

TRANS* ON LINE

I have a hard time figure drawing. I feel as though representational drawing (or figurative fine art made to appear as we see it) is to try to harness the line; to make it conform. Paul Delaroche's Daguerreotype that began the "death of painting" has given the artist little reason to attempt to accurately and decisively portray the (outside) visible world. Photography has marked a strange turning point for fine art (among other arts) - one in which that artists themselves are forced to confront their dominating touch. The mark, this "touch", is only made through line. This line could be rubbing, smudging, splattering - the method of mark making is irrelevant. Although photography is typically accepting as "truth" or documentation in society, it, too, is false reality, manipulated rigorously through indirect human touch. Therefore, without this direct touch, painting's ability to highlight the artist beneath its marked history becomes evident and even more important. The mark, that being said, acts as a documentation or mark, of the action of mark. If this mark is documentation, it must (and does) hold the weight of the moment in which it was birthed the artist's body/tool.

The mark becomes not only a documentation of the moment it was birthed, but of the artist's history. The mark transforms into the truth that photography lacks: the truth of unfiltered reality, of expression. The mark is born in the moment the artist pauses to create line, to document the gesture of mark making. The line in itself, after the new foundations of photography, can become a time marker for everything that happened to the artist up to and during its creation.

It is this notion, that the line documents not only the moments of one's life leading up to, but also during its creation, that allows an unfiltered truth to enter the realm of fine art. (And exiting most processes of photography). The potential that line has for my trans*, queer, Jewish body is quite unique. I have always felt that the truth presented by fine art (which is essentially mark-making) could be a window out of my dysphoria - in other words, to be seen without the crushing weight of the body that wasn't mine, but is now. I do not think this potential can go unnoticed, for when we realize the public's views on the death of painting, it is ever more important to reclaim it in your own unfiltered truth. To do so is to accept reality and voice yourself among others doing the same - to have such a conversation that transcends all languages but art. To any painter this becomes even more important as one thinks about the way their identity can appear through such documentative marks. When reconciling with the truth that I have made before my eyes, I cannot think it is wrong. For thinking a mark is "wrong" or "bad" is to say the truth is the same. Is the truth of the line you have made upsetting you? Why? Why hate it? Why obsess over the image of a gesture? To ignore it would be to cover it up. To love it and accept it would mean to accept and highlight, even, the truth of your identity, not only as a human in this world (or your own) but as an artist speaking your own language.

This is the unadulterated expression that line can so effortlessly bring. This is why I find figurative, representational work often just confirmation of a European, white, male dominance over the techniques that are taught (and thus frequently accepted as its own inherent truth of art). I do not think it is worthwhile for myself as an artist to spend more time confirming this notion of European triumph and thinking about how to twist and manipulate my mark making. To do so would be to ignore my unique potential as an artist in my own body and world.

PRACTICING

Performing daily always, inevitably, irresistibly, is the truth of society. This is why I love performance, and love/hate fine art; meaning drawing and painting. However, the lines are grayed between the two seemingly unrelated topics.

When I practice, daily, I become an artist.

In doing so, one is able to acknowledge a daily progression upon their making and identity. Maggi Hambling is often repeating the notes of her past mentor, "If you're going to make yourself an artist, you must make your work your best friend, that you can go to whatever you're feeling. Whatever it is go to your work." I strongly believe this statement speaks to how practicing regularly allows the artist to establish themselves as a maker with a technique

and process separate from the “real world”. An artist to me can be defined presently as an individual who actively creates art by making marks (ephemeral, social, literal, etc.) that show us something new - the artist themselves, the only truth worth listening to, worth spending our 2019 time on.

In seeing my own work daily, and recognizing that I must work constantly and daily, as we also proceed to irresistibly perform radically in and throughout our society. Thinking constantly, performing constantly, shouldn't we spend this perforative lifestyle and time learning and thinking on finding what we contribute and as artists developing ourselves?

I strongly devote myself to Hambling's reminder that to be an artist making art, one needs to be able to return again and again to one's art in order for the art to develop inside the artist. As Paul Hackett, my former mentor would say, “Push your craft”. An artist must push themselves to the limit to find what drives them, what the meaning and purpose of their influence is. In order to develop such a craft, a sense for devotion to artistic development must linger and grow, enticing the artist into the warm embrace of art.

In becoming, one performs. The performance of mark making, the creation of the documentation of gesture and this gesture meeting surface can tell a pure truth that often refuses to be erased or muted out. (Rare in this world of performative “truths” and manipulation and lies). The history and performance of one/s life stops to mark this gesture, to create the mark. Thus the mark becomes a document and holds the weight of everything within the artist's world, life, history, and creative practice.

ON EXPERIMENTAL, “NEW”, ABSTRACT MARKS

Matisse, although widely accepted as a paedophile and a bigot, was onto an incredibly influential study of children's artwork. The purity, innocence, and freedom expressed through such work was something often found in Matisse's own practice. The study of expression without the burdens of “traditional” schooling or the white European hold on art in this world is eye-opening to how learning and unlearning go hand in hand in our world. To learn art is to learn techniques of other artists. In doing so the artist, through practicing, will hope to gain some knowledge from the origins of such technique. It is as much, if not more important in our present day to unlearn and question our teachings, readings, practices, to begin to understand art - and possibly more powerful, our own artistic practice.

