



Dreams work as a tool for creative process

Anniina Pasanen

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ABSTRACT

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ANNIINA PASANEN
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Humans sleep a third of their lives. However, the brain is not "off" but operates in a different way, but equally actively. The purpose of this study was to find ways of working for artists in which the sleeping time would not be wasted but would be included in the creative process. Dreams have been used as a part of art process in art history and in contemporary art and this study introduces artists who have been characterized by dreaming such as Salvador Dali, Zdzislaw Beksinski and Epic Dewfall and presents their working methods with dreams. That cannot be done without exploring the dream theories by Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung. Freud had an impact on Surrealists and Carl Jung's theory is still used in dream coaching for artists today. Modern day findings are explored in this thesis and main-focus is in the newest area of sleep research: lucid dreaming. The data for this thesis is from various sources such as research articles, interviews, books and internet articles. Dreaming can be useful tool for creative work in various ways, especially if the techniques of lucid dreaming are learned.

Key words: dreaming, lucid dreams, surrealism, unconscious, fine art

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1. INTRODUCTION

To practice art as a profession one must be creative. To get creative ideas can be tricky, but art does not have boundaries for sources of inspiration. What is more creative state than dreaming? This has been a source for inspiration and ideas for artists in past and probably will be in future, too.

There are many surrealists know from their bizarre and dream-like works, but I focus on two well-known painters who have been inspired by dream landscapes. Their working statements are fairly similar too: Salvador Dali wanted to paint “dream photographs” and Zdzislaw Beksinski wanted to “paint in such manner that he would be photographing dreams”. To do this, Dali turned for the help of hypnagogic sleeping state and Beksinski used free association.

I present their working methods, but it cannot be done without mentioning Sigmund Freud and his theories about unconscious. The other big player in dream theories is Carl Jung and his work still influences dreaming artists today, so it is worth while looking into his ideas. I also explore the recent ideas that science has about dreams and unconscious.

Dreams have not stayed in history, they are still strongly used today for creative working. Even “superstars” in contemporary art like Kiki Smith and Marina Abramovic are familiar with dreams.

Marina Abramovic had a whole work about dreams. Her work “Dream House” (2000) is located in Japan, where she asked visitors to spend the night and write down their dreams. She later published “Dream Book” (2012) which was based on dreams visitors wrote about. The idea of the book was to be “a public dream library”, including 100 dreams that were dreamt in her Dream house. She has focused her work around dreams after the Dream House too. In 2005 she had installation called “Dream Bed” in Rose Museum (Boston, USA). She sees dreams as little art pieces themselves. (PRI 2005.)

Well-known contemporary artist Kiki Smith is also using dreams as a source for inspirations. She says in her 2018 interview with Uwe-Jens Schumann:

“Once I had dream about a ship, and instead of Noah’s Ark, it was singular animals on a death barge. I ended up making this big black drawing based on those animals and I showed it in Washington when Clinton failed to sign the Kyoto Protocol. You know, we

were facing this extinction of large mammals with global warming... But mostly due to deforestation and displacement and humans taking up space, so I had this idea that I really do have to pay attention to animals”. (The Talks 2018.)

My own interest lies in the recent discoveries of sleep science: lucid dreams and possibilities that they provide. In next chapters I explore the world of dream theories and research today, the ideas about unconscious and how artists have used dreams for their creative process. I try to find specific methods how to work with dreams and take the full advantage out of them.



Picture 1: Marina Abramovic, “Dream Bed”, 2005. Credit: Evan Richman/The Boston Globe

My love for animals is shown in my works, in the final exhibition and later work also. Written part in this thesis work is about my working methods and “the helping hand” that I got from my dream. This whole case made me surprised how much one dream guided me to a new and more interesting direction. It got me wonder how much potential lies in our dreams, and how we could use them even better to support working in creative field. Not only to scoop imaginary, but to get ideas and aspects, too.

2. WHAT ARE DREAMS?

Dreams and visions have been known and been part of our culture and arts since recorded history. Dream theories have been around for a while, two biggest of them has been founded by Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung. Their theories were interested in the content of dreams, and what they reveal about the unconscious. It's probably their theories, that has affected the painters and creative professionals the most. Salvador Dali was a fan of Freud's, and psychoanalysis affected many surrealists. Jung's theory is popular in dream coaching, which I will explore in chapter 5.

2.1 Sigmund Freud and the hidden desires

In a following chapter I have a look into the psychology of dreaming and science behind it, where Sigmund Freud has been one of the leading character and theorist. Sigmund Freud was born in Austria 1856 and died in London 1939. He developed his own, very famous, branch of psychology called psychoanalysis. (Freud 1900, 5, 27-30.)

In his theory he based his model of dreams in his theory of unconsciousness. Unconscious to Freud was the hidden part of ourselves, and our conscious mind was just "a tip of an iceberg". Our actions and thoughts are based on these secret wishes and drives of the unconscious, barely recognized by our conscious mind.

His book "The Interpretation of Dreams" was complete in 1899, and he said that "the interpretation of dreams is the royal road to a knowledge of the unconscious activities of the mind" (Freud 1900, 769). Freud thought also that dreams play a role keeping us asleep: "Dreams are the guardians of sleep and not its disturbers" (Freud 1900, 330). In his theory, our waking life is full of experiences and feelings that feed our unconscious desires (like shameful sexual ones) that we suppress and they pop up to our conscious mind through our unconscious while we sleep. Latent thoughts and wishes are in this way manifested into dream imaginary which then can be worked in dream interpretation (Freud 1925, 51-53).

For Freud there happens no psychological growth during dreaming, but the growth can happen during psychoanalysis and dream interpretation. The way psychoanalysis works

is through free association, which is in a sense “mind flow”. A patient tells what goes through in his/her mind freely, without trying to repress any thoughts or ideas. Freud notes though that the situation itself (therapy) affects and censored the mind to work freely. (Freud 1925, 47-51.)

Freud approached dreams as a wish fulfillment place. The dream interpretation for him was a useful tool to get us connected to our unknown side of psyche. Unlike Jung, he thought that dreams hide their meaning, and present it through symbols and bizarreness. (Freud 1900, 200-213.)

2.2 Carl Jung playing detective

Carl Jung (1875-1961) was a psychologist who was in Kesswil, Switzerland. He studied medicine and became physician. He was in correspond with Freud from the year 1906 onwards. He travelled to United states with Freud in 1909 at the invitation of Clark University. The two analysts had different approach to dreams which in the end caused their friendship to split in 1912 after Jung had written a book called “Symbols of Transformation”. Freud thought that “Jung tried to give the analytical facts a new abstract, impersonal and non-historical interpretation, hoping to avoid recognizing the importance of childhood sexuality and Oedipus complex and the importance of analyzing childhood” (Freud 1925, 63). Jung’s follower Marie-Louise Franz writes about their separation “The fundamental question was whether the unconscious is only an epiphenomenon of consciousness, arising from repressions (Freud), or whether, as Jung thought, is the autonomous creative matrix of normal psychic life” (Franz 1975, 6). This was the time that Jung designed his own branch of psychology to be analytical psychology and distinct from psychoanalysis theory. Man was not fully to understand by himself (or anyone else either) if he/she was not in touch with his/her unconscious.

