

Relates back to my work and 12/29/17

I've been pondering that silly title I gave in my proposal to Heaven Gallery and really wanting to work on it. I've attached it to this email and frightfully embarrassed, especially so after my rant during our last phone conversation. My embarrassed rant has made it way more silly and dramatic than it may be. If I had not been so dramatic, it may not come across as silly as it now does. Ugh. I've written the proposal in the third person, which I never do but because I sent them the group exhibition proposal at the same time in the third person, I just went along with it.

I'm focused on the performative aspect of the exhibition and still pondering how that will eventuate: whether it will be me coming in at random times to initiate the performance of the sculptures as stated in the proposal or if I will bring in a team of women who I recruit and train to come in and activate them. I'm also planning on making new ceramic pieces that are made specifically to relate to the furniture I purchase.

So I'm thinking of the act of performance. [This article](#) on performance art is interesting in positioning why women gravitated towards the medium in the 60's and 70's. Martha Wilson says "As women, we find ourselves performing all the time to meet society and the culture's expectations about what we're supposed to do, how we're supposed to look, what we're supposed to think." The idea of performance – to perform – what does that mean? Who are we performing for? When are we performing? Is performing just the way we exist as a whole? Can one live a performance-free life? Life as a performance. If in the everyday we perform, when do we not? If you don't know the performances that are shown in this article, def look them up. On a side note, these two performances are my current faves: Marina Abramovich [Breathing In/ Breathing Out \(Death Itself\)](#) (This was a 19 minute performance!), Carol Donegan [Head](#).

I've been thinking about the attraction to performance and why women gravitated towards it so naturally and owned the medium in the 60's and 70's. Why women are still, to this day, more attracted to the medium than men. And also, why women represent their bodies in a variety of mediums, similar to the work I do, more so than men. My work definitely points towards labour, specifically women's labour: using the body to create, the invisible labour surrounding creation. Creation, of course, in its most general sense. Women do create more than just another human with their bodies, which is what is normally referred to when these two words come together: woman/creation. I often think if I was to not use my body as a source of inspiration in my work, what would I be commenting on or inspired by? Maybe the desire for the everyday performance of being 'woman' to end, is the driving force for women's attraction to performance as a tool in art.

Public and private performance: how are these differentiated? How is private and public determined? Who determines this differentiation? Not sure how this fits in here but I do love this article and quote [on the greatest definition of love](#): "Knowledge of each other, not of the flesh but through the flesh, knowledge of self, the real him, the real her, in extremis, the mask slipped from the face..." Tom Stoppard. Desire for intimacy may be a desire to simply remove the mask that we put on to perform in the everyday public arena. I can't help but think of your role as husband within the performance of your marriage. Where does the private and public line of performance differentiate in your life?

Bataille talks about man's rejection or need to conquer nature as a way to differentiate himself from 'animal', to position himself above and beyond the mere animal, which is undesirable. The desire to control nature is in a way, a desire to control himself. "There is, in every man, an animal...imprisoned, like a galley slave, and there is a gate, and if we open the gate, the animal will rush out, like the slave finding his way to escape." I think women's connection to nature is closer as women bleed and are reminded of being animals every month. Mother nature. The history of women being oppressed in all aspects of her life have potentially created this need to escape and so her actions become seen as animalistic. I'm not sure why I am thinking of this but I feel there is a connection to the attraction women have in using their bodies directly in their work or as a source of inspiration.

But of course, I want to remove gender in my work, to open it out from the confines that are imposed by my gender because it is not only women who perform, who experience invisible labour, who are confined by the perceptions of others onto themselves, gender roles, toxic expectations of those gender roles, who perform in the everyday whether public or private. But then, to have men activate the sculptures is something I would need to ponder...

Well, I suppose not being able to get a quick fix through text messaging may mean these long ranting emails. Apologies. It's ok for you to not respond. I do tend to rant when I am given the written word as a form of communication where character limits are not a restriction ;) And as I have not practiced here in Australia for a couple of years, I am not surrounded by like minds, which is always painful to not be able to share thoughts and ideas.

