

Here and Now:

*Mapping Jungian Archetypes
in Adult Contemporary/R&B Music Videos 1989-1994*

1

which itself includes a Nadia Savage-led multi-hour tour of the labyrinthian-to-put-it mildly non-Tower MassArt facilities. And no snacks.

2

which via public transportation would take a solid two and a half hours plus the overall lameness of getting off the commuter line, taking the Green Line to Park Street, taking the Red Line to Harvard, then getting on a bus to Western Ave and walking to the studio, where I work.

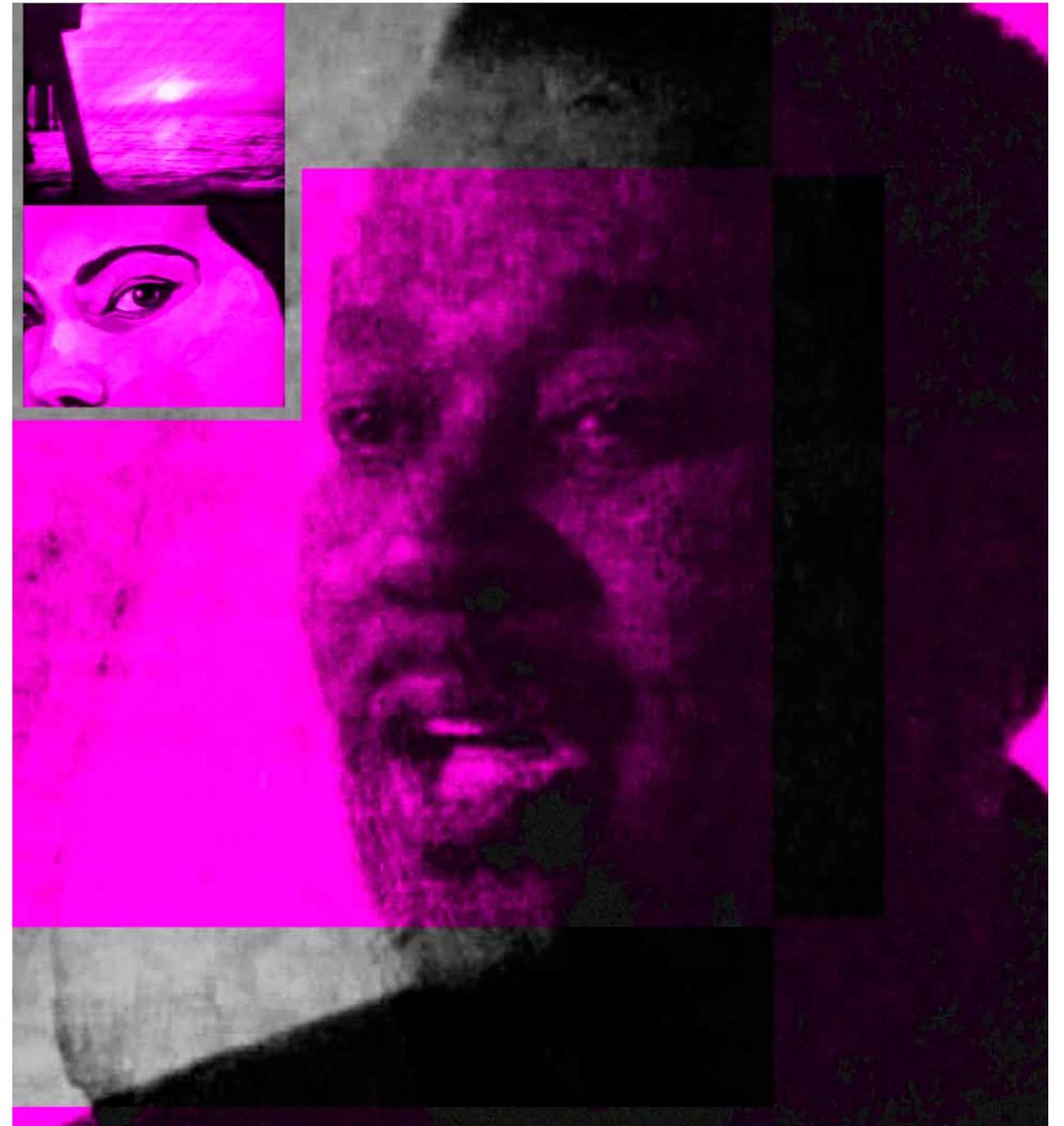
3

At the start of this year, feeling somehow born again, I decided to again try taking the train in to school. This experiment ended after two missed trains, a lot of running with my laptop, and a lost monthly pass.

