▶ CONTINUED of not spending money on materials, I see it as a political position: I don't need to consume to be happy, and I do not want to engage in wasteful use of materials to create my work. I recycle and reuse and thus create without leaving much of a trail. My plan is to continue with this until I have no more stuff.

What I think is most effective about my nonconsumption rule-beyond demonstrating that it is possible—is that the rule, the fact that materials are running out, is affecting my aesthetic. The politics of my work now are creating an aesthetic that is richer because of this restriction. That is a revolutionary aesthetic.

I think about politics as actions, and because of that, I work them into my process. My politics affect reality as part of my aesthetics, in addition to making visible the problem.

In my work.

politics = presentation

narrative = representation.

DB: What makes people so adverse to overtly political work?

ST: If the work is political, then I'd like for it to really do political work, which means it ought to attempt to affect change where the problem exists. But often when a political issue is seen as representation in the art context, it feels as if it is instead profiting from the problem and just offering a highly rarified audience a chance to feel as if they are affecting change by sitting with the issue-thus, they are buying themselves the good feeling of having done something without doing anything about the actual problem being presented.

DB: Your nonconsumption rule, while political may be unknown to your audience. Is it desirable to make this aspect of your work known?

- ST: I want the audience to know how I make the work, but I find it a lot more effective when they look at the work first and then learn about my practice. It makes a more convincing argument for valuing creativity over materiality, to be engaged in the images despite how they were made; learning about it later brings home the point that creativity makes the work, not material.
- DB: Despite the rule against consumption, your work does not appear to have material limitations: your maximalist aesthetic belies a scarcity of materials. I often see people relate minimal and brutal aesthetics to political intention, but I am also interested in the aesthetics of joy as political tools.
- ST: Thanks! I'm not interested in documenting political problems but instead am looking for the work to make visible-and present solutions to-the problems. It makes sense that the work should be joyful and exuberant-it is optimistic.

DB: What value do you see in covert political operations within art or life generally?

ST: Anytime you can let people discover truths on their own through experience, it will be a stronger, more empowering reality shift.

In my animation Rotation, the decision to make a piece that is extremely dense visually but short and in a seamless loop is actually a political decision—it empowers the viewer. I

explicitly create a situation in which the audience becomes the editor through their gaze. They are compelled to watch the film over and over, and as they do, they can see different stories as they move their eyes. It also speaks to the power of interpretation: everyone will walk out of this with their own experience-not a handed-down experience but one they

DB: How do you communicate with people who don't want to be told what to do?

ST: When it comes to the divide that we are experiencing politically in this country, I am currently not interested in speaking to "the other side." I can't take that on because I'm too angry and hurt. My strength is mobilizing my people and keeping them energized for the long run.

DB: Is it possible to be poetic and political at the same time? Must we dispense with ambiquity and nuance?

ST: I think it is extremely important to hold on tight to ambiguity and nuance. Life is complex: we need to accept that and deal with it.

DB: Would you consider limitations on what you depict? I am thinking about a conversation we had about depictions of strong women and what depictions of women are available to people, especially young women.

ST: Yes, I put all kinds of limitations on what I depict. Images can easily be instrumentalized. so I have to be aware and thoughtful. Meaning happens in the receptor just as much as in the emitter. In the case of depicting women, my main issue is that women are still predominantly empowered by the male gaze, so it is important to me to show women who aren't playing to that carrot.

DB: Are there any past experiences that you feel have been successful toward these ends of visibility of different feminine realities?

ST: Last year, I got so annoyed with the art world dominated by white men that I decided it was time to boycott. In order to make visible the extreme gender imbalance in the art world, I no longer participate in-or look at-any group exhibitions that aren't at least 50% female. Part of my stance is to express my position publicly on social media in order to make the problem visible and to encourage others to join me in this boycott. This is not an art action; this is about making a point about the unfairness of what is going on in the art world (and everywhere else, but this is an area where I have power) and making visible the power we all have to change things by each of us individually standing up loud and unafraid.

DB: We've also discussed the idea of discomfort as a means to conform (e.g., wearing high heels to appear sexier), although recently I've been interested in the idea of discomfort as a call to action (i.e., If I'm uncomfortable with what is going on, then something is wrong with me). I'm not sure what my question here is except to point this out: I also think that anything with double edges is important. You also seem to make this connection between fear/ anger > energy > activism.

ST: Yes. I do think that discomfort is a call to action; it tells us something is wrong. And when something is wrong, we should address it.

Sessions from the Archive:



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Or access here: http://elasticarts.org/ graphic-notes-v8-mar-may-2017/ http://elasticarts.org/category/blog/

Selina Trepp is an artist whose work explores economy and improvisation. Finding a balance between the intuitive and conceptual is the goal, living a life of adventure is a way, embarrassment is often the result. Selina combines installation, drawing, painting, and sculpture to create intricate setups for photos and videos. Her work has been exhibited widely internationally and has exhibited widely internationally and has received several awards and honors, including the Swiss Art Award and the Illinois Arts Council Fellowship. In addition to her studio-based work, Selina is active in the experimental music scene. In this context, she sings and plays the videolah, a midi-controlled video synthesizer, to create projected animations in real time as visual music. She performs with a varying cast of She performs with a varying cast of collaborators and as one-half of Spectralina, her audiovisual collaboration with Dan Bitney.

Dana Bassett is an arts administrator and writer from Miami. She works as the Development Director for Artists Cooperative Residency and Exhibitions Projects (ACRE), an experimental, volunteer-run organization based in Pilsen and Steuben, Wisconsin. Dana also contributes to the Bad at Sports podcast and manages their blog.

