

O A Z O

A THESIS SUBMITTED ON THE FIFTEENTH DAY OF APRIL, 2019

TO THE DEPARTMENT OF FINE ARTS

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

OF THE SCHOOL OF LIBERAL ARTS

OF TULANE UNIVERSITY

FOR THE DEGREE

OF

MASTER OF FINE ART

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Section One.

SECULAR SPIRITUALITY

A Primer

*"If someone asks me if I believe in god I will say I believe in believing in god."*¹

-Matt Mullican

There is a single thread that weaves throughout the fabric of all of my creative efforts. Often it is central to the theme of the work. Other times it plays a subtler role. In any case this thread is persistent. It delineates paths. It builds bridges, forming complex connections between artworks. The vast majority of the work that I have created since beginning my professional art career offers, in some fashion, a personal exploration to assign a visual and spatial aesthetic to existential imaginations surrounding my own sense of spirituality.

It is only recently that I have truly discovered the pervasiveness of this core motivation in my work. Defining this link in concise and coherent language has proven to be tricky. Spirituality evades any empirical measure or factual truth. For me, it lies somewhere between conviction, critique, confusion, and conjecture. My investigation is a deep and ancient one. Throughout time, the attempt to define the spirit has seen infinite incarnations, massive evolutions, and will

¹ Matt Mullican Book

forever continue to form and adapt to human existence and technology. OAZO is my creative interpretation and effort at asking meaningful questions concerning the meaning of spirituality.

I persistently struggle with the idea that in order to be spiritual, or to have spiritual health and fulfillment, you must ascribe to a certain creed or set of beliefs. This is what I was taught. Throughout my spiritual exploration, I have found it problematic that any one set of assumptions could be absolutely and irrevocably true. To have unconditional blind faith seems not only wrong, but foolish.

I began my own spiritual journey when I started going to a non-denominational Christian church when I was beginning middle school. I wouldn't say that I grew up in the church. I am sure at some point as an inquisitive child I asked my parents what happens when you die. They surely explained to me that you go to heaven if you're good and to hell if you're bad. But, I don't really remember considering my spirit or soul before this time at the church. I went through periods of strong faith and wavering belief, but by the end of high school I considered myself undeniably atheist. As I have grown older, I have softened that stance, and I am still trying to understand what it is that the spirit is to me. One might call me agnostic. I don't discount that there is some driving force behind our willful actions. I don't even discount the idea of some sort of cosmic order. However, I most certainly discount the idea of assigning absolution to what lies outside of our cognition. More importantly, I condemn actions of aggression towards others who have dissenting beliefs on the matter. To harm someone else because a difference in opinion of what might happen when we die is asinine.

For the past two decades, the ideology of *spiritual but not religious* has become increasingly prevalent in both the United States and Western Europe. According to an ongoing Pew Research Center study reported earlier this year, a staggering 64% of Western Europeans

across 15 countries who believe in some other higher power (not as God as described in the Bible) or spiritual force in the universe, responded that they were *spiritual but not religious*. This same study found that those who responded in this way also believe that they have a soul, and that they are more likely to believe in astrology, and meditate. A similar study by the Pew Research Center was done just last year in the United States, indicating that “27% of adults say they think of themselves as *spiritual but not religious*, up 8 percentage points in 5 years.”² So, over a quarter of us in America feel this way. What’s even more interesting is that this ideology is broad-based: “It has occurred among men and women, whites, blacks, and Hispanics, people of many different ages and education levels, and among Republicans and Democrats.”³

Evidently, there is a gradual trend of withdrawal from organized religious institutions, at least in Western civilizations. Perhaps the problematic histories of violent colonialism and cultural erasure are to blame for this trend. The migration could also be a resistance to contemporary salacious scandals or acts of extreme terrorism. Maybe for some, these religions simply operate under an outdated model. Those of us who live in prosperous societies have the ability to derive happiness through our living experiences. We aren’t just left with the hope for divine salvation from the miserable bonds of human existence. I would surmise that technological advancement, especially in the field of information sharing via the Internet, has had an effect on this incremental exodus. It certainly has contributed to mine. Access to information about other cultures’ belief systems and world views presented me with the thought that maybe I didn’t have adequate information to decide how I was going to think about the afterlife for the rest of my living days. Maybe I had it wrong? Is there a wrong perspective? Perhaps we’re all talking about

²Pew Research Center article

³Ibid

the same omnipresent power, we just have different names and myths framing it, specific to our individual cultures. If there are gods, do they even have a preference for how they are worshipped? Do they even care to be worshipped at all? Does it matter if we know these answers?

