

Hi Gemma,

The part that talks to me most here is, "[...] this reflects the experience of the everyday search for meaning, to acknowledge and relinquish it in disparate situations." Along with the quotes at the bottom, I can see why you wanted to discuss the sublime with me.

You emailed me a statement, statements come across as earnest but I think your attitude to your work is quite earnest too. You are a very serious artist, and whenever I talk to you, you laugh in acknowledgement of that. You are careful not to inflict yourself on others, you don't put on a front and you have no act. Mostly painters don't feel they need one, their style or their subject matter says it all on the wall for them, but neither of these do that job for you in your work. There's no pitch or backstory or attitude or context, there's only what happened that day and whether you liked it, or how you came to accept it - which is why the need for a story might arise, because the image doesn't necessarily tell you why you are looking at it, I have to find that for myself.

It's your paint and your brain; they give it uniformity but do not really explain what happened. They compress the work, similar marks and decisions, and they don't initially convey your everyday life, they draw a line under it instead. Maybe they ask me to ask about that line, how good it is, or useful, or in what way it might become acceptable or unacceptable – and the questions you have for your work are always around its capacity for significance. I think you are sensitive about the possible artificiality of artistic activity, the contrast between cause and the label consequential that we worry about in a studio, away from any socially determined site of action (for now). I think you are wary that attempts to understand significance differently, personally, might become attempts to get around this gap: you are slow to praise yourself, it's not your role, you can't be your own audience.

One thing you could do, then, is just put the paintings up on the wall and insist on them, "That's what happened, it was an event; this is another event." But this isn't very you either. You worry too much - not just about what people might think, but about the way we think in general.

So what would you give an audience? How do you acknowledge a duty to them or get round it? When Sarah Sze makes they don't look like spontaneous creations, taken on their own terms because she had none of her own that day. They are self-referential. She knows what she does, what she's seen to do - they're weighed carefully against that and then passed out to the gallery. When Tuttle makes, it's mostly positive - a reflexive form emerges, or statement of character, arbitrariness. And that's enough for some. When you make, a pit opens up and nothing will fill it, because you can't trust anything that would. A horrible pit, with a visible bottom, not too far down. No one else is likely to see the pit for themselves; it's not in their life that it happened. Do you make it their problem? Do you work hard around the work to translate the experience of work? How? How do you set them the parameters of your life, and what are they? Or do you just stand next to it? And offer no explanation or apology or function or good. Allow the questions to accumulate if people are moved to ask them. Maybe they're shallow if they don't ask, or maybe the audience is?

This became something different as I was writing. Instead of asking you questions and then trying to write something, I think this is all I can do. I don't want to affect something for a public, and you don't dare tell me what to think; we're both careful of each other. Maybe you'll tell me what you think? I think there's a joke on the sublime in there. I could write something different, though.

X

Hi Tom,

Two points and a piece of string.

When I draw a line I want that line to operate, not on its own terms, not on mine, not on a perceived viewer's terms. To talk of something else, potential. A has potential. B. They depend on each other for meaning.

What talks to me in your writing is 'there's no pitch' - here I think painting is posturing, confrontation, and as I step up to the mark I ruin it a little by releasing, letting go. Removing a point, the tension falls away, like a piece of string. My pitch - any sign of a figure replicates or mimics the gesture of its making.

'Paint and your [my] brain'- this makes me think of my body and impulse, pulsations, heartbeat versus thought. When painting I am thinking about a time other than the present moment. Here are the two points again to stretch time; they rely on each other to create weight. *Or they don't.*

 I don't worry as much as I used to, I think it is more a calculating process, a problem solving approach, rather than passive worrying. In short - I think!

'The way we think in general' - yes please think about this when looking at the paintings :) brain as receptacle, images as excavations, an inherent language.

Of Tuttle: which form am I looking at? The paper as a piece of work, then the papers describing the work - both are on display, but their status is different. The piece of string or the string to contain the string? It's a joke. The string as protector becomes a double up. For me, this is Tuttle's big gesture. He names and frames. I don't mind that. Or how my perception as viewer shifts when I look at one and the other.

"Do you make it their problem?"- No. I'm reading Susan Sontag's diaries and she is so careful of herself, too. The folding in and away from herself, self-checking, suspicious of her involvement/uninvolvement (others' words or ideas, of using a language as if it were stable) in her writing. The way she writes, what and why and who. She too is a consumer (like, to be obsessed with the consumption of all things, to be able to consume with the means to call something your own but remain nameless).

I think that a word is full of possible meaning and specific social and cultural constructs sometimes claim that word and meaning comes from collective use. Though, yesterday I said warm too many times and it became foreign. The same happens with marks and figures.

As I write this, I am aware I'm not painting. The paintings will sit on the wall in the exhibition, even though not all are made yet, I can see them there, because I am excited about making a thing - and I know that I will make it and that it will make its own thing. Then it will claim the space and I will claim the space around it. The spaces among the people who come to visit and talk to each other, ask questions about each other, as a way of talking about themselves at private views and offering info on future meetings - they recognise the potential of this meeting (this is an observation not a criticism) whilst the paintings are a _____ in those conversations.

I found your email very generous. Thank you.

X