

This Is My Art

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“Everything can be art,” Jeremy claims as he lets thick, soft-green paint drop in careless puddles onto the carpet. He dangles a paintbrush like comical carrots on a stick before a donkey whom craves it, so he gives the sweet vegetable chase. I, however, do not give chase, for I do not crave it. It is, instead, me before Jeremy, and it is I potentially holding a paintbrush that sets his cheeks red and legs ready to chase. I grab at the brush for the sheer fact the carpet is not ours to keep, but only ours to replace. He has falsely won. He doesn’t care; he never cares about how he wins, or even if he does. Pride is not an issue for him, just getting and wanting, always wanting. I believe he wants to want more than to obtain. I grab the paintbrush, and he wants more. I take it to the fresh, obnoxiously-white canvas. He let me turn the tiny backyard into a shelter for stranded pets, so how could I not show my lack of skills with a paint brush and some beautiful green paint?

The nearer I come to my shame the more excited he is, “everything can be art,” “all you touch and alter has become a creation.” I have visions, grand visions of scenes I want to place on to this canvas. Huge roaming fields where he and I will be eating juicy mangos, watching butterflies rest, talking about how life began and why I decided to wear my hair down that day. A place where we could be naked, warm, and free. Where tall grasses hide our games, and no paths lead to us. Only the sweet gentle caresses of the open wind and kind hugs of the sun could find us.

I picture where the lines should go and how the colors should change, yet the image in my mind is lost when my disconnected hand takes over. The romantic, magical landscape turns into a three-year-old's rendition of green sticks with yellow tops. I give up on trying to portray my thoughts through paint. I write what I want people to see instead. This seems to be cheating. Jeremy thinks it is brilliant.

HERE is where WE loosen
as the original lovers, Adam and Eve
HE rests his head lower, lower,
lower, with each moment
HE is humbled in the presence of such
glowing confidence
MY hair grows long, past the knees
MY clothes return to separate threads,
fall to the ground,
take root,
rise again as a tree bearing gifts of
delicious apples
I am the upper hand
it will be too much for HIM to resist
when I bite into the fruit, and sweet juices start to flow
from my chin,
over my stomach,
down my milky legs
dripping, losing
Itself into the lush
never to be seen again
garden

but HERE is not the garden
HERE is the field that surround it
where the true loving, exploring, companionship begins
lost from the closeness of God WE have to look for IT in
each other, from
each other.

He instantly places the canvas in the large front window of our tiny apartment for all to witness my non-ability with paint. I feel the word confidence should be taken out of the poem.

From a young age, I have wondered what it was about me that I couldn't create, that I could only write silly poems of anger and love. My mother was an artist. She used paint to portray thoughts. Going into her gallery at young ages was a bitter-sweet adventure. It would allow me to leave the everyday and take a warm-breezed-walk through tall reeds of some undiscovered white-sand beach. I could visit the heavy wetness of the south to watch a swamp-home family prepare an outdoor meal. She was not restricted in her ability to depict landscape, people, or things. I was perpetually jealous and let down. I would gather what was left in her palette from the day's work and start to envision. But nothing close to what I had wanted to show up ever did. The lion was just two blobs of yellow with four rectangles for legs. Maybe shading a darker mane into the lighter body would shape this lion, and people would stop in their reverence for such a beautiful creature, but it too was just a blob.

I kept trying. I wanted to give off that mystique of walking into an art store covered happily in splashes of dried-on color or the look of frustration when the store had run out of that one and will-be-the-only-one-to-do tube of precious periwinkle rain. I was not to be this person. Although I felt the passion for it, my soul expanded hard against my skin. I would never be that person the people debated over whether my black-outline-phase was a cry for help or a sign of great control over my life.

Around the age of seven I acquired an electronic keyboard. I can recollect that it was a Christmas present, but I assume not from my parents as it had a volume control that could be turned up very high. There was not a clue in my head about playing the keyboard. I would wait until the night fell, when I could assume some privacy, clear the piles of frenzied writing from my desk and begin to try my hand at making a masterpiece of electronic notes. I enjoyed holding the lower notes for long dramatic moments, until the rush of vibrations pulled my hands away. I loved it here. I was thinking something and here was a sound, it gave my soul something to speak with. Yet when I would try to link that deep boom with another note, the whole thought would fall apart. It wouldn't make sense. It wasn't beautiful. It wasn't clear. No one would spread rumors that I had met the Devil at the crossroads.

