

**Blue Loops**

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by

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## **WRITING AS A SPIDERWEB**

These writings are to you what my art practice is to me, a living organism, a vision spiraling into 3000 rabbit holes, a collection of fragments, a meandering piece of prose, which when added together, amount to a flickering, a kinetic pulse, something not easily contained, something that is moving, something that leaves more questions than answers. At the end of the day I want to make something that remains a mystery, even to myself.

## **ABSTRACT**

I started threading wires between objects in an attempt at connecting the fragments of my life, winding forms into spiraling webs of meaning. Bluebirds, cartoon toys, Jewish kitsch, 90's teen angst, immaterial feeling. Wires are squeezed with plaster and smothered in paint, tightly wound, mummified, squeezed to death, or post-death, suspended in an oxygenless void, as if time stopped and all at once we could feel the simultaneity of things — the star hurtling through space, a swimmer falling into water, raindrops sliding off a pair of glasses. I spin wires, squeeze them with wet plaster, mummify them, until they are frozen in aerial space, lodging them into air, as if to say to my sculptures, "ok you, FREEZE, stay right there...flying midair forever. I need you to be impossible. I need you to be magical." I trace your path through the dark sky. Everything is suspended, a Mickey Mouse head, a bird, a toy troll, all swimming in the same dark goo. Maybe blue loops are a wish to capture immaterial things, to catch the present moment in my hands like a darting firefly. Maybe blue loops are diagrams of Covid era stagnation, of time suspended, of invisible growth moving through sludge at 100 mph just below the surface, growth you can't feel until you burst forth in one violent motion, spitting up dirt, hot wind ripping through your hair. "I'm alive" you say, poking your tiny head out of a hole of wet light in an endless black sky. Or maybe, blue loops are an impossible attempt at squeezing something so tight it can stay alive forever.

## **CHAPTERS**

**BLUE LOOPS**

**STRANGE BALLOONS**

**GRAVITY**

**THE INFINITE POOL**

**MAPPING**

**FIRE THROUGH SLUDGE**

**NOTES ON THE UNDERWORLD**

**CYCLES**

**EXCERPT FROM AN OLD POEM CALLED HAIR THAT FREEZES MID AIR AS IT FLIES**

**SECULAR ISLANDS**

**DIALOGIC RELATIONSHIPS AS BLUE THREAD**

**CYBERNETIC LOOPS**

## **BLUE LOOPS**

Blue loops frozen wet with life

These are the loops that surround you

Blue loops as aerial fruit loops

Blue loops in a black void

Blue loops spun in the air

Blue loops as maps

Or as skeletons

Or as all the ways we are alive

Or as many small things occurring at one time

Stretched to death

Tethered to nothing

Smothered in blue

immortalized

Blue loops as frog feet

Blue loops as spider families

Threading

Winding

Spiraling

Vintage Menorahs

Breakfast foods

Tiny birds suspended in wet plaster

Longing, reaching, praying

Vintage animaniacs bubble bath

A porcelain poodle

Notes to angels

Fantasy liquid

Blue like the sky in an 80's cartoon

These are the loops that surround you

Loops in a void

The hardening of a soft thread

The squeezing of something wet

Embedded in wet plaster

Suspended in nothing at all

These are the loops that surround you

These are the loops of simultaneity

Wet blue

of obsession

of frantic desperation for meaning

Blue loops as the simultaneity of things

the car in traffic

the star hurtling through space

the swimmer falling into water

the moment before lips touch

the raindrop sliding off a pair of glasses

Blue loops as suspension

Blue thread as blue loops

Blue loops as mathematics

Blue loops that reach to the sky

Blue loops surrounding you

Blue loops

## **STRANGE BALLOONS**

About 1.5 years ago I wrote a series of poems about gravity, about a strange balloon in an Odilon Redon print, about its connection to a series of writings by Terrance Hayes on the great poet, Etheridge Knight. I return to these poems about gravity again and again. They can be applied to almost anything I am doing in my life at a given moment. They thread through my life just as blue loops thread through the air. As I reflect on my current work, blue loops stretching towards an open sky, I must acknowledge the theme of gravity that comes up again and again in my life and practice. The tension between being weighed down and being weightless, between tethering and floating, between sinking and ecstatic freedom. There is so much that weighs us down in daily life, such heaviness that is inevitable in this lifetime. Perhaps through making art, I can dislodge myself from the sludge. Perhaps that is the ultimate wish in the studio, to feel entirely untethered, to feel free.

## **GRAVITY**

The heaviest painting I ever saw was made by Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio in a long dark hall on the way to the Sistine Chapel. The Deposition. I found it by accident, moving through dimly lit passages, swarms of people, stopped in my tracks, almost fearful of this painting, its ecstatic gravity sinking me into the earth. Arms every which way, flailing up, calling out. One thousand pounds upon a block of stone. How could I ever move again.

