

# **Enantiodromia <sup>1</sup>**

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**Abstract**

Enantiodromia

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Multiplicity <sup>2</sup> and the bridging of opposing realities is a central theme in my work. This multiplicity speaks to a physical disconnection between places as well as to a mental state of disassociation.

Through process I enable likewise contradiction and unification.

I use materials to reconcile the opposite ends of a spectrum of transformation.

Documentation allows me to extract and distill the essence of an action performed in my studio.

I use the body in the same way I use materials. I watch its influence on a space, situation and condition and force it to enter interim stages somewhere between pleasure and pain.

The resulting pieces capture a metaphysical quest into metamorphic zones that show our interconnectivity to all reality, visible and invisible.

**The Body**

In my practice moments of anxiety, discomfort, fear and risk have found a central place. While frightening, they have also been pleasurable.

Control through restraint and direction seems to be an allowance for unrestricted and fearless pleasure.

In *“The Well”* (fall 2015, fig. 1) a body is slowly submerging into an undefined depth of water. While submerged in water, the body becomes the only known, the only orientation and place. While the surrounding slips it enables a reconnection to my bodies physical properties. Within the blackness of the water the physical shape of the well construction offers definition through enclosure and association with a place.

This definition is an important feeling for me, as I constantly feel disassociated with my self, my surrounding and my own physical borders. I have been deeply invested in the search for definition.

This definition I find in ambiguity. The loss of orientation under water, the pressure of the water weight on your body, the inability to breath and hold on to stable ground triggers great anxiety and fear.

Within this fear the over stimulated awareness of my own physicality brings back drug infused sensations of proximity and intimacy that I have since been looking for.

*“It is my body, the one through which my thoughts and feelings, as it were, ‘make contact’ with objects, so that there is a world for me...”*

*(Matthews 2006, p. 89 )*

Janine Antoni's primary tool for making sculpture has always been her own body, thus balancing intimacy and universality, destruction and transformation. I saw her collaborative project "*Honey Baby*" (2013, fig. 2) with Stephen Petronio in New York.

The intimacy of the small space, the contrasts of light and color and the feeling of distance while having an intimate experience of the space resonated with me and helped me realize how little I need to create fully enveloping situations. In Antonin's piece, while the body itself is not transforming, the dripping honey and its slow moving gestures transcend beyond the actual and physical into the realm of the imaginary.

The potential of work that utilizes collaboration between choreography and documentation was an interesting feature I started exploring in my own work.

In "*Vicissitude*" (spring 2015, fig. 3) and "*Ballast*" ( fall 2015, fig. 4) a simple activity is being documented by a still perspective camera shot.

The black cubicle of *Vicissitude* presents the viewer two options- a ground floor view into the gold interior where fragments of shed skin cover the floor, or, on a ladder the viewer may look down into the space, where a video screen replays a scene from of a body inside the cubicle, where its skin is torn from it by golden hands. The viewer in *Ballast* faces a similar scenario.

From the bottom the viewer can only hear the sound of someone struggling, he/she has to make a decision- to climb up to understand, putting oneself into an uncomfortable situation only to discover that you are now in the same position as the protagonist.

The actions are simple, visceral and intense. The viewing situation uncomfortable. Both audience and subject are being asked to perform. Both are undergoing a process of holding on, of observing.

## **Process**

Observing process, I have found, has the ability to allow me to look at a situation from a multitude of perspectives. Through observing process I feel resolution and control. Documenting that process further allows me to capture change, which I can authorize without being dependent on the structure of time. I can zoom into, isolate and regenerate a moment without restriction.

The photogram series “*Substantiating Transparency*” (winter 2015, fig. 5) has been a way of turning transparency into light and light into shadow in the process of creating a negative Image of an experiment.

We quantify our existence through matter and mass- to describe matter we must examine the void. The closest to a void we come is in the vacuum, but one can only measure the vacuum relative to the atmospheric pressure.

Artists don't only describe the physical void that defines our beings, but also take on the task to differentiate the questions fabricated by our mind that seek to fill the emptiness we feel when asking why we exist.

Our body is the container for our thoughts and emotions; we use language and materials as vessels to quantify what is within us.

As salt crystals generate change from transparency to translucency, the material undergoes the process of obfuscation and my mind is able to crystalize thoughts of metaphysical nature and to bring an idea into form, to create clarity from the chaotic structure of the mind.

I use the transitory stages of materials to reveal invisible and ephemeral characteristics.

I strive to preserve the process in a comprehensible, physical form, which acts both as an artifact of the process but also as monotype experience.

