LIBERATION THROUGH PROCESS

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My name is Jacqueline Boyle. I was born in Waterbury, Connecticut and have lived in Columbus, Ohio for seven years. My work is about myself, my daughter, and everyone in my life. It is about the struggle of our aloneness and the triumph of our connectedness. These works are my dreamboats. They exist in many different oceans. Born from images of beauty and nightmares, my fantasies have simultaneously fused with my realities to create a world of abstracted presence.

I lived by the ocean when I was a child. Even as a child, I was in awe of its magnificence. I remember jetty racing, sand sculpting, clamming, getting burnt, splashing in and out of the tide, and making bonfires for marshmallows. Memories of these times stick in my mind and feed my constant desire to be there. I identify strongly with this place for reasons I don’t understand; for me, the power is in the magic of this place. The overwhelming magnitude of its own dynamics works with the land surrounding it in ways I cannot begin to understand. Therefore, I watch and take deep salty breaths and dream.

During High School, I moved away from the ocean. I was in a college prep program and also studied art. I enjoyed working with my hands in unison with my mind, and when I moved on to college I continued my studies in art. I began using my hands, my eyes, and my mind in a manner that had been totally foreign to my educational experiences.
For the next five years I studied art and printmaking at Bowling Green State University. Printmaking had a sense of quiet magic for me. After graduating with my B.F.A. I traveled France, Ireland, Italy, Cape Cod, Texas, and Florida. I exhibited paintings in Nantes, France; worked as a waiter, dishwasher, construction crew worker; and, for a few short months of my life, had the pleasure of helping Christo and Jeanne-Claude, his wife, realize their Surrounded Islands Project in Miami Beach. I carried a journal constantly. I wrote, drew, and scribbled. I did not have access to a press, so I began painting. My life structure was a horizontal existence. I needed, wanted a finite challenge. I applied and was accepted to graduate school.

When I began graduate school my personal life was an overwhelming mess. I was a new mother, single, my father had just died, and I was again a new student. I felt vulnerable everywhere. Not having done printmaking for five years, my concentration was on reexploring technical facilities. My subject matter was quite eclectic and confusing. It included dancing girls with wild animals, women walking around the world with babies bundled in their arms, sailboats in the middle of the sea, and queer little abstractions of personal frustrations. From a year of reexploring and adapting to a new style of living, I became
more comfortable with myself as well as my materials. This allowed me a more intense focus on the concepts of my imagery and how they related to the human realities of my chosen medium.

My imagery during the past few years has primarily been focused on the "dreamboat". For a long time I believed these boats were only pictures of boats. I had planned at one time in my life to leave Ohio forever, go off to the Carribean, and become a sailor. I never have, but I still dream of the day when this becomes a reality in my life. I consciously decided that since my sailing dream was to be postponed, I would, in a way, pay homage to this ideal by focusing on the boat in the sea. What I have come to realize is that my images have little to do with the concrete reality of the boat in the sea. I do not know how to sail; I do not know what it would be like to spend life on a boat in the middle of the sea, a place as mysterious to me as Venus.

My boat is visually illusionistic because of this mystery. It doesn't even look like anything one might see floating somewhere. As fantasy, it confronts the realities of my life. To discover a sense of place, all of my work attempts to patch together the fragmented memories of my life of the past with present emotional circumstances. Though my works represent the integration of a jumble of multifarious emotions and experiences, I feel that they also
represent a compulsion for journey and abstracted transformations.

"Sounds of a child sleeping", [plate 1] is a monoprint I did a few years ago when my daughter, Simone, was about eight months old. We did some printing together. I rolled out some water soluble ink, she pressed her feet in the ink and walked on some paper. Those pieces of paper were curious and precious to me. I used one of them for this child sleeping, boat piece. The body of the boat is in the middle of the rectangular paper. It is black with a vermilion hue. the mast is also black and thin and reaches up to the horizon. The sail is trapezoidal and vermilion and divides the sky into long vertical rectangular shapes. The boat form looks nothing like a vehicle but is a crescent. The sea is a textural layering of reds and indigos and the black footprints.

