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Dreamscapes

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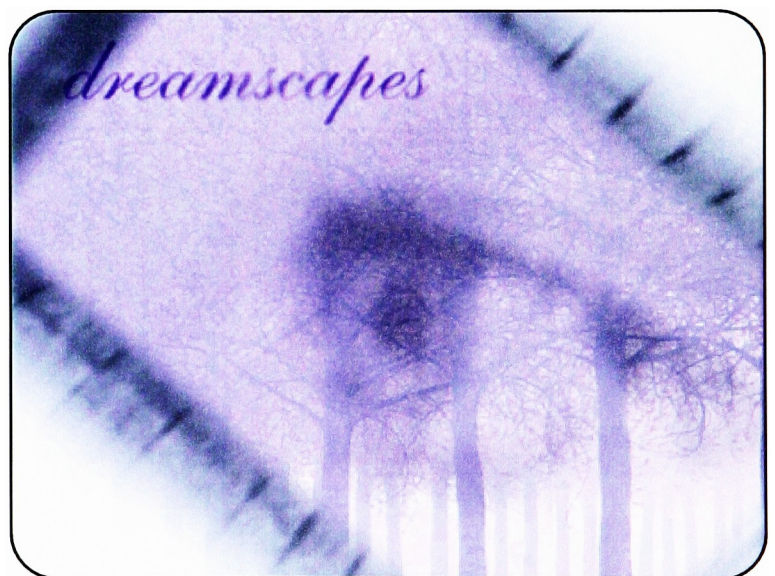
Rochester Institute of Technology

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the College of
Imaging Arts and Sciences in candidacy for the
degree of Master of Fine Arts.

title: Dreamscapes

by: Ingrid Mesa

October 31, 1997



"A dream is the shadow of something real"

Aborigine aphorism

Special thanks to:

Su Akyuz

Malcolm Spaul

Jim Ver Hague

Tim Wood

Richard Zakia

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i n t r o d u c t i o n

The main purpose of this thesis is to experiment, investigate and incorporate different vehicles of visual communications, making them work together. The challenge is to work with the digital video medium, to create a video using the appropriate computer equipment and combining visual and sound effects which will complement and work together. The sound is going to be manipulated in such a way that will reflect and enhance the 2D visual imagery. This imagery will also be manipulated and animated using computer software in order to convey a message. Once the sound and the imagery are finalized, they will be assembled into a QuickTime movie and transferred into a VHS tape.

The final movie will be a looped version transferred to a VHS tape that will run through the length of the show.

The purpose is to place a viewer into an isolated situation, into a dream-like environment, which will stimulate his/her auditory and visual senses.

The topic chosen for the video resulted from the inspiration of dream imagery and symbolism. The goal will be to convert virtual dream images into a surreal dream-like visual reality.

“A dream is a narrative, and often a highly condensed one, spanning awesome amount of material by means of its own specialized symbolic shorthand”

David Fontana

r e s e a r c h

Bizarre imagery and symbolism have driven the popularity of dream study throughout history. Dream interpretation theories have changed over the years and across cultures. Ancient dream interpretation had several mystical assumptions, such as carrying messages from gods, foretelling future events or containing good or evil messages.

It wasn't until the 4th century BC when Plato and his pupil Aristotle brought forth a less mystical dream interpretation theory arguing that dreams were generated exclusively from the sensory.

European philosophers Johann Gottlieb Fichte and Johann Friedrich Herbart started to associate dreams with psychology in the 19th century. Their studies and philosophies led neurologist, Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), to study the mind, from which he recognized the importance of the role of dreams in providing access to latent thoughts. This resulted in the development of his "unconscious mind" dream interpretation theory. This theory stating that dreams are the gateway to the unconscious mind has been the base of future dream interpretation theories. Freud believed that dreams were an expression of repressed ideas, desires, and impulses mostly of a sexual nature that the ID holds, which later emerge to the EGO, where they are transformed into less traumatizing and more manageable dream images and symbols. Uncoding these symbols is the key to the unconscious mind.