For Jung the unconscious part of us gives us as clear hints of our whole psyche as possible while dreaming. We are not dreaming the dream, but dream is dreaming us. (Harris & Woolfson 2015, 67-84.) Jung thought that dreams should be considered as facts. Facts of the condition of our psyche and the experiences it has (Lawson 2008, 9). Jung had a believe that our collective unconscious “Self” has collective memory, and we see archetypes in our dreams, which are fetched through collective unconscious. This collective unconscious is present in all human-beings. (Lawson 2008, 4.) This idea has

its critics, and it is very hard to prove scientifically. It is said that to understand Jung's work, you must experience his theory in one's personal life. (Shelburne 1988.)

The interpretation of dreams felt tricky to him. He obviously thought that the dreams were important hints from our unconscious but should be interpreted carefully. In our dreams we can work with the unconscious side of ourselves and dreams contains anticipatory symbolizations of developmental tendencies in our psyche. (Franz 1975, 87-97.)

2.3 Criticism for Freud and Jung

Freud's theory has never been safe from criticism, and Freud has been accused for overly-sexualising dreams and psyche altogether. According to Crick-Mitchison's theory interpretation of dreams afterwards can be harmful. They perceive dreams function as a tool to remove useless observations and memories from previous day as disruptive "parasitic modes" from the normal brain function. These parasitic modes (useless emotions, memories and observations) are deleted from the brain by unlearning them during the dream and forget the harmful data collected during the day. In short: "We dream order to forget". This "cleansing" from waste products collected during the day while sleeping helps brain's memory functions. For Freud, this "waste product" was essential part of our psyche and give us a glimpse to our inner wishes, driving factors and libido. For Crick and Mitchison, the dreams are just a waste product and means to forget and there is no deeper meaning in them. (Lehtonen 1988.)

Both Jung and Freud have been criticized for making the dream symbols too wide, and not considering the individual person enough. The same dream symbol might have a very different meaning for different persons, and that should be taken account in dream interpretation. (The Gazette 1994.) Their theories are not today seen as very scientific, because there is no measurable proof, except the individual experiences.

3. UNCONSCIOUS AND DREAMS TODAY

Dreams are a tricky thing to study scientifically. Scientists always rely on the first-person retrospective reviews on their dreams. One should also remember their dreams order to interpret them. Sleeping is ancient, universal and original phenomenon of life itself. Even one-celled organisms like plankton have clear cycles of activity and rest. (National geographic 2019.) Human brains have different stages of sleep, 1 to 5, which have different features and actions in the brain. Dream studies today have revealed that we all dream, whether we remember it or not. Dreams most often occur during REM-sleep (rapid eye movement state of sleep), that come around in about every 90 minutes. Dreaming happens also in other states of sleep, but dreams are more vivid in REM sleep. (Psychology Today 2013.)

3.1 Unconscious and social neuroscience

Social neuroscience is relatively new branch of psychology, which combines social psychology, neurology and cognitive psychology, that explores the mechanisms of unconscious. Leonard Mlodinow explains in his Ted-talk (2013) the idea of the unconscious today this way:

“What we mean by the unconscious in modern science today is our mental processes that are outside of our control and our awareness because of the structure of our brain. It’s not the Freudian unconsciousness which was hidden for emotional reasons and that could be revealed through introspection or through therapy. This unconscious is totally different from that traditional idea of unconscious.”

The findings that they have made has given a reason to believe that unconscious plays important role in our everyday life and helps us to make sense the world around us. It fills up the information lacking from our vision for example, by putting its data into place automatically. These unconscious mechanisms rule our behaviors and perceptions.

Social neuroscience takes advantage of brain scanning which puts psychology among “the hard sciences”. This “hard science” focuses on our brain functions, such as memory and perception, and how those portray in our behavior.

3.2 Why do we sleep and dream?

One thing that the science of sleep has given us, and researchers can agree on, is the functioning of the brain during the sleep, thanks to the technology of brain scanning. Dreams and their meaning are more open to different theories and assumptions, and there is no solid theory that all scientists agree on. (NPR 2017.) To understand the brain and its function even to write about it in this brief thesis would take me probably years, I focus on the theories of the dreaming state, without going deeper to the brain functions active during the sleeping state.

It is important to understand the benefits of sleeping and its role in wellbeing (even without understanding the meaning of dreams or taking benefit of their content). The recent research done about lack of sleep can give us hints, just how important sleeping really is to us.

Professor Matthew Walker, Director of UC Berkeley's Sleep and Neuroimaging Lab, explains the causes that lack of sleep does to humans, according the new findings sleep science has done. It seems, that lack of sleep is dangerous state and the causes can be dramatic. Lack of sleep affects for example immune system, learning, memory, mood, weight gaining, stress levels, blood pressure, performance, attention, aging of the brain. (Berkeley News 2017.) The right amount of sleep is very necessary for us. What about the dreams then? Why do we see them?

There are various theories just to mention a few here. Crick-Mitchisons theory of dreaming being a state where brain cleans itself from "the waste products". Theory by Hobson and McCarley proposes that dreaming is just an epiphenomenon of rapid eye movement sleep without meaning. Threat simulation theory argues that dreaming has evolutionary purpose by preparing us for dangers and this way being a tool for survival. According to Kramer dreaming has a role for being a way for emotional processing and modulating moods. Hoss believes that dreaming has a role in stress reduction. There is also theory about dream being a social simulation preparing us for social situations. Theory by Nielsen and Levin called affective network dysfunction (AND) hypothesizes that dreams play a role in fear memory extinction. (Soudabeh 2016.)

After these new theories and findings about unconscious and dreams, dream interpretation might not seem so magical as Jung and even Freud made it seem to be. Is there any use of dreams and interpretation of them?

4. THE GREAT DREAMERS: SURREALISTS

Even if dreams are just old memories popping up, preparing us for survival or cleansing the brain, could it be useful to still have hope for dreaming as a working tool? The answer seems to be yes in whatever case, because many creative professionals do work with dreams. They have done it in the past and they still do today.

Who is the most famous dreamer in art? One visual pops up immediately (thanks to our unconscious that fetches the memories automatically): melting clocks in bizarre landscape.



Picture 2: Salvador Dali, Persistence of Memory, 1931

There are many surrealists who are known from their bizarre works, but I focus on two painters who have been inspired by the dream landscapes. They were both known from their technical skills and dreamy works: Salvador Dali wanted to produce “dream photographs” and Zdzislaw Beksinski wanted to “paint in such manner that he would be photographing dreams”. In this chapter I will explore their working methods with dreams and free association.

4.1 Salvador Dali

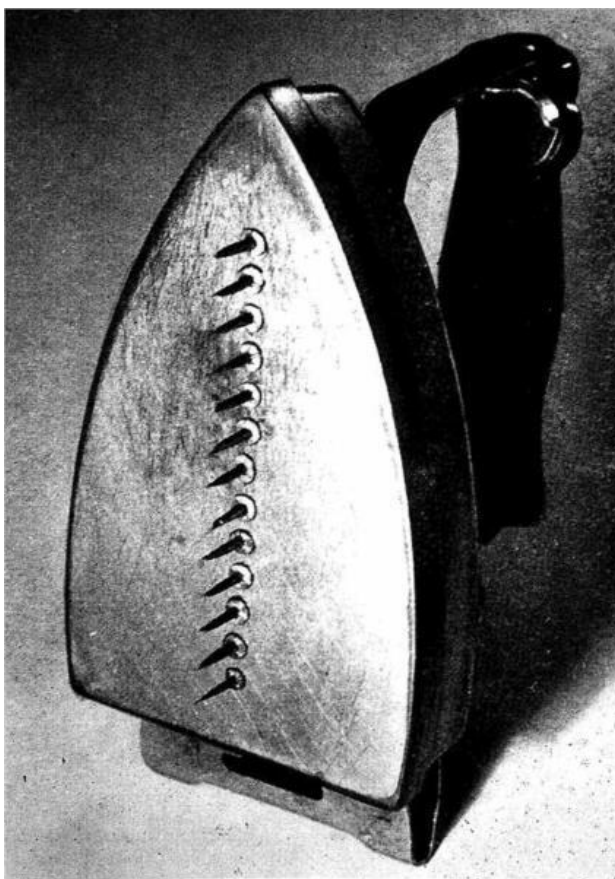
Salvador Dali (1904-1989) was a Spanish painter and troubled character. He had multiple phobias, such as fear of blushing (erytrophobia) and fear of grasshoppers (acrididophobia), becoming a father, and travelling. He also had paranoias, hallucinations, troubles in social interactions and relationships due his difficult character and unstable mind. These could be also an act to create the artistic character consciously, but he also had a family history of mental diseases. (Murphy 2009.) This can be debated, but in either case, his work made its mark on the art history.

