

# On Sublime Love

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by

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Dedication

Love never ends. 1 Corinthians 13:8

To Kendra & Lydia my love

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## Abstract

As I made my thesis work, my first child was being formed in my wife's womb. I realized then how the sublime encounter of life itself, evolving day by day, spoke to my process of drawing and painting. This unraveling experience led me to re-evaluate the way I live and to deeply consider my way of thinking about the immensity of existence. My works are homages to love and the grandeur created with minute particles of matter both in life and art. My medium, charcoal powder, is a ground material of the smallest size, filled with a tremendous capability to ignite. These portraits have become that fire. Subtle details wedded with time have created form in my work. The end result is, portraits of individuals who are made in the image of the Divine, who with love has gifted life.

**Keywords:** Love, Sublime, Mathematical Sublime, Inner Immensity, Metaphor.

## II. Introduction

I can easily summon the faces of the people I love: individuals whose uniqueness treasures feelings of intimacy and an awareness of their inner immensity. This uniqueness mesmerizes me, and moves me to humbly approach these experiences as an artist. As I made the work for my thesis exhibition, my first child was being formed in my wife's womb. I realized then how life evolving day by day, spoke to my process of drawing and painting. Like the process that I was engaged in, I discovered that life itself is a process of unraveling transformations. Intricate organic rhythms and an endless amount of genetic information are coded uniquely at the embryonic stage. Life is given by a miraculous and astonishing course of developments that begins with a process of cellular transformations. The unique intensity within these transformations forces me to stop in the quickness of a moment. There, I try to remember and treasure the images of marvelous entangled rhythms and the human condition. The convolutions in these images fascinate me. Once immersed, I am able to grasp a vastness that I cannot fully relish yet. It is then when drawing becomes my haven; I can resize and reclaim these experiences on a surface, by gracefully moving my hand. The creation of this portrait series of charcoal and graphite drawings is deeply connected to matter transformation, and to the way I have been moved by sublime moments of miraculous inner-immensity. Mere dust has been altered into an experience, fashioned by an intense complexity in detail, and a romantic devotion to the creative act.



Fig. 1 Franklin Delgado, *Inner Immensity (Agape)*, charcoal on paper, 65 x 48 inches, 2016

### III. Hand Made Conceptions

A certain wonder for the future delicately softens her vision. My drawing portrays an expectant mother who is full of thoughts, reveries, and hopes that humanize her inner thinking. For nine long months, before my daughter was born, it was our love that created her life and my wife's body that formed her. Since the day of her birth into this world, from the moment they met, there was an unexplainable connection. I was present, but in a burst of pure joy, it was my wife's warm arms that held her first. She rested upon her mother's bare chest. With her first

breath of life, her flesh changed, from cool to warm. They both cried, one tears of joy and the other tears of life. Their hearts regulated with each other's presence. Blood stopped pulsing from her umbilical cord, and life miraculously started outside of the womb. Thinking deeply about the amazing way nature works; one sees and understands that a body is fully equipped to sustain life. One sees a being so sensitive to notice the slightest of changes: a glance held longer than usual, an arm extended by will and not just reflex. A mother is a refuge. She wakes to the softest of rumblings to soothe her child. She exudes hope when the world is dark and everyone else is asleep. The magnitude of encounters of love and inner immensity is vast beyond all measure. It is what defines us. Facing such encounters sets us in a place of difference. Experiences like birth come into our lives and change us, causing us to never be the same.

As an artist, a sense of admiration weaves inside experiences of change. The greatness of these moments inspires me not to render images in one stroke, but to carefully build them. To arduously create images, something handmade, an experience analogous to the greatness of sublime experiences. For Kant: "one's inability to grasp the magnitude of a sublime event ... demonstrates inadequacy of one's sensibility and imagination. Simultaneously, one's ability to subsequently identify such an event as singular and whole indicates the superiority of one's cognitive, supersensible powers. Ultimately, it is this "supersensible substrate," underlying both nature and thought, on which true sublimity is located."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Kant, Immanuel. *The Critique of Judgement*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1982. 82, Print.



Fig. 2 Caspar David Friedrich, *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog*, oil on canvas, 37x 27 inches, 1818

This romantic idea of self-reflection is depicted in Caspar David Friedrich's *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog*. The image has been intensively castoff to exemplify the Kantian mathematical sublime. Immanuel Kant estimated the magnitude of natural things by defining the ideas of the sublime. The mathematical sublime estimates nature's magnitude by means of number; and aesthetic, by mean of the eyes or mere intuition. For Kant "we can only get definite concepts of how great anything is by having recourse to numbers (or ad infinitum), the unit being the measure; and to this extent all logical estimation of magnitude is mathematical". Likewise, "the

estimation of the measure of the fundamental measure must, therefore, consist merely in the immediate grasp which we can get of it in intuition, and the use to which our imagination can put this in presenting the numerical concepts: (i.e., subjectively and not objectively determined).”<sup>2</sup>

