

I want to start with a kind of carousel (tho incomplete!) of shout-outs to some of my heroines and heros, influences, sources, my ancestors in art, to set out some principles that I work with, so to speak. it's like showing you my backyard, maybe. so first I'll quickly run through a bunch of images and try to set out the principles that are always in my mind when I'm working, to honor these traditions that I think could be helpful later when I talk about my own work to unpack some of the ideas and structures I'm building on.

1. THE PRINCIPLE OF PROCESS:

70's art practices, experimental dance, film & performance, Judson Church, contact improv, ps122, 8BC, the Byrd Hoffman school for birds, embodiment, chaos.

drawing as diagram, drawing as thinking, the ancient sense of touch still alive, and thinking as touching, stroking, patting, nudging. Touch's tenderness, and its immediacy, its way of being like writing, like code, like messages.

the idea that process is how you develop form, and that process is a living experiment, corporeal, like walking or breathing.

the idea of a personal performative space, actions made, maybe even absurdly, just to find out the shape of your thought.

the idea of a studio not as a factory for products, but as a lab for trying things out, contemplating, like a library is for scholars, and that involves work, labor and uncertainty.

In this way of making, the work is seen as formed while forming, being both a splitting and a unifying of your mind and body as you look at your own hand or arm forming the forms;

the work is not divided between concept and material, not even between up and down, wall and floor, but is an actual medium, a bridge between knowing and doing, and I'm defining a medium as any space you create for thinking, including the page.

A rough space, a cave space, a palpable space, where you work through things as they come into being, the idea of not dividing the work into thought vs action, not walling things off, but the medium itself as embodied thinking, body-knowing, a speaking body;

this can be like building up a language, this can be what cognition is. maybe unclear signs but like a conversation, like a relationship, this can be messy. you do it on the spot even though you're not sure what you're going to say next.

you're looking for a structure, by moving the parts around, but you're building a new language with just the signal-to-noise ratio with your body-knowing.

(Imagine the female goddess Iris as the medium, instead of Hermes, and then imagine what iridescent knowing might be like, instead of hermeneutics.

(In this way process is related to wisdom.)

2. THE PRINCIPLE OF DOUBT

doubt in philosophy,

doubt in literature,

doubt in theology,

and in aesthetics, doubt as fundamental to touch, to the sensation of drawing, of painting,

the kind of painting where you make constant changes, where nothing remains fixed, doubt is about knowing WITH feeling, agonizing, not being absolute, being incalculable, a painting that says “I don’t know, or I wonder” but recognizes a shimmering space of the possible, the potential, or even the absurd.

Understanding that the shimmer and the absurd are connected, that anxiety is connected to knowing, that the etymology of “understanding” has to do with being split open like a piece of fruit, being pierced, perforated, or opened. letting light in.

Knowing that knowing involves being opened or perforated.

A process of feeling your way through.

(In this way doubt is related to sensuality.)

3. THE PRINCIPLE OF NEGATION

Not just negation in theory, or analysis, or ideas,

but in knots, problems, urges, or as glitch,

or objection

or picturing problems with no solutions,

or as annihilation

or being a refusenik, saying NO to the art world or anyone in it,

or stating a whole list of limit conditions or boundaries or refusals, making a chronicle of them,

and thereby defining your boundaries, your own counter culture, making images for certain people only.

Or just wiping things out,

making nothing out of something, or something into nothing,

or just erasing the whole damn thing.

(In this way negation clears the way for affirmation.)

4. THE PRINCIPLE OF IMPROV

The stroke, the gesture, the opposite of playing from a written score, but instead, working the nerves, in the heat of the moment, in response to the others,

an aesthetics of the nervous system, the limbic system, that includes the downbeat, the syncopation, or the harmolodics of color,

the surprise of seeing color moving, as either divine

or as mundane, everyday stuff, garbage, camouflage,

the making of lists, piles, messing around, and blowing up small things into phantasms,

or just scribbling on the paper, while listening to the news,

just a regular person who breathes, walks around and responds,

dealing with the world and its junk, its everyday stuff.

Maybe being both social and antisocial.

(In this way, improvisation can be structured.)

5. THE PRINCIPLE OF ACCIDENTS

Chance operations. The possibility of ugliness, awkwardness, the id, the unconscious, limping verse, unfinishedness, painting as impure, just a series of moods, adjustments of impurities, an awkward embrace, an accidental meeting of systems and uncertainty, finding that you're in a relationship with an art process that asks YOU questions, being knocked off kilter by the glitch in your system; or finding a safe space where you can refuse to assimilate, where you define your own standards, or drawing from your own model aesthetic, cultivating your own scene, making inside jokes for your own audience, inventing cryptic messages and codes for your people, or sending practical political signs to the people you need to reach.
(In this way the principle of accident is very purposeful.)

6. the principle of DIFFICULTY

Declaring the difficulty of being a subject, or a citizen, the right to be opaque, having scrappy aesthetics, trying to figure it out in your underwear. Wrestling with the materiality of the world with your bare hands, using anything you have: your spirit animal, your pencil, a camera, melodrama, TV, sentiment. Stretching rhetorics and grammars to unfurl in time and space til they mean something new. Explaining, diagramming, chronicling the world. To write and draw as simultaneous interpretation, using everything, to work in the margins, to use scraps, used envelopes, and fragments, using language as material and art made into language. To define your own SHAPES, shadows, silhouettes, affections, decorations. Finding structures within yourself in order to change outer structures, to mess things up, things that flood, that won't stay in their place, that cross media. Painters who work like filmmakers and filmmakers who become painters. To refuse medium specificity, to adopt the wrong medium as your model on purpose, productive misunderstandings: to use experimental film/video as a model for a painting practice, for example: shooting freely first, then editing into meaning by assembling parts later. using sequence, using duration, accumulation.
(In this way difficulty is also legible.)

7. THE PRINCIPLE OF HUMOR.

Dumb handmade stuff, DIY culture, comix, "bedroom productions," private dances, folk art, phantasies,

art made as gifts.

Political satire, tragedy in cartoon form, protest in cartoon form, anguish in cartoon form.

Painting from your own spaces,

outsiders who don't necessarily want to come in, insiders who want to be out,

de-skilling as re-skilling, fast painting,

bad painting, low culture, pop songs, irony, shabbiness, sexiness,

queerness, camp, drag, satire.

(In this way, humor is also liberation.)

8. THE PERSONAL IS POLITICAL"

A 70s motto that could apply to all kinds of identity politics, to implicate yourself, your own body and subject position. Recognizing the subject as nested in context, politics, histories both inside and out, being willing to say it out loud, in streets and in hospitals and homes, the idea of care, portraying yourself and others honestly and clearly and with care. In this way the personal is related to ethics: how well you treat people no matter what your damn political rhetoric is, how generous you are, how you channel your feelings and thoughts, how you make your forms with touching feelings, and making work with feelings touching.

(And in this way the personal is related back to the tactility of painting.)