Carl Jung (1875 – 1961), a Swiss psychologist, spent most of his professional life studying his patient's dreams, hallucinations and delusions themes in his psychotherapy practices. He concluded that they all derived from a common theme. Departing from Freud's theory of the unconscious mind, Jung achieved the theory of the "collective unconscious." The collective unconscious is a "genetic myth-producing level of the mind common to all men and women, and serving as the well-spring of psychological life." (6, p.30) Jung's theory states that the mind gathers a great number of symbols, which mankind has collected in its dreams across cultures throughout history. He calls these mythological and historical images "archetypes." Archetypes are "the profoundly resonating images and themes that inform the world's myths and religious and symbolic systems, as well as populating our most universally meaningful dreams." (6, p.13)

Although Freud and Jung worked in the development of the dream interpretation theories, their ideas were very different. Jung's inclinations towards astrology, mysticism, and occultism issues disapproved Freud's great emphasis on the underlying sexual content of dream symbology. This lack of agreement resulted in Jung's conclusion that "grand dreams" were a doorway to a mystical world instead of coded messages referring to specific desires.

Freud and Jung were the founders of the two greatest theories of dream interpretation, that people have followed through time and even refer to in the present; the unconscious mind and the collective unconscious. Both theories have been combined in the creation of the basis for understand-

ing the various levels of the mind and the key to interpreting dreams.

These levels and divisions are:

The **conscious mind**, "EGO" or "I", is the mind's rational and self-awareness aspect.

The **preconscious** contains material such as facts, memories, ideas and motives, which are open to the mind.

The **personal unconscious** which Freud referred to as the ID, "is the primitive instinctive side of ourselves controlled by the ego urges, half forgotten memories, traumas and emotions." (6, p.23)

The **collective unconscious** is a genetically inherited level of the mind. It is a mental reservoir of ideas, symbols, themes and archetypes, that form the material of the world's myths, legends and religious systems.

These stages of the mind are reflected in three different levels of dreaming:

LEVEL 1 is the most superficial level and deals with data from the preconscious.

LEVEL 2 uses mainly symbolic language specific to the dreamer which is stored in the personal unconscious.

LEVEL 3 also known as "grand dreams," deals with archetypes that emerge the collective unconscious.

p r o c e d u r e

inspirations

Symbology is the language used by dreams to interpret an idea, a memory, a mood, or an insight. Dreaming represents a personal language between the unconscious and the conscious. We can learn the typical meanings of many dream symbols, but there never will be the assurance of the understanding of the connections between them.

The dream symbols used in this thesis were:

eyes: as windows of the dreamer's spirituality and inner self

sky and clouds: represent mystery

keys: open and choose a certain path



“symbols constitute a universal idiom”

Carl Jung

procedure

the full moon: symbolizes feminism and eternity

clocks: as the human heart, show the emotional side of the dreamer's conscious mind



opening doors: invite others into your inner self



the forest: being a place of uncertainty, full of secrets to be discovered

elements of the universe: reach to higher states of consciousness

bridges: symbolize transitions in life

Colors "are often one the most revealing aspects of dream imagery." (6, p.144) The symbolism of color is a key element in the interpretation of dreams as it is related to the natural world. The colors that prevailed were:

"violet, a combination of the primaries red and blue, has an especially mystical, enigmatic quality, suggesting at one and the same time a union and a tension between the dual creative sources behind the universe." (6, p.144)

blue, a highly spiritual color, suggests the infinity of the sky

white symbolizes purity

conceptualization

The longest phase of this thesis was the conceptualization stage which emerged from the research done on dream interpretation and symbology, as well as from the collection of personal dreams, which guided me to look for the visual material to be used.

Several storyboards illustrating different arrangements of my dreams were pursued. The final storyboard carried a very symbolic

approach as it invited the viewer to a journey through the three different levels of dreaming by constantly opening doors that drew one deeper into a dreamscape.

i m a g e r y

The collection of physical material included reviewing various photo CD's, my own photography work and pictures found in books. Other visual sources were video clips found in various motion pictures as well as educational films.

s o u n d

The original inspiration for the sound came from listening to New Age music, which is very soothing, with rhythmical variations and dream-like effects.