Anyways, I hope you have a great entrance to a fearless 2018! (Fear being something else I have pondered this morning: "Fears are educated into us, and can, if we wish, be educated out." Karl Augustus Menninger)

Let me know if you have any thoughts on how to work the title for my exhibition at Heaven.

Hoping you are well in the current freeze that has swept Chicago.

Speak soon,

Santina

1/10/18

I've spent a lovely few days at the beach, not doing much but swimming and eating. The water is absolutely sensational and beach culture is a huge part of the Australian way of life as the coasts are the most populated part of this country. Drownings are a huge contributor to child fatalities here so my dad made sure we all knew how to swim from the second we started walking. The beach is my medicine for sure. Nothing like salt air, which i miss immensely living in Chicago. I need to make more of an effort to go on short trips to the beaches in the US, even if I can only manage a tent on the sand. Bliss actually.

My trip back home has been different this time around. Not only do I finally feel more settled in the US after living there for seven years (might even be calling the country home!) but I'm noticing the passing of time, parents, friends and fam aging and my inability to accept aging as something that is inevitable. We romanticize aging when young because we imagine the freedom it gives in terms of not having to commit to working all the time but in actual fact, our bodies fail us and the freedom we dream of can be robbed by that fact. I'm hating seeing my mum and my friends parents (especially their dads) struggling to simply walk. I have always lived my life in 'full throttle' as you once observed. I always feel death really, really close to me. Always have. I think that's why i loved living in NYC. I feel my mortality in that city and it makes me want to do more. Even as a child, I had a morbid sense of urgency, knowing this isn't going to last so best to make the most of every fucking moment. I'm finding myself in pain here, full of anxiety for not doing enough. But then...

when I question the feelings I feel when I am accepted into a program, an exhibition or anything related to my work– the elation, the feeling of worthiness, the temporary joy and celebrations that comes with someone saying 'yes' to my work– I feel sick. I feel sick that I get sucked into those injections of endorphins that are based on the approval of others onto my work. I've always prided myself in not giving a shit what others think but attention received from my work or from men for that matter, seem to prove otherwise. Ugh. I think I'm just in a shit way right now not having focus and being too self indulgent without the focus of actually making art work. I do a bit nutso when I don't make art for a while.

I've been pondering your comment on how you see 'performance' in my work and especially your comment on understanding the theory behind it in art/academia. I have never made a distinction between art/academia and life itself. I do see it as being all together in a huge mix like a soup where flavours merge and mix to influence each other. I suppose that's what I think of when I think about my dough and ceramic work. I def don't see one element out performing another but infact, all elements acting as an 'ingredient' to the performance as a whole, whether the performance is in view or hidden.

There is the performance in the person making the dough that will be loaded into the sculptures. They become vessels for the making of the ingredient that will in-turn, perform. The ceramic sculptures then become vessels that await the performance by the dough but they also wait to be activated by the pre performance of the making the dough. And then I suppose the dough performs, which is not what i see as the ultimate performance but more so as a chain reaction of the previous performances. The dough wouldn't be able to perform without the performances in the preparation that come before.

I'm not sure what I'm thinking here. I am interested in this idea of how we 'perform' depending on the stage we are offered, especially with my most recent experience of job interviews. I've never been great at trying to impress or convince people that I am the person for the job, opportunity, or even in mating. I've always been "if you like it, lets go and have a hell of a ride but I am def not going to try and convince you that you should come." So I suppose this is where the gender thing becomes irrelevant as men feel the need to perform, especially with cultures attitude towards the performance of masculinity. My brain then goes off into our history of androcentric sexuality and how performance has been played out by both sexes within sexual relations (and I also assume that would be the case in male homosexuality), which is always a weird performance. There is a role or a persona each vessel needs to uphold within the performance of sexuality or sexual relations, always on edge of collapse.

I'm going to create a list of words that surround my dough sculptures so I can think more about the title and the work itself. Persona, vessel, consumption, merging, performance, collapse, destruction. I think this is what I will work on tomorrow as i sip my morning espresso. I need a better title and with that, I will be able to hone in on the context for the work.

I keep going back to Bataille's quote that opens his book on Eroticism:

"Eroticism is assenting to life even in death."

I might just leave this email at that.