The boat, I illusively placed in front of the sea, may be simultaneously perceived as void; thus, it expresses sentiments of connectedness and disconnectedness to my world. In the middle of a whimsical tick-tock, it touches the passionate sea, but it is not touching. Reaching into the silent black boat form that is smiling, teasing, I made contour interactions that bespeak the freedom of the flow.

The sea, mysterious and wonderous, does not contain the form. The sky's strength is around and works through the sail but does not belong to it. The boat is my focus. It
creates the play, the rhythm of motion, and the melody of
time, as if waiting. At any movement, the child could
awaken, but now there is a commitment to unity. Its
existence is affirmed through the action, the process of its
creation. The landscape is surrounded by a border of
purples and reds and oranges, emphatically establishing
itself as a world of its own. Separating the illusion of my
mind from the reality of the wall, it hangs on in my home;
it exists as a constant reminder to me of the reality of my
existence. The interlocking and intertwined juxtapositioning
of my life as it is, and the fantasy spaces I need to
actualize, to see, in order to grow, to be alive are in it.
"Sounds of a child sleeping", in one instant, is a timeless
memory of Simone as a child, my child, growing with me and
away from me, through me and around me; she steps, she
sleeps. In yet another instant, I am far away; my child is
sleeping, and I am alone in my home, simultaneously making
images of dreams that have yet to come true and images of my
life as it exists. I am no longer a mother, a student, or a
woman. I am the void reaching into myself and touching that
which is owned only and completely by me.

I work through an intuitive process, which, by its very
nature, defies thorough definition and clarity. In the
realm of visual articulation, I never truly understand that
which I set out to achieve until it is achieved. Thus, for months during my second year of grad school, I had difficulties relating to the visual reality of the boat image. They had become emotionally unfulfilling, arbitrary, and they appeared to be works which only addressed manipulation of form. Frustrated with my beloved boats, I consciously began a body of work which related specifically to that frustration. I went to the wood shop to make elaborate frame forms in which to house those abstracted, and now, cut-up boat prints.

Those frame forms came to represent guardian structures to me, abstracted idealizations of my role as mother. In them and through them, I worked out my frustrations in an almost disconnected manner. Because of this disconnected approach, I did not feel an urgency to work these “totems” to their fullest potential, but they then became instruments in inspiring the compositional style of the two prints that followed.

A photograph I had taken in undergraduate school was a close-up of a female torso, fantastical in the sense that the figure appeared to be in flight but, by the very nature of a still photo, contained. I wanted to realize her as a guardian figure, a figure of protection, because of my role as mother. I wanted to see this image large. The larger the image, the more protection offered.

Simone was approaching the age when all territories and
boundaries had to be finitely defined. I was and still am her guardian, her sole protector, responsible for opening doors and building fences. In retrospect, it was a natural occurrence for me to become totally fascinated with the series of little fenceposts that started popping up all over campus. When walking to school, I ritually traversed the same path. In front of Mershon Auditorium, there was a large area of dirt. It was during the winter that I noticed its beautiful rich color and the various changes in accordance with the weather. Sometimes a dark sultry brown would greet me. At other times it became a fine sandy tan; sometimes it was the color of Simone. Walking on this dirt daily, constantly aware of its chameleon like properties, was quite the religious experience for me and related directly to the emotions I felt and continue to feel for the ocean. Both are magnificent in their proportion and work as materials of inspiration because of their beauty and also because neither can be owned. One day, I chanced upon a 5 foot x 5 foot square of this land fenced in by four steel poles and two thin steel wires with yellow tape stuck on at various places. How odd. Had someone else noticed this beautiful spot of land, come in the middle of the night, and fenced it off? Were they attempting to claim it as their very own, containing and protecting?