Endless questions breed more questions. For some of us, our existential mortality has us fixated on what to expect next. What I am able to glean from my experience is that I will never know, and I shouldn't bother trying to figure out what it exactly is. But, I should celebrate and nurture my secular spirit. The stronger my awareness is to my inner will, the less I will be encumbered by the weight of resistance. The only way that I know to share my perspective with others is through creative production.

OAZO is the culmination of the conviction, critique, confusion, and conjecture surrounding acknowledgement and manifestation of my own spirituality. OAZO is a brand of transcendental art objects and experiential immersive environments. It borrows from aesthetic and emotive elements of rite and ritual found in various religions throughout human history. It mimics the ambivalence that I have toward the simple belief that we are more than just what we see, hear, smell, taste, and feel. OAZO strips absolution away from any idea that there is a definitive resolve to what spiritual existence is or should be. OAZO is not a solution, it is a suggestion with a crisp look.

OAZO also operates similarly to a high-end boutique brand. With OAZO, I ask the question of whether or not the consumption of goods devalues or even delegitimizes a spiritual experience. Can these two ideas be compatible? Are they really all that different? I argue that we consume spiritual experiences in the same way we consume products, especially those products that trigger strong emotional response.

Fig. 1. *QAZO, Installation view of front room in Carrol Gallery.*

Fig. 2. *QAZO, Installation view of front room in Carrol Gallery.*

QAZO presents an alternative mode of spiritual access through the embrace and consumption of the commodified good. I am suggesting that we accept the notion that we can find fulfillment and nourish our souls through objects with designated roles.

My purpose with this brand is to exhibit environmental conditions conducive for the recognition of human immateriality through a composite of rich and vibrating colors, unique structures, alluring lines, and enveloping spaces with blanketed golden light, heavenly redolent scents, and surrounding sounds. It is an invitation to be present, vulnerable, and open to the idea that there is something bigger than us, whatever that looks like. QAZO offers the opportunity for participants to take their experience with them and continue to refine and focus by purchasing a resonating object and bringing it into their home. This is not unlike the idea of an altar or icon seen in traditional religions that are found in homes as personal spaces for contemplation and reverence.

The aforementioned objects are QAZO's dei. Dei, a play on the word "deity," is the name of the sumptuous sculptural representations of human conditions and/or elemental phenomena that punctuate the exhibited environment as curious symbolic markers, which signal to a sublime purpose. They exist as conduits for the circulation of spiritual energy. They are objects with designated roles. They emit power and incite transference. The dei request a deep breath with shoulders back and aspire to slow down the perpetuation of time. Their aim is to lift their viewers off the ground a bit. They are artworks created in the tradition of conveyance of the sublime.



Section Two.

RED, BLUE, BLACK, & YELLOW

The Aesthetic

The design and visual aesthetic of OAZO is definitely the most important element for the success of the work as a brand. OAZO's cohesive look is intentional and comprehensive. Its limited-but-bold color palette, the variety of visual and actual textures within the materials, and the repeated formal elements shared within the breadth of the work combine to develop an articulated and precise language. The language is immediate and obvious. It identifies a collection of objects and ideas as one unified entity. It reads clean, clear, and presents a seductive allure.

The importance of the aesthetic to this work is derived from a personal fascination in the idea of corporate identities, particularly in apparel and uniform among other practical ephemera. My father worked for Pepsi-Cola during the entirety of my childhood. The Pepsi "globe" was a part of my visual landscape during those years. It was on my father's clothes, on his route truck, on boxes in the garage, on his golf gear, and not surprisingly, on cans in the refrigerator. I have to believe that the immersive exposure to one of the most recognizable trademarks in the world has had some sort of effect on how I interpret and implement visual ideas.