*Inner Immensity (Agape)* is the first large scale portrait of the series. This breakthrough drawing has become the power spot of the exhibition.<sup>3</sup> It is built with specific emphasis in its aesthetics, and a critical acknowledgment of the beauty embodied in the instant. While I created the drawing; endless thoughts, feelings, and emotions were present. I was overwhelmed with the intensity of the image, its significance, and intricacy. There is great complexity within the maze of rhythms in her hair alone. Each line of hair has been specifically acknowledged and granted as important. The source of light on the left side of the composition defines the movement of the form. It created sources of tonal variations and allowed me to discover important nuances that the light gently created. A pearl on her ear is located in the center of the image. The one and only outsider element, a hamlet in the humanity embodied. The round pearl has been lit from the bottom left and upper middle. It allows the form to spark intensively and to cast shadows on the flesh. I have incorporated this element and wish to transmit with its presence, not a defined and easy to read allegory, but rather to intentionally depict the strangeness of the form in this environment. The pearl is my daughter, isolated, vulnerable, and at the threshold of life. I thought of the way I could portray a pregnant women without the noticeable womb. I thought about the form of an embryo, a zygote, a cell formed by fertilization. I learned that a gamete is a cell that fuses with another cell during conception shaped in a round new cell. Gametes carry half of the genetic information of each individual. The presence of this analogy of circular matter

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<sup>2</sup> Kant, Immanuel, and James Creed. Meredith. *The Critique of Judgement*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1952. 56, Print.

<sup>3</sup> Power spot is a term used by Robert Irwin, referring to the place where all is revealed.

acknowledges and depicts graphically the ontological idea of love fashioned by Jacques Lacan and extensively enlightened by Alain Badiou in his book *In Praise of Love*. For Badiou, love is a quest for truth. “In love one tries to approach “the being of the other”. The individual goes beyond himself.”<sup>4</sup> This drawing portrays a search for truth; it acknowledges our origins and portrays life. It portrays love.

#### IV. Deferred Action, the Unfinished Business with Tradition

It is significant to unveil the practice of belated romantic aesthetics in contemporary avenues. Consider the thesis foregrounded by Hal Foster in *The Return of the Real*: “for Freud, especially as read through Lacan, subjectivity is not set once and for all; it is structured as a relay of anticipations and reconstructions of traumatic events. ‘It always takes two traumas to make a trauma,’” comments Jean Laplanche, who has done much to clarify the different temporal models in Freudian thought. Foster continues, “One event is only registered through another that recodes it; we come to be who we are only in deferred action.”<sup>5</sup> It is this definition that Foster expands: historical and neo avant-garde are constituted in a similar way, as a continual process of pretension and “retension,” a complex relay of anticipated futures and reconstructed pasts; in short, a deferred action throws over the simple scheme of before and after, cause and effect, origin and repetition. Contemporary art, then, is understood for its pluralism of returns, pretension and retension.

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<sup>4</sup> Badiou, Alain, and Nicolas Truong. *In Praise of Love*. New York: New, 2012. Print.

<sup>5</sup> Foster, Hal. *The Return of the Real: The Avant-garde at the End of the Century*. Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1996. Print.

My work clings to tradition in the idea that is a return from the future that embraces historical modes of representation as idyllic metaphors that portrays with extensive qualification, instants of inner sublime immensity. It represents a paradoxical attempt against the non-verbal immediacy of postmodernism and values post-structuralist theories. I have embraced my place within this aesthetic because it treasures the ardency and romanticism of realism and ultimately bears with intensity a thoughtful care for the elegance and the importance of expression in the creative act. I want to consider with my work a return to historical tradition, as the fundamental idea that fosters my art.

The break from historical movements and tradition in portraiture has not been total. Just as Hal Foster suggests, it is necessary revising our notion of epistemological rupture. Instead, the definition of deferred action provides rather than a break with the fundamental practices and discourses of tradition, “the signals and discourses of postmodernity have advanced in a later relation to them.”<sup>6</sup> Just as the sun changes its route daily with the seasons, the lineage of portraiture throughout the twentieth century was also altered. Art movements like Abstract Expressionism (1943-late 1965), Color Field Painting (1940s-mid 1960s), Conceptual Art (1960s-present), Fluxus (1959-1978), Hard-edge Painting (1959-1970s), Happenings (1958-early 1970s), Kinetic Art (1954), Minimalism (early 1960s-late 1960s), etc., had dropped representation entirely in favor of a new art experience. It is then when in the 1960s, a group of artists reutilized realism, a time-honored approach, to comment on popular culture and the commoditization of art. Among these artists, Chuck Close’s large portrait paintings created in

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<sup>6</sup> Foster, Hal. *The Return of the Real: The Avant-garde at the End of the Century*. Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1996. Print, Page 32.

1967 are related aesthetically to the visual component in my work but reject the intimacy that I treasure.



Fig. 3 Chuck Close, *Big Self Portrait*, acrylic on canvas, 107-1/2 x 83-1/2 inches, 1967-1968

Originally, Close's work was meant to shake the traces of gestural painting and the subjective use of color. He longed to innovate and avoid pre-conceived ideas in portraiture painting. His use of an airbrush was purposefully thought out to separate the artist from the intimacy of the brush, paint, and canvas. "It secluded his direct contact with the tools or ways to

traditionally attack this subject"<sup>7</sup>. Up until this point in art history the subject of portraiture had a flux of constant technical enhancement, experimentation, and critical theory that shaped its differential imagery.

