

vesseled: a collaboration

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part 1: video, 6:40
prologue/preparation

I start with a short video of Jared handling the clay. He sets it out into four parts then combines them into one mass which he rolls out, shaking the table rhythmically. He is preparing the clay, making it pliable and ready to be thrown. I'm trying to do the same with my writing (narration is a muscle). I like when he hits the clay, the sounds it makes. When he first cuts the mass on a silver wire, in frame but innocuous until that moment, it's jarring. Clean yet visceral. Then he weighs the halves –but I'm still reeling at the now-menacing line dividing the top third of the screen. When he uses the wire a second time, I am steeled. I don't flinch. He pushes his palms into the clay to roll it then quickly moves his fingers under to push it back up again. After he pats the newly round lump, he shows it to the camera for an instant, almost proudly. It's a beautiful color. His hands are cleaner than I thought they would be after so much rolling and slapping. He cleans the table, cleans the wire, and stops the video.



part 2: video, 42:55

exercise: write when clay is being added or manipulated. edit when clay is being removed. pause when clay is not being touched. create a matching vessel.



writing a poem and ready to be shown. I'm going to do the same with my writing. Sometimes he always been the same up for me. I like when he has the clay, she would be better. When he last...
to the state for a few years, so I have to remember that that moment. It's a long. That's just
normal. Then he walks far before. But Tom is thinking of the most common, but it's like the top,
that of the wheel. The wheel is at a strange angle. I don't walk there when writing it in space.
When he was the man a good sign, I was asked, I don't know. He pulled his pants and the clay
to roll it into quality, more his finger under to just to look up again. After he puts the wheel
around the clay, he shows it to the camera for a minute, slowly possible. It's a beautiful color. His
hands are slower than I thought they would be when he was making and shaping. He shows the
wheel, shows the work, and it's not like a clay.

video 2, 42:55
exercise: write when clay is being added or manipulated. edit when clay is being removed. pause
when clay is not being touched. create a matching vessel.

to the state, a computer it
(I am writing without sound)
most of words. I cannot touch it
That's not a real house
some containers. two of them
to those. or woodlands to outside. or windows
the material. it like a wood post. it like a draped
halfway saying. tapping at the background. or right a three
I passed down there. it looks like a. among the air right
it would be. like the looks like. light like light
as I've never would see. in the hands of my containers
as the skills of my containers. as childhood I could see
digging in. drive. as the one with me drink. as the clay with my three
appreciable level. when I put back the water. in a state of two hands
The all statement
ghosts of memory
of

so tilt the sun + compress it

(I am writing into one coastline)

coast of words

I cannot touch it

hell into my horns

furniture geographies: woodland wetland savanna

bullfrog leaning into the night

panel of light light light light

in the trench of my sentiments

when I pull back the curtain

it is made of your hands

 fins of sentiment

 glories of sentiment

 a fish looking for a hook

 a fly looking at everything

 a branch made for one purpose

church of my morning/sediment of my sentiment

window through you: spiral assertion: palm apology

I heard all this on the phone

 with my clearest eyes

 & my pond perspective

Who said *I would swim*

Like a mermaid of the earth

To find your bones?

I would swim

Like a bullfrog of the earth

eroticism of pressure & of leverage

(worm eroticism

as opposed to cool eroticism

which is this)

part 3: spikes
reflection, after forms



When I wrote this I wasn't writing anything. Summer extended itself like a veil between my desires and my actions. It was luxurious in a way, moving between dull extremes, no sleep or nothing but sleep, going out dancing then the next day feeling a sudden incision of threat, or grief, or some other word for July. The strength of my frustration both legitimized and degraded my feelings about making art. I was also in love for the second time in my life. On the beach with my boyfriend— a Virgo, a ceramicist (yes), a rock-climber, a variety of things that seem to require slow, steady movement— I was talking about how frustrated I was at not reading and not writing and he said something along the lines of “it sounds like you should do those things more.” This was neither helpful nor unhelpful. The only way was to set parameters. I have never had a “practice.” I wanted to be a mirror.

Jared sends me videos of him making the vase and a suggested color palette for the glaze. I consider the white/blue/rust colors a tonal suggestion, but it's hard to see anything but brown as I write. The brown of clay is so soothing. It's the perfect amount of alive. Immediately I understand a difference in that he is already working with substance, already has something in his hands. I am having to produce as I go. Perhaps the more authentic way to do this would be to start with some kind of “clay,” some material – a word bank? another text? – and manipulate it instead. But what is

dear to me as clay? Jeffrey McDaniel's "Archipelago of Kisses" makes it into this one, but just for one image. And Denise Levertov's injunction in "Claritas," where she commands me into light. I feel warm and fuzzy thinking about the possibility of clay in my mind, having access to that kind of solidity at any time, but I can't really think about it because I have to keep pulling it out. It's more like how I imagine carding wool might be. A finicky animal and a comb.

