

## **Evan Major, *Caffeine Dream*, via email to Bryan Ricupero, 9.20.15**

### **Process**

I made this oil painting my sophomore year at UW in 2008. That was before I really understood what was important to me about the creative process. At that point in time I was still primarily concerned with the product of creative work. Process was merely a means to an end.

### **Content**

The semester I made that painting I was taking Painting 1 and Color Theory. I was learning about how our eyes and our brain process and interpret color. Our eyes have what are called rods and cones. The rods process light and dark (black vs white) while the cones process color. Humans have a limited number of cones that work together to create all the colors we are each capable of seeing. Our cones can only process certain color wavelengths simultaneously. There is a color opponent theory that explains (in short) how our eyes can only process one color to its complement (a color opposite it on the color wheel) at one time (i.e. red vs green, blue vs orange, purple vs yellow). So when we see red next to green our cones process each antagonistically and not simultaneously. This means that our eyes work harder to process color complements edge-to-edge resulting in a kind of visual shock. I wanted to use this to my advantage in *Caffeine Dream*.

In this painting I wanted to use the color complements yellow and purple to create an optical vibration. The dog and the abstracted eyes (purple) float over a highly saturated color field of yellow and green. There is no ground, no vantage point, there is no context by which to define space. The effect is a kind of astral floating electric image. When you focus on the eye of the dog the other repeated eye shapes start to float and vibrate above the color field.

My intention was to create a highly saturated image that would simulate that kind of lucid dreamlike state I was in when I created the sketch in the music auditorium. It was not a conscious intention at the time, but the image draws on inspiration from the Inuit art I had seen at the Denver Art Museum. In retrospect, looking at this image now, I see a convergence of many of the things that surrounded me at the time: color theory, lucid states, drugs, simulation, Native American art, "Big Sky Country," "Astral America," Wyoming.

### **Inspiration**

The image was taken from a sketch I did while half asleep in the music auditorium waiting for my music history class to start up. I was listening to a song called *Black Eye Dog* by Nick Drake

and I wasn't really thinking about concept or content I was mindlessly sketching in a kind of lucid state. Later that week I found the sketch and was excited by the way the eye of the dog was abstracted and repeated throughout the picture plane. I saw it as a perfect image to use for a color experiment.