Making the Invisible Visible

Thesis

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By

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Abstract

This writing is an extension of my art practice.

The material of the work becomes a different form through the writing in a book.

I continue to explore the relationship between two.

The artist becomes the writer and the viewer becomes the reader.

Together we experience the process of making.

I manipulate the physical and immaterial to make a tangible experience.

I transcribe an audio recording of voices for the eyes.

Through responsive movements, I create a score for two performers.

The concept of my work mirrors the experience the reader has with the writer.

There is a division between two.

Both forms of work create a separation, yet a moment of togetherness.

This shared moment is where the work exists.
Dedication

To my parents, Tom and Cindy Knox
and to my sister, Kimberly Knox
Acknowledgements

With sincere appreciation, I would like to thank my thesis committee Amy, Ann, Amanda, and Jeanine for their knowledge, encouragement, and guidance during these past three years.

I am also grateful for the support from my colleagues, especially Jill Guyton Nee and Owen David for their commitment and interest in my work.

Lastly, I would like to thank you, the reader.
Vita

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Fields of Study

Major Field: Art
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I begin with words on a page.
The words you silently read are mine, but the voice you hear is yours.
These words are the threshold where you and I meet.
Our encounter collapses time.
The time between your reading and my writing.
The writing is a collection of words and spaces arranged to make a complete thought.
An intentional space exists to separate each word and each line.
This space creates legibility.
Between each line, there is a moment to draw breath.
A line's absence is equal to a word's presence.
Your reading shifts between the intervals of presence and absence.
This score sets a pace for our journey.
Your eyes move from left to right scanning the written text.
Each word you read moves into the past as you remain in the present.
Chapter 1: My Practice

NOTICING
AWARENESS
DISCOVERING
OBSERVING
ATTENTION
RECOGNITION
RELATION

I observe the current conditions in my surroundings:

The ordinary, the everyday, and the familiar.

Fingerprints left on a smooth, glass surface.

Scuffmarks on the concrete floor.

A presence remains in an empty room.

The sunlight moves.

The shadows alter.

The sounds echo, disperse, and reverberate.

Air circulates in your body and in the space.

The edge of the room sets the boundaries of the space.

There is a distinction between each plane that surrounds you.

The floor intersects the walls.

The walls intersect the ceiling.
Take a deep breath.

Allow your eyes to wander from this page.

Look around
What are the conditions of the space?

Are you aware of the circulation of air?

Can you feel the air filling your lungs?

Does its release alter the space?
What sounds can you hear?

How is time present?

Is anything moving?

Are you still?

Where does light touch the space?
Will you remember your observations?
I rest on an observation – taking in every detail.

If my mind drifts, I let it go.

Not everything I notice becomes a catalyst for making.

If a specific moment lingers on my mind, I pay attention.

As I pay attention, I recognize the fleeting moment.

A relation occurs as I make with the ephemeral materials.

I want to be absorbed in the experience and share it with others.

This practice becomes a material for making.
Chapter 2: Making

Making is exploring with materials.

I explore through the physicality of the body and of the hands.

I discover how my decisions shape the work.

The work is a place where the maker and viewer meet.

A physical material gives form to the work.

The transparency of a material allows a view to the other side.

The material blocks the body from moving to the other side.

The light reflects upon the surface.

The reflection changes the material from being invisible to visible.

This physical material allows me to experiment with the ephemeral and intangible.

CLEAR ACRYLIC
LANGUAGE
GLASS SCANNER
AIR
CONDENSATION OF BREATH
LIGHT
OIL FROM MY HANDS
TIME
BUBBLE SOLUTION
SOUND
LATEX BALLOON
MOVEMENT
SILVER MYLAR SHEET
MEMORY
WHITE COPY PAPER
There is a familiarity with each material.

I intentionally use common materials to give a new experience.

The physical materials serve as a positive ground where I use and shape the negative space of the intangible.

One supports the other to bring a presence to the absence.

Through this transitory state of making, I manipulate the material and immaterial to make a tangible experience.
Chapter 3: A Container

A container is a means to hold.
A lining separates its interior from its exterior.
The material can be thick or thin.
Porous or impermeable, Opaque or transparent
The boundaries define the parameters of its contents.
A container can be empty, but full of purpose.

Language is a hollow container.
Something is not physically there.
It fills the space between bodies.
Language is a material that takes different forms.
The spoken word is a sound that travels through the air.
Until it falls upon the receiving ear.
The written word solidifies a shape onto a surface.
The eyes perceive the lines and curves as a set of letters.
As you read, each letter is contained within a word.

That word is contained inside a horizontal sequence of words.

This line of text is contained on the white of the page.