In addition to having a corporation's identity prevalent throughout my upbringing, I have always been intrigued by uniforms as a method for unification. When watching sports as a child (and even today), I would be more interested in the colors of the jerseys, their logos and

graphic elements, than I would be of the goings-on of the competition. The Cincinnati Bengals were my favorite American football team because they looked like a bunch of tigers on the field. There is an empowering element to uniformity. It reminds one of the power behind teamwork and that there is strength in numbers. The dei of OAZO are fortified by their sameness.

The color set of OAZO is the most evident aspect of its visual presentation. A rich red-orange, a warm greenish-blue, a deep golden yellow, and a heavy black make up the palette of OAZO's identity. Holding the position that this work is a brand, I believe it makes sense for it to present an identifiable color combination that relays a memorable association. These specific colors are necessary and equal to OAZO.

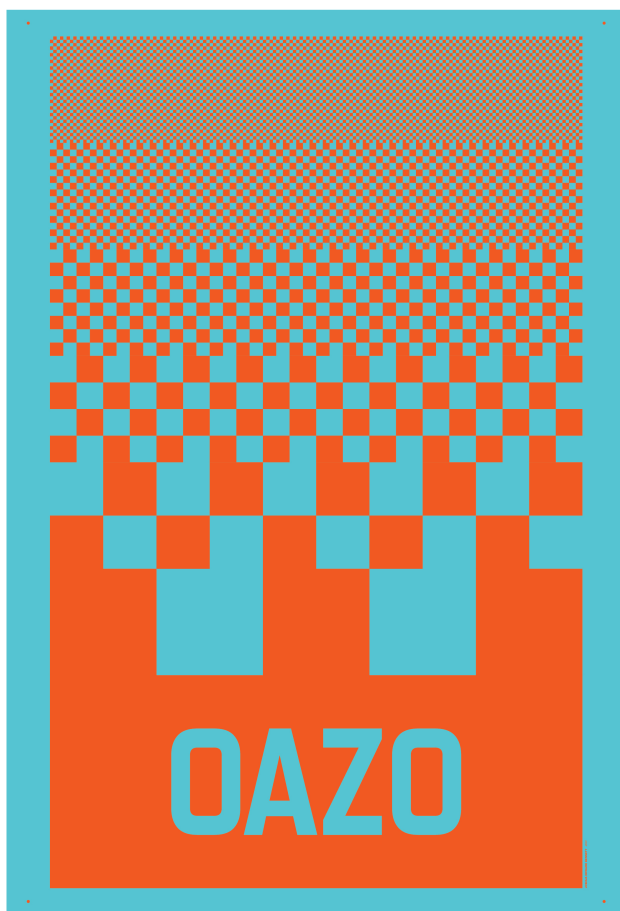


Fig. 3. *Digital design for OAZO poster, 13" x 19", 2018.*

The colors are an off-primary set with a warm slant. The black holds them all together; it frames, delineates, and helps round out the shapes that make up the dei. Because the red and the blue are so close in value, they compete for foreground prominence and therefore tend to buzz or vibrate. I wanted to call upon the woozy psychedelic concert posters from the 1960's created by Wes Wilson and Alton Kelley, among others. Those posters were intended to make the viewer feel high on drugs or in an ecstatic phase through optical illusion. My intention in using these particular colors is to create that same momentary daze. Because a piece appears to be unsettled in its color hierarchy, the viewer is meant to question what reality is being presented. The oscillation that occurs between these two colors is intended to embolden the idea that these objects are alive, not completely solid, and may serve as modes of subliminal access.

The golden yellow is a personal obsession of mine. I cannot pinpoint when it began, but it was certainly fueled by an investigation in public road signage. Cautionary signs are typically a golden yellow with black writing, which is supposedly one of the better color combinations for ease of legibility and for grabbing attention. Ever since learning this, I have been tempted to use both black and yellow together in my work and design as an attempt to solicit attention.

Colors certainly have a weight to them that is beyond their visual performance. They can elicit emotional responses. They have historical association, particularly with royalty and traditional religious ceremony. With OAZO, I have assigned an inherent meaning to each of the four colors. The color red is assigned the concept of corporeality, of structure, and of physicality. The color blue represents spiritual energy, life force, or the soul. Yellow indicates light, sound, space and environment. And finally, black illustrates the concepts of time, nothingness and death. By carrying meaning, these colors become elemental to the composite. The prominence of a single color in a dei influences the overall direction that dei promote. These associative color

definitions are not essential for the viewer to understand the greater meaning underlying OAZO, or of any specific piece. However, these meanings were considered when I was developing the formal qualities of each dei.



