

ABOUT TIME (MEMORY AND THE OPPOSITES)

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INTRODUCTION

Before coming to UW I made paintings in my studio, using photo collage as a reference, cutting photos up and repositioning them. My every day subjects were mostly people, especially crowds, and events in public spaces, but also family dinners and gatherings with friends.

Daily memory drawings were a private aspect of my studio practice before coming to UW. These were small drawings done in the studio in which I would draw some experience from memory. I would often use social occasions (public and private) as my subject. In the months before moving to Seattle for grad school I made colour and value studies as well as my daily memory drawings, and when I got to UW I started using these studies as material to collage onto my memory drawings. My daily memory drawings became a public practice at UW simply because people were coming into my studio and responding to them.



fig. 0 Teddy's Party, graphite on paper, 6.5 x 9.25 inches, 2012

MAKING A MAN

Sometimes my reason for making a piece, and my ideas about it are embarrassingly simple. A central idea in the narrative of my sculpture is a dialectic of pride (achievement) and damaged pride (shame, guilt, regret). My first sculpture at UW was a man made from found wood in the flex space at sand point early in the morning. I hammered the wood together in an improvisational way. I wanted to make it right then and there with only the materials I had found. At the time I placed a great deal of weight on things falling into place. Using found materials and having them fit together was to me, a sign of luck, of good fortune. Making the man stand up became the big challenge for me that morning, and when I did make him stand up I had a satisfying feeling of accomplishment, and pride. (fig.1)



fig.1 Making a Man, found wood, 80X9X4 inches, 2012

One day I came in to sand point and found my man lying in a heap in the hall along with another one of my sculptures and some of my drawings. I felt violated, and needed to do something to recover. I thought that painting the man might help so I painted him in my studio with grey oil paint. I had to move him out of my studio to dry, and there was nowhere to grab on to him to move him, so I hammered a metal wood carving gouge into his torso to serve as a handle. I didn't hammer the gouge in for any reason other than to make a handle to move him out of my studio but plunging the metal spike of the gouge into the wood had an immediate cathartic effect, and only then did I feel relieved of the sense of violation I had suffered at seeing my man tossed in the hallway. (fig.2)



fig.2 Feeling Better, found wood, paint, 80X9X4 inches, 2012

The man fell over in the sand point gallery before my final critique in the first quarter, and the wooden handle of the gouge broke off unsheathing a metal spike that protruded from his chest like a weapon. I spent the morning unsuccessfully trying to get him to stand up again. I did get him to stand up again to bring him to the Jake for the first year show, but I had to using lengths of found wood, which were like skis.

(fig.3)



fig.3 Skier at Jake, found wood, paint and copper, 80X9X4 inches, 2012

HOW I DRAW: MY SCULPTURE PARK

My memory drawings began as an improvised, autobiographical, daily record. The memory picture of a certain experience is for me a form to riff off of, like a particular tune in jazz that musicians improvise over top of. I draw with graphite to begin with, building up values gradually, and incising into the paper to reserve thin light lines in places (I carry a small flathead screwdriver for this purpose). The tactility of drawing: pressing, and incising into the paper, is a crucial part of the cathartic function of drawing for me. When I'm drawing people and things I start inside the figure from the imagined core and work out to its contours where the individual encounters the world. I also penetrate into the figure or object with the background. I see these actions as engaged in a dialectic tension: building up from the inside, and breaking down from the outside, composing and decomposing, creating and destroying.
(fig.4)



fig.4 My sculpture Park, graphite on paper, 6.5 x 9.25 inches, 2012

TAROT

I had dinner at a friend's house, and there was a tarot reading. Later that night I drew my interpretation of the space and the people from memory (fig.5). I collaged on value studies. Sometimes they contradicted the perspective. I like to tilt the picture plane up so that more information is visible. This impulse is related, for me, to the dialectics of starting inside the figure at an imagined centre, and penetrating into the figure from the outside, in the sense that it is an impulse to remove obstacles. While tilting the plane up is simply a desire to "see more", to eradicate obstacles to vision, penetration tries to eradicate tactile obstacles, to "possess".



