

Krishnamurti once wrote in his diary, "Illusion will always exist, as long as the urge for the continuation of pleasure and avoidance of pain exist" (Krishnamurti 10). On the road to look for the authentic self, human beings are usually burdened inside their own narcissism, and from that lose contact with reality. In order to stop themselves from this idea of egotism, human beings must step out of their own physical bodies, and strengthen their "self-critical awareness." The two artists Mathew Barney and Bruce Nauman use their own body as the ultimate material for self-reflection as the two philosophers, Slavoj Zizek and Jiddu Krishnamurti, are taking a different approach to access and talk about "the unconscious self"(Zizek).

Mathew Barney is one of the most famous filmmakers in the history of American avant-garde cinema, and his unique approach to cinematography has defined a new form of art through the beautiful integration of different materials and genres into the 2D screen. Along with the two series of feature-length films, "Drawing Restraint" and "The Cremaster Cycle," he has also experimented with performance art. His works are mostly autobiographical, and they usually give the viewers a sense of chaotic experience through all the layered imageries and symbols. In the same way, Bruce Nauman also uses a wide range of media like sculpture, painting, video, and installation in his career. His works have a huge influence in the art world today, and some of them have changed the way people look at art forever. When it comes to Bruce Nauman, the viewers suddenly become a part of the artwork itself, because through the artwork, they can also feel a sense of connection through the human condition.

Slavoj Zizek is a Slovenian philosopher that deals with a wide variety of topics from politics to psychology. He often uses examples from modern politics and popular culture to describe old philosophical theory in a vibrant way to point out his perspective. On the other hand, Jiddu Krishnamurti takes a more spiritual approach to talk about the psyche through meditation. His work usually points out problems that human beings have in this modern society, and from that, helps us to improve ourselves.

As an artist, your job is to let the viewers see what you see. The artists Bruce Nauman and Matthew Barney have done a great job in turning themselves into visual language and let the viewers look into them to find connections. Bruce Nauman expresses his perspective about the violent nature of human beings through the work "Anthro-Socio" as he says, "My work comes out of being frustrated about the human condition. And about how people refuse to understand other people" (Make Me Think Me). By using a simple string of repeating narrative "Feed me, eat me, anthropology..." Bruce lets the viewers feel the uneasiness, and the irritation of the repeated cycles of simple human needs, and through that reflect on themselves as members of this human society. His art points out common things that we all experience everyday but usually can't notice, and from that, improve yourself as a human being. With the concept of creating an environment for self-realization, Bruce Nauman has created a new form of art in which the message of the piece relies in the connection between the viewers and the screen.

In the four films entitled "Art Make-up" that were made in 1967-68, Bruce Nauman explores the concept of art as he comments "Make-up is not necessarily anonymous but somehow it is simply contorted; something you can hide behind. It doesn't really give away anything, but doesn't reveal anything either. This is often precisely what the tension in the work is about. One doesn't get what one simply doesn't get" (Nouveaux Media). This says a lot about his attitude as an artist, and also shows his

passion in expanding the meaning of art. Using the body as the medium, Bruce turns himself into the magnifying glass for people to look at humanity, and think more into themselves.

In an interview with *The Believer Magazine*, Mathew Barney shares his intention for the “Cremaster Cycle” as he says, “There was a conscious attempt to balance autobiographical material against the mythological, and the more intuitive, abstract material. It’s not so much about creating a portrait of an individual, but rather a complex, or a system that describes an individual form. Something like building an elaborate mirror over a ten-year period, then arriving at the mirror and being surprised to see your own reflection” (Stosuy 1). By using his body as the centerpiece of the film, Matthew wants to bring himself to a higher level of being, and from that the viewers will be able to see themselves through his body. From my perspective, Mathew Barney’s story telling technique is usually linked with the idea of self-obsession, and the ego in him has taken control of the way he present his story to the viewers. It’s harder for the viewers to access his mind, and understand his personal point of view; the work doesn’t have the power to connect with the viewers’ mind, and instead, all they see is a well-decorated piece of unrelatable stories that says nothing about the human condition. Looking back to the final project, it’s also something that should be considered when I’m doing my project in order to create a link between the viewers and myself, since that’s also one of the goals that I made for myself before starting the project.

