



# **ARTIST PORTFOLIO**

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### On TRANSLATION: As Method in My Practice

Everything I do is a translation. From mind to hand, from synapses to memory, from digital to physical, from on to off/line, filtered through a structure of translation, some of these transferals are more successful than others, they line up with my intention, and many don't.

From Carolyn Shread's translator's introduction to Catherine Malabou's *Changing Difference*: "We have neither to hold up the holy book, nor burn it up entirely in a fit of despair; the space of the text is enough for plasticity, if only we can shift our fixed view of change as fixity unsettled. Starting with the wrinkle that will come to the text, we see the aging and renewal that is translation, the plastic possibilities that lie in every text."<sup>1</sup>

I practice failure through repetition of attempts to become clearer. If communication were a pool of water in which we float, at what point am I able to float without paddling my feet, to see through to the rocky bottom, and can two or more people float next to each other? What sorts of diffractions of meaning are generated through the waves of the rush of water?

Define Diffraction: the process by which a beam of light or other system of waves is spread out as a result of passing through a narrow aperture or across an edge, typically accompanied by interference between the wave forms produced.

Define Communication: a letter or message containing information or news.

I am studying Phenomenology: studying the structures of consciousness as experienced from a first person POV. I am thinking continually about Sara Ahmed's *A Phenomenology of Whiteness* in which she invokes Franz Fanon's description of reaching for a cigarette.<sup>2</sup> Fanon writes: "Consciousness of the body is solely a negating activity. It is a third-person consciousness. The body is surrounded by an atmosphere of certain uncertainty. I know that if I want to smoke, I shall have to reach out my right arm and take the pack of cigarettes lying at the other end of the table. The matches, however, are in the drawer on the left, and I shall have to lean back slightly. And all these movements are made not out of habit, but out of implicit knowledge."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Catherine Malabou, *Changing Difference*, trans. Carolyn Shread (Cambridge, UK, Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2011), xi.

<sup>2</sup> Sara Ahmed, *A Phenomenology of Whiteness*, *Feminist Theory* 8, 2 (2007): 152.

<sup>3</sup> Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (London: Pluto Press, 1986), 110-111.

Bodies do the work, they know where to find things. “Doing things” depends not so much on intrinsic capacity or even upon dispositions or habits, but on the way in which the world is available as a space for action a space where things “have a certain place” or are “in place”.

Define Work: activity involving mental or physical effort, done in order to achieve a result.

Define Body: the physical structure, including the bones, flesh, and organs, of a person or an animal.

In this translation of thoughts from my practice to you here, I am reminded of Adrienne Rich’s comment in her text “Notes towards a Politics of Location”: “I come here with notes but without absolute conclusions. This is not a sign of loss of faith or hope. These notes are the marks of a struggle to keep moving, a struggle for accountability.”<sup>4</sup>

I am working towards building a radical understanding of how we are inextricably tied to each other through material, weather this material is physical, linguistic or bodily, we are linked and responsible to one another. And my work, works towards, finding the knots that tie us and make us responsible for our movements and affiliations. Through objects, I am troubling the border of self and the other by translating materials and forms into and through one another.

Define Paper: material manufactured in thin sheets from the pulp of wood or other fibrous substances, used for writing, drawing, or printing on, or as wrapping material: an essay or dissertation, especially one read at an academic lecture or seminar or published in an academic journal.

Define Material: the matter from which a thing is or can be made.

In the studio when I’m making the work, the shreds of paper from my partner’s office, from the embassy, from my failed drawings, from my collected scraps of paper from my freelance job where I couldn’t bear to throw out the misprints (they don’t recycle), are churned in the blender, the literal blender, ink is added to the mix. They mix. They churn. They become wet, mushy, play-dough, colorful, they leave a bleed of ink on my hands when I touch them, the small crevices between the folds of my skin become alive with this color, the palm lines become activated like the branches of a tree. Then, the pulp is poured over a series of screens. Fine, thin, coarse, thick, plastic, metal, synthetic and woven mesh. The mesh holds the pulp, the pulp bulges into the mesh like a plump stomach pressing up against tight sweaty clothing, straining to fall over into a muffin top, yet held. Then, form, color, abstract marks, mistakes of the placement of the different colors of pulp on the screen with the wet plump mesh, form is created by pouring more on top or creating rivers in the mass and feathering pours of pulp into the fibers in-between. By engaging this wet plump pulp, an abstraction emerges.

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<sup>4</sup> Adrienne Rich, *Blood, Bread, and Poetry: Selected Prose 1979-1985* (New York, London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1986), 210.

Define Plump: having a full rounded shape.

I've been thinking about air, but actually, the pulp is flop, ping. With/out clarity to make the work clearer – and the gesture to layer the languages on top of one another – is this a suffocation of image?

Is a suffocation of language a translation of it?

I wait for the molecules to replace (transform/cure), air for water, wet for dry, thick in this way for thick in that way.

Material and process, and their associative dimensions, are my main concerns. It is the same material in this show in three different configurations; as a 'base unit' [blank pages], as an 'activated unit' [my drawings], and as a 'reconfigured unit' [the paper pulp works]. I started making these paper pulp works because I was interested in the idea of pulping community, the scraps that are the material for this work are literally the thoughts of friends and colleagues re-constituted anew. I am finding a way to make the letter/drawings feel more sincere and hold more room for association. The paper pulp works are an evolution, of the drawings, and they hold a more specific relation to my feminist abstract painting history. The paper pulp is a digested letter. How can you say something "from the gut"? I wish through this digestion to become open to different names for the same thing, or for us to find ways to always question how we name things in adulthood, so that we can be less caught in the structure of language. And to recognize through the material concerns re-represented here that we have a responsibility towards material.

Wooden chairs we sit on used to be trees.

The paper I used in this exhibition, used to be a tree too. Where did it come from? How did it end up here?

Through closely studying translation I am understanding this term in my practice as a way to link a linguistic process of language (different names for the same thing – one language to another) to material – lively matter, with leaves, that flutter in the breeze, to kindling, to pulp, to plank, to support beam, to support for artwork, and support for learning (books, essays, tests, bureaucratic forms).

Define Translation: the process of translating words or text from one language into another: the conversion of something from one form or medium into another.

## References

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