I wanted to work with these concepts through the torso image. This image for me was symbolic of my role
as mother. I wanted to create a visual atmosphere of something which was contained and paradoxically something which was free. It worked conceptually at this point but visually, it was incomplete. Five months after the completion of the print, the boat was added. I wanted to obscure the representational image of the woman without annihilating her. She became the ocean. I took a pink sennelier and simply outlined my boat so that the contour tranquilized all of the harsh literalness of the photo and denied its literal intent by metamorphising figure to ground, ground being ocean.

"A boat...A breast...A float...A boat" [plate II], works on multiple levels for me. By visually transforming the literal to the abstract, I embraced both worlds. This print reveals my incessant desire to explore the territories and borders that exist in this world and in my mind through a photo image from my past connected to my present day concerns. The dynamics of the relationship between the complexity of the photo-litho and the simplicity of the line contour allowed me to facilitate both the childlike and sophisticated nature of my work simultaneously. On a level which might be purely emotional, this piece acts as a door which I am free to open and continue with my boats.

At this point, the boats and the work that followed were no longer just manipulation of form. I realized that it was thorough the fusion of my personal life with my work
that I was able to achieve successful images. "Proof of the Guardian" [plate III], was a photo intaglio which allowed a timid re-entry of the boat. The largest portion of this print is devoted to the guardian surrounded by a border. The border is an elaborate prison made from cut-up pieces of collage, portions of the previous photo-litho, and marks obtained through various processes of intaglio. The top edge of the border is the only edge which is vulnerable, abstractly alluding to its own antithesis, wings which contain and become part of the female torso. The figure is thus contained but can be free and go beyond. Connected to the borders top left edge is a tiny, post-card size, etched drawing of a boat landscape, small and vulnerable and full of light [plate IV]. Another element of past imagery that I etched under the boat landscape was an abstract representation of the shark, a visual simplification of personal fears, dark secrets. The visual reality exploits the fear element, quietly mocking it. Three images were collaged and unified on one abstract, two-dimensional surface.

"Dream of the flying boat", [plate V], is a monoprint which was inspired by yet another fencepost that I came across while on a walk. It was standing tall and alone and had yards of wire wrapped around it in a chaotic fashion. In my mind, I saw it as a symbol of defiance of containment, a visual representation of liberation. I was in the midst
of a conceptual transformation. No longer was containment the issue of concern; liberation was. This image strongly emphasized the image of the fencepost. I did not use a believable landscape; my perspective is high above, as if flying in a dream, but, for the practical concern of needing a flat plane on which to rest my fenceposts, the boat changed form. Its shape became that of a shield or a heart with its hull dark but exposed. The mast is tall and thin; it makes its way to the top edge of the paper where wire or wind winds around the top of the mast. The sail is gone. This image was the genesis of a group of large “dreamboat” drawings.

After realizing "The dream of the flying boat", I decided to explore this new form more thoroughly. The earlier boat drawings discussed the beauty of the form itself as an isolated object and became a reference to journey in each of those compositions. Through the forms, color choices, and markings I was subjectively and abstractly revealing the stories of my life. It was at this point in my personal life that I was fighting with a lot of ugly realities in my life choices. I had left the man who was the father of my child because of physical and sexual abuse. I had to show myself that in spite of that ugliness and other ugly truths of my life and of my world, I could be optimistic, both in life and in my work. I did not want to hide from what my existence was but wanted to expose it,
so I could understand it, and, in fact, become more whole through the fusion of personal tragedy and personal triumph. My boat became an intimate symbol of liberation.

"The pregnant boat rides the crest of a wave", [plate VI], is a drawing about a heavy boat. The structure is burdened with deep and aggressive marks. The horizon is totally unrealistic with three tiny waves interrupting the triangular flow. The sky is white and silver lined. This is all in the background of two other boats. One is black. One is white. Their sails bending in opposite directions. It is the rememberance of three lives, together then separate. All of the separated parts are visually integrated to form the whole. My ugliness, my beauty, was unified and transformed into an abstract world that is also compellingly real. This piece, for me is a direct visual translation of an important struggle in my life.

