An Escapist Utopia

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An Escapist Utopia
My work has always been object-making. 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."

Most of my work is based on impulse (or compulsion). There is not a lot of planning or preparation. This lack of "thinking" creates a space of escape, allowing my ideas to flow unshackled, 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 when it asks to be manifested, and consisting of whatever I have available at that given time.)

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.

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).

Despite saying I am an ad-hoc maker I still find myself on the "this isn't not perfect enough" 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 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 EXPERIENTIAL
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 speed, the impulse, and the hand at work.

IMPERFECTION AS COMPLIMENT
IMPERFECTION AS INVENTION
IMPERFECTION AS INDIVIDUALITY
IMPERFECTION AS IDENTITY
IMPERFECTION AS NARRATIVE

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OBJECT AS PILGRIMAGE
OBJECT AS CONVERSATION
OBJECT AS TIME
OBJECT AS FEELING
OBJECT AS RELIEF

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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 been trying 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

Living in the in-between as an act of freedom freedom as a response to oppression one cannot exist without the other

this acts as proof of my existence in this moment this space that is relevantly, irrelevant a perfect illusion of time and space this space that is relevantly irrelevant a perfect illusion of time and space

or am I shedding a skin that I know too well that feels worn out that is inappropriate for the current place I have arrived to that I have landed my body feels inappropriate for the current state of my mind

How Does this Space of Immateriality Become a Womb of Immortal Memory a Bank of Moments That we can Refer to or Reflect on to Show Us Who we Were Who we Are?

Constantly cocooned in a concoction of emotional precarities it’s such a burden to know so much to care to love too much what is the escape where is the resistance how do I find balance in a realm whose ground is constantly shifting how absurd it is to feel so deeply

When I was a child I watched as my brothers balloon floated away I was torn apart watching it float into infinity I hugged my feet to leave the ground to grab the string and bring it back down how was I to know that was the first time I became an emotional martyr to protect one of the souls that I loved

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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

i cannot seem to grasp them
i lose words
they run away from me

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

in retrospect
it was my social anxiety that kept me awake
at parties till 5 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

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

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 forced 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.


In this work, Halberstam proposes low theory as a way to break apart traditional definitions of success and failure by arguing that failure to rise up to societal norms can open up more creative ways of thinking and being in the world. I adopt 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 denigrated, 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, aestheticism and functionality. I apply many of the ideas directly from their manifesto in my own design practice as both an aesthetic and philosophy, and show how they influence and interact with one another.


Nelson uses this poem 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 world. 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 mesh into my own poetry practice. 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.


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 exception extra for myself. My work is the process, the journey, not the end 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-narrative 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 not be taken seriously, as it falls drastically in terms of modern design, however this failure, for me, is freedom.

-S.E.H.D

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