *Waking Life* as well as songs from artists such as Papadosio, Shpongle, Welder, and Akara who dominate the transformational music festival scene in which visionary art is

often presented to contemporary audiences. Rachel Miller, another volunteer, and I recorded *Waking Life* quotes over the summer of 2015. These quotes were then worked into the musical compilation to tie in the philosophical themes of the visionary art movement within the auditory portion of this collaborative piece. Nine student dancers have been cast by Rachel to perform our piece entitled *Evolution of the Soul* that will utilize Alex Grey's visionary artwork as the inspiration for this piece. By incorporating the efforts of an extended creative team including a choreographer, dancers, a sound designer, a costume designer, and myself as a lighting designer, I have been able to illustrate the intrinsically synergistic nature of the creative process.

The inspiration for the creative process of my thesis stems from the culture surrounding the visionary art movement. Modern visionary artists can often be found painting alongside the live music of similarly spiritually conscious musicians at events referred to as transformational festivals. Elizabeth Perry offers an apt description of what makes the culture of these transformational music festivals so unique in her *Redefine* article: "all of these festivals share a unified goal of creating community, inspiring transformation, and spreading positivity beyond the physical limits of each festival and its participants" (Perry). I have worked to achieve the same level of community between the various artists who contributed their creative energies towards this project. Audience members will ideally walk away from the performance of this piece feeling more connected to a global collective and inspired to incite positive change. Building on a framework of the values present in transformational festival culture and the art style that is most popular at these gatherings, visionary art, I will create an environment perfect for

prolific visionary artist Alex Grey's description of creativity: "Creativity is the way that the cosmos evolves and communicates with itself" (*Cosmic Creativity*).

Art vs. Design: Light As a Creative Medium

Often the first image that comes to mind when discussing the concept of creativity is the image of a painter hard at work on a new landscape scene or a musician stringing together eloquent melodies. Stereotypically, artists are viewed as eccentrics running around with paint splattered hands and no sense of how to ground the wonderfully abstract creative energy that powers them into our physical reality. Designers of all sorts are tasked with the responsibility of integrating this abstract creativity that powers artists through their creative process with the same sort of problem solving approach utilized by scientists. Superficially, the distinction between art and design may seem vague as both results incite wonder and inspire the viewer. However, closer inspection of the related disciplines reveals an underlying inherent difference between the two.

Still much debate exists as to the principal purpose of art. Thomas Munro offers a crucial function of art that all aestheticians can agree with when he emphasizes “the subtle and complex ways in which a work of art affects a sensitive observer” (Munro 8). By asking abstract questions, works of art are able to “affect” consumers in a variety of ways and are subsequently essential for human inspiration. Designers differ from artists in their propensity towards creating work that attempts to answer the same sort of abstract questions set forth by works of art. While art does not seek to answer the questions it sets forth, the whole process of designing is geared towards formulating an answer to some creative problem. As Duvall explains, “design is there to fill a need. Art fills no need except its own internal need to exist and challenge the viewer” (Duvall).

The vast world of design extends across fields as diverse as fashion, engineering, and theatre. While there are a great number of specialties from which to choose, theatrical

lighting design captivates me in a way that no other design specialty has. The ability of light to manipulate my experience and understanding of the action onstage in a performance is enthralling. Light is able to tell a story on a subconscious level about the performance onstage. In the same way that the binary system of alternating zeros and ones is able to power the incredibly complex technological devices that rule the twenty-first century, the patterns of light and shadow are able to craft human perception of the surrounding world. The ability of a lighting designer to capture the essence of the action onstage through something as intangible as light reveals the true limitless potential of light as a creative medium.

The true majesty of light is often something that is taken for granted, as light as present everywhere in all aspects of life. Because great theatrical lighting designers have the ability to make lighting transitions seem flawless and not premeditated, audience members are rarely tasked with critically thinking about the complexity of the creative process these lighting designers must undergo in order to accomplish such a feat. Despite the fact that theatrical lighting design may not be as widely understood and appreciated as other realms of theatrical design, no performance would be visible, let alone beautiful, without the work of theatrical lighting designers. Light is a particularly extraordinary creative medium in the realm of theatrical design due to the multiple crucial functions it serves onstage.

Lighting designers are able to control how the story of onstage action unfolds by utilizing light as a means to reveal the form of three-dimensional objects onstage. By creating focus on certain elements or persons in a performance, the lighting designer's control of visibility allows him or her to tell a story in a subtle fashion that is concordant

with the story of the musical or theatrical action onstage. The manipulation of lighting compositions provides critical information for audience members as the quality, angle, intensity and color of the lighting all give clues to the physical location, time of day, and setting of the onstage action. As architectural lighting designer Larry French stated in his discussion of why theatrical lighting designers have a strong background for immersion into the closely related field of architectural lighting design, “work in the theater starts a lighting designer in a thinking process that is about light first. [...] A young designer learns to work in a structured 3D environment where angle and light quality decisions are forced upon you” (Cebula and Mulholland 25). French goes on to discuss what he calls the “kinetic process” of lighting design, which is what sets apart the end products of theatrical and architectural lighting design (Cebula and Mulholland 25). Whereas theatrical lighting designers are given the opportunity to tell a story with lighting in sequence with the changing action in a performance, architectural lighting design is more set in stone in the sense that the design is static and much more permanent.

Mark Major, an architectural lighting designer, discusses how theatrical lighting designers often have the “requisite appreciation of how light changes the character of spaces and surfaces” which makes them have a sensitivity towards light as a “medium that is rarely displayed by people coming from other areas of light” (Cebula and Mulholland 25). While there are a number of differences between the two lighting design disciplines, what individuals in both groups share is a passion for the use of light as an evocative and powerful creative medium. The lighting design community is thus not the only creative community passionate about utilizing light as a form of communicating

abstract ideas. Photographers are just as reliant on light to communicate creative concepts as are lighting designers.

Photography is defined as the “art or process of producing images by action of radiant energy and especially light on a sensitive surface (as film or an optical sensor)” (Merriam-Webster). Inherent in this definition of photography is the reliance of the entire discipline on the manipulation of the properties of light. Carlotta Corpron was an influential abstract photographer who shared her wisdom about lighting with students at Texas Woman’s University during the 1940s. Corpron was best known for her appreciation and exploration of the properties of light in works such as her six photograph series entitled “Light Drawings” in which “she captured linear patterns of light by swinging her camera in front of the moving lights of carnival rides” (Curlee). Her emergence as an influential photographer was in part facilitated by the encouragement she received from abstract photographers like Gyorgy Kepes and László Maholy-Nagy who referred to her work as “light poetry” (Museum of Contemporary Photography). Corpron became so enamored with light as a “plastic medium capable of creating abstract designs of extraordinary beauty and interest” that she even began to coordinate what she referred to as a light workshop at Texas Woman’s University in 1942 to enlighten students about light and its use in the creation of photograms, photographic images created by placing objects on light-sensitive paper and revealing their form through negative space (Corpron 5).

Corpron represents a vivid example of the transformative experience that is the “awakening to the possibilities of light as a creative medium” as she turns her creative focus from textile design to manipulating light in photos upon initial exploration of light

as a creative medium (Corpron 5). She discusses how her students come to life with the realization that light has the ability to transform the ordinary into the extraordinary in her 1962 article in *Art Education*:

They discover that light, passing through circular openings, slats and perforated materials creates dramatic light patterns, often amazingly distorted. Fluid light designs on water and the ever-changing patterns seen through structural glass panels and blocks increase their awareness of light as a medium for creative work. (Corpron 5)

Not only was Corpron an immensely important figure in the process of earning light recognition as a prolific creative medium, but she also represents the kind of creative individual who bridges the gap between art and design.

While it may be convenient to separate art and design into distinct categories as a means of clarifying distinctions between the two disciplines, this compartmentalization obscures the whole truth of what it means to be an artist or a designer. If one accepts that one of the principal purposes of art is to challenge and incite an aesthetic experience in a viewer, then one also comes to realize that this same sort of experience occurs with consumers of the end product of design. The most fantastic aspect of light as a creative medium is arguably its ability to transcend the loose distinctions between art and design, as light serves an unparalleled role in not just creative media but also our physical reality as a whole. As German industrial lighting designer Ingo Maurer so articulately expresses, “light goes beyond science or nature, or even art— it is as potent as life itself” (Sommar).

