An Escapist Utopia

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AN ESCAPIST UTOPIA
My practice exists to the scale of my body. There is usually an “easter egg”, so to speak, in the physical size, shape, or orientation that is a direct reference to my physical existence (a finger’s length, my height, my height crouching, my wing span, etc.) Beyond size and orientation alone, the incorporation of my physical body becomes inseparable from the process of making (foot as paint brush, finger as pen, lips as stamp, hands as clamp, etc.). This allows my practice to not only be a self-narrative of ideas, but also one of my physical existence.

**Body as Object**

**Body as Image**

**Body as Ritual**

**Body as Time**

**Body as Experiment**

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Despite saying I am an ad-hoc maker I still find myself on the "this isn't perfect" thought spiral while making. Over time, I have developed a series of methods to combat the judgment that comes from external expectations, rather than being derived from my own individual power or meaning-making. All too quickly though, I find myself spiraling down “this isn't perfect enough”.

My work has always been object-making.

**Website as Object**

**Image as Object**

**Self as Object**

**Ritual as Object**

**Spirit as Object**

When I was a child I would lay awake at night and obsess about how I would make something. Starting with the end goal, I would work backwards and figure out how to get there. Then, I would lock myself in my room for hours, listen to music and figure out how to conceptualize whatever I was thinking (truly, my working process hasn't changed much).

In retrospect, this is when I began functioning as an ad-hoc maker. I would figure out how to do whatever I wanted, with whatever I had at my disposal. To this day, I actually find it quite annoying if I have to break the flow and go get something because I can't do it with whatever I have on hand.

Ad-hoc theory and ad-hoc making both play a huge influence in my practice. I use it as a way to challenge my own preconceptions of there being any one way or right way to do something. Proving that any and all “unconventional” methods are valuable, interesting, and have the potential to produce new thoughts, ideas, things, and connections.

Most of my work is based on impulse (or compulsive). There is not a lot of planning or preparation. This lack of “thinking” creates a space of escape, allowing my ideas to flow unhinged, guided only by instinct, by spirit.

In this way my practice functions as a self-narrative, my work being a reflection of whatever state I am in when it asks to be manifested, and consisting of whatever I have available at that given time.

This past year, as I started to exist in what felt like a mostly virtual space, my practice asked to exist in that space with me. (It is somewhere we can meet, a mostly virtual space, my practice asked to exist in that space with me. It is somewhere we can meet, understand, and commune with each other.)

My tendency to work impulsively means I rarely have the tools, materials, or prior experience to do something “correct”. Most of the time I am winging it, for the hell of it, often making things full of uselessness.

**Uselessness as Joyful**

**Uselessness as Experimental**

**Uselessness as Spiritual**

**Uselessness as Process**

**Uselessness as Meditation**

Imperfection plays a significant role in how I approach my practice. It shows the who, the spad, the impulse, and the hand at work.

**Imperfection as Compliment**

**Imperfection as Invention**

**Imperfection as Individuality**

**Imperfection as Identity**

**Imperfection as Narrative**

The majority of my objects exist as a single being (or edition), with their own existence external to me; thus imperfection acts like a beauty mark, or fingerprint to each object, marking their own moment in time.

Once set free, I no longer attempt to mandate any meaning to my objects instead allowing an external audience to interact and make meaning with them. However, I can always come back to them and remember whatever point in my own personal narrative they arose from.

**Object as Pilgrimage**

**Object as Conversation**

**Object as Time**

**Object as Feeling**

**Object as Relief**

I manifest meaning through making, and making as ritual. I make objects saturated with my connection to a physical and a metaphysical world. Texture, density, overlap, and distortion are frequent characteristics in my practice. I use them to “break my brain”, or distort an object to a point that new meaning can be derived from their original form (or break the rules on how a recognizable objects should function, be made, or be used).

My voice comes from dichotomies of never one nor the other a space between the silence amid heartbeats the expected away from the world as we know it away from the already understood away from the just because the expected into a space where you can take a seat at my table where you can free yourself and see all things like you’ve never seen before
I’m caught here somewhere between cynicism and mysticism unsure whether I should believe and feel it all or nothing at all that this all will amount to something bigger than myself something worthwhile something to be left behind assuming that one day there will be an end that we are not living an inevitable infinity a constant never-ending a lack thereof an enormity a loop assuming that I was here that I mattered what will I have left here in infinity my rings have been bothering me lately this is news to me as I have worn them for five years this is new what is going on in my mind or in my body or in my space that is causing this do I feel claustrophobic stuck lost am I craving a new sense of mobility a need for lack of resistance to glide to fly to escape my mind is changing adapting reaching trying to comprehend its being tried to release through my hands maybe that’s why my rings have been bothering me lately they’re trapping in thoughts that are trying to escape
the branches get lower when it rains
they bow in its presence
they tickle the top of my umbrella

if we both stay silent
it will remain
inaudible
nonexistent
a memory

here i lie
underwater
stained covered stapled
jailed by what i once was
begging to transform
reflecting on who i once was
who i was born to be
reflecting on what i am not
searching what i am
you can tell can’t you
i don’t belong here