Another drawing which appears at first to be a bit more whimsical is "Conversation with a glass bottom boat" [plate VIII]. It is a horizontal composition, divided in half. The sea is pea green with tiny waves, and the sky is black. The boat is central, and the interior of the hull is the same color as the sea. There is a goldfish next to the contour of the boat and one inside the hull. Are the three communicating? Can the goldfish see one another? Is the boat a vehicle or an obstacle? All three share the sea. Are they isolated? All of these questions are directly
addressed, but I cannot answer any of them. Through this drawing, I become aware of the challenge and importance of asking myself questions. Specific answers are not the issue. This is a piece which addresses future and uncertainty. I look toward my future as a challenge, as a process of communication, and, most importantly, as an intangible thing of beauty.

My most recent drawings are images of boats on top of boats and boats next to boats, sometimes touching, sometimes not. I have begun a new vocabulary on the building of relationships and communication as opposed to the concept of liberation through isolation and protection. Through my work I exposed my fears and vulnerabilities to myself, thereby making change possible. After working through some particularly important personal struggles in my life and in my work [single parenting, broken relationships, isolation] it seemed natural then, that the image of another boat would evolve.

"Two boats I had a dream about just the other night", [plate VIII] is a fantasy image. The boats are not seen as whole; only portions of each are visible, and there is but one mast. They lay on top of one another, as lovers, and co-exist in the same space. There is no evidence of trauma in the markmaking, and the ocean is a quietly moving rose water which embraces both boats while an amorphic blue shape hovers loosely above. The image is optimistic in its intent
and magically integrates itself with the boat forms. This is specifically a work about intuitive judgement in building relationships; that it is also quite romantic cannot be denied.

The boat form, in my work, in one instant takes the form of a crescent or a pendulum, or it might even be seen as a sickle, alluding by its very form, properties of timelessness, a vehicle of defense. It, at times, has been surrounded by a lucid sky and a sea that was born from frustrated and turbulent marks of deep reds and indigos hiding the delicate footsteps of my small child, [Sounds of a child sleeping]. When looking at these images in retrospect, I find even deeper still that I hide all that is in me, in my life. Only later have I begun to see the rage and the passion that I feel and feel for my world. Through the process of making these boats, all that is inside is coming out with realness and conviction; for they are the stories of my life. My boats are paradoxical by their very nature; they hide and they reveal. They are forms which are defensive and offensive. They are whimsical and lyrical and stoned dead silent. Simultaneously, I make them childlike and sophisticated. They give to me, and they take from me. All that they are is all that I own in the world. Without any pretense I employ them as personal symbols of liberation.

I am attracted to this elements, because what is
essential is not what is seen but what is felt through
seeing. The affirmation of my immortal soul is deeply
rooted in each mortal action of hand to color, color to
paper.

My work is about being alive. It is about sailing and
dreaming and flying. It is about a visual synapse which
exists between that which is real and that which is fantasy.
It is about territories and borders that exist in the world
and in my mind. It is about memory and time. It is about
relationships, formal and emotional. I am concerned with
edges and the concrete reality of two-dimensional space. I
print, I draw, I paint, and make things I want to see and,
in fact, would never see if I didn’t make them.

My art is a process of revitalization. To my work, I
bring that which I know, feel, and experience. More
dreamboats are bound to come along. I feel an urgent
commitment to the forms and the concepts which have been
evolving over the past few years. My images work best when
they are fueled with concepts for which I have a passionate
concern. Let the passion continue.
PLATE I

Sounds of a child sleeping
PLATE II

A Breast...A Boat...A Float...A Boat
PLATE III

Proof of the Guardian
PLATE IV

Proof of the Guardian, detail
PLATE V

Dream of the flying boat
PLATE VI

The pregnant boat rides the crest of the wave
PLATE VII

Conversation with a glass bottom boat
PLATE VIII

Two boats I had a dream about just the other night.