Jordan Martins is a Chicago-based visual artist, curator, educator, and musician. He received his MFA in visual arts from serves on the programming committee for the Chicago Jazz Festival and curates visual art at Elastic Arts.



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Graphic Notes

Something to Chew On:

A Conversation between Selina Trepp and Dana Bassett on the Occasion of Coffee Grounds and Consequences at Elastic Arts, March 13 - May 27, 2017.

curated by JORDAN MARTINS

From Selina: In 2001. I spent the night at my friend Arielle's house in London. At the time, she lived with Banu, a pro coffee grounds reader. Banu offered to read my cup, but when she saw the cup, she said she couldn't read it after all. She was obviously a bit freaked out, and so was I. After some prodding, Banu said she could tell me some things but that it would be difficult because my cup was entirely covered by a dense pattern. There were no distinctive zones in the cup. Reading cups is based on zones-their contents and relationships. My cup refused this mode of reading. Banu had three things to say:

- 1. I would be successful in my art career by the time I was 38.
- 2. My success wouldn't be about money or glory.
- 3. I was incapable of compartmentalization in any area of my life. Everything was connected.

Dana Bassett: There are so many things to rally against; how do you focus?

Selina Trepp: That is a problem. Currently, there is just too much terrifying news coming at me at all times. This daily news avalanche affects every aspect of my life. I'm fluctuating between actively engaging and taking political action and being paralyzed, worried, and sad about the state of humanity and the future. And then, of course, there is the question of how this major shift in the world's political reality affects my artistic output, which seems like a minor concern, all things considered, but I'm an artist so...

Spectralina-Dan [Bitney]'s and my performance project-is improvised and, thus, instantly responsive to the day-to-day reality. We already have transitioned into a much more explicit political mode. In addition to creating a space to let the tension out, our goal is to express our dissent and to encourage others to express their dissent.

In my studio, I've moved into a more poetic, contemplative phase in response to this shitstorm. Making intuitively and conceptually in the studio allows me to think through reality and process it. And, very importantly, being in the studio gives me joy, and that helps me survive these painful times.

My work always has had a political

component, but up until now that was more in the background, something to be discovered by people who got pulled into my lair by the other aspects of my work. Now I'm considering what it means if I become more overt in my political messaging and am thinking about who that work would be for, what its purpose would be, and how this is part of my practice in general.

The issue is that, on the one hand, I want to make work that is poetic, nondogmatic, openended, experimental, and process driven. On the other hand. I think we need to make sure that our world doesn't go any further down the drain. And, to that end, I could use my work as a communication tool for political and social change outside the confines of the art world.

At Elastic, I am putting these two modes of working side by side. One body of work is personal and intimate. I will show works on paper that relate to the experience of the unsuccessful coffee grounds reading I had a long time ago.

The other work is going to be a video projection featuring a series of biweeklychanging short, looped animations. These animations are designed to energize us for the fight against the current administration. They will be affirming, uplifting messages, the kind we need to see to keep us going on days when the news is unbearable. In addition to their projection at Elastic, these animations will be available online for free download and free distribution. The goal is that they are spread widely and used as an antidote to the hate that is suffocating us all. These aren't messages to convince the other side to move over; instead, they are messages to keep us going.

DB: I'm curious about the way you plan to regulate your time at Elastic. What conditions are you considering to put in place?

ST: I won't be producing work at Elastic, but I will be changing the installation and the projection over time. The purpose of me exhibiting there is to communicate with an audience that is predisposed to experimentation and art; it is a very specific audience. The use of the coffee grounds story, which focuses on the idea of every aspect of life needing to be addressed with equal force. speaks to the artist's need to make art as a way to process reality. The animated PSAs give to a

larger community; they push along the fight in a more overt way. In a sense, it is combining confrontation with escapism.

DB: Do you expect this project to shift your understanding of success in your work? Of failure? Can you talk more specifically about your goals for the project?

ST: I'm thinking of the work at Elastic as more of an open way to communicate with a creative community about the problem we are facing politically and with regard to how this affects our personal artistic production.

I have three goals:

- 1. I want to encourage everyone to figure out how they can make a difference within their power realm. Small personal action matters.
- 2. I want to encourage open communication in the arts community on how we can continue to make art that is poetic in these times without being escapist and irrelevant.
- 3. I want to make art that can effectively politically engage with and encourage people inside and outside the art discourse.

DB: To get to the overt, maybe we need to start with the covert. In what ways does your work covertly engage politics? What do revolutionary aesthetics look like?

ST: The politics/ethics that guide me in all aspects of my life are also at work in my art. It is important to me that my work makes visible and addresses real-world issues through its production, in addition to reflecting on the less tangible interpersonal power dynamics of our world through the image itself.

The main conceptual restraint I work under is that "I work with what I have." I do not bring any new material into my studio. I have stuck to this concept and have been exclusively working with what is in my studio since October 2012. After all these years of sticking to this rule, I am running out of materials, my color palette is more and more limited, and my work is changing in response to this lack. In addition to the formal and technical issues that this rule pushes me against and the obvious benefit



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UNDAY, MAY 14TH | 8 PM witch~ Ensemble

AY, MAY 20TH | 8:30 PI FHURSDAY, MAY 25TH | 9 PM mprovised Music Series Brandon Lopez

Sherae Rimpsey Matt Mehlan/David Hall FRIDAY, MAY 26TH | 9 PM
Elastro Electro/Acoustic Musivision Gallery
Spectralina

SATURDAY, MAY 27TH | 9 PM ShooBooty Studios Series Old Town School All Soul Review MONDAY, MAY 29TH | 9 PM Anagram Music Series