Fig. 4. *Kanalo*, Acrylic, HDU, MDF, Paint, Vinyl, 25" x 16", 2019.

Another immediately evident aspect of OAZO's visual aesthetic is the choice of materials that make up the dei. There are several reasons behind the decisions made for what materials to use. One is simply a choice of access. Because I work at a sign fabrication shop, I have access to materials traditional to the sign industry. These include acrylic, aluminum, medium density fiberboard, foam board, polyvinyl chloride, and plywood to name a few. I am able to use scrap pieces that would otherwise be thrown away due to their smaller sizes and odd shapes. I am

familiar with how to fabricate these materials, and have learned a great deal on how to manipulate and transform them with my experience in the sign shop.

Between the plastics, wood composites, faux leathers, foams, and pressed cork board, the materials used in OAZO are also all either synthetic, or artificially processed in some way. I feel this is important to point out. The process in which all the designed elements of OAZO are constructed is through Computer Numerical Controller (CNC) technology. This could also be viewed by some as a synthetic or artificial process. By using these artificial and synthetic materials in production that is, in part, automated, I am embracing the artifice by celebrating the unnatural.

These materials either have an inherent quality that is either seductive in itself, and/or is easily modified. For instance, the clear acrylic is great for its ability to reflect, but it also has the powerful potential to create a sense of depth within the image by utilizing its second surface, or back side. Another prime example of this unique application and versatility of materials can be seen with the high density urethane foam, which makes up the heavily pitted textural element in several pieces. The texture found in this material is sourced from a photograph I took of igneous rock when visiting New Mexico in 2018. (See Figure 4.) I chose this particular source because of its visual qualities and irregularities. But I also am excited about the symbolic reference to igneous rock being younger and more newly formed. Additionally, I draw a link to obsidian glass, which historically has been used to create weapons, particularly knives for ceremonial sacrifice to gods. The photograph is imported into a computer program that converts the value contrasts present to three-dimensional coordinates for the CNC milling code in a process called bump mapping. The darker areas of the photograph recess in space, the lighter areas pronounce. The

foam is then automatically sculpted with mesmerizing action and ease. The material becomes a facsimile of the original stone.

When I began working with computer controlled machines to fabricate these pieces, I was concerned that there would be no life to them. I was worried they would be soulless. I wanted to ensure that there was warmth, but I was actually happy with them appearing as if the human hand was absent. The dei are meant to be autonomous and forthright. The process allows me to hone my love for craftsmanship while presenting the challenge of breathing life into them. I believe that I have succeeded in meeting this challenge.

There are repeated formal elements that are present through the breadth of the work. Abstract geometric shapes are probably the most prevalent. Squares, rectangles, circles, and diamond or “lozenge” shapes make up the general shape of many of the dei. Others are more iconically representative. There are stair steps as well as other architectural features including columns and bricks. Architecture is certainly a source of inspiration for the formal qualities found in much the dei. After all, these pieces are built from a plan. They are constructions. (See Figs. 5-10)

The brick is also an element that has a visual appeal alongside metaphorical heft. The brick pattern as a visual motif is, by far, one of my favorites. I am interested in the staggered grid not only for its visual appeal, but also for its practical reason for stability and structural strength. In the context of OAZO, the brick further pushes the agenda of unity. A single brick is nothing compared to the power that can be achieved with a wall of bricks; power in numbers, strength in unity.

This idea of unity can also be extended to the overall aesthetics within the entirety of the exhibition. It is my hope that the participants of OAZO, the viewers of the exhibition, leave the

space with an appreciation for the intentionality and cohesion behind the entirety of what they experience. OAZO is heavily designed in a very specific aesthetic language. From the colors, textures and overall craft to the choices of font on the literature provided in the show, it is my aim that the aesthetic is impressionable and lasting. Whether a dei is seen individually, or as a group in its entirety within the experiential environment, the aesthetic sits proudly in front and center of the viewer's attention.

