

My approach is marked by creative uncertainty.

Go outside, lock the door, look at trash on the street. I feel stronger and more alone when I am in public. Inside, the whole world pours in.

In the studio: I start each new painting with small variations in surface preparation, scale, format. These subtle variations in materiality keep me in a state of unknowing, and may defend against systematization on the part of the viewer. *I hate making any kind of statements about what the viewer experiences.* I employ different strategies of mark-making to inhabit positions seen as alien to one another. In the private performance of making, connections are made between the gestic and geometric. The (forged) connections between geometry and gesture point to a shared history; the idealism of 20th century abstraction and its utopian dreams. Geometry's idyll of Platonic form and universal language, and gesture's hope for subjectivity, inwardness, the expressive self. I am not interested in collapsing the differences, but in reasserting them as questions in the social and institutional sites I occupy.

“...though at times it may seem to be all consciousness of misery... there is something that holds one in one's place, makes it a standpoint in the universe which it is probably not good to forsake.” – Henry James

Consciousness as conflicting forces amassed in a temporary phalanx of ambivalent (miserable) pacifists. The self; united only in the social. According to Chantal Mouffe, “The social is the realm of sedimented practices, that is, practices that conceal the originary acts of their contingent political institution and which are taken for granted, as if they were self-grounded.” Or as Badiou describes it, the subject is produced in the moment of the event. I would like to study with Mouffe, the necessity of transforming antagonisms into agonistic politics is of global concern, and I am looking for ways to inflect my practice and thinking with engaged dissent, to make critical art.

In “Beyond Institutional Critique,” Isabel Graw writes, “The canon of institutional critique includes the cemented usual suspects: Asher, Buren, Broodthaers, Haake, with the idea that painting can't, doesn't do it.” I am committed to the autonomy and culpability of the object that is painting within Capitalism. Because (not in spite) of painting's position within art institutions, I think there is still critical painting to be made. Graw again, “it is not art's supposed intrinsic qualities alone that lead to its institutional recognition, but an interplay of promotional, social and institutional activities.” I work in the dialogue between studio practice and the public platform it provides, both through sales and privileged access, and through academic institutions. My position, that of decentered, freelance cultural producer is ubiquitous in capitalism today, and threatened in the unstable economy.

What does language have to do with capitalism? I know that words have power and people that use words well have more power. Can words be objects? Can words object to the context they are derived from/born into?

They don't have to stay questions. I am not capable of being declarative. It's frustrating because I'm so much smarter than this. I've moved so far in the last four years in my thinking, I can have a conversation about this, I can listen carefully, read closely, and come up with the question. I need an interlocutor.

YOU CAN DO THIS YOU CRAZY STARVING BEAUTIFUL GIRL WHO IS ALSO A GOOD ARTIST. YOU ARE BRAVE AND SMART AND CRITICAL. DON'T WINGE.¹

Art-making is not book-keeping.² That's not to say I haven't smashed two things together in an algebraic ham sandwich and crossed my fingers waiting for the synthetic *third* (perhaps the ham itself) to appear. I'm

¹ My girlfriend, Dana Degiulio wrote this. “Starving” is in reference to the cleanse/fast I have been on for a week.

² “Must we wring the neck of a certain system in order to stuff it into a contemporary pigeon-hole, or modify the dimensions of that pigeon-hole for the satisfaction of the analogymongers? Literary criticism is not book-keeping.” Samuel Beckett “Dante..Bruno...Vico...Joyce” 1929

terrified by change, but I thrive on change. I maintain brief habits in the studio. **I am two selves negotiating. Not like a mother hen and her chicks, but like twins; two equivalent parts vying to be represented. Wounded self resents hyper-verbal self for engaging in the social effectively because it sounds like a lie, is a lie. Your paintings and your talking is the practice. These things in conflict, vying for impossible primacy because winning isn't interesting.**³ I don't know what to think about that. The relationship between talking and painting is where I *want* to talk about the viewer. For audience, painting cancels talking, talking cancels. *Writing begins at the point where speech becomes impossible (... in the sense it has when applied to a child.)*⁴

BETWEEN THESE TWO PARAGRAPHS. STEP INTO ANOTHER VOICE – MAYBE A GLOBAL VOICE, MAYBE RELATE THINGS TO THE PROGRAM NY WHITNEY SOME SORT OF TRADITION YOU ARE ON A HIGH HERE. SET UP THE NEXT PARAGRAPH.