## **THE INFINITE POOL**

My art practice is a thirsty animal, a trunk of mysterious toys, a dark and infinite pool. The more I feed the pool, the deeper it gets, the stranger it becomes, the more waves rush in from unforeseen places, flushing my face with fury, calling me to the studio to go diving, to put in the work until something is found, to plunge deeply without knowing what I will find or what I am looking for. The pool deepens when I spend time in it. The infinite pool was one of my reasons for getting an MFA, for taking a break from the hustle of daily life, to find out what blow up animals and noodles and alligators and dolphins are waiting in my pool, to know deeply that my pool is always there, and that my life is richer and fuller when I am wading through it, tidepooling for strange toys. When I am painting I am in the darkest part of the ocean, blinded by darkness, not knowing what will emerge, but knowing that if I keep going, anything could happen. There is a certain feeling when I am deeply immersed in the work, similar perhaps to when I am deeply immersed in reading a novel. When I am deeply in a novel, I am living my life in parallel to the lives of the characters in the book. Everything looks different when I am

reading that novel, and everything looks different again when I am reading a different novel. My art practice is my spiraling, winding, novel with no known path. My art practice is a riverbed running parallel to my daily activities. Life is more interesting when it is not a life only singular to me, in all my smallness, but rather one in the context of many, that reshape how I live my own. When I am immersed in my art, the undercurrent, the infinite pool, beneath me is activated. I throw one thousand tiny tea lights into a dark cavernous underworld, letting them float on black water. The lights illuminate parts of the cave I never knew existed, life sprouts from stagnant charcoal, sparking new life wherever it shines. My practice is a dead and alive forest, with full trees growing out of graveyard trunks, blossoming and casting a bed of pink flowers onto the dead roots. It is everything dead and alive talking to each other all at once. It is wrapped into my life and my life is wrapped into it. It is a hidden bed of imagery that falls out of my hands. It is the connection to something bigger than myself. It is the way I can give my life meaning. The way I can surprise myself, the way I can not know what is happening, the way I can live for this unknown, and at the same time, this deep knowing, that if I persist, something magical could erupt at any moment.

My practice is a strange and hungry spider web, growing tiny webs in its underbelly, one thing sparking the next, a constant stream of birth, rebirth, death, regeneration. It is a pile of laundry with one hot pink shirt that dyes everything pink one day, gets bleached the next day, is squeezed out, shrunken, and dyed pink again. It is the person who wears the pink shirt, the shirt itself, the drawing of the shirt, the fabric the shirt is made of, squeezed, smothered in paint, and wound around a heavy wire.

## **MAPPING**

Is it possible to speak  
of two such different lives  
as Odilon Redon and Etheridge Knight,  
invisible thread moves through invisible nights,  
the soft passage of time,  
carried toward the open sky,  
only guided by feeling that is mine,  
and who am I?

I do not seek to find or place myself within a specific canon, as directly molded by a specific type or kind of work. I seek to place myself deeply within myself, to mine my underbelly until things foreign to me emerge, rise to the surface, bubble into view. In the unearthing of myself, I will naturally be connected to others, as the imagery which pours out of



my hands is always connected to every small thing I have seen and heard, as each piece of paint winds into and around the imagery of other artists and makers, as we collectively build a web of symbolism beyond language.

## **FIRE THROUGH SLUDGE**

This year was growth moving through sludge. Growth that butts its head up out of the ground periodically, throws some paint on the wall, and sinks back in to hide. Growth and evolution during a time of quarantine and isolation is a hidden animal. The blue thread in my work is an attempt at starting to piece together the fragments of my imagination that have unearthed during the past two years, the symbols of my life, the strange joyful things I am inexplicably drawn to, the pieces of gold from my infinite pool, and to wind them all together into a physical, tangible, touchable map. To make sense of this life, where at times the future seems incredibly bleak, where death and loss are inevitable, and yet every morning we continue to wake up, to collect small things I love, to wrap them in plaster, to suspend them midair, and to say, here, look, this is an object I made, almost as some kind evidence or declaration of being, at an altar of my own design.

## **NOTES ON THE UNDERWORLD**

In what reality

does Odilon Redon

speak to David Wojnarowicz,

speak to Jorge Luis Borges,

speak to me?

Pictures find each other

like heaven in children's movies

floating heads do not land

in any place that we see with our eyes,

a falling between/invisible things.

## **CYCLES**

My work consists of video, performance, painting and sculpture. It is a cyclical practice, as one thing informs the other, and back again, again and again without end. I think of my work on an accordion between sincere romantic and spiritually guided indulgence and critical absurdity. I use absurdism to explore ritual, sacred objects, and a desperation for faith. My sculptures are meant as altars or reliquaries which reference archeological finds or religious objects. I am interested in the way that meaning, power, and potential can be infused into an inert object or substance and the idea of life being created within an object. How can inert matter hold energetic potential? I am interested in the way that humans assign meaning to objects in religious practices, thus making certain objects sacred. What makes something valuable or holy? I play with these themes through absurdism, as the sculptures I create fuse vintage candles, judaica, cartoon figurines, plaster and paint in order to create an object which has a totemic or alter-like appearance. I use plaster to embed one thing deeply into another, to connect disparate parts, to alter and change existing objects in order to infuse them with new meaning.