It is an attempt to understand something fully, to become familiar with the unexpected or unknown.

The idea of controlling and materializing a transitory action is central to this practice. In my studio I set up controlled conditions in which material can transition between positions, whereas the occurring outcome become uncontrollable.

The studies of ink and water on paper from spring 2015 are an example of this control through tracing the spreading and enveloping to be able to carefully freeze an overwhelming event.

Blowing inked soap bubbles at paper I created conditions for an event. In full control of intention and activity I released each bubble into the air. This release was also a release of control, which was regained with my selection of a trace of the burst bubbles on the paper.

I scanned each ink plot and digitally manipulated it to my complete satisfaction. I regained control. I printed and framed this event in “*Controlled Release # 1 & 2*” (spring 2015, fig.6 )

## **Material**

I approach material as a concept and idea rather than a physical situation. Through an accumulation of matter I can transform the process into an object that can come in contact with experiences we have lost our connection to. These transformations created out of uncontrollable material processes, results in clarity, order and control. The mind and body are working together in the act of making; a continuous feedback between initial ideas and their embodiment creates the space of my practice in which the craft is subordinate to the production of a spirit.

I am drawing from Wittgenstein’s notion of practice as being constituted by a set of shared assumptions that inform a habitual way of doing to bring the idea of process into the concept of practice (Shiner, 2012). The tacit knowledge I have developed through material investigations have culminated in a, process and response, studio activity.

Both Matthew Barney and Joseph Beuys have had a significant impact on my understanding of the possibility of materials and symbolism. Both artists use materials to generate a personal rationality and symbolism.

Materials are used for their capabilities to metaphorically represent something larger than the individual but also because of the specific relationship each of the artists has with them.

The Deutsche Guggenheim Museum in Berlin dedicated an exhibition to the relationship of Barney and Beuys's work. This exhibition was documentation *All in the Present must be Transformed: Matthew Barney and Joseph Beuys* (Spector 2006).

This book had a major unconscious impact on my process. What I realized through reading about their working methods was, that I could establish my own symbolism and create my own metaphors to utilize in constructing the narrative of my story.

## **Time**

Time has played an important role in my efforts. Time as an event connected to process, transformation and as a utility to generate and observe but time also as a conceptual framework and symbol for a battle of oppositions.

Time defines positions in a rational stream of events. Life and death, day and night, hot and cold are all experienced through the passage of time. Through this experience we create a reality which we choose to believe in, but time in our mind follows its own irrational clock.

The memory of time is disconnected from time as an experience/event. Through video and photo documentation of change I have been able to extract and distill the experience of time in a process. The potential in video art lies in the ability to alter time. Satisfying scenes and occurrences can be repeated, played backwards, slowed down and fast-forwarded. Each iteration creates a different viewer response ranging from boredom, frustration, and anxiety to voyeuristic pleasure. *Bill Viola's "Reflecting Pool" (1977-1979, fig.7)* is of interest because of the way it makes use of video as material that documents but also as material to be manipulated. Video is used to withhold a crucial moment, to move forward, repeat and end the process. His protagonist appears out of the forest and in the end disappears back into the forest. With this the activity the content comes full circle and creates an ending that could repeat the activity over again. Digital media have allowed me to capture a moment and to create an extended view upon this moment. This ability has been important for the development of the video project of *"Borderlands" (spring 2016, Fig. 8)*

## ***Earth, Water and Sky-Borders and Lands***

Upon entering the space the viewers find themselves faced with two transparent plastic coats hung up side by side. One slightly different than the other in length. A light table in the center of the space draws our immediate attention. A clear plastic vitrine covers the light table as to provide protection to the translucent objects within it. Barely visible they appear as a skin, a halo and a shadow of a form. Observing them close up they have transformed. Polarized filters within them provide dimension and color. All of a sudden they have become dark, mysterious and vibrant. ( Fig. 9)

Their appearance suggests the irregular object from which they are formed. They are transparent plastic copies of obsidian rocks. Through a vacuum forming process a thin skin was stretched around the solid rock to physically copy the original. But the copy is not a replication or lesser individual. Through the process of copying this twin has gained abilities beyond what its sibling could reveal. This twin is able to reflect outwards what the blackness of the other conceals. It gives back to the light what is swallowed by the other.

The entirety of this complementation is revealed through the accompanying video piece.

The scenes in “*Borderlands*” shift between four distinct locations.

A dry volcanic landscape of rocks and sky; a mountain site covered in snow and a river of melt water; a dark and cold tunnel dipping into light and an inflatable

airy space with no connection to any particular environment other than its own.