Hope you're well and keeping warm.

1/31/18

"Death. Shit."

I liked stumbling across these words breaking your thoughts in the last email. It is what I feel every day. I am currently suffering severe anxiety attacks as I own the realization I am coming back in a week and a half with a broke arse and no job. The burger joint told me to reach out, which I have, but have not had a response as of yet. I am actually really tired and even though this break in Oz could have been the perfect relaxing time, I've spent it applying for grants and jobs and have focused waaaayyyy too much on my dire financial situation. My panic attacks are weird. I feel death during them. I feel my breathe, my chest, my heart pounding, my weak being, my humanity, my flesh, my blood, my disposability, my temporality, my death. I'm about to head out of the city for a few days to a friends place who lives near the beach and a winery. I'm hoping to calm down from this intense state.

I am pondering where this desire to become gender neutral is really coming from. There is a backlash in patriarchal society to reject the female/feminine and maybe that's what is happening with this call for gender neutrality. It is never the removal of the masculine that is the basis of this call. It is mostly the removal of the feminine. I have always been both masculine and feminine at the same time. I present myself as very feminine which is probably needed to soften the blow for my perceived aggression and ambition. Who knows. I must ponder this a little more and really ask why I want to remove gender in my work. I'd hope it is not simply a reflection of being influenced by the current trend in art of gender ambiguity.

My list has grown (and keeps growing) over the time since I last wrote. And includes quotes:
Vessel

Consumption
Consume
Merging
Perform
Collapse
Persona
Destruction
Boundaries
Overflowing
Laid Bare
Rupture
Inner Experience (Title of one of Bataille's books)
Eroticism
Ardour
Excess
Claustrophobic
Suffering
Suffocating
Restriction
Oppression
Sexuality
Desire
insatiable
Temporal

"Love expresses a need for sacrifice each unity must lose itself in some other which exceeds it. In erotic frenzy the being is led to tear itself apart and lose itself." [Visions of Excess: Selected writings, Bataille](#)

"Eroticism is a movement toward the Other, this is its essential character." The Second Sex, Simone de Beauvoir

The last quote I discovered in [this article](#) i came across yesterday. I love this excerpt from the article "Love enjoys knowing everything about you; desire needs mystery. Love likes to shrink the distance that exists between me and you, while desire is energized by it. If intimacy grows through repetition and familiarity, eroticism is numbed by repetition. It thrives on the mysterious, the novel, and the unexpected. Love is about having; desire is about wanting. An expression of longing, desire requires ongoing elusiveness. It is less concerned with where it has already been than passionate about where it can still go. But too often, as couples settle into the comforts of love, they cease to fan the flame of desire. They forget that fire needs air."

I'm still working on a title for the show. It's still causing me grief to commit to something...

The Bataille quote was from a piece of writing he did for the surrealist magazine he edited called [Documents](#).

If you copy and paste the entire quote in google, you will see it's context. I found this [great list of quotes](#) from him that are difficult to read in this way but taken as sound bites, it is a great list.

I find out tomorrow whether I will be moving to Memphis at the end of the year. I am hoping to have that to look forward to as I really do need a break from all this chasing I do with my work. The idea of staying put and being supported for three months is my bliss. That, and being on a beach for a while enjoying sex and food with someone I desire, listening to the constant sound of waves rolling in, with no contact to the outside world, including the internet. Dream.

See ya real soon for a Hot Toddy,

Santina

2/22/18

Even though I'm back, I'm missing these rants and thought sending you one might not be a good idea as it seems the opportunity of being in your presence is actually coming closer but just in case another dramatic turn of events happens, I want to indulge. Or maybe my obsessive nature just can't help get myself deeper into hot water.

I've been thinking lots lately about emotional availability compared to physical availability and what the differences are there for me, or maybe in general and what the effects are where one is ruled by the other, or most likely where one is repressed and the other over compensates. I stepped away from the situation and saw a reality that had me thinking of how liberal I have been with my thoughts and feeling towards you, who is still a stranger to me. I have felt a nervous energy surround my thoughts over the past week, of seeing you in person after all this emailing I have done while in Australia. Actually, the whole time that I have been in contact with you. Even my emails to do with were quite expressive and may have suggested the type of person I may be. Maybe?