The pages you turn are contained by the spine of a book.

This book is contained between your hands.

You are holding me.

Together we are here within a space.

The area around us contains a substance of sound, people, and movement.

Or a substance of silence, solitude, and stillness.

The framework contains the air.

The air fills the space around your body.

Your body occupies the space, and the space occupies your body.

The flesh separates the interior from the exterior.

This semi permeable membrane holds the moisture.

The warmth circulates throughout the body.

Breathing sustains this moisture and warmth.

Regulated by an involuntary rhythm.

Respiration begins at birth when an infant separates from the mother.

One breath becomes two.
The intake of oxygen nourishes the blood to regulate the systems of the body.

The lungs expand as the exterior air fills within the body.

The rising and falling of the rib cage creates the invisible to become visible.

Air passes through the lungs, the windpipe, and the mouth.

Each defines its form through this passage until it escapes as a formless vapor upon exhalation.

My work directs attention to the separation of the interior and exterior

The container materializes the invisible.
I use written word as a material.

The selection of words in my practice begins with the dissection of the alphabet. I study the lines and the curves of each letter.

I separate the symmetrical letters from the asymmetrical letters.

The vertical symmetry makes a letter legible from both sides. The asymmetrical letter distinguishes the legibility for one side.

Figure 1. Dissection of the Alphabet, 2014
The hand drawn text unifies the letters.

A stencil cut for each letter leaves the absence of material.

The removal of material makes a word.

I press the oil from my hand into this absence – filling the void with my presence.

Human skin produces and excretes natural oils.

This is an invisible substance on the tips of the fingers.

The hand becomes the writing instrument.

The pressure of my hand leaves an invisible trace of oil within the stencil.

The oil marks each side of a transparent surface.

An intimate encounter occurs with the exhalation of breath upon a word.

The breath reveals the presence of two bodies.

One is present while mine is absent.

My body writes while another reveals a word.

The moisture of the breath lands upon a surface and expands.

A fog obscures the other side.

Condensation fills the space between letters - illuminating the words.

Filled within the text is the absence of breath.

This is where I wait for two bodies to meet.

A place divided, but a moment together.

The transparent surface separates them.
A word or phrase begins on one side and continues on the other.

Facing each other, two breaths overlap to alter the original word.

At times, you are revealing a word to yourself.

Other times, you are revealing a word to someone else.

The mouth speaks, but it is a silent voice.

We are listening with our eyes.

Reading becomes seeing as the words disappear.

Watching becomes witnessing as the breath dissipates.

It is through the body the work exists.

Figure 2. *Between Two*, Video Still 2014
We enter the present moment.
The duration of the experience is temporal.
Witnessed only by those who are near.
There is a beginning with a means to an end.
The moisture of the breath appears and then disappears.
Watching the breath evaporate is the dissipation of time.
Time lives in the material.
Time lives within us.

In a dark space, a horizontal light moves at a gradual pace.
The exhalation of breath from a whispered word falls upon the glass surface.
Light from a scanner traces the momentary presence of the breath.
Each breath makes a different form within the duration of the scan.
The ink rests upon the surface of the paper.
This process captures an image of the immaterial.
Figure 3. Scanning the Breath, Video Still 2014

Figure 4. Spoken Word, “there” 2014
Our eyes watch and our ears listen in the exhibition space.

Words appear on a surface.

Two voices from absent bodies whisper the words.

The sound circulates throughout the space.

Each voice responds to the other.

One black...one gray.

Moments of silence divide the two voices.

A page has two sides.

It divides a front from a back.

What you are reading and what you will read.

As you face the current page, the text on the other side faces you.

The translucency of the paper reveals the ink on the other side.

As you turn the page, you are reading the previous side.

The present moment alters between the before and the after.
I work with two performers, Jill and Owen.

They are trained dancers with a technical background in movement.

I use them as material.

They bring the material of control, flexibility, and improvisation.

They are able to move their bodies in space in constructed situations.

Clearing their minds of the before and after.

They focus on the present and absorb their surroundings.

The dancers put into action what they retain from my written score.
Aware of each other’s presence, they create an invisible tether.

Stretching across a divided space, they connect.

As the connection expands and contracts, they respond to each other’s movements.

I set a score for the performers to improvise and follow their impulses.

The exhalation and movement activates the composition.

Dispersed breath reveals a field of words.

The duration of the performance extends the moment of togetherness.

Choreography alters the experience of the work.
Figure 7. Performance Score, Page One 2014
Figure 8. Performance Score, Page Two 2014
Postface

This writing will soon be a memory.

You will hold this memory not in your hands, but contain it within your mind.

Moments of our journey, you will remember…and others will disperse.
References