Dali was part of the surrealist movement and later he called surrealism itself as “Salvador Dali”. Surrealism was an art movement that branched from Dadaism in 1920s. The main character associated with the birth of the movement was French poet André Breton. He wrote the surrealist manifesto in 1924. (Museum Of Modern Art 2019.)

Surrealism is said to be rather an attitude towards life rather than an art movement. Surrealism was born after the first world war and was against rational thinking and wanted to free the mind to all its possibilities. Surrealists were interested in Marxism, unconscious, dreams and psychoanalysis. Surrealists saw dreams as manifestation of revolt against realistic acceptance of the ill-made world. They were against pain and suffering that the rational mind causes us. They wanted to questioned the realistic and naturalistic ways of seeing things and that is why the works often have something familiar but placed in absurd situation. At first the movement was for literacy, but soon painters and other artists were included. Famous surrealists include artists such as Man Ray, Max Ernst, André Masson, Joan Miró ja René Magritte.



Picture 3: Rene Magritte: "Personal Values", 1952



Picture 4: Man Ray, "The Gift", 1921

Surrealists wanted to approach the unconscious in other ways too, beside the dreaming. They used automatization, which idea was to draw and write without a conscious censor. They also used free association, known from psychoanalysis.

Beside Dali's paintings, he also made surrealist movies, the first was "Andalusian Dog" in 1929 with Luis Bunuel. They said that they left out everything that might have meaning, so the movie does not have a plot. After this they made a movie "Golden age", which idea was to attack the bourgeoisie. (Wendy 1997, 364.) Surrealist movement dissolved after the second world war in Europe but flourished in United States after that. Due political differences with leftist surrealists Dali broke off with surrealists in 1939. Dali has been criticized of being fascist and a lover of money.

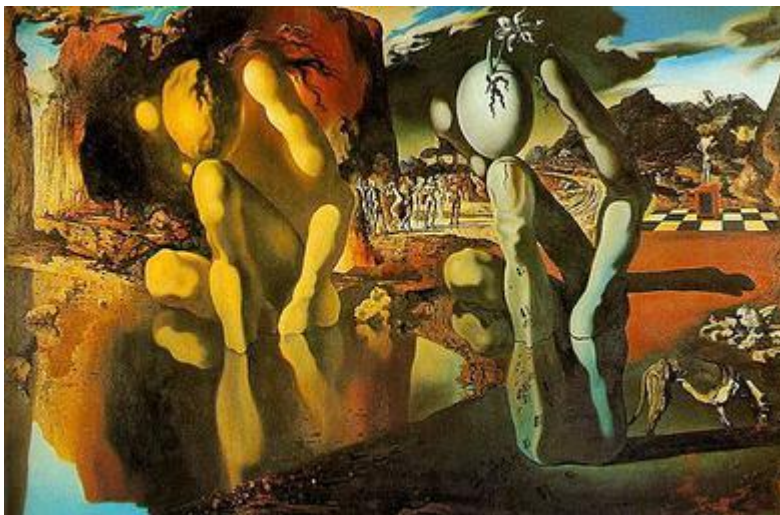
4.2 Dali and Freud

Dali was interested in Freud's theory. Murphy (2009) describes it this way: "He had a great interest in psychology and read the works of Freud and Kraft-Ebing with a passion. He used his acquired knowledge to diagnose (or create) his own case with textbook flawlessness."

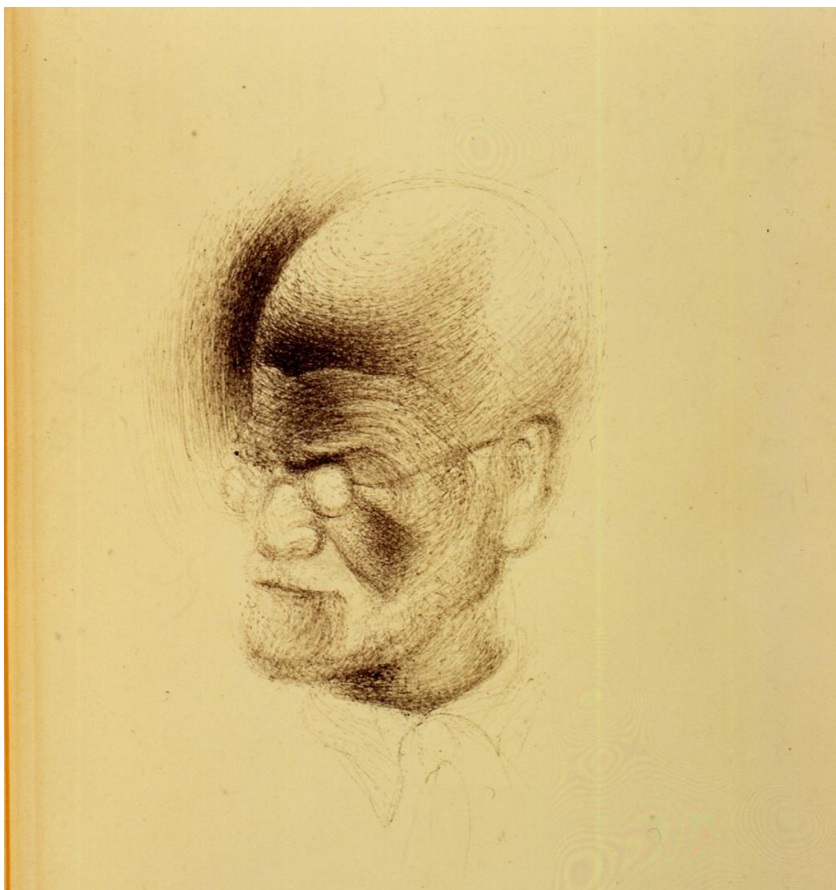
Dali even went to meet Freud in his London home in 1938. During this visit Dali sketched Freud and gave "Portrait of Sigmund Freud" to Freud as a gift.

Freud had different taste in art, he mainly collected "serious" art: Egyptian, Greek and Roman sculptures of gods and mythical characters (Financial Times 2019). Yet he said in his said to Stefan Zweig "I was inclined to look upon the surrealists, who have apparently chosen me as their patron saint, as absolute cranks. The young Spaniard, however, with his candid fanatical eyes and his undeniable technical mastery, has made me reconsider my opinion". (Dali Universe 2019.)

