Desire and Fantasy:
Catalog of Images

Raleigh Gardiner • April 2014
The following pages present a catalog of works by Raleigh Gardiner, produced between 2013-2014.

Included in this catalog are the works of several artists, whose pieces provide contextual support and visual comparison. All text is provided to articulate and justify the content of these comparisons.
Raleigh Gardiner, *Traversing the Imaginary* (II), 2014, Acrylic, ink, wax and collage on paper, 19.5 x 13.5" (oval).
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Raleigh Gardiner, *Traversing the Imaginary (V)*, 2014. Acrylic, ink, wax and collage on paper. 19.5"x 13.5" (oval).
Traversing the Imaginary (I-VIII) offers a series of phantasmic glimpses into the realm of Imaginary experience. These oval pieces, whose form references early processes in photography, draw heavily from the visual conventions of "Age of Discovery" prints and early scientific illustration from the 16th-18th centuries.

During the Renaissance Period, Western colonial expansion and the institution of global trade routes brought European explorers, scientists and merchants to previously uncharted areas of the globe. As they visited foreign lands, these adventurers collected "exotic" specimens -- flora, fauna and anthropological artifacts -- for scientific research and potential commoditization. Artists were often present on such explorations, as hired to create illustrations of their encountered experiences in these "new" worlds, for publication and distribution to the Western public.

Upon return to Europe, the explorer's marvelous and curious collections were brought to scientists, who sought to compile a conceptual understanding of the great diversity present within the natural world. Along with the establishment of "Cabinets of Curiosity" to display and organize this new wealth of new biological knowledge, artists were called on to create highly detailed illustrations of these specimens.


The images in *Traversing the Imaginary* series seek to convey a similar sense of "wonder" and curiosity, as they present a microcosmic look into a vast, strange new realm.

We see topographical formations made from ambiguous, figural forms; volcanos on the horizon emitting strange and patterned fields of clouds into the atmosphere. The creatures in this realm are ancient and prehistoric looking; we watch them secretively peek out from under the vast, primordial ocean. The figures who inhabit this place seem to be fully immersed into the sensorial composition of their environment. It becomes clear that this presented world is one that exists in an Imaginary dimension, where the boundaries between internal and external, Self and Other are essentially indistinct.

Similarly, images in the series *Wandering Bodies* (I-IV), present a vision of the Imaginary realm of experience, although they have not quite reached it yet. These pieces instead recall the passage – the journey – into the Imaginary realm, as their environments become increasingly ornate as one approached the Imaginary Order.

Above: Albertus Seba, *Common Cobra (Brillenschlange/Indische Kobra)*, 1735. (image from *Cabinet of Natural Curiosities* (Hong Kong: Taschen, 2006), 210.)
Desire of the Other (I-VIII), offers multiple deconstructed perspectives from which to view the operations of desire. Human desire, established from a "lack" that is formed as result of ones developmental subjectification, engages us in a constant pursuit of the Other. We long to re-identify with our repressed "otherness," and we desire for the Other's desire in return. This very condition of desire is maintained by the rigid structures of the Symbolic Order -- the domain of society, "law" and culture. Because we are forced to absorb language to construct a sense of Self, we are subsequently prohibited from our identifications with the Other.

Desire of the Other discusses this exchange. In each image, we see a subject who is fundamentally split from her "Other" version. Although she attempts to locate a vision of her lost Other, the harsh regulation of her environment prevents their direct encounter. As a result, desire emerges in the form of expressive, black energy, vibrating within the static space. Desire pushes to forge a connection between the subject and her Other, but as it can never be fulfilled, this desire remains enigmatic and ambiguous in its wispy, almost molecular form.

The red screens that appear throughout the series allow these black marks to pass though; representing the veils of fantasy that permit a limited access to this desire. Both these red areas and black mists convey a sort of matter-lessness.

The images in the series, Desire of the Other, were produced through a Surrealist process of creative play; for this reason, they seem to contain a record of unconscious activity in the gestural quality of their marks. By fluctuating between spontaneous action and conscious edited, the contrast between the visual elements of these pieces produces a sort of psychic tensions, that activates each drawing's composition.
For many Surrealist artists, play was an essential part of creative production; but arguably even more essential was a conceptual investigation of the complexity of human reality. Drawing inspiration from psychoanalysis, memory, dreams, trauma, desire and fantasy, Surrealist work sought to destabilize familiar representations of reality. This intention directed many artists towards the use of collage. By juxtaposing apparent "truths" through the alteration of existing images and pictures, artists could access a representation of psychological space. For example, in *Wet Sheets*, Roberto Matta combines photographic collage and drawing within an atmosphere of highly distorted architectural planes; his resulting piece presents a visual translation of the "rooms" within our psychological worlds, which contain fragments of our memories, residues of our fears, and imprints of our desires. Similarly, Yamamoto Kansuke's mesmerizing *Untitled* photograph, disrupts the sensors within our perception, which are supposed to identify the qualities of "truth" -- of "reality". With an image in front of him, Kansuke alters this plane through the placement of three-dimensional objects; then, he merges these images through the use of photography. In doing so, Kansuke creates a shifting psychological dimension that conveys the experience of "alter-reality," which we feel in a dream.

In a similar way, Carolee Schneemann sought to disrupt the rationality of our experience of reality through an activation of psychological states of being. In her series *Eye Body*, Schneemann engages in a primal, hypnotic performance, which defies societal repression and which reals the physical residue of an encounter with desire.
Much of the body of my work investigates the illusory fabric of fantasy, and its potential to integrate the Self with the Other in an articulation of the “wholeness” of the Imaginary Order. Through fantasy, we are able to come into contact with our desires and the domain of Imaginary experience. Within this realm, where definitions of Self are unaffected by the exclusions of difference, we are able to renegotiate the terms of our identities.

In society today, women are still considered an “Other.” This relegation is unavoidable, for it is written within the very structure of language, which we use to communicate, to form social bonds, to learn, and to search for the objects of our desires.

Though a reintegration with the Imaginary Order by means of fantasy, one may be able to construct an alternative, “semiotic” language of experience that is not based on dualities relationships or difference. With this language, we may be able to more intimately approach our desires with the tools to interpret and understand their meanings; conflating the Self and the Other through a creative lexicon of definitions and expressions of “sameness” and “fullness”. Through the threshold of fantasy, we find fusion with the Other.
Raleigh Gardner, retailing the Stage, A Liminal Dance Exoikute, 2013. Ink and acrylic on paper, 46" x 20 ¾".
Raleigh Gardiner, _Shifting Face Place: Country Side of Malle’s Black Moon_, 2013. Graphite, gouache on paper. 22”x 16”.
Raleigh Gardiner, *Traversing the Imaginary (IV)*, 2014. Acrylic, ink, wax and collage on paper. 19.5"x 13.5" (oval).
Raleigh Gardiner, *Traversing the Imaginary (V)*, 2014. Acrylic, ink, wax and collage on paper. 19.5”x 13.5” (oval).
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Raleigh Gardiner, *The Desire of the Other (V)*, 2013. Ink, acrylic, collage, leather on paper, 25”x 19”.
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Raleigh Gardiner, *Three Women in the Ceremony of Conceded Sight*, 2013. Ink, graphite and xylene transfer on paper. 58"x 50".