

The disconnected connects
KATHRYN KELLEY



RESISTANCE IS FUTILE.

As I am assimilated, I assimilate. I find myself in the present where a strange sense of continuity yet materializes. What appears disconnected connects.

Information and experiences are absorbed. I bring them into myself. Distill them. Discard what does not fit. They become my own.¹ This bioaccumulation of all that I have ingested, both toxic and nontoxic, has formed my current state of being. The last three years of accretion has snapped into clarity this being. The bulk of this assimilated data and change results from my immersion into 20th century art, research and collaborative analysis of design, experiments in painting and sculpture, and self-acceptance.

My initial studies in 20th century art were purely academic, the laying of a foundation.

Impressionism. Futurism. Dada. Surrealism. As my studies progressed to the more contemporary, I found myself unable to simply respond to the works and knowledge intellectually. I was compelled to make. And make is what I did. My first bastardization, *a Pollock-de Kooning in under 5 minutes*. Bad Painting. Combines. First Generation Feminism. Fast. Freely. Pink discovered spontaneously. House paint flying everywhere. Ruined pants. Ruined shirts. Ruined shoes. The sacredness of art demystified. It was ok to make bad art. I didn't have to make something beautiful or meaningful. I just had to make. And I did. Making good. Making bad. Making. Concerned design professors averted their eyes from the accumulating pile of paintings in my small studio space. The frenzy was great. Occasionally I would look up to see that my studio mates had joined me in pushing paint.

1 Huge disadvantage of my distillation of experience and knowledge is that it leads to formal language based memories being discarded with the other unfit objects.

That fall, in the short period between classes, I generated 10 to 15 four foot by four foot paintings on board. Elements of Abstract Expressionism, Pop, Minimalism, Post-Minimalism, Bad Painting, First Generation Feminism had been absorbed. Greenburg, both de Koonings, Pollock, Rauschenberg, Guston, Debuffet, Richard Serra and EVA HESSE assimilated. Ideas of the serial, all over painting [field painting], experimentation with industrial materials, and a black and white painting series had been planted within me. But more importantly I found passion. And I liked it.

GRUNT. EXPERIENTIAL TO THEORETICAL.

Plodding through laddened texts of 20th century literary, cultural, art and design theory, I find rereading required. Dissection. Backtracking. Vast amounts of time consumed. Circular and convoluted logic

slides through my clenching fists. Slow torturous grasping. An inkling of understanding finally emerges with visions of theory overlaying culture. Theory and culture weave together. Sheer fascination. Gathering with studio mates, we push and pull this woven theory/culture image into something coherent—attempting to make it reproducible within two dimensions. Fiery conversations pursued. Culture. Truth. Value. The instant. The wanting. The flatness of a world made small by speed. Mixed ideologies crash. Peaceful co-existence abides. RAYification. EDification. Finally Kathified. An original thought acquired. DAMN. Original thought collectively discarded as NOT original. AGAIN.

Design professors encourage, REQUIRE, DEMAND, FORCE, me off the computer.² Command Z³ no longer an option. Thanks Fiona. Unexpected paths filled with delight. Delight becomes overshadowed by

² *Design professors have no intention that I should embrace the fine arts.*

³ *Edit > Undo*

analysis. Analysis consumes all [studio time].
Image making occurs in the periphery. The
intellect elevated above all. Struggle to ap-
pear smart. Provocative. Hard work. Tired.
Incredible stress. Unmerciful pressure. Self
induced? Probably. Do it right. Make it
right. Design. Redesign. Meaning altered.
Backtrack. Move forward. Print. Scratch.
Start over. Crap. You sunk my battleship.

Expanded vocabulary.

Amazingly, I walk away with a sense of
wonder and pleasure in research based work
and collaboration. I will not be able to dis-
card these acts of research or the intellec-
tual sharpening that comes with collective
critical analysis. I have come to hunger for
it. And I see that extruded through these
theories and scrutiny, my work improves.
The work has become dominated with my
own interpretations of our consumptive
patterns and social critique. This, I actually
do like.

UMMMM. THE TACTILE.

Becoming *bête comme un peintre*⁴ six straight
hours every Wednesday for three months.
Naked model. My arm seeks across the
page. Brain tires. Arm sags. I prop it up
with the other. Finally the deadening weight
is too great. Grease pencil shifted to reces-
sive hand. Brain shuts off. Only sense of
sight and touch remain intact. Searching
lines find form. Tactile pleasure.

Naked form appeals. Direction unsure.
Design questioned. Jimenez strokes ego.

I spend a month in San Miguel Allende
studying the form alongside artists Mar-
garitte Dawit and her husband, Nacho.
Returning, I continue my figures studies.
Artery. Art League. Direction remains unre-
solved. Ego stroking no longer required.

⁴ *"As stupid as a painter"* late 19th century phrase made popular by Duchamp and less popular by Greenburg that references the artist who only paints what they see. No thinking involved

Line to mass. Clay working between my fingers, additive and subtractive processes of sculpture experienced. Three-dimensional form making. Innate? Possibly. Materials explored. Tremendous sensual pleasure derived. Kittelson, in passing, suggests jumping ship from design to sculpture. Figure studies and sculptural processes begin informing one another. Eva Hesse inspires. Direction unknown. Hunger.

CLUNK.

I cut classes⁵ and go to Europe. For three weeks, I am alone with myself drifting through the city [Roma, Firenze, Paris]. Wandering. The spectacle of the pope's carcass avoided. Ten hours a day of meandering back passages. Slipping in and out of all contemporary art exhibits and museums that I stumble upon. Munch. Emilio Greco. Rodin. Picasso. Hesse and her contemporaries. I climb through the

habitrail of the Pompidou in Paris. Explore the vaulted caverns of the Picasso museum. Am astounded by the sculptures. I experience first hand the works I had only viewed and mimicked from afar. More drifting. Do I draw what I see? No. Do I paint my response? No. Design? No. For the most part I speak to no one. I devour Guy Debord's *The Society of the Spectacle* over arugala salad, a crescent and hot tea.⁶ Aimless I continue drifting. Like Walter Benjamin, I lose myself in the city.⁷ I smell the air, dry, dusty and old. Feel the sun full on my cheeks and the chill drafting through my jacket. Evening descends, I return to the four walls of my hotel room. It takes three days of this to become comfortable in each space. Yet still I do not draw, design, or paint. Absorption. Assimilation.

Illuminated by a single lamp in the darkened room, I sit alone at the little desk in front of the hotel mirror, thinking, writing, and

⁵ *Permission secured prior to disappearance.*

⁶ *I am in Paris, naturally, I want to read French theorists. Also in my backpack is **The Practice of Everyday Life** by Michel de Certeau—a much slower read.*

⁷ *Unlike Benjamin Walters, I hire no prostitutes and seduce no natives.*

sketching/painting myself.⁸ What comes out
is not about these spaces. It is me. It is the
past three years. Distillation occurs against
this alternate backdrop. I am designer.
I AM ARTIST. Sigh of relief. Acceptance.

What appears disconnected connects.

8 Nineteen self-portraits sketched; nineteen theories of life recorded.

