

# **“Nature is a haunted house, but art is a house that wants to be haunted.”** Emily Dickinson

Night Journey #37 : The Death of Percival a Nihilist Dream

I have a friend who cautions against over thinking a painting and another friend who asks how is the viewer to know what these images are supposed to mean. I always have to reply to both that I always paint for myself and often do not find a universal imagery to express my thoughts. It is my opinion that the ambitious failure is better than the empty expression of imagery/objects.

This painting begins with the ideas of four artists. The initial idea came from a painting of two figures walking past a cypress tree and house by Vincent van Gogh. The idea or meaning of the painting quickly changed when the house I selected was the house I grew up in. The painting became about self and the two figures merged into one reflection of present and memory. The catalyst for the merging the two figures comes from a Henri Cartier-Bresson photograph.



From James Joyce’s *Ulysses* I use his compositional structure of the parallel and the parallax of worlds and realities that cannot meet and the multiple views or different perspectives of those worlds/realities. Closely associated with Joyce’s structure is Virginia Woolf’s metaphor for the death of innocence that occurs at the end of the protected childhood in her book *The Waves*.

For the compositional structure of the painting I choose the parallel structure of the square. Two sides of the square are formed by the house and two sides by the splitting/reflective figure.



The Idea of the home is the same as the idea of the State. It is a protecting veil sheltering from the realities of the world to maintain a state of innocence. At the point when innocence dies the veil is lifted and the parallel realities of the world are seen in reflection. These realities combine, overlap and haunt each other as they merge into one inseparable world reality. The safety and protection of home is viewed with the destruction of others. Guernica was once the height of inhumanity but the good and just has greatly surpassed that level of inhumanity. For my post Guernica world I have selected ruins of a WWII German city.



Ruins are a specter of life and cannot be represented in solid form so I layered images by painting and removing /scraping and repainting to create a transparency.



By placing the home on top of this parallel world changes the view of the familiar world of my existence I try to illustrate connectivity through the transparency. The one view changes the image of the other. The house becomes part of the ruins and the ruins become a part of the neighborhood. It becomes a part of my world, one that I did not see for many years and now am surprised I did not see it.



In the final painting I attempt to separate the focal figure from the dream/reality but the transparency holds the figure to the reflection which dissolves into memory. Memory is a dream where nothing exist and everything ends when memory ceases.