Introduction to Visionary Art & Culture

Contemporary visionary artist Alex Grey describes visionary art as a point of contact between spiritual and material realms as visionary artists translate their experiences in the visionary realm into works of art capable of communicating abstract concepts beyond the scope of human language (“What Is Visionary Art?”). The visionary realm so often described by visionary artists is that realm achieved by altered or heightened states of consciousness such as prayer, meditation, dreaming, yoga, or entheogenic usage. While visionary artists come from a myriad of artistic backgrounds, the movement is unified by each artist’s desire to create sacred art that inspires and motivates transformation in the viewer.

The visionary art movement was primarily born from the post-World War II Vienna School of Fantastic Realism. Artists at the core of the fantastic realism movement sought to juxtapose surrealist artistic elements with realism in a fashion similar to modern visionary artists. This juxtaposition served, as it does in visionary art, as a vehicle for exploring and understanding the paradigm of our metaphysical reality (Rapp). The Austrian fantastic realism movement was not an immediate success, however. The core artists of this movement began their work in the devastating aftermath of World War II when the attitudes of the public and art critics were especially hostile to this new seemingly whimsical perversion of surrealism pioneered by artistic visionaries like Ernst Fuchs, Arik Brauer, and Wolfgang Hutter.

Crucial to the development of the Vienna School of Fantastic Realism was Albert Paris Gütersloh, a German actor, writer, artist, and professor. He started out his creative career with an emphasis on writing but soon changed tracks and accepted a professorship

in Vienna in 1945. In Vienna, Gütersloh began to mentor students like Brauer, Fuchs, and Hutter who all went on to become the core members of the fantastic realism movement (Roy). Gütersloh's teaching style included the combination of esoteric symbolism with instruction in the techniques utilized by realist painters. One of these techniques, *mischtechnik*, involves mixing egg tempera with oil-based paints and building layers of this mixture to result in a luminous, realist painting (Jacobson and Cora). These realist techniques gave rise to the clarity and detail provided in fantastic realist work which set this artistic movement apart from its' surrealist counterparts. In Otto Rapp's essay on the Vienna School of Fantastic Realism he describes Gütersloh's art:

Gütersloh's own flair for the fantastic found a receptive audience in his students. As a poet he painted, as a painter he spoke of, eloquently, the language of the Inner Continent (*Innerer Erdteil*, which is better translated as: Inner Universe), a language not separated by barriers between Poetry and Painting, but both existing as an inseparable whole. (Rapp)

This discussion of Gütersloh's artistic prowess illuminates the deep, intrinsic connection between the fantastic realism and visionary art movements. Rapp discusses how Gütersloh's work is able to transcend the barriers between poetry and painting through an exploration of what is termed the "Inner Universe", which sounds very much like the goals that visionary artists set for themselves as they attempt to expand conscious awareness so that viewers of their works can begin to see that the universe is within every living organism.

Ernst Fuchs, one of Gütersloh's most influential pupils, went on to mentor contemporary visionary artists in a fashion very similar to the way Gütersloh instructed

him. Ernst Fuchs has been cited as several contemporary visionary artists' primary influence for their initiation into the visionary art movement ("What Is Visionary Art?"). Marti Klarwein was one such pupil of Fuchs' who illustrated album covers for the most prominent bands of the 1960s and '70s including Earth, Wind, & Fire and Carlos Santana in the visionary art style (Caruana). This lineage of visionary artists and their forerunners gives insight into the earlier styles of art that have influenced the development of this artistic movement as well as the prevalent themes that have existed throughout the evolution of the visionary art movement. As Alex Grey says in his essay "What Is Visionary Art?", "the realm of visionary art [...] embraces Modernist Abstraction like the works of Kupka, Klee, and Kandinsky; Surrealist or Fantastic Realist art; and Idealist work like Blake's" ("What Is Visionary Art?").



Figure 1. Fantastic realist painter Ernst Fuchs, *The Doors of Perception* (Fuchs)

One form of art Grey does not mention visionary art “embracing” is the recherché realm of art brut, otherwise known as outsider art. French painter Jean Dubuffet coined the term “art brut” to delineate a type of phenomenal art produced by individuals in psychiatric facilities and prisons by people who had no formal artistic training whatsoever or even, in some cases, the realization that they were producing works worthy of the fine arts classification. Dubuffet went on to establish the Collection de l’ Art Brut in Lausanne, Switzerland in 1979 that ultimately included thousands of works by such untrained artists (Raw Vision). It was not until 1972 that art critic Roger Cardinal introduced the broader term “outsider art” in order to encompass a broader spectrum of self-taught artists—those who were not institutionalized. In Kenneth DiMaggio’s article exploring the possibilities of analyzing certain literature in the same fashion as one would analyze outsider art, he describes the key point that sets outsider art apart from most other styles of art: “While the [academically trained artist] may have superior skills as a craftsman, he or she often lacks a more pure, unconscious relationship with creativity that we once had as children, and before we ‘educated’ ourselves to learn how to control and channel those unconscious elements” (DiMaggio 24). DiMaggio goes on to explain Jean Dubuffet’s view of “the unconscious being the primal source of creativity,” which is markedly similar to the stance visionary artists hold about creativity (DiMaggio 24).

In terms of strict classification many visionary artists do not meet the criteria to be classified as outsider artists, as many of them have, in fact, been classically trained. However, the striking parallels between the intentions of these distinct categories of artists suggest an intrinsic relationship between the two movements. Lyle Rexer’s novel *How to Look at Outsider Art* provides an enlightening clarification about what exactly

outsider art is, as it is often conflated with other terms in the art world, and provides numerous case studies of influential outsider artists. In Rexer's novel he discusses how outsider artists began making art: "For outsider artists, and for many self-taught artists, the decision to begin making art comes as suddenly and arbitrarily as an act of God" (Rexer 77). This description of how outsider artists often first get involved with creating art mirrors the description of how visionary artists like Alex Grey, whose artwork inspired the creation of this thesis, first started to create visionary art. Karen Ellis's *Raw Vision* article discussing the series of Grey's paintings at the conceptual core of this thesis details the transformation of Grey's artwork to the style of visionary art as a direct consequence of the divine visions he began having in the 1970s (Ellis).

Colin Rhodes' novel entitled *Outsider Art: Spontaneous Alternatives* unwittingly describes the most prevalent connection between visionary art and outsider art: "One of the most striking features of Outsider Art is its general tendency to present the world in transcendent or metaphysical terms. Visual images reveal that which would otherwise remain hidden from view thanks to the special insight of their creators" (Rhodes 104). This same statement can be applied directly to visionary artists, as portraying the mundane world in transcendent terms is the core principle of the visionary art movement.

Alex Grey has devoted much time and energy towards delineating the phenomenon of visionary art beyond the actual creation of visionary artworks. He set himself apart from other visionary artists by publishing several essays and novels describing the movement and its global significance. Influential author and artist Patrick Lundborg discusses Alex Grey's influential role in the visionary art community in his last novel before his passing: "First of all, visionary art would not be the active, promising

field it is today without the appearance of Alex Grey on the scene. [...] Alex Grey is the leading psychedelic artist of today, and also one of the foremost proponents of visionary art as a style” (Lundborg 421). I, like many others, was only introduced to the visionary art movement and its associated culture through Alex Grey’s artwork that has been represented in the album artwork of a variety of Grammy Award winning musical groups including Tool, The Beastie Boys, and Nirvana (“Biography”).



Figure 2. Alex Grey’s *Dissectional Art* for Tool’s 2001 album *Lateralus*. 2001. (Grey)

In Alex Grey's Technology, Entertainment, Design (TEDx) talk at Maui in 2013 he discusses the artistic concept for his piece *Gaia*. He describes this piece as a part of a vision he had about the state of our planet and in doing so he poses a question that truly encapsulates the spirit and intent of the visionary art movement: "Our world is in peril and we have a decision: evolution or self-destruction?" (*Cosmic Creativity*)



Figure 3. This is Alex Grey's piece entitled *Gaia*. Oil on linen. 1989. (Grey)

Individuals like Alex Grey within the visionary art movement have made a conscious effort at creating a community for transformation and enlightenment. This is a potential explanation for the recent global phenomenon of transformational festivals.