Chuck Close's endeavor then, aimed to further traditional ways by creating a system, orientated conceptual art practice; his process was driven by a new method, practically artificial and mathematical. "Photography had been challenging painting's former dominance in this area, and succeeding in steadily gaining critical appreciation as an artistic medium in its own right. Close emerged from the 1970s painting movement of Photorealism, but then moved well beyond its initially hyper-attentive rendering of a given subject to explore how methodical, system-driven portrait painting based on photography's underlying processes (over its superficial visual appearances) could suggest a wide range of artistic and philosophical concepts. In addition, Close's personal struggles with dyslexia and subsequently, partial paralysis, have suggested real-life parallels to his professional discipline, as though his methodical and yet also quite intuitive methods of painting are inseparable from his own daily reckoning with the body's own vulnerable, material condition." <sup>8</sup>

In this sense the kindship between Chuck Close's and my work exemplifies Hal Foster's ideas of the constant informative/foundational rapport between art movements and their context. My work returns to historical representations of portraiture, to sensibly acknowledge sublime encounters in contemporary times. Here, it is necessary to emphasize that Postmodernism has been applied to a host of movements that reacted against tendencies in modernism. These

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<sup>7</sup> Arthur, John. *Realists at Work*. New York: Watson-Guptill, 1983. Print.

<sup>8</sup> "Chuck Close Biography, Art, and Analysis of Works." *The Art Story*. N.p., n.d. Web. 12 Aug. 2016.

movements are typically marked by a revival of historical elements and techniques. This revival has created affinity with Close discoveries, and these novelties are weaved in my work. My process is strongly process orientated; I use a grid to transport the proportions of the image in the photograph, to the drawing surface with precision. Photographs have been the source of my images, I have acknowledged the use of these references and I do not deny the use of this medium. "Photorealist, along with some practitioners of Pop art, reintroduced the importance of process and deliberate planning over that of improvisation and automatism, into the making of art, draftsmanship, and exacting brushwork. In other words, the traditional techniques of academic art are again of great significance, and painstaking craftsmanship is prized after decades of the spontaneous, accidental, and improvisational." <sup>9</sup> The idea of utilizing photorealism deliberate planning, conventions, and discoveries revalidates Hal Foster's idea of the deferred action in my work; while at the same time, introduces the romanticism that once was left aside during this art movement.

Hall Foster has two distinguished operations that clarify the trauma of "retension": the first is disruptive, and the second restorative. My work relates to the restorative operations of historical portraiture to bring both a perceptual shift in its larger-than-life scope of poetic nuances, and to bring an important subject in art history to the forefront. It retains the essential ideas of photorealism and restores its mechanical automatism to an ardent romanticism that I treasure in my studio art practice. It is almost a standard generalization to say that artists try to make significant comments in the way they view their subjects and represent their images, but I

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<sup>9</sup> "Photorealism Movement, Artists and Major Works." *The Art Story*. N.p., n.d. Web. 20 Aug. 2016.

long to convey more than commentary; I seek to convey through extensively romantic quality, the sublime essence of love.

The images of loved ones are treated with an exceptional emphasis to specificity that relates deeply to intimacy in my work. Nearness with my sitters allows me to create an image that is deeply empathetic. The process itself allows intimacy to intertwine through my work from its foundation. The large sheets of paper are gridded with graphite pencil to help translate the proportions on the surface. A general outline of the image peaks in with a subtle presence. The graphite and charcoal powder enter in stages and allow layering larger areas of the surface with a rather controlled array of soft movements. Each time I reach for the powder with a rag, there is a moment in which I transfer the excess material on to a different piece of paper. This purifies the intensity of the mark and gives the determined section, a rather quiet fine treatment that treasures the white of the paper and emphasizes the importance of value range. The technique carries the emotion in every movement, and a sense of wonder and joy grows, as the image develops by itself. The sensibility to create these pieces personifies a romantic attitude, in which everything is considered miraculous and magical, underlying a deep desire for extensive qualification.

#### V. Expressive Theories and extensive quality

The term ardency means to place preponderant emphasis on great conceptions and vehement passion to something loved, and awed. It is the sum of a life lived while sitting in front of a blank surface, confronted with the elegance of a frightening purity and the scent of a brand new sheet of paper. My portraits hinge on this passionate complex process, the responses that occur while creating, when modest marks and romantic actions are combined with one another; building the image of a miracle, by enhancing its deepest, furthest, and essential qualities, from

the humblest decisions. There must be subtleties that are thought out but derived effortlessly. They must be natural and funneled before moving my arm gracefully.