fig.5 Tarot (Drawing), graphite on paper, 6x9 inches, 2012

In the Tarot painting (fig.6) I tried to push and pull the space. I was thinking about pattern, Islamic art, and mosaic. I thought that dividing a painting into patterned zones would help me to judge quantities of light and dark, and to "see" the painting as it is: abstractly. I was also interested in the encounter of opposites: not just light and dark but also the encounter of ordinary everyday life with invisible, irrational forces like magic and luck. I wanted to do a big painting, and to take colour out of the picture. I brought colour into the painting only at the end using real materials from my daily life, beginning with a brown paper Subway sandwich bag. I had been changing the faces quite a bit. I put the bag on the left hand figure's face and I liked it much better than what I had painted. Somehow the bag made a better face. I also collaged on pieces of paper towel that I had been using in my studio as palettes to dry out my paint, and I collaged on old painted

studies as well. The figure with his back to the viewer began as a self-portrait, but as the painting developed, and my relationship to the people in the picture changed, he became an unknown stranger. I made the stranger's head very small, and painted numbers on his back that seemed matter of fact, and had no symbolic or esoteric meaning.



fig.6 Tarot, oil, and collage on canvas, 72x96 inches, 2012

STUDIO VISIT: KAT'S STUDIO

I was thinking about folk art, and modernism (especially Picasso and Klee) when I painted Tarot. Another influence at this time, especially for my drawings, was James Castle. I was inspired by his habit of drawing obsessively from memory on an intimate scale with materials that were close at hand and storing his work in carefully ordered bundles. His practice of setting up private exhibitions of his drawings and constructions and drawing the installations also intrigues me and in retrospect I can see parallels to my "Studio Visit" pieces. My studio visit pieces are often pictures of an encounter in my own studio, and give me an occasion to do other versions of things that are in progress. "Studio Visit: Kat's Studio" Is My friends studio. The drawing was made very quickly, after visiting her studio, before rushing to an art history class. (fig.7, fig. 8)



fig.7 Studio Visit: Kat's Studio (Drawing), graphite on paper, 6x9 inches, 2012



fig.8 Studio Visit: Kat's Studio, oil on canvas, 48x60 inches, 2013

M PARK GIRL

I wanted to carve people outside. I was looking for a place to carve in Magnussen park and I came upon a clearing that was littered with lying down logs, as if a battle had taken place there (fig.4). It felt significant to me to stand one of these logs up. It felt like a human thing to do. I stood one up by leaning it against a stump. How things stand up: alone or with support, mattered a great deal to me. I started carving the log with no preconceived idea. I made notches in the log with my chisel, and saw faces. There was a crack in this log. My intention was to go inside the crack, to investigate the interior of the log. At first I used a variety of chisels but settled on one in particular that belonged to my great uncle. At a certain point I changed my approach and decided it would be a figure. The void made by carving away at the crack became the void between the figure's legs. I decided it would be a female figure. I drew on her with walnut ink, and gesso.

(fig.9)

People were messing with my sculptures outside in the park, so I brought "M Park Girl" inside, and put her in a corner of my studio. I continued to carve into the crack, and thought she might be dividing into two figures. As I was bringing her into the Henry for the thesis show I realized that the crack was too big and felt exposed. I filled the crack in with wood scraps (shavings from stretcher bars that I had been saving in the back of my truck for a beach fire).



fig.9 M Park Girl, wood, 54x12x8 inches, 2013

I showed the piece in open studios and felt bad afterward. Like with "The Man" I felt like I had to do something to recover. I wanted to get back to the raw material of canvas, so I scraped it down. I decided that I needed to start with a picture in mind, so I painted my apartment (fig.11) but I scraped that down too.



fig.11 Charlie's Walk (2'nd state) oil on canvas, 84x120 inches, 2013

At this time I was going through my earlier daily drawings and using them as a model for painting. One drawing of my dad walking into the woods was used as a model for a painting on cardboard (fig.13, 14)



fig.13 Charlie's Walk (drawing), graphite on paper, 4x6 inches, 2009



fig.14 Charlie's Walk (on cardboard), oil on cardboard on panel, 14X21 inches, 2013

I was going through my old computer and found a photo of my dad walking into the woods, and decided to paint from this photograph. Some things lined up in the process, such as the man in the apartment, and the dark tree. Once I had the picture mapped out, and felt good about it, I stopped looking at the photograph and continued to paint. I was thinking about the opposites, such as figure and ground, light and dark. I was teaching at the time also, and I found that naming the opposites was helpful in trying to articulate to my students the full range of their options in terms of value, mark making, and composition.

There was a show at the sand point gallery and when I installed "Charlie's Walk" in the space I felt like changing some things in the painting. I tried to see the light and dark and the figure and the background, at once. I changed the figure and it became ambiguous which direction the figure was moving in: up or down, towards the viewer or away from the viewer. I painted a blue descending from the top, and a blue halo around the figure's head. (fig.15)



fig.15 Charlie's Walk (4'th state) oil and paper on canvas, 84x120 inches, 2014

I wanted to make the figure in "Charlie's Walk" smaller and to adjust his posture to be more stooped and peering out at the viewer. I pasted on brown paper to push the figure over, adding a single flat shape in contrast to the calligraphic mark-making of the entire painting.