Jeet Kei-Leung and Akira Chan's collaborative four part documentary series entitled *The Bloom Series* explores the prevalent themes and elements of transformational festivals such as visionary art, social entrepreneurship, barter-style economies, non-denominational spiritual ceremonies, and co-creativity through filming at roughly one hundred transformational festivals all over the globe (Chan, Akira and Jeet Kei-Leung). Through Kei-Leung and Chan's travels they were able to compile a map of the global occurrence of these kinds of events that showed these festivals are happening on almost every continent. In Julia Allison's *New York Times* article about the phenomenon of transformational festivals she quotes Kei-Leung offering a rebuttal to potential qualms individuals may have about these events: "This is not a retro-nostalgic Woodstock. This is a forward-thinking culture that is embracing social entrepreneurship, permaculture, spirituality, self-actualization, and conscious living" (Allison).

Transformational festivals are born out of rave culture and as such tend to share similar values that aim to "unite people from different professions, religions, ethnicities, and ages" in a way that is otherwise rarely accomplished (Bottorff 54). Transformational festivals meet the qualifications of the term coined by Sufi scholar Hakim Bey: Temporary Autonomous Zone (TAZ). A TAZ is a "liberated area of land, time or imagination where one can be for something, not just against, and where new ways of being human together can be explored and experimented with" (Jordan). What sets transformational festivals apart from other TAZs, however, is their emphasis on

“intrapersonal, interpersonal, and transpersonal evolution through cathartic experiences” (Bottorff 56). While some may simply dismiss these kinds of events as little more than a hazy, drug-induced chance to indulge in the most primal of human desires, in actuality, nothing could be farther from the truth.

Visionary art is at the core of every transformational festival as the intentions behind visionary art are very much aligned with those of the global transformational festival movement. These events are all unique and exhibit a variety of different elements, but what is constant throughout the whole movement is the nurturing of a co-creative experience that inspires festivalgoers to incite positive change in their own lives, both within themselves and externally. Visionary art aims to encourage the spiritual growth of the individual to a higher level of conscious awareness about his or her place within the universe and knowledge of the unity of all life. It is thus fitting that visionary art be presented to individuals within the framework of transformational festivals that share the same goals for their attendees.

Experiencing the culture of transformational festivals firsthand opened me to the world of visionary art beyond just that of Alex Grey’s work. Although Grey’s work has been a source of inspiration for many of my creative pursuits throughout the years, being exposed to a whole community of artists and innovators who share the same intent for their work to inspire transformation in their viewers allowed for the seeds of my thesis to take root in an artistic movement far beyond the work of a singular artist. Landscape painter Peter di Gesu describes visionary art as a collectivist movement where the efforts of the group are valued over those of the mere individual (Albright 2). This appreciation of collective co-creation is apparent at transformational music festivals, where visionary

artists sharing canvases and painting during live music is the norm. Just as transformational festivals are the perfect contemporary platform to expose the world to visionary art, no other artistic movement is capable of showcasing the collaborative nature of creative expression so impeccably.

Why *Waking Life*?

My introduction to the film *Waking Life* took place while searching through an online forum of “Mind-Expanding Movies” that claimed the experience of watching *Waking Life* was akin to having an existential crisis in the midst of an LSD trip (Sophia). Needless to say, this description intrigued me so much that I watched *Waking Life* for the first time that very night and it was then that all the vague concepts about my thesis that had been floating around in my head for months coalesced into a clear idea of what the final product would become.

Richard Linklater’s films have been said to straddle the line distinguishing independent filmmaking from Hollywood filmmaking (Grabiner 41). Linklater emerged into the world of filmmaking with his first full-length film *Slacker* in 1991 that caught the attention of American mainstream media and became a staple in the American independent film repertoire. *Slacker* resembles *Waking Life* in terms of narrative arc, or more accurately, both films’ lack of a narrative arc. *Slacker* was selected by the National Film Registry in 2012 as one of the ten films of the year to be preserved eternally in the US Library of Congress for its role as a work of “enduring importance to American culture” as a reflection of “who [Americans] are as a people and as a nation” (King). *Slacker* was able to set itself apart in the independent film renaissance of the 1990s because the film was not tied to an inherent sense of narrative responsibility which allowed for it to serve as an illuminating cross-sectional view of American youth culture and ideology.

Waking Life is an extension of Linklater’s exploration of cinema not slavishly tied to a narrative arc so as to provide an opportunity for cinema to engage “its audience in

looking at, thinking about, and experience looking” (Grabiner 41). In *Waking Life* the live action footage shot of actors and real Austin intellectuals and professionals is digitally animated in a process referred to as interpolated rotoscoping (Manojlovic 185). Thirty artists instilled their unique styles into the wide variety of animation completed for the film. The animation styles in *Waking Life* have been described as varying from German expressionism, surrealism, and impressionism to neo-cubism (Mann 19, 22). This technique of rotoscoping such a diverse cast of animation styles allows for the creation of a “world constantly in motion, both the background of buildings and trees, and people themselves, all gently oscillating, pulsing and vibrating” (Cooper 16). This constantly moving world creates “aesthetics of the in-between” that Manojlovic argues provide “a platform for the transvaluation of the notion of life in contemporary cinema” (Manojlovic 185).

The cast of wandering Austin eccentrics featured in *Waking Life* has a lot to say about the universe, the meaning of life, and the nature of humankind. *Waking Life* has an unnamed protagonist played by Wiley Wiggins who is the sole character present in almost every scene of the film. The audience becomes aware that Wiggins’ character is waking repeatedly into yet another dream with characters as unique as radio show host Alex Jones ranting over a loudspeaker about the corruption in political systems of control, African American writer Aklilu Gebrewold discussing liminal experiences, a monkey operating a film projector, Bill Wise conveying Buddhist philosophy in a boat-car, and Richard Linklater himself playing pinball with Wiggins and discussing the nature of the universe (Mann 17-19). The themes explored in *Waking Life* oftentimes mirror those represented in the work of visionary artists.

Visionary artists focus their creative energies on the intention to create divine art that motivates enlightenment within the viewer (“What Is Visionary Art?”). Visionary artists employ alternative states of consciousness as modes of exploration into the nature of the universe and human life. These alternative states of consciousness include everything from meditation, lucid dreaming, prayer, entheogenic usage, and sleeping to hypnosis. Entheogens are sometimes employed by visionary artists as spiritual tools in order to induce visionary experiences that inspire their artwork (Cole-Turner 642). Superficially, it seems as though the only link between the altered states of consciousness theme within visionary art and within *Waking Life* is Wiggins’ lucid dreaming in the film, but in actuality the connections run much deeper. In Maja Manojlovic’s article discussing the digital aesthetics of *Waking Life*, she addresses the nausea the unsettling animation of the film instills in her: “My nausea gave way to various degrees of hypnagogic and hypnopompic states of alertness (or even drowsiness), all characteristic of the liquid quality of *in-between* states of consciousness” (Manojlovic 185). Manojlovic’s comments suggest that the experience of watching *Waking Life* is so unique and profound that it is quite like an altered state of consciousness in and of itself.

In one scene of the film Wiggins meets with three men in a white room, the first of whom explains to Wiggins that in terms of brain chemistry there is no difference between our waking perceptions and the hallucinations that arise from substance use or dreaming. The next man Wiggins converses with tells him that “the trick is to combine your waking, rational abilities with the infinite possibilities of your dreams, because if you can do that, you can do anything” which serves as a mode of assigning value to the experience of altered states of consciousness (*Waking Life*). The unnamed man who tells

Wiggins to combine his waking abilities with the infinite possibilities of his dreams is given an important voice in my creative project. This quote marks the most substantial transition in *Evolution of the Soul* just as it serves as critical advice for Wiggins as he meanders along his own spiritual journey. *Evolution of the Soul* is thematically split into three suites that can each be thought of as a stage in the evolution of “the Soul” which can represent any and all souls, just as Wiggins could represent any individual. The unnamed man’s quote buffers the transition from the suites about the exploration of altered states of consciousness into the final, and arguably most important, suite about integrating these important realizations into a more conscious lifestyle.