I am interested in the arbitrary and absurdist creation of meaning through the act of reproduction and repetition. Just as biblical stories gain tangibility and believability through repetition, how can I use sculpture, painting, and video in order to document and create an archival reality of constructed art objects? I make a painting of each sculpture as an act of documentation and reproduction. Can these objects gain meaning over time, through reproduction and documentation? What does it mean to create an archive of a religion that does not exist? What is the function of art as a medium of preservation and storytelling? I am interested in the idea of the artist as a studio anthropologist and the life and meaning that can exist in inert material. In my video work, I explore this idea that profound meaning can be attached to an object through worship of absurdist statues, angels, and ceramic objects. Through the character of Ashley, I explore the common human desperation for faith through a psychological lens. Ashley surrounds herself with these seemingly “spiritual” objects as she goes on an absurdist quest for enlightenment.

## **EXCERPT FROM AN OLD POEM CALLED HAIR THAT FREEZES MID-AIR AS IT FLIES**

My paint characters have wild hair that freezes mid-air as it flies  
Their hands are in the air too  
shapes of exuberance  
fluid squishy  
noodles  
string beans  
jellyfish, starlight  
floating and drifting

## **SECULAR ISLANDS**

“The person with a secular mentality feels himself to be the center of the universe. Yet he is likely to suffer from a sense of meaninglessness and insignificance because he knows he’s but one human among five billion others - all feeling themselves to be the center of things - scratching out an existence on the surface of a medium-sized planet circling a small star among countless stars in a galaxy lost among countless galaxies. The person with the sacred mentality, on the other hand, does not feel herself to be the center of the universe. She considers the center to be elsewhere and other. Yet she is unlikely to feel lost or insignificant precisely because she draws her significance and meaning from her relationship, her connection, with that center, that Other.” - M. Scott Peck

What have we lost in a millennial generation turned away from religion? There has been a surge in spiritual trends as people try to make up for a lack. Why as humans do we need faith? The sense of “meaninglessness” felt in secular culture is something I see in my generation. As a millennial, I along with most of my peers were raised with some kind of organized religion, and now have discarded it. It is no coincidence that in a society and peer groups where religion is shunned, mystical activities and hobbies have popped up. The casual tarot reading at parties, the astrology apps, the self care books are all part of a larger cultural phenomenon which is taking place. These are methods of seeking answers, of looking to sources outside oneself, of seeking guidance, seeking a way to not be the “center of the universe” but instead to be part of something larger. This desperation for meaning is deeply embedded into human consciousness. Whether or not someone is attending a religious service or seeking answers from a tarot reading, the human drive to seek out forces larger than oneself is the same. I am interested in the power of intention behind prayer, which is lost without religion.

If prayer has power, what happens when prayer is inserted into a physical object? What

are these object markers of religion such as devotional objects, relics, statues which acquire a kind of holiness? I am interested in the relic, in the object infused with life and meaning, in the inert matter that somehow has a life to it. In my sculptural works, I explore these themes through the creation of totems and alter like figurines. Absurdism is crucial to the work, as cartoons such as Mickey mouse are paired with objects with spiritual or religious connotations. Through these juxtapositions, I intend to call into question the inherent absurdism in the worshipping of the object. Who are the original artists and makers of the religious objects we see? Who gets the privilege or the right to create a mezuzah or a hamsa (hand) and dictate its meaning? I am interested in interrogating this idea of who the maker is, the medium between “god” and the people. Who decides what makes an object holy? Throughout history, it was groups of men. But what about now, as an artist in my studio, how can I push these boundaries and transgress through the creation of “spiritual” objects.

## **DIALOGIC RELATIONSHIPS AS BLUE THREAD**

Dialogic relationships stretch across mediums, through threads that wind through antique toys, through color relationships on a flat surface, through the subtle differentiation of something matte vs something shiny, through physical installation, through multiple channel video that ping pongs off itself. Through multi-channel video, I explore dialogic relationships through overlapping argumentative dialogue as a means of hurling towards meaning. The character of Ashley speaks to an imaginary angel guide, the viewers hear an omniscient narrator, and the narrator communicates with the imagined angel guide, creating a web of dialogic relationships. Viewers are left to contend with multiplicity of perspectives and arrive at their own answers.

## **CYBERNETIC LOOPS**

“The psychological self emerges from abstract feedback loops of self-referent symbolic representations, recursively reflecting on itself in a reverberating circuit—a cybernetic loop.”  
Douglas R. Hofstadter

What is the self composed of? Perhaps instead of telling you directly, “This is what I am. This is what my work is,” I will present you with a massive reverberating circuit of symbolism, strange objects, tangents, rabbit holes, ideas that shoot out of my fingertips and circle back around to question themselves and repeat themselves, fragments that create more questions than answers. In the spirit of my winding threads shooting off in all directions, I invite you into my strange labyrinth

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