(Fig. 10)

Bill Viola's note resonated with the way I have approached the use of landscape in this project.

*"Landscape can exist as a reflection on the inner walls of the mind, or as projection of the inner states without. Flat open vast space lends itself to a clearer monitoring of the subjective inner world. "*

(Viola and Violetta 2005, p. 53)

Within the shifting landscape the body and the two states of rock are constant. The body moves through these scenarios. Climbing, walking, bending down, picking up, carrying and holding the states of the rock.

The movements are simple, focused and directed, doing nothing more than necessary.

As a dominant feature we see the pointe shoes, making the movements feel precarious, risky and as close to floating as possible.

The body is clad in a thin, transparent plastic coat. It is covered without being concealed. A flesh colored tight leotard veils nakedness without suggesting clothing.

This body is an agent- the agent that facilitates the change of the material.

Through touch solid black obsidian, representing the male potential transforms into a transparent and weightless other of itself, suggesting the female quality.

The agent carries this new being towards a light table. Removing its hands from it initiates further evolution into an iridescent playful third that has the ability to encapsulate both the black, transparent and white as well as every stage of color in between. This third being I view as a hermaphroditic unification in which everything is united.

This process is cyclical. As soon as all the obsidian has fully transformed the agents returns to its original place. Rewinding the transformation to the source. The first scene in the video is also its last scene. Everything returns to its original position and constitution, having gained an experience that thus altered our understanding of it.

While everything is the same nothing is what it was. Then the process restarts and the agent begins again.

The ability to use video loops, to suggest process and circularity adheres to real life experiences rather than storytelling.

The situation I describe is less a story with a distinct beginning and end than a cyclical process of unification and rebirth.

The process of transporting the rock is both a metaphor for a geological understanding of time and the insignificance of human concern in addition it symbolizes a philosophical quest to answer these concerns. A futile engagement in understanding the madness to ask while being compelled to ask anyways.

The rock as the central sculptural object but also as the main character in the video deserves some explanation.

The volcanic landscape of Bend Oregon from which I collected the obsidian served as the environment for the film as the birthplace of it. It contrasts to an inhabited environment; the absence of vegetation indicates the influence of fire and the monotonous massiveness served to further the moments of otherness present within the ordinary of life.

The contrasting icy and wet yet similarly austere landscape of the Big Four Ice Caves in Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest extended associations towards the opposite mineral, to the birthplace of opal. Formed in mineral rich water cavities, opal is a silicate just like glass. Most commonly transparent to milky white it has no color of its own, but due to the nature of the alignment of the molecules it refracts the entire spectrum of light. While being nothing it embodies everything at once <sup>3</sup>.

Obsidian, a volcanic glass absorbs in its blackness all-light. Made under pressure and heat it presses to the earth's surface where it breaks apart into large bolder as it cools <sup>4</sup>. ( Fig. 11)

Obsidian and opal lend their symbolic qualities of difference and similarity to express the completeness of potential within.

The act of physical transformation references a psychological transformation much like the alchemical process of transforming base metals into gold. While the alchemist transforms a material he/she is being transformed by the process as well <sup>5</sup>. (Fig.12)

## ***Hot & Cold, Father & Mother***

The situation I created for my solo show at the South Gallery at the University of Washington is a family structure, a solar system and an allegory. I wanted to use the space in a way that opposites could be present and experience able without explicitly pointing to specific associations.

As you enter the gallery two large wall projections take up most of the space. The projections are of two planet-like circular videos. (Fig 13)

Each of the video loops is approx. four minutes long. Because of the different duration of the video loops the events go out of sync like planets orbiting at different speed around their central star, eventually realigning for a brief moment during which they mirror each other, in which they marry.

One video is a thin soap film, which embodies the entire spectrum of color. Over the duration of four minutes the iridescent content of the soap film sinks to the bottom of the circular Image leaving a milky, translucent disc behind. Just as the soap film has almost disappeared it starts filling the circle again. This process repeats itself over and over, never quite satisfying through a resolution, with a definite state change or completion of the process.

The second projection is another planet-like disc, a glowing glory hole <sup>4</sup>.

First bright yellow to almost white but slowly fading through the spectrum of orange and red to a dark brown that mimics the darkness of the unlit wall behind it.

Here again, at the point where it is barely visible the Image starts becoming brighter again to return to its original glow.

Both soap bubbles and glory holes are round structures that fulfilled the requirements of the planetary symbols I was looking for. They stood for hot and cold, fire and water. One male and the other female, the sun and the moon, those encompass the main piece of the project.