The final selection of the music changed from its original intent, for I decided to layer and combine digital music, various sounds, rhythms, and natural sound effects. These altered the pace and mood of the dreamscape.

p r o d u c t i o n

The flat art was scanned at 72 dpi using a flatbed scanner. These still images were cleaned, their sizes, directions, shapes and colors were manipulated to fit the required layout using Adobe Photoshop.

The video clips used were digitized using Adobe Premiere as 320 by 240 QuickTime movies at 15 frames per second. These raw QuickTime movies were cleaned up and sometimes manipulated in Premiere by changing their speed and direction. Premiere's Color Balance, Brightness and Contrast, Hue and Saturation, and Levels filters came in handy when trying to distort the original footage.

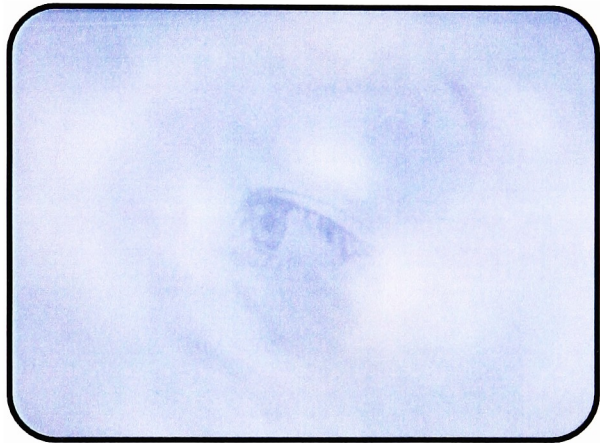
The original sound files were digitized and cleaned up in the computer using Macromedia SoundEdit 16. These were saved as AIFF files. The finalized sound files were imported into Adobe Premiere, which was the software package used to synchronize and layer these files according to the video's imagery and mood. Layering the sound was very critical, for it allowed me to emphasize the mood I originally intended to create.

*"the content of our dreams has traditionally been
thought to reveal a higher spiritual order."*

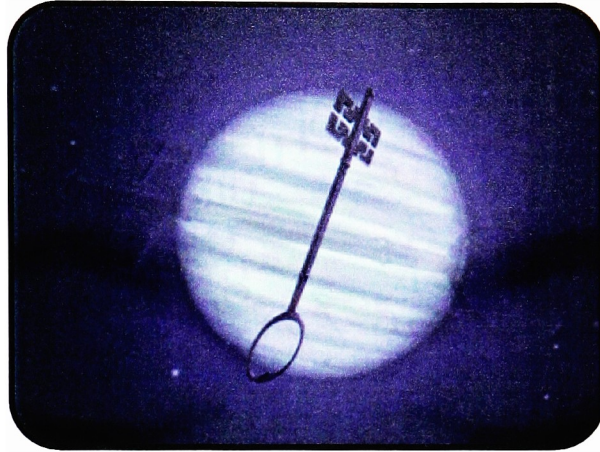
David Cohen

interpretation

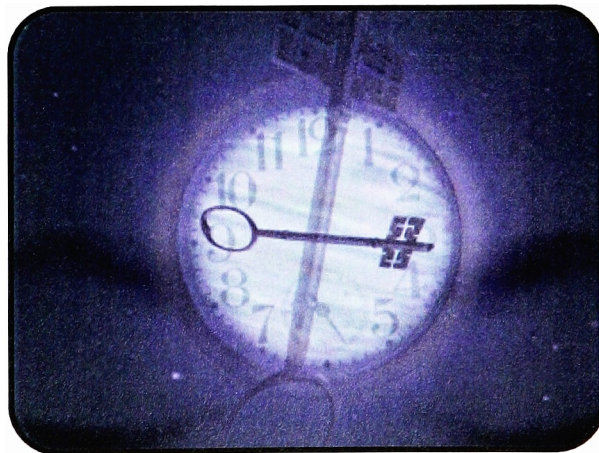
The final version of the movie was intended to be looped, since it is a journey to the unconscious mind via dreaming.