Dali uses in his works imaginary of drawers. This can be associated with his admiration to Freud and he said in his autobiography 'The only difference between immortal Greece and the present time, is Sigmund Freud, who discovered that the human body is full of secret drawers that only psychoanalysis is capable of opening'. Dali also used "paranoid-critical-method" by which he meant ability to create in one image another hidden one like in the painting "Metamorphosis of Narcissus". (Financial Times 2019.)



Picture 5: Salvador Dali, Metamorphosis of Narcissus, 1939



Picture 6: Sketch of Sigmund Freud by Salvador Dali, 1938

4.3 Dali's technique with dreams

Dali called his works “hand painted dream photographs”.

He tried to remember his dreams in order to paint them. He used techniques such as placing a plate under his hand, which he has keys. Once he falls asleep, he relaxes his hand and the keys drop to the plate. The noise from the drop will wake him up and he can try to remember the dream imaginary.

Today we know that this state is called hypnagogic sleep state, which is similar to REM sleep. In this state the mind is fluid and hyperassociative. Mind can arrange creative connections and bring distant ideas together in a new way. This hypnagogic state is useful for problem solving and creative work. (Psychology Today 2015.) No wonder Dali found his inspiration there!

Dali also gave tips to scent pillows with fragrances that evoke concrete periods of one's adolescence life, casting intense light to one's pupils to have more colorful dreams, and play melodies associated with memories while sleeping. He also recommends eat three dozen sea urchins that have been gathered one of the last two day before full moon. (Artsy 2019.)

4.4 The dystopian surrealism: Zdzislaw Beksiński

Surrealism can be dark too, like polish painter Zdzislaw Beksiński (1929-2005) has shown us. He is known not only a painter but a sculptor, a photographer and a graphic artist. He switched photographing to painting, because he felt there is more freedom to express himself. His dark works has inspired game industry, musicians and filmmakers even after his murder in 2005. (Culture.pl 2015.)

Beksiński was best known from his dystopian surrealist paintings. He described his works “I wish to paint in such manner as if I were photographing dreams”. He didn't fetch the imaginary of his paintings directly from his dream but used a similar kind of method with his working that he believes is causing dreaming.

This is what he says about dreams in his 2002 interview by Katarzyna Janowska and Piotr Mucharski: “The funny thing is that dreams are made of free associations. When someone tells a psychiatrist about dreams he made up, it doesn't matter. It is also free association

based on same structure. I compose paintings in a similar way, hence some people find it similar to dreams. To some extent, it defines my psychic structure, but I cannot judge that.” He seemed to believe that the unconscious is revealed in free association in some sense. When he was asked what inspires him, he replied “This is very complicated question, as there are many sources of inspiration. But directly, it’s an idea that comes Absolutely not led by any rational thinking. It just appears, same way music idea does”. (Dmochowski Gallery n. d.)

In his works we can see his unconscious working through free association, which has been popular working method to surrealists.



Picture 7: Zdzislaw Beksinski, 1978, oilpainting, entitled AA78



Picture 8: Zdzislaw Beksinski, 1984, Oil painting, untitled

5. WORKING WITH DREAMS: DREAM COACHING

There is nowadays dream coaches for artists. Former actress Kim Gillingham from Los Angeles is one of them and she has a whole business around this theme. She works with other dream coaches, like Jungian analyst Marion Woodman, in her “Creative Dream Work” company to tap in the unconscious world of creativity. It is not free though: 4 and half hours of “Creative Practice” with Gillingham costs \$190. “Creative Dreamwork 4-Day Intensive” costs \$680 for each participant of 15 artists who take part of the workshop. This may sound much for a student (like me), but for some clients thinks it is worth it. Actor Bradley Cooper worked with acting coach Elizabeth Kemp and took part in dream workshops. He used his dreams to build the character he is playing in the movie “Star is born”. (New York Times 2018.)

For someone with no money, or does not happen to be at Los Angeles, how to make these workshops at home? What do they do in these workshops and does it work?

The basic idea that Gillingham seems to have about dreams is that they are gateway to the subconscious part of us. This part seems to be more creative and filled with ideas. Because artistic work is trying to find the new, unseen ideas, dreams are great tool to get our conscious, working mind there too. Gillingham describes her work with artists this way: “If we’re deriving our work from the ego or the thinking mind, we’re almost destined and doomed to regurgitate and repeat what we’ve already taken in. But by diving down and making contact with the creative source—the unconscious—we have the chance to bring fresh material through”. (Artsy 2019.)

In her workshops with artists Gillingham doesn’t try to interpret the dreams, rather to bring the most vivid dream symbols out of them and include them to the artistic work. That seems to be similar to the technique that Dali used. She guides the artist also with breathing techniques and movement.

In the ending part of Gillingham’s workshops, she asks the artists to change their chosen medium to something unfamiliar to the artist. Painter will sculpt, and dancers will paint and so on. This way she believes the unconscious takes more lead in the work, when the conscious mind doesn’t know how to work with the medium either, the working must happen intuitively. She explains the method to “the liberation available when you stop

trying to be good or right, and instead switch your focus to be a surrendered instrument for the unconscious to come through”. (Artsy 2019.)

There is yet one other layer to dreaming, that they don't mention in dream coaching, but this way of dreaming feels like a fast-lane to the unconscious. That one is lucid dreaming. Lucid dreams seem to be the wild card of dreaming. Compared to just fetching imaginary from normal dreams, one can play, get visual ideas straight just by asking and even get mentoring. How does it work and what is lucid dreaming?

6. WILD CARD: LUCID DREAMS

A lucid dream is a state when person in asleep understands that he/she is asleep and dreaming. Usually dreamer can control some events of the dream. Roughly 20 % of our sleeping time we are under a state when we see dreams more vividly than other states. This state is called REM sleep (rapid eye movement). (Psychology Today 2013.)

Voss, Holzmann, Tuin and Hobson describes in their 2009 study the state of lucid dream and brain activity: “Preliminary studies, for example using EEG to look at brain activity during wakefulness, normal REM sleep, and lucid dreaming, suggested that lucid dreaming is a hybrid state between fully awake and REM sleep. The frontal lobes are more active in lucid states than normal REM, but not as active as fully awake”. (Sleep Research Society 2009.)

6.1 Lucid dreams: Scientific research and history

Scientific research of lucid dreams began in 1975 when lucid dreamer Alan Worsley made first-ever scientifically recorded signals from a dream to researcher Keith Haerne in the study lab at University of Hull in England. He signaled his lucid state with prearranged eye movements: left to right eight times and pads that were placed in his eyes recorded the movement on a polygraph's printout. (Waggoner 2009, 8.)

This started a new era in dream studies. For the first time the researchers were able prove that lucid dreaming is a relevant state and can be studied with brain scanning and

signaling. States of dreaming could now be studied: for example researchers have found that performing physical tasks takes more time in the dream reality than in awake reality. This finding was made when the subject was making the previously agreed tasks. (Erlacher & Schredl 2004.) Nowadays research of consciousness is taking advances of lucid dream studies, and it is a new tool to study our brain functions and consciousness (NPR 2017).

Before that it was not taken seriously even though the first mentions of lucid dreams are way back in various religions like Buddhism, Islam, Christianity and shamanic practice. Especially in Tibetan Buddhist have mentions of lucid dreaming part of their meditation exercise called dream yoga. The earliest mention of lucid dreams goes back to Aristotle (350BC), who writes, “when one is asleep, there is something in consciousness which tells us that what presents itself is but a dream”. (Dream Studies Portal 2019.)

6.2 How to become one: Learning the techniques

Lucid dreaming can be learned. Meditation, especially mindfulness, might enhance the ability to have lucid dreams (Stumbrys et al. 2015).