Fig. 4 *The Return of the Real (Zack)*, charcoal and graphite on paper, 41 x 57 inches, 2016

Charcoal is favored as my medium, a dark matter of primal capabilities and origins. Charcoal is made by thermochemical decomposition of organic material transformed at elevated temperatures in the absence of oxygen. Charcoal is volatile and fragile, ready to ignite. These portraits have become that fire. They hold the sum of humble decisions made during the act of creation, condensed into something that possesses a spark of hope in its core, hope to become something greater; to create homages of experiences lived. The sophisticated form of matter ground down to dust, creates an unforgiving, unruly material. Its use unifies the characteristics of the image and adds a challenging step to the process of making. The scattered fragility and

minimal size of the millions of particles of charcoal enhances its unique sophistication. Marco Tullius Cicero (allow me to change the word orator to artists, audience to viewer, and eloquence to expression) defined: “three aims of the artists to be: conciliating, informing, and moving the viewer, and added that the artist must himself achieve a state of excitement if he is to evoke emotions in his viewers, for no mind is so susceptible of the power of expression, as to catch its blaze, unless the artists, when he approaches it, is himself in flames.”<sup>10</sup>

In order to accomplish an extensive qualification in my work, I have closely held a defined structure that embraces my aesthetical decisions. I learned that ICU (Intensity, Complexity, and Unity) is a similar theory to Tullius Cicero’s, both of which aim to transport greater complexity in a work of art. The original framework was created in 1958 by the art philosopher Monroe Beardsley, and updated in 2010 by the writer Stephen Knudsen in his essay: Practical Aesthetics Examining Artwork with a Critical Eye. In his essay, Knudsen initiates elucidating Beardsley’s theory as “a simple, elegant set of objective reasons for aesthetic success in a work of art.” [...] “Beardsley proposed that a wide variety of reasons for aesthetic goodness could be condensed into just three categories: Intensity, Complexity and Unity, known as ICU.”<sup>11</sup>

Intensity refers to works of art with “great power, energy or strength, depth or emotional force” as defined by Knudsen<sup>12</sup>. Perceptual shift is a quality of intensity that states the capability within the work of art to supersede a paradoxical perception. Formally, I exemplified the

<sup>10</sup> Abrams, M. H. *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition*. New York: Oxford UP, 1953. Print.

<sup>11</sup> Knudsen, Stephen. "Practical Aesthetics Examining Artwork with a Critical Eye." *Practical Aesthetics Examining Artwork with a Critical Eye*. N.p., 10 Oct. 2010. Web. 13 Aug. 2016.

<sup>12</sup> "Beyond Postmodernism. Putting a Face on Metamodernism Without the Easy Clichés." *ARTPULSE MAGAZINE RSS*. Web. 29 May 2016.

perceptual shift in the larger than life scope of my portraits. In the same way Chuck Close granted a perceptual shift to his paintings, these are hard to take at once. The intensity of his images forces the viewer to recede and harvest all the information at once, then at the same time, demands from the viewer intimacy to appreciate the nuances within the countenance of his sitters.

It is also postulated in this theory that Complexity is the intricate organization of countless characters within the form of art. Variety is essential to achieve complexity through and amid the formal elements in the work. The dermis, flesh, hair follicles, eyebrows, and specific information of the humanity of my sitters provide the diversity. The varieties of each of these forms are paradoxically enhanced by the harmony and boldness of the drawings magnitude. Unity is described by Knudsen as the “idea of wholeness, a form of harmony important for the human psyche.”<sup>13</sup> These ideas have nurtured both form and content in my creative act.

Similarly in 1953, M.H. Abrams in *The Mirror and The Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* offered key ideas to the development of romantic theories. The author illustrates major observations of the novelty essence of romantic theories and contrasts these to the main tendencies of theory of art during the preceding two thousand years. He states: “Even though the characteristic patterns of romantic theory were new, many of its constituent parts are to be found, variously developed, in early writers”.<sup>14</sup> In the middle of the eighteenth century, some elements of tradition theory decreased and dropped, while others expanded and improved; “ideas which had been central became marginal, and marginal ideas became central; new terms

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<sup>13</sup> Knudsen, Stephen. "Practical Aesthetics Examining Artwork with a Critical Eye." *Practical Aesthetics Examining Artwork with a Critical Eye*. N.p., 10 Oct. 2010. Web. 13 Aug. 2016.

<sup>14</sup> Abrams, M. H. *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition*. New York: Oxford UP, 1953. Print.

and new distinctions were introduced; until, by gradual stages, a return was brought about in the prevailing orientation of aesthetic thinking”.<sup>15</sup> Abrams clarifies the heritage and distinctive ideas of romantic theories that developed the idea of art as the expression of feeling, or of the human spirit, or of an impassioned state of mind and imagination. Overlays of romantic ideas are ardently depicted in my work. Expression was the foremost end of Alberto Giacometti’s painting. James Lord described the romantic attitude in which Giacometti created art. Lord, in *Portrait of Giacometti* exposes literal evidence of the intensity in Giacometti’s process; thus showing the artist in a constant inner battle with his either human and/or technical boundaries, as well as the development of his work. When I am engaged in the creative act, an analogous experience to Giacometti’s keeps me company<sup>16</sup>. However, the presence of my limitations is vanished by time and effort. Time nurtures the intricacy in the work, and “the technique carries the emotion and the subject”.<sup>17</sup> The inner immensity contained by the human countenance is sublime; therefore the impassionate state of mind declared by Abrams provides that forbearance vital for the process of creation. Here, specific ideas are central components of romantic theory: the attention to nature, the transport of the artists’ intensity, in addition to his art and acquired skills; while the tendency is to conceive of the invention, disposition, and expression of material as mental powers and processes.