While visionary art is deeply personal in the sense that each visionary artist is exposing his or her deepest spiritual thoughts in the form of art, the material actually produced transcends the limitations of the interpersonal and connects to all viewers transpersonally. This same sense of transpersonal communication (the mode of communication which facilitates self-growth through a deeper understanding of the inherent unity of all life) with the viewer is achieved in *Waking Life* due to Linklater’s decision to not flesh out “Wiley’s individuality or character through narrative continuity” and instead allow the “discontinuous fragmentary series of vignettes about human encounters ride the force of the present moment and carve out a portrait of a singular life” (Manojlovic; Bezuidenhout 4). The idea of a singular life originates from the philosophy of Giles Deleuze who envisions the singular life as one that precedes the individuation of particular subjects’ lives and is immanent unto itself at all times, much like the transpersonal goals of visionary art to extend beyond the personal or the individual (Deleuze; “Transpersonal”)

Waking Life's unique ability as a film to undo the "spectator's conventional cognitive habits and signifying processes" allows for the experience of viewing this film to become a co-creative one, much like the co-creative framework of transformational festivals in which visionary art is often presented (Manojlovic 198). This is the principal reason that the incorporation of *Waking Life* is so instrumental to my exploration of the collaborative nature of creative expression. In the same way that watching *Waking Life* is much more than the simple viewing of a film, audience members will be left with the thought that *Evolution of the Soul* is more than a dance performance. While cinema always requires the active engagement of its subjects with the media being presented, because *Waking Life*'s animation style is so joltingly different it "forcefully prompts the spectator to reassess the world and reconnect in a conscious, meaningful way to what she internally feels and perceives from the outside," which is a statement that can be directly applied to the spectators of visionary art (Manojlovic 198). The consumption of creative media in any form requires the active imagination of the consumer but it is when this imagination is about the nature of the consumer's own existence and the nature of reality as a whole that media such as visionary art and *Waking Life* appear.

Both *Waking Life* and visionary art aspire to motivate their respective viewers to think critically about the metaphysical nature of our reality and, in doing so, pull key themes from many of the same philosophical disciplines. In *Waking Life*, Violet Nichols asks a coffee shop novelist what he's writing about and he answers simply, "There is no story. It's just people, gestures, moments, bits of rapture, fleeting emotions" (*Waking Life*). These bits of rapture accompanied with the spatiotemporal destabilizing nature of the animation force the spectator to stay present in each vignette of the film much like the

ancient Hindu philosophy that inspires visionary artists encourages individuals to do in all aspects of their lives. *Waking Life* is such a thought-provoking film because Wiggins' character is constantly questioning if the nature of his reality is primarily that of his dream states or of his waking life and this questioning serves as a "metaphor for the nature of modern culture and for the human condition as a whole—in what ways do we fall asleep even while awake? How can we lead a life that is more awake, more aware of people and things, more authentic?" (Mann 15)

Waking Life ventures to offer answers to these questions via the explication of Hindu, existentialist, and situationist themes. Douglas Mann's *Journal of Film and Video* article describes the parallels between these three philosophical disciplines and *Waking Life* and then suggests that each of the three is meant to act as a different kind of wake up call for the viewer (Mann). The first wake up call has to do with awakening the spectator to the illusion of separation that guides their perception of the universe around them as well as the release of attachment to ego and the past. These themes are an integral part of ancient Hindu philosophy.

The ancient Hindu texts the Vedas and the Upanishads describe God as Brahman, the eternal, absolute reality at the core of all external experiences as well as the concept of Atman, the individual soul. After achieving Moksa, which can be thought of as enlightenment, one becomes aware that Atman and Brahman are synonymous (Gordon 145; 149). This inherent non-dual relationship between Brahman and Atman indicates that the "soul *is* the universe, and the universe is contained in every soul" (Mann 20). We see this concept, termed cosmic monism, reflected in *Waking Life* on multiple occasions. Richard Linklater describes his dream in which he is told that "there's only one instant,

and it's right now, and it's eternity" as well as in "The Holy Moment" sequence with director Caveh Zahedi describing how cinema captures God and thus indicates that God is present in every facet of reality (*Waking Life*; Mann 21). Visionary art is founded on this same ideological core about the nature of the universe being divine as everything in existence is part of an immanent, transpersonal God. Cosmic monism is also at the core of the realizations "the Soul" has in *Evolution of the Soul* as this concept of inherent cosmic unity is the motivating factor that spurs on the creation of an enlightened state within "the Soul" in the latter two suites of the piece.

Pantheism is a philosophy that equates God with the universe, and the World Pantheist Movement describes a pantheist artist in a definition that also applies to visionary artists: "A Pantheist artist, by definition, would most likely be a 'religious' or spiritual person whose work would be concerned with exploring and expressing the myriad facets of divinity within Nature (or the Cosmos) in a uniquely personal way (World Pantheist Movement 1). In the same vein, *Waking Life* exhibits existentialist thought that is interrelated with the same pieces of existentialist philosophy present in the visionary art movement. Philosopher Robert Solomon declares his disagreement with postmodernism because of the way that postmodernists present individuals as "social constructions, or as a confluence of forces, or as fragmented" because this opens up "a whole new world of excuses" instead of suggesting that it is always our choice as individuals to determine who we are (*Waking Life*). The work of visionary artists also suggests that our "social roles are tests of our freedom" and our ability to transcend them instead of becoming nothing more than "moving blobs of flesh and bones animated by nothing more than custom and habit" (Mann 25).

Situationism is a philosophy centered on the concept that our postmodernist consumer society, absorbed with mass entertainment and instant gratification, strips away any and all authenticity. Situationism is reflected in the “Society is a Fraud” scene in *Waking Life* in which four men walk down a decrepit city street declaring their desires to “rupture the spell of the ideology of consumer society to open” themselves up to authentic desires and in Alex Jones urging everyone to realize they are being conditioned on a mass scale and to “start challenging the corporate slave-state” and get fired up about the things that really matter such as “creativity and the dynamic human spirit that refuses to submit” (*Waking Life*). Guy Debord, one of the French philosophers who pioneered the creation of situationism as a school of thought, describes individuals as consumers of illusions due to the fact that individuals are only able to relate to one another in modern society through “cars, stereos, mass-produced music, TV shows, and vacation packages. We live in a world of illusions created by our endless pursuit of commodities” (Mann 27). This final wake up call presented by *Waking Life* allows spectators to see not only the connection between the messages from these wildly different philosophies, but also that visionary art sends the same integrated message to its spectators.

Waking Life is uniquely successful at cherry-picking aspects from an assortment of philosophical schools of thoughts and focusing on those that are also most prevalent in the visionary art movement and, by extension, *Evolution of the Soul*. These diverse philosophies converge at the notion of enlightenment, which is described as the “crumbling away of untruth” and “seeing through the façade of pretense” (Adyashanti). In *Waking Life* terminology, enlightenment is the process by which individuals no longer sleepwalk through their waking state nor wake-walk through their dreams (*Waking Life*).

In Michael Schwartz's gallery of integral theorist Ken Wilber's talks and visionary artist Alex Grey's work, he describes the world we live in as being "media saturated" and suggests that as a result of this "it is easy to waffle between two poles of evaluative numbness: excessive and uncritical praise, like that heaped on a celebrity; and the ennui of deadened indifference or scorn, hiding a secreted sense of one's superiority" (Schwartz). Schwartz then declares that it takes more than just a "moment of reflection to awaken from this collective slumber" (Schwartz). Because waking up and shifting our postmodernist paradigm is a necessity, art such as that of the visionary artists and *Waking Life* will continue to emerge to address the issues facing our world.

The intentions behind the creation of *Evolution of the Soul* are the same ones that provide both visionary art and *Waking Life* with the ability to challenge the current post-modernistic paradigm. The experience of alternative states of consciousness, although demonized in this current reductionist paradigm, give "the Soul" the chance to awaken to an internal paradigm shift that when combined with the concept of cosmic monism facilitate the possible external expansion of this paradigm shift. Because *Waking Life* is the cinematic representation of the philosophical underpinnings of the visionary art movement, it was also the perfect platform for the conceptual development of *Evolution of the Soul*.

Evolution of the Soul: Creative Process

My creative process began on the shores of Lake Hartwell in Westminster, South Carolina while contemplating how to integrate the vital life lessons I had just learned at Gratifly Music & Arts Festival into a manageable creative project. Being a microbiology major, I had been previously exclusively considering biological research of some kind for my honors thesis because I thought it would be impossible to organize a creative project that could somehow make a statement that transcends the science-art boundary. My experience at Gratifly made me reconsider, as I realized that putting together a creative project around the conceptual framework of visionary art would allow my work to communicate the type of transcendental, spiritually conscious, and thought-provoking message I wanted to send.