People who remember their dreams also have higher score on lucid dreaming than people who do not remember their dreams, which seems quite obvious. All people have dreams, even those, who claim they don't have any dreams while asleep. They just don't remember their dreams. This skill is also learnable. By keeping a dream journals they will start to recall their dreams eventually.

Remembering dreams and writing them down helps with noticing your own dream symbols. Once you are aware which objects normally are included in to your dreams, you might start to ask yourself “is this a dream” while seeing these objects in a dream state and became aware of it, in other words lucid. It is hard to prove if someone had lucid dreams if they don't remember their dreams in the first place.

The effect of personality with lucid dreaming was researched by Michael Schredl and Daniel Erlacher (2004) and the findings was that personality itself did not affect, but openness to new experiences had correlation with lucid dreaming (Personality and individual differences 2004).

There are many different approaches to start lucid dreaming. “Reality checking” is known to be effective way to improve one’s chance to get lucid during a dream. Reality checking means that while person is awake, they check the environment to make sure they are not actually in a middle of a dream. This can be done for example by pushing a hand against a wall. If it doesn’t go through, you are awake. One trick can be watching your hand twice: first look you hand, then look away, then look again. If you would be dreaming, your hand would probably change its form during the second time of watching. For me, the most efficient “reality check” method has been holding my nose and seeing if I can still keep breathing. If I can, I am sleeping. If I cannot, I’m awake. While I do this when I am awake, I am always sure, that I am actually awake. But funny thing is, that is also always the case in a dream too: I am sure that I am awake and this cannot be a dream, but my test “wakes me up” in a dream, telling me that in fact, I am middle of a dream!

The idea of this exercise is to form of habit of reality checking, so when a person is asleep it is more likely that they will do a reality check and realize that they are actually dreaming.

Because human sleeping cycle is about 90 minutes, REM state of sleep (dreaming state) comes up in every 90 minutes. Some people use dream interruption as a tool to get lucid dreams. They set up an alarm to wake up every 90 minutes and then gets up for a little while and then goes back to sleep. This way a person can make sure to be awoken soon after dream state to remember the dream easier and have a next chance to get lucid in the second round.

6.3 Lucid dreaming risks

There has been a belief that lucid dreaming could cause sleep paralysis, but research has shown that this is not the case. Sleep paralysis is a condition where person is awake but not able to move. A person who is having a sleep paralysis often have hallucinations from dreams, and the sensation of someone else (someone malicious) also being present. It can be experience full of fear and even pressure in chest and other physical sensations.

Dissociative experiences during wakefulness can cause dissociative experiences during sleep, like sleep paralysis or lucid dreaming. Sleep paralysis is related with issues of sleep

quality and well-being, and lucid dreaming to greater and positive imaginative capacity in waking states. (Denis & Poerio 2016.)

7. HOW DREAMS SHAPED MY FINAL EXHIBITION WORKS

My painting process starts always with thinking process, because my work is figurative. The starting point of ideas can be surprising, like in my final works.

The first painting “The Real Deal” (unicorn) in a sense “came to me” in a dream a couple years before the exhibition. From there I expanded the idea of one painting to four painting series that then took the place in our final exhibition.



Picture 9: “The Real Deal” 2017, Graphite, resin mixed with acrylic ink and nail polish on MDF-board, 100 cm x 120 cm, photo by Alisa Komendova

I was in a place of my studies where I was trying out various techniques and the themes on my works. I was into human figures, especially faces. I had been thinking about new

large work for a while with hyper realistic drawing combined somehow with abstract resin part, but the idea was just in that place: without a theme, without visuals, without a goal. This I think is often the starting point of a painting, at least for me.

Then I saw a dream. I was in a conversation with a unicorn that told me to paint her. Next day I did some google search and found out the fascinating history of the unicorn. I had been following the situation of the endangered animals, especially rhinos, and found the similarities in their stories. This is how my final exhibition works finally came alive in my head and later in canvas (or in my case MDF-boards).

This dream of the unicorn was quite unexpected for me, I haven't been interested in mythical themes previously and I don't remember myself thinking about them. Yet this dream provoked me to explore the myth deeper and find interesting aspect from it to combine to my other interest: endangered animals. The painting itself became the one of the series, and it was the one I sold eventually from the exhibition.

Unicorns myth is surprisingly similarities to rhinos. Both horns were (rhino's still is) sold with high value, and the myth is the factor that creates that value. In other words: these myths are created to make money for the storyteller (a poacher).

Yet, even if the myth sounds too good to be true, we still buy it, the myth and the horn. "Did you buy that story?" does sound very concrete phrase after all. I probably would not have thought the poaching issue with rhinos from this point of view without my dream with the unicorn. I didn't even know about the history of the unicorn, or if I did, I didn't remember it.

7.1 The result of my dream inspiration: "Myths of reality"

In our final exhibition HOT FUTURES, April 2018, I presented my learned skills with four paintings. The theme was around endangered animals, especially endangered animals and their relations to mythical non-existing animals.

Rhinos are poached because of their horns. Horns are believed to cure numerous of diseases and is used even a cure for hangover. These beliefs are, of course, false. According to science, the effect is the same as biting our own nails.

The story that we tell about rhino horns healing powers is very similar to unicorn horns, alicorn, mythology. These alicorns were sold in middle ages and they were very valuable. Off course, because the creature never existed the horns were from other animals, especially narwhals. Alicorn was believed to purify poisonous water and cure diseases. These stories we sadly still believe today, and it is causing extinction to species. Sometimes stories have different turn and miracles do happen. That was the case with kakapo, the largest parrot (still) existing. Kakapos live in New Zealand and when humans and their pets arrived in the islands where they lived, parrot that cannot fly, was powerless against new predators, especially cats. It`s survival mechanism against predators is freezing: stopping moving and trying to blend into the environment. That helps with predators attacking from the above, like eagles. But with land predators, like cats and ferrets, the freezing will only get you killed. So, when cats took over the islands, the bird was thought to be extinct, until a small population was found in New Zealand! Remaining kakapos were moved to tree island without predators and with protection, the specie is recovering slowly. Every kakapo today is known, and they even have individual names. From a brink of extinction back to life, like a legendary Phoenix!

7.1.2 "The Real Deal"

“The Real Deal” was the first painting I did for this series. It is a combination of graphite, charcoal, resin, ink and nail polish on gessoed MDF-board. I wanted to "hide" the legend of unicorn under the resin layer, but it can be seen, when the viewer moves closer to the painting. For me this movement of stepping closer to the painting to see more and to get more information presents the idea of getting to know the myth deeper. This way the viewer can “see under the myth” (look under the sprinkling resin layer) and create more realistic idea of the animal itself and brake the myth down.

I wrote the whole article of unicorn from Wikipedia under the resin. Wikipedia was the place I found the right amount of text to fit the bottom part of the work, but also Wikipedia is one of the most used sources of information today, like stories and legends used to be. I also draw narwhals under this layer, because they were the real animals that suffered the causes of this myth.

This way I wanted to portray the overall idea, that we are not so familiar with the causes that our stories are causing to other animals. They are hidden and we just see what we want to see: the mighty unicorn. I also wrote the myths of what the horn, alicorn, can do according to these stories (the diseases it can cure) in unicorn's horn. I also wrote the mentions that The Bible has about unicorn in the hair of the unicorn. These mentions are one of the reasons why the myth became so strong and it was believed. That is why I wanted to add them to my work.