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>16</sup> I was first introduced to Giacometti by the artist Todd Schroeder; his ideas of working from life and the romanticism in his process sharpen my understanding of ardency.

<sup>17</sup> “The technique carries the content and subject” is a concept introduced by the artist Roger Mark Walton, to describe the capability of technique to transport and to communicate expression. In my work, a significant part of my content is emotion.



Fig 5 Alberto Giacometti, *James Lord*, oil on canvas, 1964

Consider also David Foster Wallace's *E Unibus Pluram* essay. Here the author introduces the necessity of "a cultural sea change, or at least the need for one. Wallace suggested that perhaps what had made postmodernism vital-such as irony, appropriation and obsessive intertextuality-was beginning to fizzle. The suggestion was radical at that time". This new sincerity sometimes referred to the idea that termed aesthetics, poetry, literary criticism and philosophy. It describes creative works that expand upon and break away from concepts of postmodernist irony and cynicism, representing a partial return to modernism. "Wallace's idea embodied sincerity as a crucial value in his life and work [...] even as that work's defining

feature”<sup>18</sup>. Likewise, Adam Kely in *Consider David Foster Wallace: Critical Essays*, fronts a critical question that expand on the idea of a New Sincerity: is there something fundamentally new about Wallace’s sincerity, a re-working of the concept as complex and radical response to contemporary conditions? Kely sources Lionel Trilling’s 1872 study of Sincerity and authenticity, the result of said study offered historical outlines of these two key concepts. Trilling describes sincerity as “a congruence of avowal and actual feeling”<sup>19</sup> Trilling suggests: (via readings of Roseau, Diderot, Hegel and Jane Austen) that this conception of sincerity would become a salient, perhaps a definitive, characteristic of Western culture. “But by the twentieth century it had gone in sharp decline, superseded by the idea of authenticity, which conceives truth to the self as an end and not simply as a means. Whereas sincerity places emphasis on intersubjective truth [...] authenticity conceives truth as something inward, personal and hidden, the goal primarily of self-expression”<sup>20</sup>.

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<sup>18</sup> Fest, Bradley J. "Consider David Foster Wallace: Critical Essays Edited by David Hering." *Critical Quarterly* 53.2 (2011): 102-06. Web.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>20</sup> Wallace, 17.



Fig. 6 Franklin Delgado, *The Quest for Truth (Kendria)*, charcoal and graphite on paper, 41 x 57 inches, 2016

#### VI. The act of Drawing

Drawing reveals the interest of stages of development; it is the process of revision, the artist's first attention in all its energy. "The process of drawing is before all else the process of putting the visual intelligence into action, the very mechanics of visual thought. Unlike painting and sculpture, it is the process by which the artist makes clear to himself and not to the spectator what he is doing. It is a soliloquy before it becomes communication," Michael Ayrton (1921-1975), English artist and writer. Here, we could consider and pair Ayrton ideas to David

Rosand's concept of "Kinesthetic circuit,"<sup>21</sup> in which the drawing is understood as an extension of the mind and body. Equally, it is noteworthy the intimate nature of the creative act and its dialogue with the artist; just as it is imperative to acknowledge the natural ardent connection between drawing medium, artist and sitter. Most of the ideas presented by Ayrton relate to considerations on Baudelaire. The transparent and immediate quality of drawing to gracefully forefront creativity and sensibility were the Baudelaire's reasons to favor the medium. Similarly Ayrton believed in the precise and delicate demands on the intellect awoken by drawing, as opposed to the physically more generous art of painting.

Guy Davenport introducing *The drawings of Paul Cadmus*, correlates the inherited energy of sketching in impressionistic paintings. The realism of Mantegna or Bellini, as Davenport elegiacally has enlightened, was superior; they were able to create an unseen finesse. Their subject was Christ; therefore, the paintings required extensive information to convey its sublimity. We need to believe it is Christ being crucified. It is necessary to feel his agony and his pain after being nailed to the cross. Here was required a balance of spirit and information. "If the word was made flesh, then its realization in paint had to be visually authentic, convincing and rich in information."<sup>22</sup>

Along with authenticity and complexity, it is fundamental to blaze in passion while attacking this aesthetic. Ardency is vital and fundamental for the creative act. It requires a great undertaking. The elemental characteristics of the materials and the passion that drive my process are profoundly submerged into the physiognomies of my images. This passion is what pushes my own boundaries to encourage me to go further. Longinian theory connects the ideas and ardency

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<sup>21</sup> Rosand, David. *Drawing Acts: Studies in Graphic Expression and Representation*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 2002. Print.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 20.