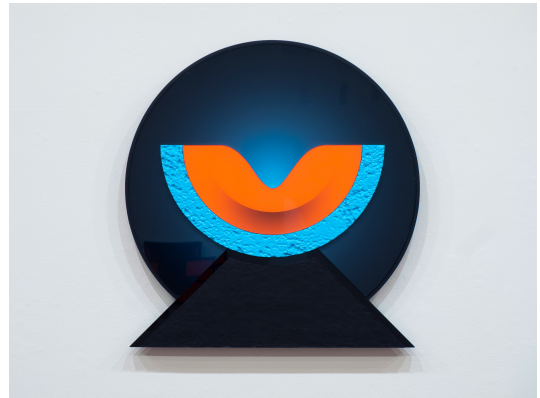


Fig. 5. Ligita, Acrylic Faux Leather, Paint, PVC, Vinyl, 27" x 21.75", 2019

Fig. 6. Sentema, Acrylic, Ball chain, Cork, MDF, Paint, Vinyl, 37" x 21, 2019

Fig. 7. Kiklo, Acrylic, Chain, HDU, MDF, Paint, Vinyl, 45.5" x 25.25", 2019

Fig. 8. Ekvilibra, Acrylic, Faux Leather, HDU, MDF, Paint, Vinyl, 26.25" x 25.25", 2019

Fig. 9. Hejmo, Acrylic, Cork, Gravel, HDU, OSB, Paint, Vinyl, 27.5" x 28" x 6", 2019

Fig. 10. Deurnuwin, Acrylic, Chain, Faux Suede, Gravel, MDF, Motor, Paint, Tacks, 108" x 24" x 24", 2019

Section Three.

BE PRESENT

The Themes

OAZO features an array of encompassing themes, meditative mantras, and lyrical chants that posit meaningful and complex conceptual frameworks. What I believe makes this artwork capable of what I suggest it can do, is its persistent objective of positive encouragement. As mentioned before, the theme of unity is prevalent in many interpretive elements. This unity is not only between the work itself as a uniformity. Nor is this sense of unity limited to the metaphorical sense of power in numbers. OAZO also speaks to a unity within oneself. This unified-self agenda is most clearly pushed by the mantra of “Be present.”

“Be present.” is a succinct and imperative command to OAZO’s participants to nurture an awareness and develop a focus of the reality of the perpetual now. I personally struggle with trying to stay present with my life. I will think about the past and how things could have turned out differently. Conversely, and most certainly, I tend to think about what is to come. “Be present.” is a simple statement; it isn’t specific. It is a reminder to slow down and acknowledge the moment in which we are. “Be present.” suggests we unite our body with our mind and experience. Once a person can get into that state, the more likely they will be able to access the full potential of OAZO.

The concept of utopia is underlying this work. The concept of utopia underlies most religions for that matter. Heaven is a utopian city of sorts. What I really find fascinating about the

concept of utopia is that it literally means “no place” and yet we still persist and forge ahead hoping to find it. It is the exploration that is important in the end. It brings us closer to the idea, even if we never get there.

The word “oazo” translates from Esperanto, to “oasis.” Esperanto is a constructed international auxiliary language that was developed by a Polish-Jewish ophthalmologist named L. L. Zamenhoff in a utopian dream to unite disparate international cultures and foster understanding in the late 18th century. The language is inherently utopian. “Esperanto” translates to “one who hopes.”⁴ I chose the word “oazo” because I believe it to be a perfect and quite romantic analogy of the concept of a utopia. The oasis is this respite amidst the harsh and unrelenting landscape of the desert. Though in the storybook version of the oasis is often seen in hallucinogenic mirages, it embodies perfection and retains all that is needed to fulfill and sustain.

The utopian concept of spiritual congruence and social order is ubiquitously present in Science-Fiction films, especially those in from the middle of the 20th century onward. Sci-fi films are a huge inspiration for my work, especially in *OAZO*. I am fascinated by retro presumptions of how the future would be and look in these motion pictures. I borrow heavily from the distilled aesthetics of these films and I am thrilled that the objects I resolve seem old and new at the exact same time. It is believable that they exist in some alternate futuristic utopia.