A full size freezer-refrigerator exposed guts.

The exposed functional components of the unit became both a human scale body as well as a digestive system. Plugged in, the front section of the fridge was being cooled and condensed the atmospheric air as a thin layer of ice on its coils, while the condenser unit of the fridge behind the coils would emit heat to cool the coils. By nature of their proximity the condenser unit inhibits the cooling coils to get cold on the back, leaving an area of ambiguity in which ice turns to water and evaporates again to be refrozen in the front.

This object I call "*the Twin*." ( Fig. 14) It stood as a symbolic reunification of opposing forces in one system and structure. It was the hermaphrodite child born out of the union of the opposites of hot and cold, water and fire.

*The Twin* stood on a 3 foot circle of reflective Mylar, as if it were in a lake of silver.

The silver sea relates to the line of the poem from “*Borderlands*”

*-Late in the day, the sun sometimes turns the sea sliver like beaten metal-*

( Solnit 2013, p.160)

*-And others swear you are a hermaphrodite-* (Shelley, p. 228) <sup>5</sup>

and is reflective of the condition of temporality and potential. It symbolizes the base metal which is transformed by the alchemical process that is happening above into gold or the perfect new being, the hermaphrodite that symbiotically enables conflict and union.

( Fig. 15)

The element of never achieving, never coming full circle or to a resolution has been an important element in this work. The absence of the body and its replacement through the object has channeled some of the pressure of struggle and torment into a third party experience for me. I have given *The Twin* the impossible task to fulfill its duty to cool a large space, while placing its release elements with it in the same space. Its circumstance never allowing it to achieve its goal.

During my first quarter at the University of Washington I attempted to create a sculpture that would allow me to use condensation of water on a cooled metal surface to render visible the image of a body. Through interchanging heat and cooling cycles the body would appear and disappear in a slow cyclical motion.

Through *The Twin* sculpture this first attempt has found a satisfactory resolution, in many ways more successful than the first attempt because of its level of abstraction. The refrigerator structure implies a body without a physical representation of it. It also combines the cooling and heating mechanism in its interior rather than this system being a separate, hidden function. It also removed the artificially induced system that tries to resemble a natural function.

Ephemeral materials and transitory conditions have had a reoccurring presence in my work. Capturing the moment of change and inconsistency in a given system or structure allows me to ask questions about fear and existence, death and potential that go beyond the personal or individual. However my exploration of these universal conflicts is driven by my personal anxieties, hopes and longing.

<sup>1</sup> . Enantiodromia is term introduced by Heraclitus that describes the appearance of opposites in the course of an event. Carl Jung uses this word to describe an unconscious force that emerges within the self as a strong opposition to a conscious dominant and intense state as an unconscious counter reaction to a strong tendency. This opposing reaction eventually reaches a threshold and break through the conscious control. ( Source: <http://jungiancenter.org/jung-on-the-enantiodromia-part-1-definitions-and-examples/> )

<sup>2</sup> . Deleuze differentiates two types of multiplicity. The continuous ( qualitative) and discrete ( quantitative) multiplicity. Quantitative multiplicity is logical, scientific and mathematical. Qualitative multiplicity is substantiates things that can not be properly counted and is subjective, virtual and intensive. Contrary to the understanding that differences are part of a larger One, this idea of multiplicity acknowledges that everything is different and an individual self, with its own properties. Both the continuous and discrete multiplicity exist at the same time is the world, but they make up the difference between reason and poetry. Allowing for a worldview that enables minorities and differences.

<sup>3</sup> . Information source: “*Opal Description*” , 2002-2012 Gemological Institute of America Inc. , <http://www.gia.edu/opal-description>

<sup>4</sup> Hobart King, “*Obsidian*”, <http://geology.com/rocks/obsidian.shtml>

5 . Alchemy is concerned with the complexity of change and transformation from one state to another. Each step of transformation is represented in a color and mineral. Through the different states, opposing qualities are first separated and then reunited into the divine hermaphrodite, a reconciliation of spirit and matter, a being of both male and female qualities. A being that is both constituted as same and other, defined as thinking and feeling (Huskinson 2004, p. 47)

6 . a glory hole is an equipment used by glass blowers to reheat the glass at the end of the blow pipe, to soften and further manipulate the material.

Vesta Products, “*Glory Holes & Equipment*” <http://www.vesta-kilns.com/kilns/glass/hot-working/glory-holes-and-quipments/>

7 . These two lines are part of the text for the voice in the video of *Borderlands*. The text was composed of my own writing as well as with text excerpts from other authors.

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