The first stages are meant to create a sense of curiosity and anticipation to capture the viewer's interest. This was made possible by manipulating a sound file that complemented a black and white texture which simulates a heart beat. As the image rotates an eye slowly disappears into a tunnel-like effect. This tunnel-like effect was created by superimposing two very different cloud photographs that rotated in opposite directions at different rates and revolutions.



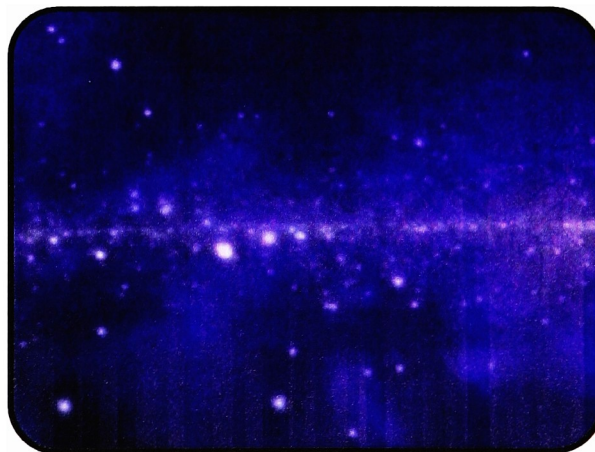
The first key that one sees is an invitation to enter the dreamscape as it rotates into the full moon. The rhythm of the music picks up anticipating the ticking of an approaching clock.



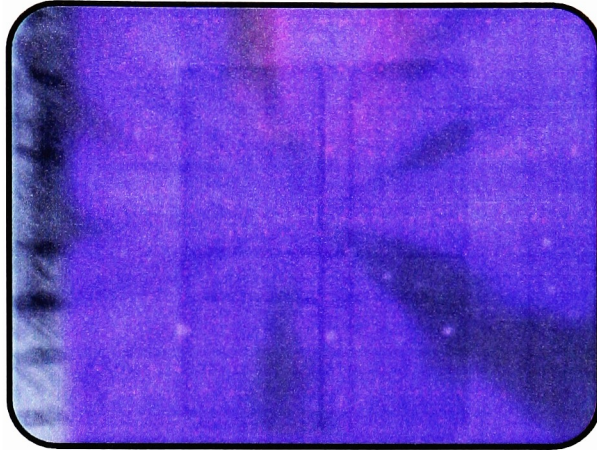
The clock image provides the dreamer with the sense of time.



The flying door guides the viewer into a deeper level of the unconscious, represented by a purple forest. The wind sound adds curiosity to the scene.



The flying stars are the key that lets us know that we are in a level of dreaming that is almost archetypal. The wind sound complements the motion of the stars as it draws you deeper into the dreamscape.



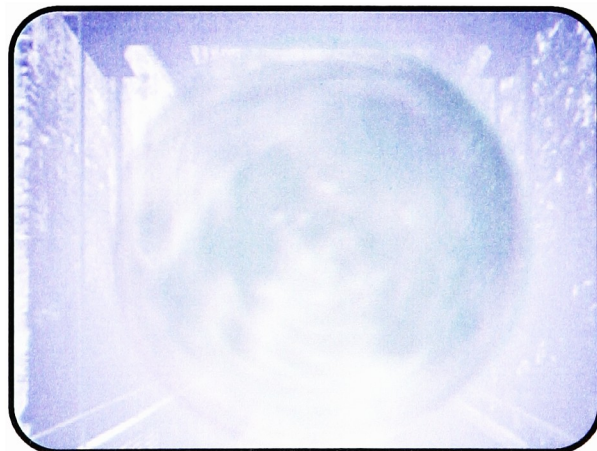
The drastic transition from the image of the closed door to a colorful almost surreal sky, adds ambiguity to the dreamer, it almost seems to pull one back into the dream.