The first thing you're presented with when you're a new DMI student, after you've made it through orientation¹, and you've smirked and sighed your way through the vaguely commune-initiation-esque and entirely fluorescent meet-and-greet in the DMI lounge area, and you are actually sitting in *Design Studio I* across the considerable table formation from Mr. Jan Kubasiewicz, is the *You Are Here* project. Some refer to it as the *You Are (Now) Here* project, since the project handout (remember those?) had a sort of ghosted "NOW" preceding the "Here", appearing and existing in a way that somehow implied both parentheses and also the word "NOWHERE", depending on how existential and/or depressed you were feeling when looking at the handout. Regardless of what we fondly or regretfully remember about what the project was called, it was basically an open-ended assignment, encouraging we newly-initiated to map something about our own personal existence at the time: here, where we are, NOW.

After working in and having to drive to Brighton² a few days a week, I was initially pretty excited about taking the train to MassArt for my evening classes. Moving against the rush, fairly empty trains, abundant time to read. I was excited. But, classes routinely ran late, and I missed the 930PM train often, and had to wait for the 1040PM train, and then one time missed THAT one, and soon I had had enough and decided to drive to school, exclusively³.

So, I ended up spending a fair amount of time on I-93 and I-95/128N, usually searching the dial for something to ease the pain of extensive con-



4 Recently extended from 8-12, due to popular demand(!), according to the station's official website.

5 Pronounced "BOO-SHAY".

6 which comes off as him being a quasi-Barry White, if he had in fact been white and maybe wore cashmere turtleneck sweaters, exclusively.

7 One favorite that I've somehow committed to memory without trying: "And I guess it's meant to be...forever...you and me...after all." Again, imagine this with every word spoken in Boucher's signature baritone near-whisper *sans* background music bed, simply out there in the night.

8 Perversely, Boucher keeps his appearance a guarded secret, which somehow leads me to believe that my assumptions about his audience could be at least partly true.

9 The closest thing to a pure "art" class that the DMI program offers, taught by psychoanalyst-in-training/instructor/surrogate-mother-figure-to-all, Gunta Kaza. Usually taken in the first semester of the program, the class generally gets everyone back into the process of making and being excited about the creative process through weekly assignments that involve physicality and tangibility and a sort of "back to basics" approach, vs. screen-based or digital work.

struction and traffic and traffic due to construction. This led me, in my searching, all the way up to 106.7 on the FM dial, which, between the hours of 8PM and 1AM⁴, is home to the adult-contemporary show *Bedtime Magic*, hosted by the silk-voiced David Allen Boucher⁵, who, apart from having a unique radio delivery and cadence⁶, peppers his between-song DJ banter with hypnotic murmurs and spoken-word recitals of things like Peter Cetera lyrics⁷. Due to this delivery, and to the kind of music played on the show, I imagine his core audience to consist largely of lonely single or divorced career women in their 40s, all wearing oversized cutoff sweat-shirts, drinking Pinot Grigio and living in stale but glittering luxury apartments with skyline views⁸.

But so anyway on one of these drives back to Salem, early in the semester while still honing in on what my idea for the *You Are Here* project might be, I heard Luther Vandross' 1989 hit "Here and Now" on *Bedtime Magic*. I may have sung along. I mean, that's a lethal chorus. The song stuck in my head, as these kinds of songs do. The next day, I went to *YouTube* and watched the video. Cheesy would be a mild word for the general aesthetic of the thing; it featured Vandross standing alone in a room and seemingly singing to someone off-camera. He's not singing at the camera. This singing footage is then inter-cut with a classic boy-loses-girl-boy-gets-girl-? narrative. The actor playing the role of the "boy" is white, has a curly mullet, and wears a denim jacket. This guy also seems to hang out in either art galleries or rooms bathed in white light. There are also crude animations of paintings of sunsets and birds flying. I was enthralled.

I started clicking around *YouTube* and watching more and more videos from this time period, specifically from the Adult Contemporary/R&B genre and I started noticing visual similarities between some of them. A lot of the same kinds of set design and color were used. Lots of purple. Similar story lines and plot devices kept happening, over and over. Camera angles and movement from different videos were repeated as if coming from the same shot list. There seemed to be an underlying visual language waiting to be mined and deciphered..

Also around this time, probably at least ostensibly as a result of the *Design as Experience*⁹ course, I was interested in the work of Carl Jung.