of the artist. It is called sublimity. “Sublimity is said to be the product of an inspired moment of passion, rather than cool and sustained calculation”.<sup>23</sup> Historically, there were requirements to achieve sublimity, all of them contrasting, but intimately related to notions of speed, power, and intensity. My work connects deeply to this theory, in that “sublimity is not recognized by an act of analytical or comparative judgement, but by our transport (ecstasies), and the spell it throws over us”.<sup>24</sup>

#### IV. Inner Immensity

In *The Poetics of Space*, Gaston Bachelard expands on the idea that forests are an illustration of the concept of intimate immensity. Forests are magical places of depth. They are the convoluted habitat of thousands of colossal giants in a constant quest for enlightenment. Forests symbolize physically, metaphorically, and psychologically, a real experience of an intimate immensity and its true meaning. Geographical information has little to do with the impressions of immensity that this endless world owns. “Intimate immensity is often what gives meaning to our experiences with the real word. [...] We do not have to be long in the woods to experience the always rather anxious impression of “going deeper and deeper” into a limitless world. Soon, if we do not know where we are going, we no longer know where we are. [...] “Forests, especially, with the mystery of their space prolonged indefinitely beyond the veil of tree trunks and leaves, space that is veiled for our eyes, but transparent to action, are veritable psychological transcendents”: sublime experiences.

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<sup>23</sup> Abrams, M. H. *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition*. New York: Oxford UP, 1953. Print.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 22.



Fig. 7 Franklin Delgado, *Psychological Transcendence (Kalli)*, graphite on paper, 64 x 48 inches, 2016

Just as within the immensity of the forest, there is a hidden grandeur immersed in my work. It is nursed by the ability to sieve the immensity of these experiences through my being and to transform them into a graceful expression. Consider the drawing *The Triumph of Love*. It's a large scale portrait of my first born daughter. This drawing is the materialization of a personal encounter of the sublime experience of love. It is an instant of a confrontational meeting

with the sublimity of an enduring power. It elevated the capability of my understanding of this mathematical sublime in “Planck time” and transported me to the presence of God.<sup>25</sup>



Fig. 8 Franklin Delgado, *The Triumph of Love*, charcoal and graphite on paper, 48 x 64 inches, 2016

Lydia's eyes confronted me with a bare truthfulness. This allowed me to experience in the infinite of her eyes the magnitude of a Divine love. Immanuel Kant in *The Critique of Judgement* defines as the mathematical sublime: an "aesthetical comprehension is not a consciousness of a mere greater unit, but the notion of absolute greatness not inhibited with ideas

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<sup>25</sup> In physics, the Planck time is the unit of time in the system of natural units known as Planck units. It is the time required for light to travel, in a vacuum, a distance of 1 Planck length. The unit is named after Max Planck, who was the first to propose it. It is the lower order of magnitude of time.

of limitations.”<sup>26</sup> Experiencing the sublime in the birth of life and being present when that life evolves with time transported me to a place of difference. The mathematical sublime relates to something that is infinite. Being present at the birth of the world did not seem like a finite moment in my life. There was something of great beauty and great awe in that experience. There, a better understanding of the immensity of love came to be. I grasped how “eternity can exist within the time span of life itself,” the experience solidified the sublime supremacy of love<sup>27</sup>.

The beauty and grandeur I experienced at the birth of life made me realize in such a small order of time, the sublimity of our inner immensity. It also made me think about creation and human genealogy. In Genesis 1:26-27 says: “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness...So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.” This verse made me wonder if the lineage of mankind could be traced back to the beginning of life. It is natural for me to immediately think about creation since I am a believer. And the answer for that question is a given in my beliefs. However I wondered at the same time if this theory could be proven in a scientific way. While studying the origins of life I learned of *alleles*. Human cells carry two copies of each chromosome having two versions of each gene. These different versions of a gene are called alleles. Alleles can be either dominant or recessive. The dominant and recessive traits in my daughter have been passed on from my wife and me. These alleles were passed on to us by our parents, and to our parents from theirs. I believe this genealogy can be traced back to the creation of mankind, the creation of male and female in God’s image, and therefore to our ultimate father. In this sense, my daughter carries

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<sup>26</sup> Kant, Immanuel, and James Creed. Meredith. *The Critique of Judgement*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1952. 56, Print.

<sup>27</sup> Eternity immersed into time is a term created by the philosopher Alain Badiou in his book *In Praise of Love*

the infinity of love hidden in her genetic information; she is the conception of love. Jérôme Bennaroch expands on the idea of love as the proof of two, “it is their declaration and eternity, however, there comes a moment when two must pass their test in the order of One. It must return to One. The once symbolic and real figure for this One is the child. Our child is love’s true goal; the existence of the child is the expression of the One.”<sup>28</sup>