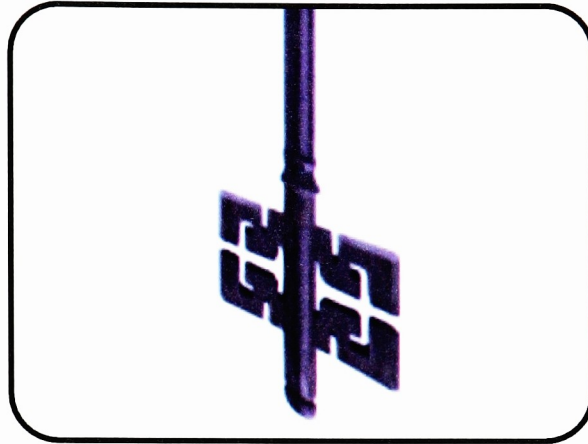
The image of the eye and the clock hands moving backwards makes the viewer feel trapped in the dream. This dreamscape is emphasized with the ticking sound of the clock.



The bridge symbolizes the final transition into the highest or deepest level of the unconscious. With the racing clock, one gets the feeling of speed and uncertainty of where one is headed. During these scenes the rhythm of the music changes from a softer mood to a faster beat without eliminating the wind sound.



This level of dreaming is composed of archetypes. In this frame, the moon not only reflects the femininity of the dreamer, but it also represents the greatness of the universe. The sound level builds up and suddenly drops, altering the previous mood.



The single key and the sound returning to the original mood, bring the viewer back to the dream. They encourage him/her to continue traveling within the dreamscape as one last door opens.



The image of the opening and closing eyes as part of the forest, suggest the awakening of the dreamer.

a s s e m b l y

Once the still images were finalized in Adobe Photoshop, they were imported into Adobe AfterEffects, where they were animated by using the various effects, filters, and unique features offered by this software.

The most common filters used were Gaussian Blur, Motion Blur, Perspective, and Lens Flare, as they provided the dream-like effect that I wanted to portray. Among the effects that were frequently used are size manipulation, rotation and the opacity controls.

The final movie was rendered in AfterEffects at 30 FPS, full size (640 by 480) and video compression in 30 to 50 second long pieces. The final AfterEffects QuickTime movies were arranged in Adobe Premiere where they were assembled with the use of transitions.

Once the individual QuickTime movies were arranged in a way that made sense, the sound files were imported. Premiere allowed me to manipulate the speed of the sound files even further to synchronize them with the imagery. The sound files were layered in Premiere creating new and interesting sound effects that embellished and complemented the final piece.

Once the final QuickTime movie was finalized it was transferred to video tape using Media 100. A final self-contained QuickTime movie was imported into Media 100 and rendered and transferred to tape.

r e s u l t s

This thesis has been a learning process from beginning to end. The research done on dream interpretation theories and symbolism have been critical in the development of the storyboard.

Freudian and Jungian dream interpretation theories and dream symbolism, were essential in the finalization of the storyboard, which was combined both imagery and events found in my own dreams, as well as the studies I did in dream imagery and interpretation.

Collecting my own dreams was also a valuable learning experience. As a result of collecting these dreams and translating them to visual images, I was able to understand and picture surreal images better as well as sensing of how to interpret dream-like images.

Working with the digital medium was a very important factor I learned while producing this thesis. Among those factors, I learned to use AfterEffects which was the main software package that carried me through the completion of the thesis.

Difficulties encountered were low storage memory and rendering time, which took an average of 2 hours of rendering time per second of digital data. By experimenting and testing the different compressions, I learned that animation compression gives the best image quality but the file sizes are too large to handle. Video compression works fine, giving a much more manageable file size but in my project it posterized some of the very subtle images. I had to choose between file size or image quality. Due to the nature of my thesis and the

topic I chose, I could get away with the posterization whereas I wouldn't have had enough storage capability to be able to transfer the whole project.