The two philosophers, Slavoj Zizek and Jiddu Krishnamurti take two completely different approaches to describe the concept of the psyche and human relationship. In the book Slavoj Zizek: A Graphic Guide, Christopher Kul-Want, a course director of the MA in Fine Art at Byam Shaw School of Art, explains Zizek’s philosophy about “the big Other” as he says, “For Zizek, this constraint whereby the symbolic order governs the formation of the subject’s own self-identity depends upon the rule of an authoritarian ‘super-ego’” (Kul-Want 62). In Lacan’s three orders, the imaginary order is where people start to alienate themselves, and become narcissistic. They will set up barriers for themselves, and from that raise their expectations of society. In the book Cogito and the Unconscious, Zizek poses question about the connection between the unconscious minds as he writes, “All formation of the unconscious have this in common, they are accompanied by a ‘this is not me,’ ‘I was not here’...How can the subject of the unconscious be possibly conceived of as cogito?” This is an essential question that human beings have when they are trying to access their subconscious selves in order to find the truth deep down inside. As human beings, we always live under an illusion of ourselves being the center of everything in this universe. Just when we are able to realize where we are, and look at ourselves as a part of a whole society, that’s when we will be nearer to the truth.

In the book Krishnamurti’s Notebook, Jiddu Krishnamurti shows his readers the path to achieve full unconsciousness as he states, “The complete, the whole is the mind; it is empty, totally empty, and because of this emptiness, the brain exists in space-time. Only when the brain has cleansed itself of its conditioning, greed, envy, ambition, then only it can comprehend that it is complete” (Krishnamurti 9). Meditation is an essential part to our mind and beings, because through that, we can achieve the ultimate subconscious level, and look at things from the third-eye perspective without becoming too far away from society. Human society has created so many different rules and sets of

morality; this is the big Other, the highest level of self-absorption, like when Krishnamurti says, “Social values are based on doing something for the sake of something. This makes for barren existence, a life which is never complete, full” (Krishnamurti 12). The definition between good and bad has been challenged once again by Jiddu; if society is the highest egoistic form of living, then why should we live inside this illusion filled with reflections of ourselves? He encourages people to take a different approach to life, and look at things like we’ve never seen them before.

For the final project, I use different ways to access my subconscious with meditation, self-hypnosis, and walking meditation. When I go into the subconscious state of mind, I begin repeating the same questions, and approach the question from an authentic viewpoint. Here are a few questions that I’ve posed for myself:

What gets me excited about life?

What are your strengths/weaknesses?

What do you want most?

Am I happy with myself?

After the meditation, I try to write down all the thoughts that I have during the meditation inside my journal. From there, I translate all of those thoughts into abstract movements for a performance piece that I’ll record and edit into a film. I also go around campus and interview people to see their perspective of me. During the process of creating the performance piece, I always put the audience’s reaction in mind. I want them to step into my world, and feel the emotion that I want to express through the audio and the visual language.

Different artists and philosophers approach the human psyche differently, but at some point of the journey, they achieve a stage of self-realization, and influence other people to see what they are able to see. Through art, Bruce Nauman is able to push the boundaries, and let the viewers reflect and better themselves. Matthew Barney uses himself to develop abstract stories that turn his imagination into reality. Slavoj Zizek uses old philosophies to describe the issues in this modern society. Jiddu Krishnamurti is a spiritual teacher that guides people to a better stage of their life. Constant self-reflection is an important part of all human beings, because during that process, we see ourselves in everyone, and it keeps us from the thought of narcissism.

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