I wrote a paragraph (deleted) about the difficulty of locating the “I,” which makes me think of conceptual video art practices, like Dan Graham. He was using technology to induce self-reflexivity in the subject. I guess maybe I feel like technology has caught up and now performs that *on* us, so it's been rendered ineffectual, the technological effect of mirroring. *Well, it's been folded in right? To um, social networks. Personal technologies, etc. And the subject reflected in these culture/media things has become undifferentiable from the sea, from the masses. The whole. The sucking vacuum, it's the same right?*

So, why does “I” have to be differentiated, and is that nostalgic? Well, that would be the thrust of what I'm trying to do, which is to argue for the necessity of the notion of the individual, more than a notion. The thing about the individual is that it cannot be divided, and that's not what I mean by individual. I mean a fragmented self kept whole by agonistic relations with world: the self is intact because the world is worse, Dana brilliantly said. Brilliantly. You're an angel for helping me with this. Are you seriously going to have another cigarette?

These ideas of holding one's place, of standing firm against the enticement to “melt” away, of creating form in a formless world, of destroying form in a rigidified market economy, inform my dialectic of object making. I want my paintings to be extremely abstract, and extremely material at the same time; disjunctive in their way of knowing, bearing witness to the impasse of the speculative mind. *Philosophy becomes tortured thinking.*⁵ I make tortured paintings, in the same sense.

My undergraduate education, at the Evergreen State College, was progressive. A smattering of humanities: Erving Goffman, Lyotard, Aime Cesaire, Frantz Fanon, Camus, Guy Debord et al. One quarter I and two other women designed an independent project reading absurdist theatre (Ionesco, Beckett and Pinter) and building puppets for performance. I also took concentrated, year-long courses in Nietzsche and French studies, the latter with a post-colonial approach, taught completely in French. My interest in misunderstanding history, in “petting the cat backwards,” derives from this education, where we delved into post-structural texts without having read the Greeks, or the structuralists. I did not always understand, but I felt desire. In graduate school at the Art Institute I attended courses on Benjamin and Adorno. **I delivered an hour-long lecture on Susan Sontag in August of 2007. I write art criticism and publish it in small tracts, which are distributed locally in Chicago and online. I teach painting at the graduate and undergraduate levels. I co-founded (in 3/08) and run Julius Caesar, a small non-profit gallery space with four other artists. I ran No Exit, a multi-use arts space in Olympia, Washington from 2002 to 2004.**

I worked in bookstores for ten years before graduate school, furtively reading, conducting an autodidacts investigation into Modernity. Through Kate Chopin, Henry James, Joan Didion, bell hooks, Fredric Jameson, Guy Debord, Greil Marcus, and others, I traced a history of capitalism and its discontents, while

³ Dana DeGiulio

⁴ Roland Barthes, “Writers, Intellectuals, Teachers” 1977

⁵ Susan Sontag “Thinking Against Oneself, Reflections on Cioran” 2002 in Sontag's lineage, from the systematic philosophies of Kant and Hegel, to the compressed, aphoristic styles of Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and Cioran.

bumping up against the world: In 1992 I attended my first Riot Grrl meeting in Olympia Washington, where the main topics of conversation were “when do you hate being female?” and the media blackout (post Newsweek and USA Today coverage.) I was not yet graduated from high school, but already, the local celebrity count was rising, with increasing numbers of my friends becoming media stars. In 1998 I lived in Europe for six months, working in bars and living in the Shakespeare & Co. Bookstore and a dirty apartment with two men (bartenders also) in Gibraltar. Back in Olympia in late 1999 some female friends and I met to plan a women’s music and art festival. Ladyfest 2000 happened in late summer, with all tasks, from Emcee, to “sound guy”, catalog design (my project) to workshop organizing performed by women. We raised over ten thousand dollars for a battered women’s shelter, and by the following year, Ladyfests were happening internationally. I roadied for the Sex Worker’s Art Show Tour in 2004. Over 30 joyous manic hellish days driving a van full of queer divas around the country.

Take any of this, take all of this. Each practice threatens to destroy the other but doesn't. "I can't go on, I will go on."