The music played a very important part in the decision making stages of the thesis. Rough half size QuickTime movies at 12 frames per second were assembled using Macromedia SoundEdit 16 in order to help me picture the sequence of the final piece.

"Dreams are the royal road to the unconscious"

Sigmund Freud

c o n c l u s i o n s

As a visual communicator, I feel that it is very important to work with different graphic media that will broaden and enhance one's creative vision. Using my skills and knowledge I experimented with the digital video medium in order to effectively communicate a dreamscape.

The outcome of this thesis was very successful, as I improved and experienced the digital video field by dealing with new hardware and software. The chosen topic allowed me to be visually informative by creating an intriguing, innovative, and surreal video which fulfilled my original intentions.

Communicating my thesis in an effective way so the audience would feel engaged, was a key element of the project. I took the initiative of setting up an installation during the show that enhanced the video. Using these "non-digital" resources complemented my original intentions.

The outcome of this thesis was very fulfilling. The installation was definitively a big aspect of its success. Once all the TV monitors were installed and the sound was set up in a white isolated environment, all my original intentions became a reality. Seeing the reaction that dreamscapes had on the viewers during the night of the thesis show was the most satisfactory experience. My project had such an enormous effect on some people that they were totally engaged in the dream and would not leave the room. For others it was a feeling of relief and peace, and in one case, the motion and rotation of elements in the video had an effect on someone's dreams.

On a more personal level, this thesis changed the way I feel about dreams, especially my own. As a result of all the research and studying I did on dream symbology and interpretation, I have become more aware of the images I see in my personal dreams. Collecting, analyzing, interpreting and illustrating my dreams led me to realize how perceptive and vulnerable I really am to everyday objects and situations. These have a great effect on me and I saw it reflected in my dreams.

I truly enjoyed this learning and creative experience because it helped me in my professional and personal growth.

*“We see, hear, smell, and taste many things
without noticing them at the time...”*

Carl Jung

a p p e n d i x

The following software packages were used in the development of this thesis

Adobe AfterEffects 3.0

AfterEffects is a video editing software that has become a fundamental tool in digital post-production for film, broadcast video and multimedia. It has that capabilities to produce sophisticated animations and professional-quality film and video composites.

Adobe's AfterEffects primary function is motion-based effects. It allows the user to superimpose moving and still PICT images, text, and video clips, combining them into a single layer. It is the perfect option for image editing. AfterEffects also gives the option of rendering QuickTime movies, which can be digitally output to film, videotape, or CD-ROM.

Among its greatest features, is the compatibility with other Adobe products. Photoshop and Illustrator files can be imported into AfterEffects without losing their information and settings. It also supports Photoshop filters, which makes this software package even more powerful and useful.

Adobe Premiere 4.2

Premiere is a powerful desktop video and audio-editing software application which complements AfterEffects. Adobe Premiere offers higher quality video-capture and nonlinear editing capabilities, as well as better sound support.

One of Premiere's best qualities is the capability to change the speed and duration of QuickTime movies. Another tool that Premiere offers is the Transitions channel, which allows the user to smoothly combine

footage. Finally Premiere provides audio layers which support AIFF and QuickTime sound files. This innovative feature allows the user to collage and synchronize different sounds.

Adobe Photoshop 4.0

Photoshop is the leading tool for creating digital imagery. Version 4.0 provides the users with greater creative support such as Actions, Adjustment Layers, Free Transform and Custom Gradients among others.

Adobe Photoshop continues to be the leading software package in image editing and manipulation.

Macromedia SoundEdit 16 version 2

SoundEdit 16 allows to record, edit, enhance, mix, play back and store multi-track highest quality, which is 16-bit, 44kHz soundtracks. Its features include the ability of multi-track mixing and editing in a QuickTime format for better synchronization.

SoundEdit 16 has the capability of converting these sound files into different file formats to be compatible with other multimedia applications.

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