Realistic drawing is a slow process and it took me three months to complete this piece. Resin on the other hand is very different process. It takes only 45 minutes to cure, so the working must be fast. At first I mixed the resin and the hardener and divided it to different cups. Then I added the inks and nail polish to make it colorful. Once that is done, I can start to pour it over the drawing. This was one of my very first resin works, and I do think it could have gone better too. The colors were too dark and the background was not showing as much as I would have hoped. It also spread too far area and hidden some areas I really liked. Oh well, live and learn...



Picture 10: Detail of the horn with texts of horn's mythical powers



Picture 11: Detail of the drawing



Pictures 12: Detail of narwhal and text under the resin layer



Picture 13: Graphite/charcoal part done, before resin

7.1.3 "Sudan 1973-19.3.2018"

The last northern white rhino was named Sudan. He died 19.3.2018 and now there is only 2 females of this specie left in the whole world: his daughter and granddaughter. We humans value our thinking and ideas, but sometimes we should think more. Our ideas can be dangerous and it is simply not fair that some other creature has to pay the consequences in such high price. I wanted to paint the real animals in different style than the mythical animals, because I wanted to make it clear for the viewer what is reality and what is only a story. Still I wanted to use “soft” and “mythical”-like technique for these real animals, because their realities are so much combined with the myths we create.

“Sudan 1973-19.3.2018” was made by using pouring cup -method with acrylic paint and silicon oil on mdf-board. The colors are mixed with water and silicon oil and the poured to same cup (without mixing or blending color with each other) and then pouring the whole cup on board. Silicon oil creates "bubbles" when the poured paint is swiped and the result is interesting. By adding multiple abstract layers of paint, I could create

figurative rhino. Once the rhino was done, I wrote the myths that are causing the extinction of this specie to the horn of the rhino.



Picture 14: "Sudan 1973-19.3.2018", acrylic and silicon-oil on MDF board, 100 cm x 120 cm, photo by Alisa Komendova



Picture 15: Detail: the myths about what people can do with rhino's horn



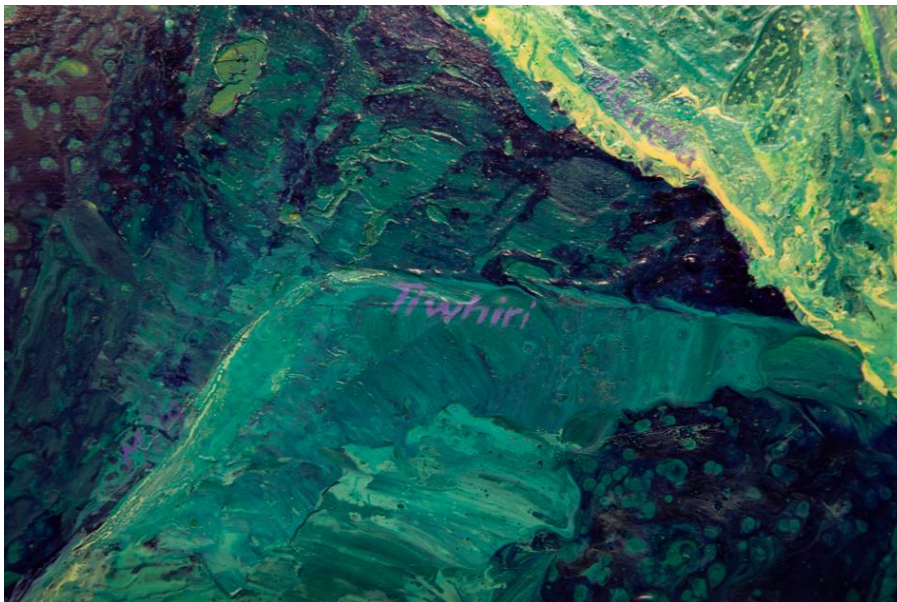
Picture 16: Process: applying the color layers

7.1.4 "149 And Counting!"

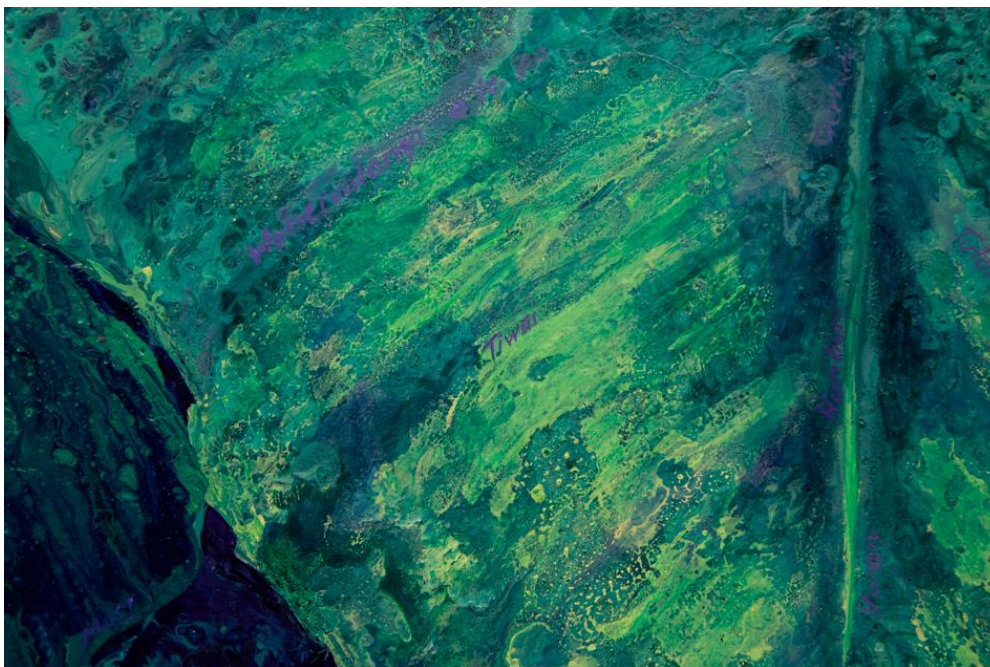
This painting was created with the same pouring cup method as "Sudan 1973-19.3.2018". The bird, kakapo, was painted over the poured layers with acrylics. In the leaf I wrote the names of the existing kakapos. They are all known by the researchers of Kakapo rescue foundation who are trying to save the specie.



Picture 17: "149 and Counting!" 2018, Acrylic and silicon oil on MDF-board, 120 cm x 90 cm, photo by Alisa Komendova