Developing a comprehensive description of the creative process has eluded psychologists, philosophers, and artists for years. Dr. Jane Piirto's novel *Understanding Creativity* delineates a variety of perspectives about the creative process from the perspective of cognitive psychology, industrial psychology, psychoanalytic theory, and social psychology (Piirto 41). Industrial psychologists theorize that the creative process fits the Creative Problem-Solving Model (CPS) in which the creative identifies a problem in need of solving, gathers data to facilitate the "solution-finding" phase, and ultimately concludes their process with the "acceptance-finding" stage (Piirto). Psychoanalysts hold to the notion of the creative individual as intrinsically Janusian in that "creative scientists, writers, and artists are able to hold opposites in their minds while creating and to see the possibilities of working with these opposites" in order to ultimately conceive a creative product that embodies that which is "seen in the mind's eye, the mind's ear, [and] the

mind's touch" (Piiro 43). Social psychologists focus their energies on researching the motivations of creative individuals that inspires the creation of their work. None of these theories, however, seem to capture the true essence of the ineffable creative process.

The workshops I attended at Gratifly opened my eyes to the importance of community throughout every step of the creative process, irrespective of creative medium. Being in such a fascinating microcosm of society that gave me the opportunity to meet artists and scientists from practically every discipline imaginable and hearing how their creative energies inspired one another in the formation of a co-creative gathering gave me the initial impetus I needed to step out of my comfort zone and fully flesh out my most intensely personal creative endeavor to date.

I came home from Gratifly and started scribbling some abstract poetry about my experience in the woods of Avalon. Over the next few months I wrote a handful of these poems which I used to formulate a list of themes I had been noticing both within my own writing about visionary art, the media itself, and its surrounding culture. This list allowed me to create a vivid mental image of what my thesis could become. I came to my thesis advisor Mr. Levin with a list of songs that are often a part of visionary art culture, a variety of examples of Alex Grey's visionary art, and eventually a list of quotes from *Waking Life* that would ultimately be included in the musical composition specially created for the piece. One of the most monumental challenges throughout the planning of this piece has consistently been my desire to include too many elements that would most likely drown out the creative intentions of the piece. While there is an endless array of creative activity taking place at the kinds of events in which visionary art is often presented, much of this simply cannot be reflected within a ten-minute dance piece.



Figure 4. Alex Grey's *Blessing* that served as the initial visionary art piece that inspired *Evolution of the Soul* (Grey).

I briefly considered the idea of having poi spinners, a performance art that involves the manipulation of lighted, tethered weights and is prevalent at transformational music festivals, and a large handcrafted structure of a stylistic eye from Alex Grey's work onstage before realizing both of these ideas were impractical. Ultimately, dancers, a unique music compilation, my lighting design, and a rear projection of visionary artwork were the only elements deemed both essential and plausible. Once I had determined which elements of the piece were necessary for the design concept I had formulated, then came the process of translating my abstract ideas into a concrete enough explanation to serve as a basis for the choreographer to determine whether or not she wanted to take part in the project.

I presented this piece as a movement in three suites when introducing *Evolution of the Soul* to Rachel, our choreographer, for the first time. These suites mark the key stages in the *Evolution of the Soul* and are necessary for a conceptual understanding of the creative message the piece communicates. The first suite is about the exploration of alternative states of consciousness such as meditation, lucid dreaming, entheogenic usage, and prayer as a mode of self-discovery. This first suite transitions into the second with the *Waking Life* quote, "...a single ego is an absurdly narrow vantage from which to view this...this experience. And where most consider their individual relationship to the universe, I contemplate relationships...of my various selves to one another" (*Waking Life*). This quote is instrumental to this first transition as the second suite is about the expansion of consciousness exploration to include the realization that the universe resides within each individual and that a conversation with the self is simultaneously a conversation with the universe at large.

The second suite of the piece is about the initial process of integrating the heightened awareness gained from the experience of alternative states of consciousness as innocuous as prayer or meditation into the physical reality of the world around us. Much of this suite of the piece is exploratory and inquisitive in nature, whereas the third and final suite of the piece offers some solutions to the quandary at hand. The transition from second to third suite, from questioning to answering, is carried by the *Waking Life* quote "the trick is to combine your waking rational abilities with the infinite possibilities of your dreams. 'Cause if you can do that, you can do anything" (*Waking Life*). After this quote, there is a marked difference in the style of movement the dancers embody. The movement goes from fluid, loose, and exploratory to confident, grounded, and sensuous

as they depict “the Soul” coming to terms with the interconnectedness of all living beings and thus its responsibility to this interconnected web of life.

Going through the process of determining how to conceptually structure *Evolution of the Soul* put me in a state of mind much like an all-consuming altered state of consciousness. I scrolled through endless images of visionary art with similarly creatively aligned music with no sense of the passing of time whatsoever. Brewster Ghiselin created an anthology of works about the creative process and explains a concept he terms “oceanic consciousness” that perfectly relates the experience I underwent through my creative process. Ghiselin declares that “a creator gives in to a feeling of vague unrest and then surrenders the self to some internal necessity” and that this surrender is oceanic consciousness (Piiro 44). This alternate state of consciousness is alternatively described by psychologist Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi as a state of flow in which the “person’s body or mind is stretched to its limits in a voluntary effort to accomplish something difficult and worthwhile,” which is precisely what I was experiencing as I tried to determine how to articulate the deep, metaphysical themes that pervade both visionary artwork and *Evolution of the Soul* (Piiro 45).

In the very early stages of my creative process when I was still selecting quotes from *Waking Life* to include in the piece, determining which quote would wrap up the entire piece was so challenging that I rewatched the film in its entirety and wrote down each of the quotes I was considering by hand to determine which was the best fit. Ultimately, I selected the quote that possessed the most relevant conclusive quality and we proceeded to record Rachel speaking it and incorporated it into the music compilation. Rachel and I both struggled to formulate movement ideas to accompany the final, longest

quote of the piece. It was not until the end of the summer when Rachel showed me dance videos she was pulling movement inspiration from that the perfect idea came to me. Rachel started a recording as she talked me through the movement that would go with each portion of the music and when it got to the final portion of the piece I interjected with the idea to just have the dancers continue their movement as a very slow lighting cue dimmed the lighting to the point that the very end of the quote would play over a completely darkened stage. Moments like this during the creative process have been a constant reminder about how necessary collaboration is to the formulation of a successful creative project.

The formidable creative duo whose flawless collaboration and experimental designs serve as a source of inspiration for the creative relationship between Rachel and I is choreographer Martha Graham and lighting designer Jean Rosenthal. Jean Rosenthal's work in the mid 1900's pioneered the establishment of theatrical lighting design as a recognized design discipline alongside scenic and costume design (Fippin). Rosenthal made a name for herself by working on a number of well-known Broadway productions but is now best known for her dance and opera work. She particularly enjoyed the collaborative relationship she established with inventive, abstract choreographer Martha Graham and made her work with Graham a "professional priority" so much so that she designed the lighting for a Graham piece while wheelchair-bound in the last weeks of her life (Fippin). Rosenthal not only pioneered the profession of lighting design but also put a special emphasis on the team spirit required to be a successful lighting designer. She stated, "in this field [the lighting designer] must be absolutely willing to be a collaborator" and this is the lesson from Rosenthal's career that I have most internalized

while in the development of *Evolution of the Soul* with the various members of my creative team (Boone 78).

The meetings I organized early in the creative process for Elijah, sound designer, Rachel, and I to work on the music compilation were frequent reinforcers of the concept of collaboration as well as the inherent compromising involved in collaboration that must take place in order to develop a successful creative piece. Rachel would often ask Elijah to play transitions between different songs included in the compilation so that she could get up, move around, and see if she could come up with movement to buffer the sometimes abrupt tempo changes. Throughout this phase of the creative process it was fascinating to observe the dialogue between choreographer and sound designer because the issues that arose would never have occurred to me from my perspective as a lighting designer. Although I have been involved in a number of lighting design projects in the past, I have never been in any sort of leadership role that would have required me communicating with artists in other disciplines. Being at the creative helm of this project has given me the opportunity to be involved in these cross-disciplinary design conversations which taught me much about the synergistic nature of theatrical design projects in particular.

Over the summer we recorded the last of the *Waking Life* quotes and Elijah put his finishing touches on the transitions within the music compilation while I finalized my lighting design conceptual research. I began by searching through various art websites while listening to our music compilation on repeat so I could find a repertoire of research images that artistically aligned with the music and movement of our piece. Ultimately, I developed a slideshow presentation of roughly thirty visionary art pieces in sequential

order with some notes associated with each image to highlight the key elements from the image that I eventually incorporated into my lighting design. Often these notes include comments about the quality, texture, color, shape, or angle of the lighting in the piece as well as the mood and focus that the lighting creates.