To express something new, something worth spending our precious, short attention on, there must be some sort of original material coming from the artist in the aftermath of the presented work. Let me explain further: to find something new, expressive, and artistic, going within oneself and one's artistic immersive world is necessary. The reason being is that humans will always fail to accurately represent anything in this world, and only slightly better something in the artist's head. Thus, there seems to be little reason to depict our world as we see it. We as artists must therefore understand our ephemeral relationship to the page, camera, surface, material, experience, performance, etc. The performance of this creation is the artist's undeniable truth. The full, completed (if that is really such a state that art can be) work of art (including mark and “fine art” practices) documents each gestural mark as every documented mark or line is present in one single moment.

To express something that intrigues and holds the viewer si to create something worthwhile; new; interesting; and above all, a work of art.

This “newness” is similar to the newness one experiences as a developing child. (Coming back to Matisse's fascination with children's expression in art). Parallels can be drawn between the artistic practices and the experiences of learning a new world as a child. Reading, listening, watching, a new word can seem foreign to a child, potentially of another language to the untrained listener. When defined, and therefore prescribed a new meaning, the word has usage, function, and potential. Not only does the child now have power over the word, but the word has power to give to the child as a tool of language. Defined, assigned value and structure within the child's growing vocabulary, the new word becomes a powerful tool both in itself and in its developmental impact upon the child.

This tool, this realization structure, and discovery of an exotic newness, is the experience of finding new theorems in “fine art” (i.e.: abstract developments, and profound gestures within one's life). This is not necessarily inspiration, or the attempt to find it - which is sure to fail - but of foundation of the identity defined and shaped in the paragraphs above. Chuck Close promotes this idea stating late in his profound career, “‘Inspiration is for amateurs —

the rest of us just show up and get to work. And the belief that things will grow out of the activity itself and that you will — through work — bump into other possibilities and kick open other doors that you would never have dreamt of if you were just sitting around looking for a great ‘art idea.’” Close understands that these explorations of artist development are not equivalent in the slightest to finding inspiration. The seeing eye cannot be completely reliant, nor the mind, nor both together, can be counted on for inspiration, much less motivation, to create art. Finding the real motivation, through constant, daily practice as a fluid and working artist, is just like the child’s discovery of a new word.

Therefore, the line can express something of truth, purity, childlike innocence, but most importantly a sense of something new or shocking: an unidentified truth of gesture and existence that speaks its own language, balances its equations, and holds its own undeniable truth.

In 2019, not many things can shock the viewer in the art world, especially “fine art”, but in our case within the realms of this discussion, abstract art. The 2016 election forced America to acknowledge how little we paid attention after WWII and how badly we need to gain focus on reality. Repeating patterns of Germany’s iconic holocaust and America’s own internment camps, and systemic racism rules the foundations of both our country and capitalism. The human race, it seems, has always been in crisis, but the redefinitions of society and identity as human has caused a numbing of our country through both *learning* and *unlearning* the false “truths” America has had since its birth. To shock the viewer it to hold the viewer, to present this exotic newness. To do so today is an extreme feat for a fine artist, and indeed a painter. This is why, in creating/manipulating/highlighting truths or falsities, or simply shocking the viewer with the work’s presence, today’s art is ever more important to the hardened society.

To show someone art is to show someone an identified, unidentifiable performance of identity frozen within the framing of our viewing world. All this being said, the line has more *newness*, more *power*, more *shock*, more *strength*, more *presence* than any hydrogen bomb, technological creation, chemical reaction, human ready-made object, etc. etc. We cannot be numb, and to shock is to prove a truth of existence and in doing so hold the viewer. The truth of the artist’s own developed identity can perhaps affect this 2019 world for a less harmful future. The importance of this particular kind of expressive, worldly deconstruction of our physical world is becoming ever more crucial as our country among others repeats deadly history.

The deconstruction of our world by the artist forces the artist to create in this age. It is in order to escape the world, to escape my life, to escape other’s lives, that I paint, that the artist paints, that I make, that I feel is my only purpose, truth, and duty to this world.

The experimental, the abstract, the identity, the identifier, are new. They are showing the world the truth of art through the truth of the world (which comes from the pure identity build from active practice). This truth, as stated above, is proving to be rarified throughout constant bigotry and silencing of the avant-garde, the students, the educators, the real artists, the working artists, the artists who have no money, the artists who have some money, the artists who love what they do, the artist who makes, instead of the phonies and capitalist knock-offs dominating our culture. Life is not all about seeing, or receiving pleasure or taking something from somewhere. I am no purist, but some of the “purity” in this notion is relevant. The alluring, unadulterated and thus “pure” truth within the mark/gesture shows the viewer the only thing “new” the artist has to offer: themselves, and their ephemeral identity throughout their own practice.