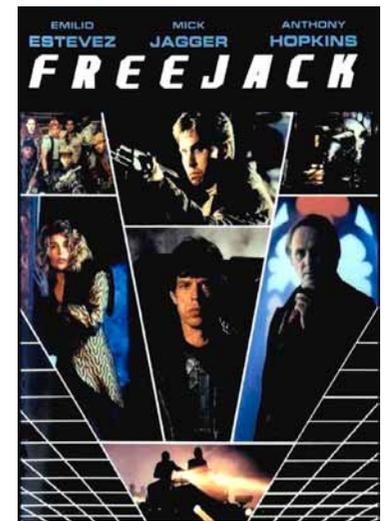
I wish I could say that I had done extensive reading throughout his catalogue, or had taken at least an introductory course on him as an undergrad, but I hadn't. I was familiar with the basics; in high school I'd learned about the Joseph Campbell appropriation of his archetypes and the hero's quest, and then last fall had read a long article in *The New York Times* about the publication of his *The Red Book*. But that's it, really. And so I had the idea of looking for Jungian archetypes in these videos that I had spent a long afternoon in the midst of, forgetting to eat dinner, adrift in a sea of clicks and hyperlinks and pixelated video.

It was the combination of these two seemingly unrelated ideas, cultures and forms, that made me decide to pursue it as a project. I would map Jungian archetypes in the visual language of Adult Contemporary/R&B Videos between 1988 and 1994.

I started the project proper by purchasing four DVDs of music videos from the appropriate genre and period. I already owned *The Best of Cameo* and *The Best of New Edition*¹⁰ (I figured six DVDs was an okay sample size). I imported twenty videos and started cutting them up in *Final Cut Pro* (Apple, Inc., Cupertino, CA, USA). This was chaotic and overwhelming; it was hard to keep track of everything. I needed to pick a specific case study, and a form to display my analysis. I chose "hand gestures" and the specific Jungian archetype of "The Goddess". Hand gestures because they were pervasive in these videos, and because they were hypnotic when looped. I chose "The Goddess" because every one of the videos I studied had some sort of idealized female character or personification in it.

I liked, and still like, the idea of a visual system without a text-based menu. My first idea for the form of the project was to create a large-scale video grid that featured all of the videos, looping in real time. The perceiver would then be able to touch a video, which would, depending on what visual language elements and archetypes it contained, display those elements in two ways. If it contained a visual language element, such as a hand gesture, the section of video containing that gesture would be shown in a smaller grid, alongside other loops of gestures from other videos. This would be the "Conscious" interface, because of the apparent intent of the video makers; it was a conscious decision of the director or choreographer or artist to make

10 Both semi-gag gifts from friends of mine. For a period of time in the late 1990s/early 2000s, we gave each other "bad" DVDs as gifts. I also own a copy of *Freejack* as a result of this practice.





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Make no mistake: these are stylized, not-fooling-around gestures. These are the kinds of things that aren't done by mistake.

the hand gesture¹¹ and include it, and the way in which these excerpts are presented reflects that.

If the video contained a Jungian archetype, the excerpt from the video containing that archetype would appear, full frame, superimposed over other excerpts from other videos containing the same archetype. The video loops would fade in transparency, allowing the perceiver to make his/her own visual/emotional/spiritual connections between the videos. This would be the "Subconscious" subset, the idea being that the inclusion of these archetypes in the videos wasn't necessarily intentional. Their presence is dependent upon an interpretation of the content, and the interface invites further interpretation.

That's about as far as I got in developing the project. Soon it was on to Guy Pierce, tattoos and nonlinearity in *Memento*. Looking at the *Here and Now* project now, it seems clear that, at a very basic level, I was taking these artifacts that I had experienced at a previous and largely formative point in life (my childhood) and de-contextualizing them, taking them away from their original context in order to look at them with new eyes. It was a *You Are Here* project in the sense that it documented the way I was thinking about very specific things at a very specific time, and it came directly from my own personal experience. I'm just glad I didn't do a visualization of my *Facebook*¹² friends. What would that have told me about my place in the universe, the world, the country, the state, the city, the school, the program, or even the class? Somewhere, likely on one of the upper floors of the Prudential tower, no doubt shrouded in a trench coat and a fedora, I imagine David Allen Boucher is whispering the answer, his voice being near-instantaneously converted to radio waves and transmitted to the cosmos, ready to be reconfigured, one hushed syllable at a time.

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I'm not a member of the site. Also, no offense if you're into that sort of thing.

NEXT PAGE ABOVE: THE *Conscious* INTERFACE.
NEXT PAGE BELOW: THE *Unconscious* INTERFACE.