~4:53 "bursts into flame" – texture & quality of light

Figure 5. Lighting design research image with notes including a timestamp from the music, along with the associated lyrics (Haiduk).

Cue Number	Cue Placement	Time	Lighting Description	Research Image
1	With Music	7/9	Slow buildup Cool colors Hazy Swirly textures Backlight w/ booms then build front <u>diags</u>	

Figure 6. This is an example from the lighting storyboard for this piece. The lighting description includes information about the angles of light used in this cue as well as color, texture, and timing of this lighting cue.

These research images serve as the starting point for the next document: the lighting storyboard. The storyboard includes the exact placement of each cue with time stamps from the music compilation as well as details about the length of the cue execution, a describing of each lighting look, and an associated research image so that the information for each lighting look is presented in both verbal and visual format.

After I completed the preliminary draft of my storyboard containing as many notes as possible (considering the fact that choreography was not finalized at this point early in the semester), I translated the information contained in the storyboard document into a spreadsheet. This spreadsheet serves as a list of the lighting cues in my piece and is referred to in the industry as a cue sheet. The lightboard operator will later utilize this list of cues when he or she is determining when to execute the pre-programmed lighting cues I will have entered into the console.

When rehearsals began for *Evolution of the Soul* I came to the first rehearsal to meet the nine dancers Rachel cast for the piece and to explain my design concept. I came into the studio armed with my thesis proposal, several research images, and several

quotes to aid my explanation of the piece. I introduced myself as the lighting designer for the piece and explained what visionary art is and how it relates to the piece and gave the dancers a synopsis of its three suites and how they differ from each other. Rachel interjected during my explanation of the suites of *Evolution of the Soul* to explain what kind of movement would be necessary for each suite and guided them to ask me any questions they had about my design concept. A few weeks later when I attended another rehearsal it was gratifying to see how the dancers had internalized my input and incorporated it into segments of movement where they had the chance to improvise.

Cue	Time	Time	Wait	Follow	Call	Composition
Evolution of the Soul						
251	0:00	7:9			Lights w/ dancers then music	Slow buildup; cool colors, hazy; backlight w/ low intensity front to highlight intricate hand movements; build front diags
S8					Music	
252	0:25	5:7			As girl rises and dancers stamp across stage	More purple in color palette; build more side light, lighting focused on group US and line of stampers
253	1:21	5			As formation lowers girl to ground	Add warm side light; build down light intensity
254	1:37	8			As soloist begins	Soft quality of light; richly saturated cool colors to evoke watery sense; build intensity DS on soloist
255	1:54	4:9			As soloist jumps into group's arms	Shift to warm side of color spectrum; high sides; bump intensity US
256	2:28	10			Girls making hand motions in line; go off of time stamp	Slow build to cooler, more intricate look; mids & shins color contrast; more full stage lighting because movement in this cue all over stage
257	3:09	10			"The THING bursts into flame..."	Build magenta/purple shins; more isolation on dancers; clear focus on dancers as they look over cliff
258	4:29	7			As girl gets down to spin on head	Build more warm high sides to create hazy contrast w/ already present cool colors
259	4:48	5:7			"The THING bursts into flame..."	Multidimensional quality of light; honey-gold pool of downlight creating focus as the "thing bursts into flame"; pump mids intensity
260	5:09	7				Ground the honey-gold pool of light w/ sunrise warm high sides
261	5:27	5			Pop out of center formation	Vibrant color scheme; intricate texture
262	5:57	5			Girl breaks out of line with hands	Radiance; striking green/magenta/blue color scheme; central focus
263	6:38	5			All girls sit down and come together	Stark contrast in color scheme and value of lighting atmosphere as a whole
264	6:43	12				Very slow build to radiant warm color scheme; multidimensional texture
265	7:33	5			Group slides down to the ground	Isolation on dancers; intricate shifting texture
266	8:24	5				More cool colors; bump side lights
267	8:45	5			With ding sound	Narrow in lighting to focus on soloist; crystal clear quality of light
296	9:28	5				Slow blackout over continuing movement
297						Bow
298						Blackout
Curtain					Bring all curtains out (legs, eye, traveler)	
299						House
300					Dancers at standby	Blackout

Figure 7. This is the cue sheet for *Evolution of the Soul* that the lightboard operator will use to determine when to execute each of my pre-programmed light cues.

At this later rehearsal Rachel employed a collaborative method to progress the choreography of the piece. She asked the dancers to split up into groups of two and come up with short motifs of movement for a thirty-second section of the music. Each group then presented the motifs they formulated and Rachel had them incorporate elements from each of their ideas into a cohesive choreographic direction. As this project is about the collaborative nature of creativity, it was encouraging to hear that Rachel was most confident about the choreography that came together as a result of collaboration with the dancers. Hearing the language the dancers used to justify their improvised sections of movement showed me just how much they had been thinking about the creative intentions behind the piece.

A few short weeks later it was time to select the colors of gels to use for side lighting so that I could begin programming my cues into the lighting console. Companies such as LEE Filters and Rosco market colored filters, referred to as gels, to be placed in front of theatrical lighting instruments. These companies also release what are referred to as swatchbooks for designers that contain samples of their gels as well as information about the percentage of light that can be transmitted through each particular one. I worked with these swatchbooks and compared the coloration of the gels with prevalent colors in the research images for *Evolution of the Soul* to come up with a blend of cool and warm colors to achieve my intended lighting looks. In previous lighting design projects I have undertaken, I normally program my lighting looks into the console while alone in the theater with no performers on stage. This time, however, was a surprise

because I had a programmer with which to work and this experience of communicating my cues to a programmer was a novel lesson in creative collaboration.

Luckily, I was not by any means alone in the theater when I cued *Evolution of the Soul*. All nine dancers in the piece, Rachel, and a programmer were all there to assist and collaborate with me as I was given the chance to direct the manner in which my design would come to fruition. I called out specific angles of light and intensity levels for the programmer to record into the console as the dancers moved around onstage so I could see where light was needed to illuminate them at various points throughout the dance. The end of the piece was different from the way I had envisioned it, so Rachel and I had to collaboratively brainstorm a solution so that my lighting would match both the action onstage and the intended concept of having the lights fade slowly over the final quote of the piece. We rapidly came to a conclusion by doing just what Dr. Piirto ascertains is necessary when collaborating in a creative process, which is to foster group trust by allowing each member of the group to voice their ideas, not dominating the discussion, and “offering feedback to people in a way that will let them know that they were heard” (Piirto 48).

Technical limitations have consistently been the limiting factor throughout the creative process for this piece. In the thesis proposal stage, I planned on building a three-dimensional structure of the eye featured in Figure 4 so that the dancers would have a tangible representation of visionary art with which to interact during the second and third suites of the piece but this required too much time-intensive construction as well as funds we did not have. I discussed with Rachel the pros and cons of having a projected image of the eye in Figure 4 instead and we came to the joint conclusion that the projected

image would be easier technically as well as being more aesthetically aligned with the piece as it would allow for the central focus to remain on the dance itself.

A week before technical rehearsals began for the fall dance concert, it became apparent that the original projector would not be feasible for use in *Evolution of the Soul* leaving our only remaining option for a projection of Alex Grey's artwork a much smaller, lower quality image onto a textured blackout curtain. We tested this smaller projection during one of the early technical rehearsals, but ultimately decided to cut the projection entirely from the piece because the surface on which the image would be projected distorted it too much to be aesthetically pleasing. Although the loss of the projection was disappointing, this drawback forced a reexamination of creative priorities in this piece consequently allowing *Evolution of the Soul* to develop into a stronger creative piece as a whole.

Conclusion

Determining how to conclude *Evolution of the Soul* both onstage and on paper has been the most arduous aspect of this entire creative project. As the word implies, evolution is an inherently continuous process of development, so terminating a creative discussion about an evolutionary process presents itself as a perplexing conundrum. Ultimately, it became apparent that having the dancers continue their movement as the lights fade was the only way to properly convey my intent to show that the *Evolution of the Soul* is an everlasting process. Just as visionary artists operate around a motive to inspire enlightenment and spiritual growth within the viewer; this final gesture in our piece offers a moment of reflection and an opportunity for introspection for our audience.