I think this nervous energy is definitely part excitement, as seeing you in person has always made me light up like a Christmas tree, in such a bazaar way. Even our first meeting at the coffee shop had me feeling mighty awesome. Your energy just really hit me like a tonne of bricks and made me feel charged, proud to be the crazily wired and abundantly energized self that I am. You made me feel super fucking confident in my own skin and brain. But this nervous energy I am feeling goes beyond this really cute feeling that is, I suppose, physical attraction. There is some kind of darkness there too.

I have played that scene of you being totes awkward right before telling me you were married, over and over again in my brain. It is definitely something that I have pondered. I think it's because I questioned why you were so awkward telling me, instead of being confident that it wasn't relevant anyways. Marriage is a constructed reality. It isn't real. What is real is your emotions surrounding this constructed reality. I am wildly emotionally available and free, as you may have gathered. Expressing myself emotionally has never been a problem and I suppose that is maybe why I found your awkwardness in telling me you were married quite intriguing. Even your text that evening came through as formal and reluctant, as if not sure how I would react once knowing about your constructed reality. Why were you so nervous about telling me about your situation? I'd definitely be interested to hear.

For me, marriage was created to confine us, not allow us to be free both physically and emotionally in this world and our one life, which is why I have never been interested in its constructs within my own life. I cannot exist in this one life being confined by anything. I won't. I'm sure you have gathered that the fact that you are married does not phase me in the least, as it's not a problem I have imposed on myself, that is, if it is indeed a problem for you. I need to feel free and as long as a situation does not confine ME within relationships (both romantic and platonic), I am not concerned for it at all.

I go back to the idea of emotional and physical availability and how these things coexist. Can they? I am wondering if they may be opposing like Yin and Yang but it is the aim for a well rounded life, to have balance in the two to exist well in this world. I think all my life, I have been emotionally available, free. It is my natural state and definitely comes easy to me. But being physically available might just be something women in general find difficult to achieve as restraints are placed on us from the beginning about how we are to present ourselves physically to the world: how we are to be present. You get what I am saying here, I am sure.

And then I go to men and what is taught to them about availability and how they should present themselves. I suppose being emotionally available is not encouraged and thus the sheer physical presence a male body has in a room in general makes sense. Men are taught physical availability. Even physical act of sex has been taught in a very androcentric way.

I'm ranting. I know I'm ranting. Maybe the reason I felt compelled to write this this morning was that I am a little nervous about seeing you soon. I do feel exposed and yet know nothing of you. I suppose I hope to see you be vulnerable too, to not only see a physical discomfort just as I did when you told me you were married, but to see an emotional one. How does being married make you feel when

experiencing what is obviously happening here between us? I mean, I don't know what's happening here between us exactly, but all I can say is that I have fantasized touching you, being touched by you and my body certainly is telling me it wants to be near yours. My mind is also enjoying the fantasy of you and the thrill it gets from receiving a text, email or phone call from you. And I'm awkwardly enjoying this: writing lengthy emails of my ranting thoughts about existing and all the vulnerability that involves, knowing you are on the other side of the screen, reading each word and pondering my thoughts. That is truly a delight.

Oh well, there I go again exposing my emotional shit, to make me feel EVEN MORE vulnerable and potentially MORE nervous about seeing you soon. Ugh. I'm such a dick. Probably should not have sent this.

But then again, am totally thrilled at the idea of you reading this right now ;)

Sending.

2/24/18

I must admit to finding myself stuck in moments of gazing into space this morning after being in your presence last night, re-running some delightful moments. I can't help but think you may feel this scenario with you is a common one for me, especially surrounding the conversations about my emails being driven and inspired by desire and that one day, they may stop. It is true that I write super well when I am in a state of desire. It is the reason why I can't on-line date. The words flow too easily and I often find myself getting ahead of most situations and the object of my desire runs in the opposite direction because the writing is so intense, direct and cuts to the chase. I have come to accept that when a woman *truly* desires a man, it comes across as frightening to men as they are not used to this. Our patriarchal system was created to repress female desire because it was so fearful to men. Think about whenever you see an image of a woman in a state of desire: she is almost always looking at the viewer - aka her desire is for their disposal. I think of Laura Mulvey's [essay on the gaze](#), which was the first time this was actually mentioned. The idea has since exploded. Unfortunately, this means women like myself actually lead very solitary lives, which is probably why I focus so much on having art things going on all the time and avoiding relationships with men. And yes, it has been a long time since I have had a 'relationship'. I put that in inverted commas because what does relationship actually mean? To me, again, it is freedom of full expression, which I have found difficult.

