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## Machine For Grinding Fog

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Machine For Grinding Fog

By

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and the graduate Faculty of the University of Kansas in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Master's of Fine Arts.

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Date defended: \_\_\_\_\_

To Oar or To Oar not  
And if to row  
Which way to go  
Machine for Grinding Fog

## Machine for Grinding Fog

The act of Decision is the ultimate absurdity. In the face of infinite possibilities, resulting in innumerable secondary consequences, and eventual outcomes too contingent to calculate, we as conscious entities must inevitably choose. We choose constantly. We choose confidently, sometimes we choose timidly. We choose because our intellect is constructed to build a chain of logical events based on cause and effect. Inevitably, we choose from a base of finite knowledge when the possibilities are far more infinite. Despite our desire for logic, there is poetry in the comprehension and understanding of simultaneous contradictions.

The exhibition title, *Machine For Grinding Fog*, is derived from a poem of the same name that summarizes, both in its absurdity and playfulness, the concepts in my recent stop motion animations. The six films revolve around three primary concerns: relationships, psychological or subjective reality, and relativity. Relationship is the all-encompassing theme in my work... relationship between maker and medium, between paradox and certainty, between the individual self and the other self, one's self to others, and on and on. Awareness of a psychological reality that is related to, yet clearly distinct from, physical reality has emerged as an invaluable tool in comprehending what relationship and knowing mean to me as an artist. Written as I began this body of work, the poem became a working Mantra that spanned the exhibition's development. It asks a futile and answerless question: "What the hell are we doing?"

More to the point, what does it mean to know something? My own answer is paradoxical. Experiential knowledge that allows us to truly "know" is contingent upon experiences that inevitably vary, or may be random. This is a disenfranchisement of powerful symbols that are based in a shared but static knowing. Titles and symbols allow for organization of society but what happens if our communication needs have altered. What if we have become so functionally distant that experiential understanding has all but disappeared? What if we come to know only the symbol and not that which is symbolized?

The risk is quite simple as in the game of telephone. We debate semantics while losing sight of the origin.

To know a symbol should not be confused with the knowing of that which is symbolized. Every day, language is constructed as symbols or objective signifiers that are shortcuts like the names of places, names of people, streets, etc. When we communicate with symbols, what is it that we really exchange? Does the name of a river conjure the same knowing as the experience of a river? Of course not, but the reflection of an experience must have its own outlet, an outlet that inevitably or usually is re-directed back through language.

During this period of investigation, nineteenth century Russian literature has provided a sense of conceptual community through narratives that questioned popular notions of identification and relationships. The real complexity in these literary works is in the development of characters that embodied a strong subjective point of view. In a number of these works, "piori" was absent or deeply scrutinized. Characters gained experiential knowledge as they invented and reinvented their own psychological realities in order to challenge external priori and commonly held assumptions. Similar influences came from artists like Rene Magritte, Karel Zeman, Yuri Norstien, Dylan Thomas, Tarkovsky, and Walt Whitman who spoke to me by challenging popular perception and expectations. Each artist created an inventive poetry between concept and their chosen medium that transformed their work beyond objectivity into a fully developed and realized subjectivity.

Rooted within concerns of faith, personal ethics, and a re-evaluation of individual and artistic purpose, the poem and animations identify what I, at first, perceived as a multitude of contradicting tones, tones of futility coexisting with tones of a childlike playfulness. These viewpoints became interchangeable, altering perspectives with such rapidity that a blurred subjectivity evolved from the once polar sentiments. When the conveyance of this experience is created as art, it becomes experiential in itself and is in turn experienced. This is our basic chemical process, regenerative and transformative. For me, this is the role of poetics and the process of art making.