The last of the three suites of *Evolution of the Soul* is all about the process of integrating the knowledge and awareness gained by “the Soul” in the first two suites into a more conscious lifestyle that focuses on being more in tune with the needs of our planet and cherishing human connection. The final quote plays over the dreamy soundscape created to buffer the transitions between music and speech and, as such, is perfectly suited to compel the audience to consider how to integrate the concepts and ideas presented in *Evolution of the Soul* into their own lives. The slowly fading light cue represents the constant, everlasting nature of not just “the Soul” but by extension, all other souls. Although the first suite of the piece details the journey of “the Soul” through its encounters with alternative states of consciousness such as entheogenic usage, meditation, lucid dreaming, or prayer, the subsequent suites are about so much more than just the exploration of alternative states of consciousness.

Often visionary artists employ alternative states of consciousness as a mode of self-discovery to facilitate the creation of their artwork. The most common assumption is that these alternative states of consciousness are strictly the result of experimentation with psychedelic substances and while many visionary artists, including prolific visionary artist Alex Grey, have claimed that their experiences with psychedelics have been life altering, they do not advocate their utilization by everyone. Grey states “vision drugs catalyze our inherently visionary and potentially mystical dimensions of consciousness” (“The Creative Process and Entheogens”). So while it could potentially seem to viewers of *Evolution of the Soul* that the piece advocates the use of visionary drugs to reach heightened states of consciousness, this assumption neglects to take into account the value of altered states such as meditation, prayer, or even the creative process itself.

One of the most popular up-and-coming visionary artists, Amanda Sage, is a woman who was fortunate enough to be trained by one of the core members of the Vienna School of Fantastic Realism, Ernst Fuchs. In her statement declaring her artistic intent she describes the responsibility she feels for making her art “inspire others to think/dream beyond their immediate capacity. Ultimately [she] seeks to create portals that open to the infinite possibilities of being and expressing, so that we may remember and re-discover who we are, where we originate from and where we are headed” (Sage). In this description of herself as an artist, I see her delineating the same intentions around which I created *Evolution of the Soul*.

The quote that plays over the darkened stage at the end of the piece describes life as a gift and as a “time to become conscious” and “to give form coherence to the mystery” but does not offer an explicit direction on how to do this. Instead, the speaker

shifts the focus to the ability of her individual self to connect with other beings. The end of the quote gives the audience a hint that the woman is speaking from the afterlife as she looks back on her life and reflects on how connecting with others was “all that really mattered” in the end (*Waking Life*). The inclusion of visionary art themes and *Waking Life* philosophical elements in our piece thus encourages viewers to empathize with the progress of “the Soul” through the multiple stages of its evolution. This empathy with the *Evolution of the Soul* awakens audiences from their illusion of separation.

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Appendix A: Lighting Design Research

Images

Inspiration for the
buildup and first
segment of Divine
Moments of Truth



Figure 8. *Serenity* by Olivia Curry and Susan Allan (Curry and Allan)

Divine Moments of
Truth – Shape, haze,
cool mystical colors



Figure 9. *Shaman Light* by Amanda Clark (Clark)

DMT – Tribal part;
dark cool colors



Figure 10. *The Alchemist* by Emily Kell (Kell)



DMT – Multidimensional quality of light

Figure 11. *Spirit Wolf* by Simon Haiduk (Haiduk)

0:41 all the way to Alex's quote over "We Are Water" – I imagine this dreamy city of colors, textures, and sensations molded into one at the peak of the alternative consciousness experience



Figure 12. *Manifestation* by Jonathon Solter (Solter)



DMT – Expansion of the mind/self (conceptual)

Figure 13. *Forward Escape* by Android Jones (Jones)

"Inside My Spirituality" – conceptual over "various selves" quote



Figure 14. *Inside My Spirituality* by Noa Knafo (Knafo)

Start of Purple & Orange segment – intricacy, quality of light, warm color palette



Figure 15. *Origins* by Eduardo Rodriguez Calzado (Calzado)

Build up to an intricate cooler look at the start of Purple & Orange



Figure 16. *Wonder* by Alex Grey (Grey)



Conceptual "Purple & Orange" – Concentricism, duality/contrast

Figure 17. *Gaia* by Alex Grey (Grey)

Purple & Orange –
color palette; soft/
muted quality of light



Figure 18. *River to Infinity* by Krystleyez (Krystleyez)



~4:33 – hazy contrast

Figure 19. *Sunray* by josefontheroad (josefontheroad)



~4:53 "bursts into flame" – texture & quality of light

Figure 20. *Divine Encounter* by Simon Haiduk (Haiduk)

~5:10 "it was amazing..." – texture and color scheme; slow cue to accentuate that homey comfortable feeling that comes along with the sweetest intensity of this part of the song



Figure 21. *Citrine Skies* by Olivia Curry (Curry)



~5:29 start of Cualli's "Butterfly" – vibrant colors, texture, concentricism

Figure 22. *Ab Uno Floriosum* by Elizabeth Banker (Banker)



Colors, quality of light during Cualli - radiance

Figure 23. *Light of Kabbalah* by Emma Watkinson (Watkinson)

~5:57 - Color scheme & contrast over quote



Figure 24. *The Gates of Knowledge* by Nao Knafo (Knafo)

“The trick is to combine your waking rational abilities with the infinite possibilities of your dreams....” – contrast both in colors and in value



Figure 25. *Love Is a Cosmic Force* by Alex Grey (Grey)

Opening of "Sky
Dancer" –
radiance, COLOR
SCHEME

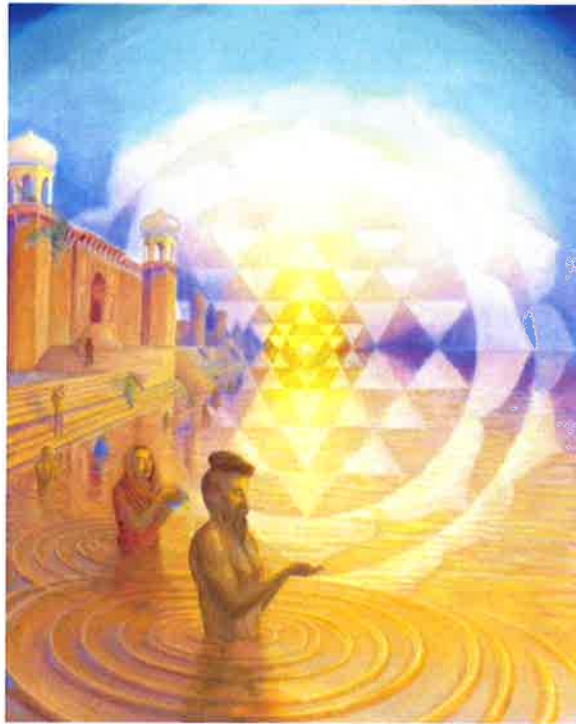


Figure 26. *Shri Yantra* by Emma Watkinson (Watkinson)



Textures and expansive color scheme during
beginning of Sky Dancer up until Famke starts
singing

Figure 27. *Spirit Bear* by Simon Haiduk (Haiduk)

~7:33 – contrast, texture



Figure 28. *Inner Harmony* by Olivia Curry (Curry)



~8:24 Sky Dancer

Figure 29. *Self Portrait* by Noa Knafo (Knafo)

Over Rachel's quote – partially conceptual, contrast, crystal clear quality of light



Figure 30. *Shadowlight* by Elizabeth Banker (Banker)

Ending of the whole piece – “The Soul Finds Its Way Back Home” (conceptual)

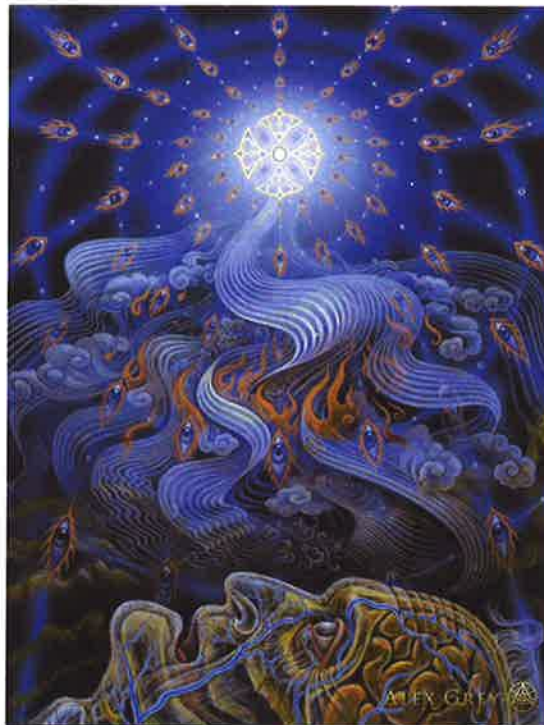


Figure 31. *The Soul Finds Its Way Back Home* by Alex Grey (Grey)