Having said that and even though yes, I have been inspired by my desire in a literary sense towards other men, these emails to you are very different indeed. I can't guarantee that the emails won't stop. Desire is an energy like any other: if it is fed, it is alive. If it is not fed, it will die. And although there is a fear that it may eventually die, is this enough reason to not experience it, at this very moment? Desire, I think, is the root of creativity and you actually make me feel safe in edging closer towards expressing that desire, fully. This hasn't happened before and I really like the pace we're at. It is allowing me to sit in that space, in that energy and really feel what desire can be. I don't know. This may be just a bunch of words that say nothing. All I know is that touching you last night, even though it was for a blip in terms of time, was remarkable. No words, as you commented. No words. Just truly lovely, new, and overwhelming. My body swells reliving that experience and I can't wait for the opportunity to touch you again. Gee, I can't believe I am writing this (insert embarrassed emoji!!!)

There is a lot to me that you don't know. Of course, as we are still strangers to each other and I'm not sure you will get to know my past as I feel that is not what this encounter is about. I feel this is totally about being present, the now; right now. Not even the future. It is as if we are to encounter each moment as infinite. And I am truly enjoying being put in a position to completely slow down and feel what is meant to be felt with you, moment by moment. But I am also fully aware of the fact that you are not available which could be falsely steering this ship but I will accept it is there for a reason.

I do want to make it clear that experiencing you is not something I have experienced before. You make me feel confident in my desire and sexuality in a way that I have always, always wanted to feel but have never had the opportunity to do so. That is, so far in our experience. I have always felt awkward when having sex but with you, I am actually imagining doing things to your body that I know your body will delight in that I have never even imagined doing before! It's as if I already know how to

handle your body; like instinct. And then I blush at the idea, surprised my body is communicating so vividly to my brain. I may come across as confident in my sexuality to you but this is *because* of you. It feels bazaar to be so forward but at the same time, so fucking comfortable to do so with you. Maybe not bazaar. Maybe what I am feeling is surprise. I am surprised at how forward and expressive I am about my desire towards you and I can only credit that to your openness in receiving my energy.

Speaking of openness, I know this is complicated for you (it kinda is for me too in other ways) but that is because you have created rules for yourself in your life in the hope that those rules may lead you to the life that you desire. Desire does not work like that at all. Desire needs freedom. Desire needs the journey of expression and creativity to arrive at it's destination. You are definitely open to me, which is why I feel safe to express myself in ways I never have done before, but I fear your boundaries may crush that. Just be aware that this is something unique and not an experience that can or even should be taken for granted. People can go a whole lifetime not having felt what we did last night or what may come if you are open to it. It's totes scary but sometimes, it's where the fear is that the most growth can happen. BTW, I delighted in seeing your reaction to the feather duster and how instantly you embraced the object, felt a deep connection to it. This felt good. I knew you would love it but could not have imagined how much so. If nothing else, I am glad this random object now exists with you in your life.

I don't know what to say this morning. My thoughts keep jumping around yet I find myself stuck repeating moments from last night, like a movie I am watching, rather than being a part of. It is all strange and weird, and exciting and thrilling. My body wells up at thoughts of you, which I have not felt in a long time, if ever. For me, being attracted to the gender that has a long history of oppressing mine, has always been a difficult situation to navigate. How do I show my desire - unrepressed, without fear - which is coming from a place of freedom and wanting to be free, to the single most strongest identifier that is my oppressor, that historically, wants to keep me controlled and composed? I have been punished emotionally from almost all of the men in my past for expressing this desire. Ending up in very fucked up physiological spaces or what I would frame as mind fucking. Not healthy at all. As I get older, my body breaking down the youthful wall that contains my true self, I have come to realize that all these men were simply afraid, afraid to experience true desire from a woman, which is where all oppression comes from; fear.

