

*Becoming unsafe*  
KATHRYN KELLEY

## *Becoming unsafe*

KATHRYN KELLEY

For the past 10 years I've been working with print and interactive design. Design has shaped my thinking, developing an analytical approach to image making. Design is safe. It is my easy way out of vulnerability and commitment. Image making in design is based on client parameters. Creativity is required; ownership is not. Though much of myself comes out in my design, emotional safety resides in my ability to divert primary responsibility onto the client.

With art making, the work becomes my own—risky. Putting myself out there, committing to say this is about me—my brain, my process, my hand—it is an extension of myself. I am not the sharpest tack in the box or the most original, but this is my own. This is not safe.

I have reached that space in life where my ego strength and self-will allow me, draw me, to take the risk of “becoming.” Becoming who I am, not that self defined by “shoulds.” Change is difficult. Self sabotage common. Yet, I am moving into that self that has been simmering below my surface for a very long time.

I am consumer, lover of stuff.

I am female, pink appeals.

I am forty-three, decay has begun.

I am visual, language challenged.

I am seeker, life teaches.

I am designer, anally fixated.

I am watcher, society astounds.

I am pattern seer, micro macro, macro micro.

I am dysfunction; I function.

I am spiritual; Christ calls.

I am tactile; let me touch it.

I am American, arrogance assumed.

This surfaced self binds together the fragments of my many selves into a unit, into a whole. And as I step into this whole/fragmented self, the sheer tactility of my art making overwhelms me—sketching naked people, pushing paint, welding metal, hammering nails, a brow slick with sweat—I find myself. Deep satisfaction. Maturation.

My “should” self has never known passion.

My design self has been safe. An electric current of fear courses through me as passion moves to the forefront. Art informs my design. Design informs my art. The safe and unsafe are merging and I am “becoming”