Can art really cause one to transcend and allow them to “relinquish corporeal control” in order to find some sort of spiritual connection? Within the right conditions, I believe it can. I try to imagine the vast amounts of spiritual energy aimed at stained-glass windows in cathedrals. They were truly conduits to the Christian god. And this god’s message was relayed back through these images; divine connection through art. This is at the heart of what I am seeking to facilitate

⁴ Wikipedia contributors, “Esperanto,” Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Esperanto&oldid=807870629> (accessed October 3, 2017).

through OAZO. The difference is that I am suggesting that god is within the individual. The dei have utility, much like stained-glass windows. Hope, unity, solidarity, awe, strength and inner-power are all the themes pushing OAZO into a positive direction of being capable for the cycle of spiritual activity. The environment and dei are all in place to facilitate these feelings and phenomena.

Section Four.

0AZO 2019

The Exhibition

0AZO 2019 exhibits twenty-four unique and complex digitally fabricated sculptures within a space and includes accompanying architectural elements, furniture, plush carpeting, custom lighting, engaging sound, and diffused distinctive scents. The arrangement of these sculptures, or dei, and the ephemera listed are able to be adapted to whatever the setting requires. The properties included in the requirements for the success of the exhibition of this work have a great transformative ability. The ideal scenario for the exhibition of 0AZO is within a controlled and installed immersive environment.

In order to maximize the potential for viewers to experience 0AZO in a way that is most salient, many factors have to be in place. 0AZO is not only a brand of art objects, it also offers the experience of interaction within the space that these objects occupy. The amount of dei being exhibited is less important than how they are presented within a space. I believe that presentation is pivotal to the success of an artwork. The participant of the exhibition of 0AZO should enter the space and immediately understand that they are in a place that is very different from where they came. The environment should instigate a need to assess the surroundings.

To successfully achieve such a punctual moment, I find that there must be a dramatic shift in lighting. Lighting can drastically change the perspective we have on objects and in spaces. It helps compose our perception of reality and confirm that vision is not objective. It can

create suspense and drama or it can obliterate detail. Lighting can truly make or break a show. No matter how good a piece of artwork is, the way in which it is lit can alter the viewer's comprehension in extreme ways.

For the exhibition of OAZO, I exclusively use a multitude of specific LED colored bulbs to flood the space with golden yellow light. It is completely transformed. The white balance shifts to a rich, warm, and comforting yellow. The white walls appear to be painted. This is not the lighting of an environment that one finds oneself in very often. It is unnatural. It takes time for eyes to adjust.

There are some curious effects that the colored light has on other colors, which is an additional benefit of this choice. The filtered effect enhances the value shift of color prominence between the red and blue. By casting a medium toned light on the red/blue color interaction, it closes the gap between their value difference even more. The woozy psychedelic effect is amplified, creating a more powerful optical illusion. This lighting is a unique and essential design element to OAZO.

In addition to controlling the baseline of the illumination in the exhibition space for OAZO, I frame the auditory experience with dynamic ambient music. For OAZO 2019, there are twenty-three dei pieces of originally composed and recorded music playing through three digitally connected wireless speakers. The twenty-three compositions correspond individually to the twenty-three dei that are represented in the exhibition. I composed the majority of the tracks, however I commissioned three other sound artists (Scott Campbell, Eve Maret, and Proud/Father) to contribute to the OAZO soundtrack. They were prompted to create sounds for specific dei and produced some beautiful auditory moments that accompany the space. It is not necessary for the participant of OAZO to know which track belongs to which dei while in the

exhibition space. The main purpose is that the music sets a mood and calibrates the way people can experience the show.

Continuing with the appeal to the senses, I also include an olfactory element to the presentation of this experience. A customized blend of essential oils are vaporized in two air diffusers housed in vertical display structures that are internally-lit, seemingly guarded by a perimeter of ball-chain. The scent permeates. It is pleasant and clean with a citric sweetness. It lightens the air, despite being quite potent. It begs to be taken in with a deep breath.

Smell memory is the best form of memory that humans have. A particular smell can recall an experience that we had forgotten about in all other ways. By including an olfactory association with OAZO, I intend to utilize this strength that we have. It is my hope that a vague whiff of something similar to what I developed could transport them back to the space they experienced in OAZO.