Jim Rittiman came for a studio visit from the Henry Art Gallery in advance of the thesis show. Before his visit I pasted on colour studies with my glue gun and I also pasted on yellow writing paper that I had nearby, which suggested to me a light source in the top right hand part of the painting, and gave me the idea that I definitely wanted a motion of light going from the top right to the bottom left of the canvas.(fig.16)



fig.16 Charlie's Walk (5'th state) oil and paper on canvas, 84x120 inches, 2014

I knew I wanted to make the figure in "Charlie's Walk" smaller and I wanted to articulate the tree forms and foliage more decisively. I also wanted to paint the motion of light from the top right to the bottom left. It was about a week before delivery of the painting to the Henry that I found a photo, in which the figure was the right size. I did a small gouache and realized much of the information in the photo would be useful in the painting, so I squared up the photo, and the canvas, and mixed a lot of paint. I tried to incorporate what I had learned from working with cut paper, about larger flat areas of colour, while working from the photo.(fig.17)



fig.17 Charlie's Walk (6'th state) oil and paper on canvas, 84x120 inches, 2014

STANDING FIGURE

This standing female figure is the first sculpture I carved from the start in my studio. Bringing the carving into my studio had an effect on my painting. To begin with I sawed a roughly human sized length off of a birch log from a pile of logs that were positioned to block road access to my sculpture park. I used my great uncles hatchet to carve, this piece. The sculpture was too short to begin with, so I sawed off another length from the same log, and glued it on so that the figure would stand on her own. (fig.18)



fig.18 Standing Figure, walnut ink on wood, 68x8x7 inches, 2014

SANDPOINT LUNCHROOM

I was working on the "Sandpoint Lunchroom" (fig.19) painting on cardboard at the same time as I was carving "Standing Figure". Carving inside my studio had an effect on the painting. I noticed colour correspondences between the wood, the paint, and the cardboard, and it seemed natural to start adhering wood to the painting. I went about this in the same improvisational spirit that I had when I made the man. I glued the wood parts on and then stapled them to hold them in place. I also glued and stapled on paper with fragments of writing. Later I noticed correspondence between the subject of the picture and the content of the writing and it added to the meaning of the piece. I wanted to make the piece more structurally sound, because the cardboard seemed a little flimsy, so I adhered the cardboard to wood panel. It was hard to get it to lay flat on the wood panel, so I had to staple the cardboard a lot more than I intended. I began to see the act of adhering as integral to the meaning of this work. There was a desperation to the gluing and stapling. Just as when I am collaging and I find the right position for something it is very urgent that I get it pinned down in just that spot, very quickly and by any means necessary, so it was with this painting very urgent at the time to get these materials to stick together and stay in place, but I also noticed that it felt like I was repairing something, as if I were responding to dire circumstance, trying to fix something, to bind the whole thing up, to make things cohere via gluing and stapling.



fig.19 Sandpoint Lunchroom, oil, bark and paper on cardboard on panel, 48x96 inches, 2014

MAGIC TREE

There were changes in my "daily memory drawings" in my second year. For one thing they became less "daily". I would work on them for an undetermined length of time, as necessary. I also started to use colour in my drawings: working with coloured pencil to begin with and then with coloured inks. I also began using gesso to work reductively back to light. As I mentioned pressing graphite into my drawing paper, and incising into it are important tactile processes with emotional resonance. Drawing with graphite is like carving for me and collage is like constructive sculpture, building out from the surface of the paper into the viewers space, with overlapping layers. The format of my drawings became less regular in my second year, changing size and shape depending on the demands of the subject I was dealing with. At first my drawings followed a consistent, standard format but the process of adapting the format to the subject began to assert itself in different ways. I wanted to bring figures closer together, which I dealt with by cutting and compressing my drawings. A change happened with my collage materials also. In my first year value studies, and parts of other drawings were used. I started using coloured papers also for collage and in my second year I bought a larger range of coloured papers, and began preparing my papers with gouache colour scales for use as collage materials. I also used every day materials like yellow writing paper, and brown packing paper.