I don't know your history but I feel you may not have experienced true desire. Have you? Maybe that's not important.

Let this be infinite while it lasts, whatever *it* may be. I am happy for an elongated - slow, very slow - experience as long as I receive a true yes to the whole experience from you and most importantly, respect and gratitude for this vulnerable space that has been created. If you think this may be something that you don't think you can handle or willing to experience, please do put me out of my misery by saying so early. I don't want to feel pain with you or from you. I just want to feel infinite, free and temporarily endless with you. Can you handle that? Are you prepared to be fearless?

2/28/18

You're not running away? How is that possible? The last few days since I sent that last email, have been torture. I couldn't help but think it had pushed you away: I had come to the conclusion that it did. I was writing an email when your text popped up and all I saw was "Hi Santana. Sounds good, about the writing. I'm down." The rest of your message was hidden and I sat there stunned. Stunned by your openness to experience what may come, yet fearful at the thought of what may come. You're not putting a stop to this? To my desire? This freaks me out! The past few days, I was convinced that yes indeed, it was all too much. I was too much. All my life I've been told that I'm just too much. Too much. Too loud. Too forward. Too excited. Too enthusiastic. Too rude. Too aggressive. Too ambitious. Too consuming. Too everything. And now here you are saying I'm not. That how I'm responding and expressing myself to you, is all cool. I now don't know what to do with that! You are giving me permission to go where I've never had permission to go before. Now I'm afraid. Afraid of what might happen with this permission to feel, to express, to be too much, to execute my desire. I don't even know what that will look like but it does scare me. Permission to indulge. Permission to be too much. Permission to be open, to be free with a man I desire? Now that's scary.

I was once told by an older woman to not show 'the crazy' too early as men will always run. As I age, I cannot not show 'the crazy' too soon. Desiring a man is intense for me. It always has been but as a young woman, I was better at containing it. Or I thought. Reflecting now on my affairs, especially in my twenties, the distance between us was a gaping hole and soooo painful for me but I thought this is just the way it is. That I was not capable of having successful relationships. I never felt connected, even during sex with those men as I was never allowed to truly express my intensity. I suppose what that old woman told me I instinctively knew from a young age. My desire not only consumes my being but consumes men and apparently consuming men is not the done thing by a woman. My existence as a woman being who was "born into a world that presumes there is something grotesque, unspeakable about female desire" (Jill Soloway's I Love Dick), is probably why desiring men has always tortured me so.

I fear seeing you again. I fear this new territory you have laid out for me. I fear a dilution of my desire. In a previous email, I declared desire is alive and needs to be fed. But what if my desire feeds off emotional unavailability? I truly fear that. I fear the expression of my desire only knows boundaries. I may finally understand a man's feelings when in a heated moment, his penis goes flaccid. Is this what I am feeling now? Sooooo much yes that it overwhelms and debilitates instead of empowers? Can it be possible that my desire is only intense when it is not allowed to be expressed or is unrequited? Have I fallen victim to this system that has been created by society that thinks there is something weird and inappropriate to indulge in female desire? Am I like the caged animal that is finally let free but stays in the cage with the door wide open, too fearful to leave even though it has desired freedom all it's caged life? You are giving me permission to speak. Permission to feel. Permission to indulge. Permission to be free. And this is frightening.

I'm not even sure how to end this email. I think I am still stunned that you have so casually, told me in a text, that it's all good. How casual you are towards me. How refreshing, but strange, unfamiliar. I think the only man in my life that has been so casual towards my intensity is my father, who actually delighted and was entertained by it. Now that's weird to bring in some Freudian reference.

Maybe that's the best way to end this email... On yet another weird note.

3/6/18

I had a conversation with a friend of mine about desire and the possibility of it having no obtainable goal apart from how it makes one feel about themselves, which lead the discussion to this episode of Jill Soloway's I Love Dick. Not sure if you have seen the series but this one episode is awesome, with incisions of visual artists work included within the visuals.

<https://www.onitube.com/video/43718>