

Lit Log OFOCN
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Artist Statement
American Psychedelic



American Psychedelic is an altered version of "American Gothic," a well-known painting by Grant Wood. This version was digitally changed to represent certain themes and ideas in the novel *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* by Ken Kesey. The name American Psychedelic is a play on the original title of the painting, inspired by the opening pages of *OFOCN* where Kesey describes how being involved in government programs where psychedelics were used played a huge role in creating the novel.

The idea behind American Psychedelic is to show how the perception of the world is different for each person, sometimes drastically different. In this case, a famous painting, one that many people know and perceive in certain ways, is altered to resemble the way Chief Bromden may see this painting and other aspects of life in the novel. Hallucinations and themes are changing the way that the original painting is represented.

The first thing you may notice is the overlay of fog on the picture; the motif of fog is recurring in the novel and Chief Bromden's mind. Fog in *OFOCN* was originally used as a memory from Bromden in the war, describing the way fog was used so you lose perception of your enemies, but when they get close you see them clearer than you've seen anything before. Later in the novel, the fog turns into one of Chief Bromden's hallucinations, something covering the hallways, something masking what the nurses are doing. This is a mix between one of Bromden's actual hallucinations and a representation of losing touch with reality and a loss of clarity. In the depiction in American Psychedelic the latter is shown, a thick layer of fog that makes the image harder to recognize and harder to perceive.

The woman in the artwork depicts Nurse Ratched. The nurse from *OFOCN*, who Bromden perceives as evil. In American Psychedelic the woman's farm clothes are digitally replaced with old-fashioned scrubs that a nurse might've worn. The personification of her evil is depicted by the 8 eyes that she eyes, representing when Bromden viewed her as a spider. This is also used to show her overall evil and the monstrous view that Bromden has of her. The male farmer's face is completely morphed, making his features completely unrecognizable from the original artwork. This is done to show Bromden's untrustworthy narration, the idea that certain key details may be lost due to the way that he perceives certain things.

The last key detail of American Psychedelic is the view into the house through the windows is changed into a brightly colored technical design representing the inside of a machine. The intention behind this is to depict the motif of machinery in the ward. Bromden refers to certain aspects of the system of the ward as machinery and refers to people using vocabulary that you would describe a machine as. This motif of machinery symbolizes the way that the people in the ward act like robots, void of emotion or free will. And depicts the system of the ward as a machine, running in certain purposeful ways for methods of control.

Below is the original American Gothic for comparison to the artwork.