Appendix B: Lighting Design Storyboard

Cue #	Cue Placement	Time	Lighting Description	Research Image
251	0:00	7/9	Slow buildup Cool colors Hazy Backlight w/ booms then build front diags	<p>The top panel of the research image is a vertical artwork with a monochromatic blue and purple color palette. It features a glowing purple lotus flower in the lower right corner, with a bright yellow-orange center. To the left, there are several faces or profiles, some appearing to be part of a larger, more complex figure. The overall style is ethereal and dreamlike.</p> <p>The bottom panel is another vertical artwork, also in a blue-toned palette. It depicts a glowing white bowl on a small stand, with a stream of light or smoke rising from it. A bird is flying in the upper left, and a large, gnarled tree trunk is on the right. The scene is set in a dark, forest-like environment with various plants and flowers.</p>

252 0:25 5/7 More purple
in color
palette; build
more side
light, lighting
focused on
group US and
line of
stampers



253 1:21 5 Add warm
side light;
build down
light intensity



254 1:37 8

Soft quality
of light;
richly
saturated cool
colors to
evoke watery
sense; build
intensity DS
on soloist



255 1:54 4/9 Shift to warm side of color spectrum; high sides; bump intensity US; "it was amazing"



256 2:28 10 Slow build to a cooler, more intricate look; mids & shins color contrast; more full stage coverage because movement in this cue all over stage



257 3:09 10 More magenta/purple shins; More isolation on dancers; Central focus on dancers as they look over cliff



258 4:29 7 Build warm high sides to create hazy contrast w/ already present colors



259 4:48 5/7 Multidimensional quality of light; honey-gold pool of downlight creating focus as the "thing bursts"; pump mids intensity



260 5:09 7 Ground the honey-gold pool of light w/ sunrise warm high sidelight: "it was amazing"



261 5:27 5 Vibrant colors
Texture as in image



262 5:57 5 Radiance
Color palette in image;
central focus



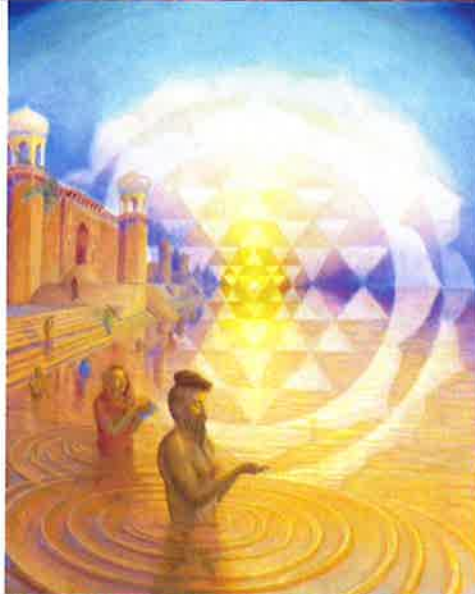
263 6:38 5

Value & color contrast like in image over “waking rational abilities” quote



264 6:43 12

Slow build to this radiant color scheme over opening of the Sky Dancer
Texture in polar bear image



265 7:33 5

Intricate
texture as in
image
Radiant
central focus
to accentuate
the quality of
the vocals
Isolation on
dancers



266 8:24 5

More cool
colors
Side lighting
Narrow
lighting to
focus on
soloist



267 8:45 5 Narrow in lighting to focus on soloist
Crystal clear quality of light



296 9:28 7 Slow
blackout
Over
continuing
movement

297 Bow
298 Blackout
299 House Lights
300 Blackout

Appendix C: Lighting Design Cue Sheet

Cue	Time	Time	Wait	Follow	Call	Composition
Evolution of the Soul						
251	0:00	7/9			Lights w/ dancers then music	Slow buildup; cool colors, hazy; backlight w/ low intensity front to highlight intricate hand movements; build front diags
S8					Music	
252	0:25	5/7			As girl rises and dancers stamp across stage	More purple in color palette; build more side light, lighting focused on group US and line of stampers
253	1:21	5			As formation lowers girl to ground	Add warm side light, build down light intensity
254	1:37	8			As soloist begins	Soft quality of light; richly saturated cool colors to evoke watery sense; build intensity DS on soloist
255	1:54	4/9			As soloist jumps into group's arms	Shift to warm side of color spectrum; high sides; bump intensity US
256	2:28	10			Girls making hand motions in line; go off of time stamp	Slow build to cooler, more intricate look; mids & shins color contrast; more full stage lighting because movement in this cue all over stage
257	3:09	10			"The THING bursts into flame..."	Build magenta/purple shins; more isolation on dancers; clear focus on dancers as they look over cliff
258	4:29	7			As girl gets down to spin on head	Build more warm high sides to create hazy contrast w/ already present cool colors
259	4:48	5/7			"The THING bursts into flame..."	Multidimensional quality of light; honey-gold pool of downlight creating focus as the "thing bursts into flame"; pump mids intensity
260	5:09	7				Ground the honey-gold pool of light w/ sunrise warm high sides
261	5:27	5			Pop out of center formation	Vibrant color scheme; intricate texture
262	5:57	5			Girl breaks out of line with hands	Radiance; striking green/magenta/blue color scheme; central focus
263	6:38	5			All girls sit down and come together	Stark contrast in color scheme and value of lighting atmosphere as a whole
264	6:43	12				Very slow build to radiant warm color scheme; multidimensional texture
265	7:33	5			Group slides down to the ground	Isolation on dancers; intricate shifting texture
266	8:24	5				More cool colors; bump side lights
267	8:45	5			With ding sound	Narrow in lighting to focus on soloist; crystal clear quality of light
296	9:28	5				Slow blackout over continuing movement
297						Bow
298						Blackout
Curtain					Bring all curtains out (legs, cyc, traveler)	
299						House
300					Dancers at standby	Blackout

Appendix D: Miscellaneous Creative Process Documents

Note: This is a document I compiled early in the creative process to assist both Rachel in her choreography and me in formalizing my lighting storyboard. This document also helped to make each suite of the piece conceptually clear to Rachel.

Suite I:

- DMT – Shpongle

This suite is about the experience of alternative states of consciousness like entheogenic usage, lucid dreaming, meditation as a mode of self discovery

- Suite transitions with the “...*a single ego is an absurdly narrow vantage from which to view this.....this experience. And where most consider their individual relationship to the universe, I contemplate relationships...of my various selves to one another*” quote
- The quote offers the suggestion that sparks the movement into the 2nd suite: contemplating the idea that we are the universe; transitioning from just exploring alternative states of consciousness to opening up to self-awareness

Suite II:

- Purple & Orange – Welder

- This suite is split up into two parts. The first part is during Purple & Orange and it’s about the experience of self-awakening to the idea that the universe is inside of all individuals.

- Butterfly - Cualli

- The second part is during Butterfly and it’s about the process of beginning to understand and celebrate the interconnectedness of all life
- Ends with the, “*So much of our experience is intangible. □ So much of what we perceive cannot be expressed. It’s unspeakable and yet, you know, when we*

communicate with one another and we feel that we've connected and we think that we're understood; I think we have a feeling of almost spiritual communion And that feeling might transient, but I think it's what we live for." quote

Suite III:

- This suite opens with the *"The trick is to combine your waking rational abilities with the infinite possibilities of your dreams. 'Cause if you can do that you can do anything."* quote still playing over the end of Butterfly before it transitions into the first song of the last suite:
- Sky Dancer – Akara
- This suite is about further celebration of the miracle of existence, learning to treat our planet better and cherish human connection more and then the suite ends with a quote leaving it in the audience's court to decide what to take away from the experience through the words of a *Waking Life* character:
- *'When it was over all I could think about was how this entire notion of oneself, what we are, is just this logical structure, a place to momentarily house all the abstractions. It was a time to become conscious, to give form and coherence to the mystery and I had been a part of that. It was a gift. Life was raging all around me and every moment was magical. I loved all the people, dealing with all the contradictory impulses. That's what I loved the most: connecting with the people. Looking back, that's all that really mattered.'*

Appendix E: Images of *Evolution of the Soul*



Figure 32. Still image of *Evolution of the Soul* (Levin)



Figure 33. Still image of *Evolution of the Soul* (Levin)



Figure 34. Still image of *Evolution of the Soul* (Levin)



Figure 35. Still image of *Evolution of the Soul* (Levin)