The poem is peaty; eros of the lover's hands sublimated into a spongy ground. At one point the vase collapses. I cannot reconcile this to the slow accumulation and sporadic elimination of words on my end of the experiment. There is no transmutation. I am writing to an unknown narrative, listing, bouncing around, taking from anything I can. If Jared's hands are writing, they are writing one thing over and over again: vase, vase, vase. With total certainty— not steadiness but certainty. Yet I imagine we experience a similar feeling, that familiarity, pressing down with both thumbs and feeling the shape beneath you move. Writing after not writing feels like ice melting, ice in the folds of my brain turning to ice-water, freedom to think with a cold shock that mimics blankness. A moment of no thoughts as the thoughts come out of me. Jared says he doesn't really think while throwing, but it takes a lot of concentration. Concentration here precluding or opposing thought. The poem is a concentration so diffuse. To write in prose is like lifting one heavy foot after another.



The glazed vase is more animal, sharkish. It has an attitude. I love it and am intimidated by it. It talks back more than the clay, which seemed to accept and even support any of my projections. One side is a glossy white for the poem, which will be applied as a decal to the vase. Vessel on vessel is the idea. I'm afraid it will look terrible, or cheapen both works. But I want to try it, see how the words interact with the material, see if it makes sense visually without the context of a document. I like that the words will oppose the spikes. Two ways of inflicting feeling. I like that to pick it up you will likely need to wrap your hands around the poem, so as to avoid the spikes. To touch the immaterial while the material, with some snark, denies usability. What flower would you put in this? I think of a cloud of Queen Anne's Lace. I am finishing this writing in Rhode Island, and reeling at the rose hips everywhere. At the end of four days hiking in New Jersey we ate sweet blackberries and astringent gooseberries. On the trail overhearing important news such as blueberries grow in clusters while huckleberries grow in ones. Gloss of history on the glaze.

But personal history isn't history per se. There was so much noise at the beginning of all this about living in a historical moment, but that feeling barely lasted the summer. I should straighten my referents. The pandemic which is history diluted like watercolor into the present. I am not talking about that history, although it has something to do with this one. The first time Jared and I made something together it was a basket, him weaving together two poems of mine into a skittery-looking shape, the paper dyed by materials he would collect on long walks around his neighborhood. I was in Texas; I was in a kind of quicksand. Sometimes it was very beautiful, just stopping on the sidewalk to really look at a crepe myrtle, a bougainvillea, a magnolia in its final bloom. It was the summer of long walks. And now this is the next summer, the summer of transit. Similar but different. I took the train to Rhinebeck. I took the train to Cold Spring. I took the train to Ridgewood. I took the train to Williamsburg. I took the train to the Village. I took the train to Boerum Hill. I took the train to Bushwick. I took the train to Far Rockaway. I did much of this by myself, but there were people waiting for me on the other end of the train, and I was having some trouble speaking, I had gotten unused to it, and if I could have just handed them this vase –

I can also imagine a very young child putting it on their head and dancing around. I can imagine a naked woman dipping it solemnly into a body of water and placing it on a wooden table, now brimming with sky. By writing this history I have created a kind of seriousness around the vase which may run counter to Jared's intentions, him as an artist being interested in clownishness, ruffles, cartoon grotesques, shapes that you immediately refer to as "guys." This guy is like a beach relic. This experiment is interesting because in reality he is a much more serious person than I am, he feels a certain weight of living that I do not. I find this apparent in the motions of his body, which are not sluggish but weighted downward, earth-oriented. He finds things on the ground. He is hard to knock down. In the larger vessel of history, which is an urn, we were muted. On a long walk along the rim of it. In the smaller vessel we made it through the winter. Swaths of words carved out into white space for a year of gaps. I remember writing a mean love poem, it was lauded for its meanness, it said, "When you slept you were ugly / I wanted to cover you with myself." This was three years ago. I did not want to cover the vase. I wanted to be a mirror. And the mirror showed so much empty space, and it showed this history humming beneath, and the sides of the mirror were a circling shark, and its teeth were pure affection.