While writing my thesis and creating work for my exhibition I was adjusting to a new life at home. I experienced moments in which I found myself confronted with the curious look of our new born. Sometimes there were moments in which she would be looking directly at me. I experienced all of her vast passion for life, her joy, and a sublime love in one intense glimpse. I have reclaimed this experience in the drawing of my daughter, *The Triumph of Love*. The drawing depicts her eyes the size of an average adult’s head. The scale and the large proportion of the image allowed me to convey a perceptual shift that increased the intensity of the encounter, and brought to me an unbearable intimacy. It is an analogous encounter of a being with little experience of the world. However, she confides deeply and is capable of recognizing the presence of love. Her portrait exemplifies a trust as intense as someone who has loved for one thousand years. Love here is furthered by the miracle in the inner immensity of her being, and transformed from the smallest particle of existence to create a portrait of life itself. Her gaze alone is a moving experience. Psychological transcendence and moments of intimate immensity are vastly experienced and drawn meticulously in her portrait. Her eyes carry an inner immensity paralleled to that of the forest described by Gaston Bachelard. Anatomical studies of the eyes, their function, and metaphors of its immensity are delicately illustrated. The irises, circular structures in her eyes, control the diameter and size of her pupil in this instant. The muscles in

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<sup>28</sup> Badiou, Alain, and Nicolas Truong. *In Praise of Love*. New York: New, 2012. Print.

the irises are also specific; they appear as lines of marvelous intricate mazes. These fibrovascular matters are layered by the cornea. The cornea is illustrated with a round reflection depicted above the irises and the pupil. Millions of working parts create the miracle of vision. It sieves the largest percent of the knowledge we obtain over our lifetime. This small organ, astonishingly cradles millions of rods and cones that are used for vision at night and assist in color vision, respectively. The eyes are capable to adjust in just milliseconds in order to keep balance whenever we move. Such immensity in the human physical body is radical beyond measure, unique. The vastness and immensity within our constitution grants meaning to our experiences with the world.

The book of Matthew explains Jesus' metaphor: "The eye is the lamp of the body. *You draw light into your body through your eyes, and light shines out to the world through your eyes.* So if your eye is well *and shows you what is true*, then your whole body will be filled with light". Love has been Lydia's first experience; this is her light. There was a connection with her mother inside of the womb. They are physically and emotionally linked by their closeness, by their love. So if love has been a catalyst for existence, then love is what is shown through her eyes. This is sublime.

## V. Against the Sublime

In his essay *against the sublime*, James Elkins explains his dissatisfaction with the use of the term sublime in contemporary writing and art. "Saying something is sublime doesn't make it art, or bring it closer to the artworld, or provide a judgment that can do much philosophic work or result in much understanding." He expands: "I think the sublime needs to be abandoned as an interpretive tool, except in the cases of romantic and belated romantic art."

Quoting Chuck Close: "Always the best time to paint is when people decide that painting is dead because the traditions and conventions are up for grabs." I feel the same way with Elkins idea against the sublime. I believe my work is a response to this idea. I agree that the sublime has been exhausted by artists as a subject in art history; however it is paradoxically hard to find examples of critical theory or the use of love as a sublime experience, or as a subject. It is in this spirit that my work react to Elkins deride of the use of the sublime in contemporary art practices. It is factual that the conventions of photorealism are instilled in the aesthetics of my work; however, my practice is based not only in the fundamentals of an array of methodical procedures, but mostly in the search of a genuine ardency, and romanticism that drives me to create. In other words, the methods are only a means to an end.

In my series of portraits, the images of loved ones are made not with the intention to praise a technical grandeur, but rather to honor those sublime experiences through a genuine selfhood. There is not a more sublime encounter that being present at the birth of life. It is the fulfillment of convoluted reactions in the nucleus of a female body that gives life. The development is an astonishing constant journey to perfection during the stages of gestation and conception. Suddenly, you are beholding the birth of the world. Nature offers immense encounters rooted with an endless amount of information veiled inside every form of life. I was born in a Central American hamlet, a place that breathed and exuded the air of virgin nature. Its' exuberance displayed with its' exotic arrays the right colors, fulfilling privileged adventures in the wild that few have breathed. I didn't think back then about atoms; but sensed in my surroundings a prominence. I believed and felt deep in my soul that this immensity must have been created by a divine sublime.

Within the complexity of creation, in a place of privilege amid living forms; we the humans, have been blessed with the talent to experience one of the greatest feelings of profound affection. This is love. Love is a universal language that gives meaning and intensity to everyone's life, however humble, however hidden, or however vast this love is. This unraveling experience led me to re-evaluate the way I live, and to deeply consider my way of thinking about the immensity of the world.

I discovered that life itself is love, a magical miracle and the process of an evolving transformation. Encountering this love urges me not to merely render images, but to reminisce and honor personal experiences while creating. My works are homages of this grandeur of love, wedded with time and passion: Portraits of individuals made in agape love, the highest form of love that comes from the divine giver of life. A love that embraces a universal, unconditional love that transcends.

