

Within Haggled, Twisted, Faintly Smelling Arches

There are at least two artists here. There are at least X number of thought prompts installed in the space. The artists have spent approximately X number of hours thinking. The artists have spent approximately X number of hours making. There are at least X number of works the artists have made but chose to edit out. The artists have written X number of emails in the process of thinking and making and had X number of coffees while dialoguing with each other and numerous other agents. There are at least X number of persons and X amount of funding that the exhibition is financially dependent on, partly. While we are on the topic of numbers, there are at least two artists here and they are approximately X years in biological age, though whether this number corresponds to artistic age could be up for discussion. Then there are approximately X number of artists' labour hours to arrive at what the artists suggest for the public to experience in the space. Is it possible to consider proposing a calculation where the hours of labor multiplied by the artist's age, plus the material costs can produce a sum equivalent to the monetary value of the work?

Some weeks ago, I received an invitation to write this text. I wasn't sure if I had it in me to take on the task, or whether the labor would be remunerated to its full extent, knowing how much time it would require of me. I accepted because I was happy for the contact and the dialogue with the artists was of value to me. I received, as material to write from, a zipped file of X megabytes that expanded into a labyrinth of subfolders. Some folders contained research material, while other folders were documented works that will be shown and works that were made but won't be shown. There were folders containing images of surfaces that have been drawn on. There were folders containing images of surfaces that became assemblages. There were folders containing images of objects and forms in a domestic space. Some of the objects were standing solidly with a slim but sturdy spine inserted into a circular base, and some objects had curvy spines that were leaning against a chair. There was an image where the assemblages were hung above a sofa. The domestic setting in which the works were made, resided in, and were photographed from was a persistent backdrop to my slow navigation of the material, formal, and physical dialogue between the two artists. The glimpses of intimate spheres that seeped through and between their works signaled a joint attitude of accepting, overcoming, and utilizing the given conditions as material to make from, and through making in domestic spaces of living, finding a way to survive the sudden and permanent changes in the body, as well as chronic state of grief.

In addition to the images, some folders contained texts: statements written by each of the artists alone, supporting documents like applications and press releases explaining the overall arc of the artists' joint venture, or poetic exchanges between the artists as writing exercises to bridge unbridgeable inbetweens. Flipping between the files of images and texts, spindly arches formed between the artists, not so immediately or literally related, not so rationally architectonic as to bear a lot of weight. But I intuited narrative arches in the play between images and texts, kind of like how a loop of string in a game of cat's cradle could become an arch, linking the two bodies and hands playing the game. Despite the thinness of the loop, necessary for it to wrap around fingers and hands, the players make patterns, or cradles of passages for me to weave in and out of, to pull up, through and under, while connecting, missing, dragging, and feeling the dots between drawings, assemblages and sculptures that the artists have spent time with. The thread the artists have connected with may at times be frail, but their decision to communicate,

and insistence on connection were like sinewy fibers that allowed me to walk through their arches that through time have now become passages.

Traversing through the arcade, there are objects and assemblages and drawings, and it is the last that keeps gnawing at me as I flip up and down and through the images and words. But why drawing? Why drawing both as a medium but more importantly as a verb? As in to draw from, or to draw upon, and to draw up? Is it because the scale of the works is related to those found in domestic spaces? Is it because the marks made on surfaces evidence someone who was thinking with a pencil or a glue gun at hand? Is it because of the quirky figures, lightly notated with pencil marks, which frame centrally - placed heaps of squishy rectangular and triangular structures? Is it because of material themes like pinecones, leaves, and needles drenched in white, purple, silver, and iridescent confetti that come with associations to childhood, to crafts, to remembering the ungraspable temporalities? Is it because of a form that is shaped like a shovel but insinuates a tongue? Is there a lightness to the sculptural forms that I am imagining because I am relating to the works mainly through images? I don't think I'm only imagining though. I think I'm reading into the images the lightness that Italo Calvino describes in "Six Memos for the Next Millennium,"¹ as a desired quality of writing through which characters can rise above the heaviness of predictable forces weighing them down and engage in "unpredictable deviations" that allow us to face timeframes and histories that are too gruesome to be looked at directly.

I re-read two texts the artists have shared with me, where I first encountered **Within Haggled, Twisted, Faintly Smelling Arches** as the title of a writing exercise by one of the artists, which in my first reading I didn't quite understand was the title of the exhibition. Certain references from their texts stand out, such as pilates class, bluetooth speaker, a manual on Adobe Premiere, Schenker, a skin-colored" band aid, and a forgotten poet called Helen Herschdorfer. The specificity of these markers makes me think about when the artists were born - the 1980s - and how that historical timeframe would shape their methods of remembering, of recording moments in time, and of digesting the nebulousness of their memories. They converse through formal agreements, oscillating between text-experiments and abstracted forms, where the repetition of drawn figures, compositions, textures and forms aren't echo chambers of each other, but rather voices that request a reply as a way of marking the time of lingering collective heartbreak and chronic illness.

I allow myself the audacity to claim both artists' practices as acts of drawing and hope I won't alienate either or both of them. I borrow from Amy Sillman, an artist who seems to have a painterly practice, but understands herself as a "draw-er," as she explains in "Some Notes on Drawing,"

Drawing feels its way both backwards and forwards in time. Far from being a preparatory or preliminary act, a sketch or a rehearsal, drawing is a constant respooling of chronological time and circular time, where "knowing" builds up over time, but also loops back onto itself. Drawing is a particular time-based art because not only can you see self-reflexively from both inside and outside simultaneously but you might also be thinking about something else entirely. (Faux Pas. Selected Writings and Drawings, Amy Sillman, Expanded Edition p.87)

¹ Italo Calvino, *Six Memos for the Next Millennium*, Vintage; First Edition, 1993

Sillman's identification of the time-based aspects of drawing offers a framework for the works here, the acts-in-time of the artists that have labored, singularly and in dialogue with each other. The line drawn between the artists, the works, the texts, and now to me writing this text, could be extended - as the show goes on – wherever instances of connection, brief moments of listening to and of being heard, appeals as the micro memories that sustain us through all the difficult to gruesome days. It is difficult to pin down with words, the acts-in-time of an artwork. But as long as words “live in the mind” according to Virginia Woolf, they “are democratic... uneducated words are as good as educated words, uncultivated words as good as cultivated words.”²

- Jeuno JE Kim

² Virginia Woolf, “Craftsmanship,” BBC radio broadcast, *Words Fail Me*, April 29, 1937; reproduced in *The Essays of Virginia Woolf, Volume VI*, ed. Stuart N. Clarke (London: Hogarth Press, 2011).