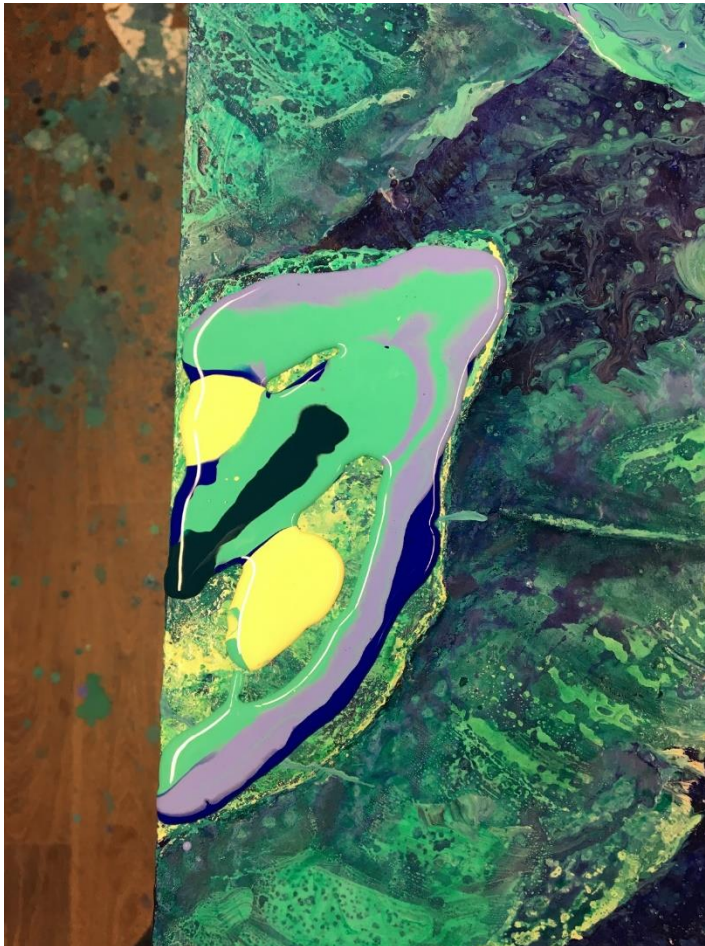
Picture 18: Detail: kakapo names in the leaves



Pictures 18: Details: kakapo names in the leaves



Picture 19: Process, applying the color layers



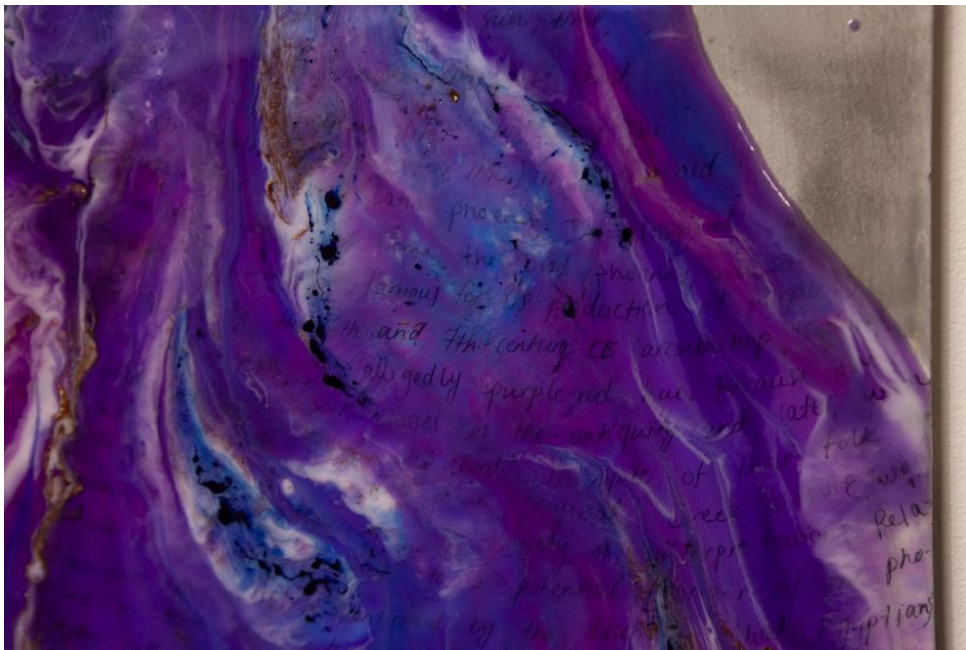
Picture 20: Process: applying the color layers

7.1.5 "Still Alive!"

The legend of Phoenix is quite well known, it varies a bit depending to a source, but the idea is the same: Phoenix is reborn after flying into a fire. I find the similarity in this myth and the history of kakapo. The specie almost died but is trying to be reborn again. Luckily this time the myth is positive.



Picture 22: “Staying Alive” 2018, Graphite, resin mixed with acrylic ink, 80 cm x 125 cm, Photo by Alisa Komendova



Pictures 23: Details: Text under resin layer



Pictures 24: Details: Text under resin layer



Picture 25: Graphite drawing Before resin



Picture 26: Process: applying the resin layer



Picture 27: Exhibition setup in Gallery Himmelblau with the artist

Dream shaped my work and I have high hopes that it will continue to do so. I am not yet fully skilled lucid dreamer but that is my goal, because it seems that there is a lot of possibilities there.

7.2 Future plans: How to use lucid dreams for creative purposes?

In lucid dreams artists can simply ask the dream to show artistic inspiration, walk into a gallery and “steal” the ideas from there, like artist Epic Dewfall does, or invite someone to the dream that could teach the dreamer something or work with the next project idea in the dream (Psychology Today, 2018).

You can do whatever you want in your lucid dreams. One example is Canadian artist Epic Dewfall, who is an experienced lucid dreamer. In his website he explains his working method with dreams. When he becomes lucid he walks around in the dream searching for

paintings. Some time he sees many, but if it is not there, he plays out that his hand is “a magical art gun” points it somewhere and says “bang”. Painting always appears. He also says that he knows that not every painting he sees in the dream are remarkable. He also figured out, why not. Dewfall says that paying attention to his own thoughts he can control if the paintings he sees are remarkable or not. Since the dream is made up by ones own thoughts, the thoughts also determine what he is seeing. If he is thinking that what he sees is pointless, it will be pointless. If he switches his thinking, the dream figures also change. He explains:

“All I have to do in order to see a good painting is decide what I want my next thought to be about. Well it worked. While still in the same lucid dream I chose an interesting topic to think about. I even said out loud as I was walking around in the dream. "I am thinking about such and such". Then sure enough it worked. All the paintings I started finding were interesting and solely about my chosen topic. This means I should start having a lot more ideas per year to turn into paintings from now on”. (Epic Dewfall.ca n. d.)

Basically he is just thinking what he is thinking in lucid state.

The only Man who ever Sees a giant Bear Stalking him
opening Curtain and seeing its Five foot Face against the Glass



Picture 28: Epic Dewfall, picture from Dewfall’s website

Waggoner (2009) has the same view of the intentions in the lucid dream. Things in the dream happen or work if the dreamer is assuming so (109-124). He also proposes that one can ask the dream to show stuff, simply by asking, like Dewfall does (139-144). Off course I had to try it too.

During my thesis-writing period, I tried to perform a task to see the visuals for my next painting while having a lucid dream. To my disappointment, I had 4 lucid dreams while the writing period (8 weeks), and only in one of them I remembered to perform the task. During the day I did my reality-checks and at night I repeated the mantra of “Next time I’m dreaming, I will recognize that I’m dreaming” before going to sleep. I think the best method to get lucid dreams is to combine all the techniques presented in chapter 6.

The dream went like this:

I was outside of an office building, which was somehow my studio as well. It was winter and there was snow in the ground. I was there with my working mate Topias and my boyfriend Tommi and could see from a window that inside the building was my cousin Tero. When Tero came outside, he didn’t recognize me. That seemed weird, because in real life we are close. I perform my reality check by holding my nose. I can still breath, so I am dreaming! BING! I am lucid! Suddenly I am in an ice rink building, which is empty, but Tero is there with me. I remember my task to see, if I can ask my dream to show me my next painting. I tell this to Tero, who doesn’t react much. I shout out “Show me my next painting”, but nothing happens. I think that if I clap my hands something might change, because I am not really liking the environment either that I am in (this has happened before: I clap my hand in a dream in order to change the environment and it has worked). I clap my hands and everything goes black. I wake up. (Dream diary 22.2.2019).

