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Drawing (Out) the Poem




River deltas as a physical manifestation of the dissolution of boundaries / A desire to memorize the names of cloud types / How “family” is the most flexible word in the English language / The space between the end of an inhale at the beginning of an exhale / The border between ripe and rotting, a cantaloupe’s scent / Ash that remains as evidence after the flame.



The times I am most in my body: dancing, insomnia, sex, injury, eating.


~~The times I am most in my body~~ I am aware of its edges.




Begin by recognizing borders, the constraints within which we all must work:

[BIRTH.... — ^^ —DEATH]

Then: Attempt to narrow focus. Thus, subject. But isn’t everything subjective?



What am I thinking about right now? When does *right now* mean? It is already behind us; we are always inside it.



I am thinking about thinking. It feels like a shimmer spiraling out from the center of my brain and then looping back in again.

Begin again: A spiral retreads familiar ground but supplements additional distance on each circuit, the gesture of another pass. Minor augmentation. A return, once removed.



The corporal manifestation of fear I felt when tasked with drawing on a blank page for the first time in decades. A new way to think. Head sweats, heart race. The terrifying realization that this isn't something that I can think my way through. There is no way to write myself out of this. Or maybe there is? What is the difference between a line someone literate in English can read and a line where I trace my heartbeat and then follow it all the way into orbit?



Questions are an easy way to create an opening. A crutch, even.

A runway; a funnel.




More questions: How do you draw a metaphor? How do you write a drawing?
I never said this would be easy.



The space between what we say and what we mean. Canyon vs. chasm, a yawn inside a dream.




This is how we overcome fear: By the doing. The doing of it anyway.




Recently I was shown how to make a mind map. Then I drew it with the same hand: words and lines. Connections like synapses sparking between neurons. Lightning.

I can't capture thunder in a jar no matter how tight I screw the lid.


So: Begin. Again.



Set the intention:


- Define my personal visual lexicon, or
 - at least get the pencil moving, or
 - loosen up a little,
 - enough to do this.
 - To make a dent.
- 

[Insert the sound of someone hiking across the terrain of a page, scribbles, snow, the occasional rip in spacetime's fabric, the static that seeps through it]




The act of setting a thing down on a page, whether with verbal or visual—*art* if I dare—marks, is an act of translation.

The first words I learn in a new language are always about how to position myself in space. That, and how to order food.




Before we have words we have gestures and symbols. Grunts and representations. Both of which carry within them, inherent, a desire to transform, and to transfer (understanding). Babies and apes and my dog can understand basic hand signs. Elephants can paint.




Drawing necessitates prehension.


To grasp. Within hand/trunk/reach/comprehension. My brain a claw, clasp.



My initial drawing appeared childlike. Simplified, boring. Red cheeks, tiny shame. Easy to follow the directive *Don't be representational* because I could never even draw a decent stick figure. No problem.



It's not supposed to mean anything. It's supposed to mean everything.



I grow bored quickly when I feel unskilled in a practice; we all have our defense mechanisms.

To stave off boredom, keep my body engaged, I begin to use the charcoal to draw first on paper, then thumb, and to rub my thumb into the blank space.

A spark: The discovery of an affinity for smudged places. Respect for the

gradient. Dissolve the space between.



More liminal space to explore:

- The poem as map, tracing the shape of a thought across terrain
- An equation expressing the relationship between distance and desire, how they are both a product of/affected by physical, temporal, and emotional space
- Composition as the act of figuring out what must be said
- The click of a lock's cylinders falling into place when the brain sees/completes a pattern, that opening
- Clarity of line/literal definition/the intense urge to smudge it all away
- How a poem would be written without words



A strange satisfaction in the gray, the carbon marks that remain on my hands after, the smoke I conjured onto the page. A wonder.

I want to want more. To get more. Dirty. Blurred. Marked.



[The sound of ash scattering across pulp, a finger leaving traces of its print, a signature of loop whorl and arch, a breath exhaled I didn't know I was holding]



Quickly I lost interest in the effect of a plain line drawn on the page. Instead, favored the act of smudging solid into a more liminal range.

Drawing becomes more fun when I use my body: palm, finger tips, wrist.

What, then, is the canvas?



[PAPER....—LINE—....—^^^MEANING^^^—....—LINE—....DEATH]



I need a bigger page.

(And yet, I refuse to mark myself with tattoos.)



Someday I want to write a poem and then smudge it into illegibility. Would the poem then still exist?

If I say.




[Insert the sound of flesh touching pulp, charcoal in the wind, of reverence and communion, salt dissolving in water, water evaporating into air]



I want to crosshatch all the whitespace and then rub it across my face, tits, belly, ass, feet. Let the paper become acquainted with my whole body. Let my body get to know the page.




Osmosis is only one type of transference.




The hand tires. Is attached to a body.


Is ready for silence.



I must leave myself a key. I must leave myself a legend. I must leave myself excited to begin again.



Let me erase my fear of blank space.



I'm beginning to think closure is overrated.

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