Commented [1]: As above, how does this relate to your practice as exemplified by your thesis show

Commented [2]: Same as above and above..\*in general you are getting way too broad here, focus on talking about the work..I would drop this whole part and address the Elkin's quote that you begin with

## X. Love

To summon my ideas of love and the sublime, I have brought to the forefront Alain Badiou. He is a French philosopher, formerly chair of Philosophy at the École Normale Supérieure and founder of the faculty of Philosophy of the Université de Paris VIII with Gilles Deleuze, Michel Foucault and Jean-François Lyotard. Badiou has written several books among them *In Praise of love*. This has been a primary source in my research. He opens the development of his ideas with Arthur Rimbaud's quote: "As we know, love needs re-inventing".<sup>29</sup> There are specific key ideas to the truthfulness of his writing. First, while I read

<sup>29</sup> Rimbaud, Arthur, Paul Schmidt, Robert Mapplethorpe, and Ben Shiff. *A Season in Hell*. New York: Limited Editions Club, 1986. Print.

them, they spoke to my heart. Secondly, his ideas simultaneously confronted me with the novelty of love as a sublime experience.

Alain Badiou bases his ideas in a quote written by Plato whom he quotes “anyone who doesn’t take love as a starting point will never understand the nature of philosophy.”<sup>30</sup> Love is a universal language, something that gives meaning and intensity to almost everyone’s life.

Because of love’s universality, Badiou elaborates on the idea that love is under threat. The first threat of love is what he would call the safety threat. This is based on the idea of relationships made and unmade in the name of a cozy, consumerist permissiveness. The second threat love faces is to deny it is at all important. “The counterpoint to the safety threat is that love is only a variant of rampant hedonism and the wide range of possible enjoyment. The aim is to avoid any immediate challenge, any deep and genuine experience of the otherness from which love is woven.”<sup>31</sup> One could say then that love confronts essentially by a safeguarded and or regulated pleasures. This last one in regards of dating cites or arranged marriages. Badiou believes that it is the task of philosophy, as well as other fields, to rally to its defense.

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<sup>30</sup> Badiou, Alain, and Nicolas Truong. *In Praise of Love*. New York: New, 2012. Print.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 28



Fig. 9 Franklin Delgado, *In Praise of Love*, charcoal and graphite on paper, 50 x 50 inches, 2016

In this sense my work guards the power of love, and elevates its significance by acknowledging that it is at all important. The relationship between my work and love is straightforward. It is almost autobiographical. In my experience, the “encounter” as Alain Badiou calls it was fulfilled in its totality. One thinks about the beautiful way destiny works on one’s life. How can it be possible that everything in life has brought me to the specific moments of fulfilment? Marriage and subsequently the birth of my daughter. Every step taken, every

known and unknown decision, and every moment of life has brought us closer to that moment, to our encounter.

Throughout graduate school, I have followed my heart. Family and loved ones have been my recurrent subjects. There is something of mystery in love. Love is not something we invented; it is observable and powerful. It has to mean something. One could elaborate and try to find meaning in love. Perhaps one could say this meaning is social bonding, utility, and child rearing. However, we love people who have died; it makes you wonder where the social utility in that is. Maybe love means something more, something we cannot yet understand. Maybe it's some evidence, some artifact of higher dimension that we can't consciously perceive. Love is the one thing capable of perceiving, that transcends dimensions of time and space. Maybe we should trust that, even if we can't understand it yet.

#### Conclusion

A daydream is often interpreted in many avenues. Within those possibilities one finds immensity as a category of daydream. A daydream is original contemplation, a special place, "an inner state that is unlike any other, that the daydream transports the dreamer outside the immediate world to a world that bears the mark of infinity." Here is where we can contemplate the immensity of love. In that, love is capable to carry eternity into time, just as a daydream transports us into a world with eternal attributes. One could also trace the symmetry within this trait of philosophical thinking to Immanuel Kant's super sensible powers: these allow identifying an event as singular and whole. This is an analogous state of mind that specifies superior cognitive sensibility. One could also link these ideas of mental perception onto a phenomenological countenance, and embrace David Rosand's concept of kinesthetic circuit, in

which drawing is understood as an extension of the mind and body. For Gaston Bachelard, “if we could analyze impressions and images of immensity, or what immensity contributes to an image, we should enter into a region of pure phenomenology—a phenomenology without phenomena.” In a way, there is no need of the phenomena for one to relate to the images, but it is the function of daydream, cognitive sensibility, or a superior cognitive state of mind that stabilizes the idea in completed images.

In this sense it is possible to revive through memory by means of meditation the echoes of contemplation of grandeur. According to Gaston Bachelard, it is also possible to reach this state of consciousness by means of imagination. Here, imagination “is able to enlarge indefinitely the images of immensity.” Bachelard elaborates: “daydream, from the very first second, is an entirely constituted state.”

Unified, romantic theories and new forms of extensive qualification associated in my work have brought to the surface form and content. The unification of Cicero’s conciliating, informing, and moving ideas; the novel sophisticated ideas of Knudsen’s on Intensity, Complexity, and Unity. M.H. Abraham’s extended ideas in romantic Theory and the new sincerity of Foster Wallace are engaged in a robust philosophical, formal, spiritual, and ethical form of art. This allows me to cradle the countenance of the sublime experience of love. My work returns with an honest realism to a genuine selfhood and authentic, sincere point of view, in an attempt to create something that speaks to my own existence.

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