Obviously I am not really controlling my lucid dreams yet, but I hope that I can improve my skills in this area too! I was probably also too sceptic, afraid or not self-confident enough that my dream would show me something. As a result, it didn’t. Maybe next time my “attitude” is better. I have to give though for my thoughts like Dewfall explains above and maybe try out his “magical art gun” idea.

Dewfall hasn’t been able to have lucid dreams anymore, but he still does work with dreams. This is what he says about his mission to have 6 painting ideas in one hour:

“Pastel paintings set 121 is unusual. I wanted to use hypnagogic imagery to get 6 ideas in one hour so I could finish poster 11 immediately. I lay down ready for bed fully intending to see more than a dozen ideas in the next hour. And it worked. I picked the best 6 ideas and was able to finish poster 11 next day like I wanted. I borrowed a trick I once used in

lucid dreams (to see more meaningful paintings). I thought to myself, repeatedly, "I am thinking about things". and also, "I am thinking about thinking". I feel this turns the brain into a problem-solving machine. Without this kick in the butt, my brain does nothing and shows me no answers or flashes of images.”

7.3 Benefits of lucid dreaming

Lucid dreams can be used for other tasks too than just working with paintings.

New skills can be learned while lucid dreaming. There is scientific evidence that athletes who practice while lucid dreaming state, improve their performance. (Erlacher & Stumbrys & Schredl 2012.)

Lucid dreams can also be used as therapeutic help for nightmares (Mota-Rolim, Araujo, 2013). Once one is aware of the dream and becomes lucid during nightmare, they can distance themselves from the nightmare, when it becomes less frightening. Dreamer can also now change the course of the dream and make it something else than nightmare. (Medical Hypotheses 2013.)

Lucid dreams are used to solve problems and get creative ideas, too. Appel, Pipa and Dresler says this in their 2018 study:

“Lucid dreaming offers a particularly creativity-enabling state: like in non-lucid dreams, the dreamer experiences a hyper-associative state with unusual combinations of ideas and sensations, however in contrast to a non-lucid dream he or she is capable of deliberately evaluating these new impressions with respect to their artistic value. And in fact, a number of painters and musicians use their lucid dreaming abilities for inspirational purposes - e.g. an artist looking for new scenes in a virtual dream gallery or a musician looking for new melodies in lucidly dreamed radio programmes”. (Interdisciplinary Science Reviews 2018.) In 2018 study made by Schädlich and Erlacher, lucid dreaming participants, who were musicians, indeed practiced and created music while sleeping and noticed it to be beneficial (Dreaming 2018).

Lucid dreams can be used just for fun: to fly, to have sex or whatever the dreamer desires (Freudian dreaming indeed). Many people use it for personal growth: facing problems, unknown fears and solving them, getting to know the unconscious you live with and taking better usage out of it.

To practice my lucid dreaming skills, I wanted to test out Waggoner`s ideas about the possibilities that lies in lucid dreaming. Waggoner proposes that the dreamer can interact with dream characters and even ask questions from them to get clues about the dreams meaning (p. 125-137). I wanted to test this theory in my dreams, and I did get some answers, but the meaning doesn` t quite open to me. I was asking what they symbolize, and the answer was clear, but I still today cannot make sense out of it. The dream went like this (19.11.2018):

(before lucidity, there was a long normal dream)

I was going to enter a huge shopping mall, but the entrance was guarded by two guards with black outfits. No one else was around. I became lucid randomly, not by performing my reality check, but just by wondering the settings I was in. I remember my task to ask my dream characters their meaning. I ask: "What do you symbolize?" and the guards answer: "unselfishness". Then they start to turn into demons with red eyes and "melted face". They start to approach me in very imitating way, and I try to fly away. They grab my feet and I wake up.

The meaning of this dream is not clear to me. Maybe in my next lucid dream I try to invite Jung to my dream and analyze this with him! Yet it was extremely exhilarating to notice that Waggoner`s hypothesis was right: you really can interact with the dream characters and they will give you answers!

During sleep, there is not much else to do anyways than to dream, so why not dream more effectively?

8. CONCLUSIONS

I saw my friend posting an inspirational quote on Instagram saying: "Nobody remembers the nights they went bed early". I think the writer didn` t remember his/her dreams or knew the world of lucid dreams. Off course this inspirational quote was supposed to inspire people to party all night, but I think it illustrates quite well our society`s relationship with sleep today. Sleeping is thought to be "waste of time" and that is why professor Matthew Walker is so worried about the sleep-deprivation our society suffers

and it can have serious consequences. Sleeping and dreaming can be very precious working time too, if one knows what to do with it. Especially for artists, because the art field as a profession is like no other. It has its own freedom (and pressure) to produce new ideas, and for that you need creativity.

We are still not quite sure where creativity comes from, so every means that might help with it, should be considered valuable. My dreaming mind is way more creative than my waking mind. This seems to be the case with many artists, like the ones I presented in this thesis.

The meeting between Freud and Dali was, for me at least, a metaphorical moment. Artistic methods using dreams and unconscious meets the science that is studying the creative dreaming mind. The moment of birth for psychoanalysis and Dadaism, which gave birth to Surrealism, are at the same century. Freud was made the saint for both, but why? I think that it was because artists finally felt that they are heard. The experiences that they had of unconscious were finally heard in the field of science.

Psychoanalysis has now been mostly abandoned as an old-fashioned view and “hard sciences” such as social neuroscience has taken its place as a view we interpret ourselves and unconscious today (Mlodinow 2013). Seems that art and artists today are leaning more towards Jung`s ideas, like we see in dream coaching and in Robert Waggoner`s ideas about lucid dreams (Waggoner 2009, 93-95).

I can relate with Dali`s enthusiasm for the new science of dreams and unconscious (psychoanalysis), because I`m very interested in the todays research about the same topic. I think my and Dali`s reasons for this interest might be similar too: how to take the full advantage out of this research and science done about unconscious?

The findings done today will probably be abandoned too in the future and some new, even “harder”, science will take its places. Yet the experience about it might stay the same?

Science changes and evolves, and so artists stays interested in the new findings. With little effort on learning the techniques of remembering the dreams and lucid dreaming, painter like me will have extra working hours, countless extraordinary experiences, even mentoring and in the best case: possibility for personal growth (Waggoner 2009, 21-22).

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Picture 6: Sketch of Sigmund Freud by Salvador Dali, 1938. Retrieved 6.5.2019

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Picture 7: Zdzislaw Beksinski, 1978, oilpainting, entitled AA78. Retrieved 6.5.2019

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Picture 8: Zdzislaw Beksinski, 1984, Oil painting, untitled. Retrieved 6.5.2019

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Picture 9: “The Real Deal” 2017, photo by Alisa Comendova

Picture 10-12: Details, photos by Anniina Pasanen

Picture 13: Process, photo by Anniina Pasanen

Picture 14: “Sudan”, photo by Alisa Komendova

Picture 15: Detail, photo by Anniina Pasanen

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Picture 17: “149 And Counting!” 2018, photo by Alisa Komendova

Picture 18-19: Details, photos by Anniina Pasanen

Picture 20-21: Process, photos by Anniina Pasanen

Picture 22: “Staying Alive!” 2018, photo by Alisa Komendova

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Picture 25-26: Process, photos by Anniina Pasanen

Picture 27: Ready works at gallery Himmelblau April 2018, photo by Tommi Kostilainen

Picture 28: Epic Dewfall. Retrieved 6.5.2019

<https://epicdewfall.smugmug.com/>