do you
this is my facade
this is my lie
i do not belong
i do not fit
i do not

so what am i but a garden
the same not unison incomplete
the wind moves me
strong in my roots
yet i do not look like you
does that mean i do not belong
that i am not a garden
oh what am i if not a garden
susceptible to being picked
being trampled
forgotten
oh what am i but a flower
in a garden
who’s to say the color of my petals
simply misunderstood

i am still looking for my bike
it was stolen long ago
but i have faith
faith it will be returned
faith in humanity
faith i will see someone riding it
faith i will overcome my fear of confrontation
faith i will see it somewhere
faith in honesty
always looking

in retrospect
it was my social anxiety that kept me awake
at parties till 3 am
i just kept doing impressions of myself
to myself
to prove
i hadn’t changed
to keep myself awake

i seem to have exhausted my tank of extrovert energy

here we are
in this void
left only to question
why we are
when we are
what we are
floating aimlessly through a
cacophonous silence
hoping for something
hoping for anything
hoping for anyone to see us
to reach out

here i lie
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i lose words sometimes
i lose them in the depths of my mind
behind the other ones ready to come out
they are lost but i can feel them
envision them
know the space they take up in a sentence
but i cannot seem to grasp them
i lose words
they run away from me

searching for relief from sensory overload in a bar bathroom
only works when the band hits intermission

to prove to us that
we are not alone
or only alone in metaphor
to prove that what we do every day is a part of something
that is not this pointless endeavor of serving ideals and ideas
that are not our own
that we do not own
that we were given
we are left searching for connection
while submerged viscous reality

but here i am
i am here!
reach out to me
call out to me
i am here!

i swear
i am here
i am engulfed in this chasm too
i am here
i am
Using the character Sisyphus from Greek Mythology, who was fated to repeat the task of rolling a boulder up a mountain to only see it roll down again, Camus introduces his view on Absurdism which lies in the juxtaposition between the need to find meaning in life and the utter silence the universe offers as a response. This book speaks largely to my philosophical standpoint, that plays a direct role in the direction of my personal design practice.


Evans uses folklore and mythology to explore collective histories of those alienated by witch hunts and militant-industrialism. Though controversial and having its flaws this book introduced me to thinking about alternative spiritualities and ways of living that counter the trajectory of “His-story”.


In this work, Halberstam proposes low theory as a way to break apart traditional definitions of success and failure by arguing that failure to live up to societal norms can open up more creative ways of thinking and being in the world. I adapt this viewpoint within my design practice, often “failing” the correct mode of working. Evans depicts the spaces where queer identities, people, and spiritualities were first named, and Halberstam offers failure as a way of reclaiming those spaces.


Jencks & Silver use this book as a counter-culture design manifesto by adapting the word “ad-hoc” from earlier architectural criticism. It encourages the mix of old and new, art and craft, work and play, theory and practice, aesthetics and functionality. I apply many of the ideas directly from their manifesto in my own design practice as both an aesthetic and philosophy. In many ways, ad-hoc theory and low theory, as presented by Halberstam, are synonymous with their implication of misfit being a fruitful and creative practice.


Leonard uses wabi-sabi, or an acceptance of transience and imperfection, to recognize that nothing lasts, nothing is finished, and nothing is perfect. I find myself allowing characteristics of wabi-sabi principles to frequent my work including an appreciation for natural objects. This piece is also a beautiful intersection of design disciplines and philosophy, and shows how they influence and interact with one another.


Nelson uses this piece as a color study of blue in a series of poetic vignettes, memories, and metaphors. This book speaks to me as both a color study and an act of repetition – a textual example of ideas present in my physical works. This work also pushes the definition of traditional poetry, as it’s written in a list format breaking down the rules and expectations of what a collection of poetry traditionally looks like.


This book offers a wonderful selection of Oliver’s poetry. Though new to my stack of books, Oliver’s poetry speaks with simplicity about the world in a way I hope to be able to fuse into my own poetic practice in. Oliver’s poetry falls under the umbrella of a more traditional poetic format, however poetry is a way to break down language and allow it to function in a more specific way.


An essay exploring the collision of traditional Japanese interiors and modern architectural design. Tanizaki explores the hidden delights of dimly lit rooms and worn staircases. Similar to wabi-sabi this book guides my thinking away from the cosmetic and towards the art of impermanence. Though coming from an architectural design perspective, many concepts presented in this piece that push back against the adoption of modern architectural design have influenced my personal design practice.

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**FINAL THOUGHTS**

As an active pursuit of avoiding excellence, my work acts as a space for failure, play, experimentation and imperfection. This document and final installation acts as a pause along a lifelong journey of object-making, creation, and spirituality. My work, specifically my working practice, rather than any one object or moment, is an escape route for myself. My work is the process, the journey, not the making or the completion of any one thing. The repetition, distortion, and production that I engage throughout my working practice act as a spiritual exercise of meaning-making through creation. I fall deeply in love with each object as I see it through to their next life. As the vessel for them to pass through onto a new existence; this work acts as a self-reflective and reflection of whatever state I am in when they asked to be manifested. I often wait for the call, or impulse to begin a new project seeing this as a way to counter modern modes of “productivity”. This work seeks to be taken seriously, as it is felt dramatically in terms of modern design, however this failure, for me, is freedom.

-S.E.H.D