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# Contemplating Mortality

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CONTEMPLATING MORTALITY

A Thesis

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Master of Fine Arts

Tyler D. Rahl

Indiana University of Pennsylvania

May 2015

Indiana University of Pennsylvania  
School of Graduate Studies and Research  
Department of Art

We hereby approve the thesis of

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The MFA Thesis Exhibition, *Contemplating Mortality*, explores human responses to the realization of one's mortality and the fear that arises when confronting the inevitability of death. To ease this fear, we adopt differing cosmological belief systems to help explain the unknown. *Contemplating Mortality* consists of mixed-media paintings, which explore humanity's quest for meaning in the inescapable moment of death and the psychological stages we move through while coming to terms with our impermanence. The idea of death and its embodiment through materials is expressed by integrating within the paintings the cremated remains of a young man who died tragically. The mother of this individual provided her son's ashes for this exhibition as a way to honor her son's short life. The paintings serve as a spiritual vessel for this individual and to memorialize his moment of passage from this life to the next.