The subject of "Magic Tree" (fig.20) is again autobiographical. My work at this time was influenced a lot by going out to parks and to the beaches around Seattle with my friend. It was a full moon night and she took me to a big maple tree in Discovery park. Later in the studio drawing it from memory I wanted to get the large shapes down to begin with, so I started cutting out shapes and pasting them down. I liked this way of working. It gave me a new vocabulary that was a real contrast to the slow accumulation of graphite. I had already tentatively begun compose with larger shapes when I collaged value studies onto my drawings, and later used coloured papers to articulate large shapes more emphatically. I used ink to draw the two figures and to articulate the gesture and contour of the tree and grass. The ink in this drawing has a contradictory function of confirming the flat cut paper forms, and breaking up those forms. I noticed later that the calligraphic ink gestures tie the figures and the tree together.



fig.20 Magic Tree, graphite and ink on paper, 7.5 x 11 inches, 2013

POSTSCRIPT (READINGS)

CARL JUNG: THE OPPOSITES AND INDIVIDUATION

During the summer break I began to draw older memories. My interest in older memories associated with a sense of de-ja-vu, familiarity that is not rationally explainable, led me to reading Carl Jung and his theory of the archetypes. He talks about the opposites and their relation to archetypal memory in *The Religious and Psychological problems of Alchemy*:

"Once the exploration of the unconscious has led the conscious mind to the discovery of the archetype, the individual is confronted with the abysmal contradictions of human nature, and this confrontation in turn leads to the possibility of the experience of light and darkness, of Christ and the devil... experiences of this kind cannot of necessity be induced by human means... Experience of the opposites has nothing whatever to do with intellectual insight or with empathy. It is more what we would call fate... Without the experience of the opposites there is no experience of wholeness and hence no inner approach to the sacred figures" (450 Jung "The Basic Writings")

"The essence of the conscious mind is discrimination; it must, if it is to be aware of things, separate the opposites, and it does this contra naturum. (against nature). In nature opposites seek one another- les extremes se touchant- and so it is in the unconscious, and particularly in the archetype of unity, the self. Here, as in the deity, the opposites cancel out. But as soon as the unconscious begins to manifest itself they split asunder, as at the creation; for every act of dawning consciousness is a creative act..."(456 Jung)

One of my objectives coming to grad school was to "find my own voice" and I found Jung's concept of "individuation" particularly helpful in this area. He says:

"The concept of individuation plays no small part in our psychology. In general, it is the process of forming and specializing the individual nature; in particular, it is the development of the psychological individual as a differentiated being from the general, collective psychology. Individuation, therefore is a process of differentiation having as it's goal the development of the individual personality. The psychological process of individuation is clearly bound up with the so-called transcendent function, since it alone can provide that individual line of development which would be quite unattainable upon the ways dictated by the collective norm.

Interestingly the process of individuation depends on the transcendent function which is a third factor arising from the union of opposites.

"The tendencies of the conscious and the unconscious are the two factors that together make up the transcendent function. It is called 'transcendent' because it makes the transition from one attitude to another organically possible." [The Transcendent Function, CW 8, par. 145.]

"Once the unconscious content has been given form and the meaning of the formulation is understood, the question arises as to how the ego will relate to this position, and how

the ego and the unconscious are to come to terms. This is the second and more important stage of the procedure, the bringing together of opposites for the production of a third: the transcendent function. At this stage it is no longer the unconscious that takes the lead, but the ego." [The Transcendent Function, CW 8, par. 181.]

WALTER BENJAMIN AND HENRI BERGSON: ON MEMORY

"The problem is no less than that of the union of soul and body. It comes to us clearly and with urgency, because we make a profound distinction between matter and spirit...It is in very truth within matter that pure perception places us, and it is really into spirit that we penetrate by means of memory." (Bergson, 235)

Language has unmistakably made plain that memory is not an instrument for exploring the past, but rather a medium. It is the medium of that which is experienced, just as the earth is the medium in which ancient cities lie buried. He who seeks to approach his own buried past must conduct himself like a man digging. Above all, he must not be afraid to return again and again to the same matter...For the "matter itself" is no more than the strata that yield their long-sought secrets only to the most meticulous investigation. That is to say, they yield those images that, severed from all earlier associations, reside as treasures in the sober rooms of our later insights- like torsos in a collectors gallery. It is undoubtably useful to plan excavations methodically. Yet no less indispensable is the cautious probing of the spade in the dark loam. And the man who merely makes an inventory of his findings, while failing to establish the exact location of where in today's ground the ancient treasures have been stored up, cheats himself of his richest prize. In this sense, for authentic memories, it is far less important that the investigator report on them than that he mark, quite precisely, the site (and the time) where (when) he gained possession of them. Epic and rhapsodic in the strictest sense, genuine memory must therefore yield an image of the person who remembers...(Intro. Walter Benjamin's archive)

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