Viewers are encouraged to spend time in the exhibition space with other elements such as the designed furniture and the plush black carpeting. The furniture, which are a set of benches and two staircases that face each other in the center of the installation, invites participants to sit, relax, climb the steps, breathe. The furniture activates the viewer through the space. Similarly, the black shag carpeting has multiple effects. It softens and quiets the room. The carpeting also makes the space more intimate by visually diminishing its sense of scale. And, visually, it grounds the entirety of the show with a textured base.

The immersive environment that OAZO offers is an integral component of the work. In other words, it isn't just the plate that the meal is served on. The plate is partly why the meal is being served. It has been my goal to develop my art practice by honing the intentionality of design as it pertains to interior art spaces. I am interested in cultivating and providing lasting and

memorable moments for those who have the ability to see my work. I feel like I have achieved what I had intended with the setting of OAZO, and I am motivated to see where it takes my practice in the future.



Fig. 11. OAZO Outreach Team Outdoor Sign, Corrugated Plastic, 8" x 16", 2018

Section Five.

SE MAMMUM DEI

The Perpetuation

How does OAZO manifest in the future? How will it develop and evolve? Can it simultaneously and successfully move in opposite directions of more intimate space and mass-marketed production? I am continuing to work with a considerable number of ideas, objects, and active event programs that are in varying states of finish. The language of OAZO is only going to diversify and become more complex as time moves along. The one answer that is clear is that it that OAZO will perpetuate.

A significant effort before I began production on the dei for the 2019 line was to develop brand awareness for OAZO. I created an edition of 250 miniature zines explaining a brief and vague description of what the brand is. These, along with custom decals and posters, were distributed about the city of New Orleans. I also produced several dimensional signs detailing the OAZO “brick logo” made out of colored corrugated plastic. These “OAZO Outreach Team” signs were meant to recruit people to openly display these signs outdoors at their home or place of business. The response was surprisingly plentiful. Many people were interested in having one to show without having any real information about OAZO. I also planted them in prominent intersections on street light posts around the city (Fig. 11.) A few of the signs made it to cities outside of New Orleans including Los Angeles, New York, Boston and Philadelphia, which is

promising. The effort to continue these strategies of brand development is high on the list of directions to move toward with this project.

It was a big part of the plan to exhibit OAZO with some sort of souvenir gift shop. This is akin to the convention of the gift shops seen at art museums enticing patrons to purchase books or prints, or even silk scarves that are reminiscent of the abstract painting exhibit. The difficulty was trying to decide on where in relation the commercial aspect would coexist with the idea of the secular sanctuary. Ideas of pop-up satellite shops and mobile kiosks began to emerge as potential work-arounds. However, I am interested in challenging the notion of “sacrilege” in a spiritual model that is not religious, but embraces the commodity as a potential portal to one’s spirit.

I am trying to understand where the line is drawn between an object being able to be consumed with the purposes of spiritual enlivening and where it cheapens the experience. Can a sanctuary also be a boutique? Is the way we consume an experience much different than the way we consume goods that make us happy? I am beginning to believe that it is not. OAZO is my attempt to find exactly how that manifests in a beautiful and curious way. Se Mammum Dei.

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BIOGRAPHY

b. 1982, Indianapolis, Indiana

Joshua Edward Bennett's approach to creating art begins with his fascination with the surreal, the intangible, and the transcendental. His curious and tightly crafted compositions present electric colors and seductive textures which signal to a sublime purpose: to exist as conduits for the circulation of spiritual energy. Elusive in definition, Bennett's wall-hung dimensional relief objects exist in a space between painting and sculpture; autonomous and forthright. These highly designed works, (typically consisting of plastics, foams, wood, and metal) are strategically assembled through means of digital fabrication using computer-controlled milling tools. Other presentations of his assemblages plunge from the ceiling attached by chain or rope, and free-standing sculptures sit on customized pedestals.

Bennett often exhibits this work within an experiential immersive environment incorporating surrounding pulsations of droning sound, dramatic floods of colored light, and a permeating redolent scent. By combining these atmospheric elements, he draws comparison and acknowledges parallels of consumption between sanctified places of worship and high-end retail boutiques. He embraces the commodified good as an effective catalyst for spiritual growth. In doing so, Bennett creates welcoming spaces that provide the potential for transcendence and access to corporeal intangibility.

Joshua Edward Bennett lives and works in New Orleans, Louisiana.