



All art is at once surface and symbol.  
Those who go beneath the surface do so at their peril.  
Those who read the symbol do so at their peril.

Oscar Wilde, preface to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, 1891

Speaking of peril, take the *Study for a Couple – Man*. A turtle shell morphs into a skull with shiny white teeth held before a pregnant woman's bulging belly. The artist grins and says, I really like that work—the man didn't do so well. This is not the Richard Strauss/Hugo von Hofsmannthal song of the unborn children—but is it evidence of an analogous mythic, creative impulse, darker, less sentimental to be sure? What to do with the hundreds of unsold works that any artist accumulates over time. Leave bundles of drawings in the woods for 15 years or submerged in water where crabs gnaw at them—a different kind of fire sale. New ways to kill the animals and/or the farmer. Will all those horses enter the barn that's exploding shit? Hercules was told to clean the dung out of the Augean stables in order to humiliate him (it didn't).

Finding the hidden self. Email: I'm just clawing my way back to 'art' after a period of forced civility so as not to freak out the grand children. Frighten the children, don't fairy tales do that? We're still scared of the dark and won't simply sit with it. He says, I'm aware that something is evolving. Only in retrospect do I know what the pieces are about. I don't want to take time at the time to figure out what it is. There is a whole text that could go with it, giving clues about what the pieces are but not telling you what your journey is. For some, artistic creativity thrives when experience unfolds continuously with awareness and without self-consciousness.

Art and the unconscious. He asks, Should such personal work be shown in public? And answers evasively, Authentic movement shouldn't be performed. We're in between two places in human evolution, out of pisces and into the age of aquarius, torn apart by the old ways, the old economy, the old Christianity, moving toward emptiness—the silence of work that's been asleep in the woods. When you lose touch with the ego, you're in the unconscious and you need a vocabulary for that. It's not about making a painting of a pig but about the sense of a story that's been lived through this imagery—and there is a large archive he can draw on to forge a visually interesting corner of the gallery, a tight, for the artist beautiful and consoling camp fire about the dissolution of a farm. Here is a privileged self-assertion alongside a beguiling shyness. Put another way, here are works of art as transitional objects, humble, proud and also poignant, an intermediate area of experience, between childhood attachment and the solitude of an adult, neither "I" nor fully "other," but encompassing both.

Craig Harbison, January 2013  
Gordon Thorne Installation  
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