During my high school years I found a limbo-of-sorts place to hide and disguise creativity. I took up photography. The chest in my room that acquired journal upon journal was cleared out to make room for the many pictures and camera gadgets that I hoped would one day be priceless. No actual mind to reality was necessary. It was just about finding an image that would speak for me. I understood what would shock and amaze; what would really grab people. I can't really be sure it was about me though. I loved to head out and feel the pride with myself and the awe of others. I would stroll, no strut, about places with my large camera slung over my shoulder, across my chest ready for that moment that needed to be forever held. The hours spent in the darkroom were pure magic, just be patient and images will appear in the water. The smell of the chemicals, the shock

of light, all gave me a label. I was a photographer. I won an award for some picture of a cross and an empty wine bottle, splayed out in a sun-spot over a shaggy carpet. It was special to someone, to a panel of judges, but not to me. I wasn't going to find my uniqueness, my own thoughts out "there." I abandoned the darkroom.

Jeremy watches with those eyes that can see through my present and sees the little me, complete with radiant blonde curls, trying to bring forth her lion. He watches, and listens intently to the long, drawn-out notes, of an untrained keyboardist. He feels the disappointment that my visions do not exist anywhere but in my head.

I am now to create again with my hands but to physically shape my mind's thoughts onto earth's gift of clay. In my head is the sleek image of a naked man and woman in a strong embrace. One leg and one arm of each is wrapped around the other. They both have one leg straight down and one arm extended in an exaggerated reach upwards. I want to create tree roots at the pointed toes, allude to tree bark with their bodies. The stretched out fingers and the woman's wild free hair are to grow into branches and healthy summer leaves. I wet my hands, put them to the clay, breathe. He watches my thoughts, he sees my hopes dash around my heart and tries to talk down the "I can't's" that are starting to darken my blue eyes. The loving red couple starts as long snakes and do not progress much farther than that. The hope of turning them into passion and a tree does not seem possible. Instead, I take a pencil and dig into the still wet, sweet-smelling, squishy page a message about what I am thinking.

"WE were at one time a seed
not of man but of earth
WE all have ancestors that bloomed
Ancestors that were
the soil that nourished the blooms
and those that were helpless to the oceans' deep currents Nature is our
mother,
we are each other's path to her.
Is this all a fanciful scene of people growing back into nature,
Or am I just trying to express my love for outdoor loving?"

Before my hand even clenches to make a battering ram against the failed art project, he grabs it and runs with his soft-quickness to the kiln.

We sit and wait for my words to be solidified and he gets an old painting of his. This one is dark with layers of blues and blacks. There is only a hint of red in it; a shadow of a person cowering among the heavy colors. He turns to me and says, "Will you please make my art more beautiful with your work? This is a portrait of me, but he feels more lonely than I wanted him to."

I am shocked and a little scared. I do not want to destroy his art. This is such a beautiful, strong piece, and anything I could draw would lower the maturity level of it drastically down. And I look at him and see those eyes, that soul. That artist's soul. One that is a melting pot of all the forgotten gods of Olympus, with all their compassion and torture. The very mountain that birthed Atlantis and also the wave that destroyed it. I realize he is looking at me also and can see the same.

I take a small paintbrush of the very same green paint that at first frightened me. With excitement I write in the upper left corner so as to not put more weight on the red shadow that cowers in the bottom right.

“Here are some words to keep you company:
You are my EeeeEeeeeaaaaaaa-ZZZ—ay to love sa- -dNESS
AAA
hopes, DESSSSSI (aaaahhhh)ERS, darkness, wants
of
ESCAPE

whom I would walk with when my feet
were
rraaaaawwwwouch
following.

Words, I have discovered, are also art. They are an emotional fever that hits and puts all other activities aside until that world, moment, person, connection has finally come together and given a place to rest, whether it be on a napkin, receipt, hand or a clean page of a journal. Writing is art. Everything is art.