



INSIDE STUDIO 280

Visual Art | Baking | Jessica Kalmar | Knitting | Sewing



Opening the Floodgates

A more relaxed schedule in wintertime offers the chance to give attention to unattempted ideas and unfinished projects. This season also happens to be my most inspirational time with the quietness of falling snow, the bright colors of birds against a grey sky, and the simple pleasure from examining an intricate snowflake on a mitten. Everything seems to click into place and then the floodgates open and it becomes hard to keep up as projects are checked off and feelings of accomplishment and confidence rise.

The snow and wintery weather seemed to take a bit of time to get to my spot on our planet and so I surrounded myself with images of winter landscapes. Having these books spread open all over the studio space helped to get things rolling. Among them were photographers Robert Werling, Robert Adams and Alfred Stieglitz, and painter Bev Doolittle.

"Is a photograph real or does it merely inform?"

Robert Werling asks this question in the introduction to his book Beyond Light : American Landscapes while reflecting on the desire a photographer has to share a beautiful scene. In efforts to answer his own question he suggests that photographers must have some way to detach from the subject matter in order to create a personal experience. The short introduction continues with such key words as "departure," "abstract," and "patience" while leading to a

Side Bar

Once again we find ourselves in the quietness of the beginning of a new year. Whether it's a time of hibernating or busying oneself, this season offers ample time to think and reflect. This winter edition holds a few stimulating thoughts to keep you warm. | Tackling some strong philosophical content, societal issues, and essays about 1970s photography all connect somehow in the Books section. | Building with blocks compliments the architecture of a photograph as seen in the art exhibit reviewed. | Knitting cozy things helps take the chill off when temperatures plunge. | When chocolate and salt get together you know it's a party. | Please enjoy this edition!

Books



Ishmael | Daniel Quinn

- A philosophical discussion about how we use this planet of ours and how we act towards each other.

My Ishmael | Daniel Quinn

- A continuation from *Ishmael* where we are challenged to think even more about what we are doing with this planet and with ourselves in society.

Thirteen Reasons Why | Author

- The process in which the main character gains information is a metaphor for how he handles the facts he has learned in this sincere story of raw and honest emotion.

Diana & Nikon | Author

- The flow of her essays about photographic art in the 1970s can easily translate to present day photographic art.

Reviews



In Pieces | Installment by
Nathan Sawaya and Dean West

This exhibit is a collaboration between sculpture and photography that merges what is real and what is fiction, when at the same time questions the reality of fiction. Sawaya is known for his sculptures of LEGO bricks while West has a photographic background in contemporary portraiture. By combining both worlds, the artists depicted a sense of displacement in an otherwise known type of utopia. As I walked through the exhibit I was reminded of how surreal photography can be. Since its public debut in 1839, photography has always been a sort of trickster, and by showing a fabricated Americana in this exhibit, I think it was very successful.

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conclusion of connectivity between photographer and viewer. His essay brought to mind the installation *In Pieces* (see Side Bar) and certain passages from the book *Diana & Nikon*. Werling's

musings are that of many photographer's. There is definitely a separation between the snapshot photographer and the serious photographer, consciously or not. To close that gap is to, as Werling suggested, "... be constantly observing, to be there, to experience and record..." because everything seems to be rushing, and it's photography that helps us slow down if we let it.

"Content and aesthetics are inseparable."



Robert Adams' photographic work is primarily concerned with "our tragic propensity for evil" in regards to how people treat the land, our planet. The group of his photographs I'm currently interested in are titled *Cottonwoods* and found in a Smithsonian Series called "Photographers at Work." Adams' photographs of the cottonwoods near his hometown in Colorado seem so definitive in their stark portraits absent of all color. Even in some of the more lush and full

trees they seem to show their feeling of impending demise. I am reminded of Quinn's books about Ishmael (see Side Bar).



Knitting

Working with a mix of fine merino wool and silk is at first a little clumsy, but after a few rows I got the hang of it. This [knit scarf](#) follows the pattern called Morning Surf by Jackie Erickson-Schweitzer. The dropped yarn-over method makes for a fun and quick scarf to knit.



More Knitting

I am knitting a [sweater](#) for David following a pattern from The Green Mountain Spinnery Knitting Book using 100% virgin wool. This yarn has been in my stash for a very long time, but it held up! After the front and back are connected, I will start the arms. If David can't enjoy it this season, then it will be a pleasant addition to his fall wardrobe.



David and I live in a landscape of hilly terrain where a lot of ground water continually flows from abandoned spring-houses and surfaces around potentially large rocks creating otherworldly marshes calling to a variety of bird species and many wild animals. It is also a place where pipeline construction and natural gas drilling sites surround us with light pollution and the constant hum of machinery. In combination, these elements have a strong affect on me and my photography. In one direction I find mystery and dreams while in the other I find damage and distress. Oftentimes these details intermingle and produce fanciful images, but they tend to speak as one of Adams' cottonwood portraits speaks. On occasion I find that I stand with my camera in hand, not ready to make a photograph, but listening and looking intently at what's happening around me, subconsciously taking Werling's advice.

"I believe that whoever created earth did so for the purpose of good."

Bev Doolittle's detailed paintings of pinto horses in the 1980s created so much hype that "the Doolittle Phenomenon" was coined by critics. I first came across this factoid in the book [The Art of Bev Doolittle](#), which was always on the coffee table at a friend's house. This book, published in 1990, was my introduction to living an artist's life. At this time I was an impressionable high school student absorbing anything that was outside of my school studies. When I visited my friend I spent a lot of time on the couch studying this book, fascinated with the progression of Doolittle's life as an artist and especially taken with the full color prints of her paintings. I suspect I was visiting the book more than the friend.

I like Bev Doolittle's optimism in her quote. Regardless of the constant reminder of man's hand with power lines, factories,

Baking

While visiting my parents over Christmastime, their neighbors delivered a small box of extremely savory treats. After deconstructing the ingredients, I made them myself. This is the easiest and most versatile confection I know that I call [Pretzel Rolo Bites](#).

Ingredients:

Bite sized pretzels

1 bag of Rolos

Pecan halves - optional

M&M's - optional

Directions:

Preheat oven to 250°F. Line baking sheets with parchment. Place rows of pretzels. Then place one Rolo on top of each pretzel. Put trays in oven and let Rolos melt for 3 minutes. They should be very soft and not completely melted.



Remove from oven and quickly place a pecan, M&M, or pretzel on top of each Rolo and smooch.



I hope this one makes you smile, as I have a hunch you may already know about this yummy ensemble.



and clamorous machinery, one can see past all that and notice the evident beauty. Much like the “leaver” and “taker” categories of human population Quinn expresses in his Ishmael series, Doolittle’s positive attitude recognizes the good of our earth and tries her best to live more of a “leaver” lifestyle, meaning she is content with the world by living in harmony with nature rather than altering or ruining it.

The Cascading Effect

Unexpected connections pop up all the time with almost everything I am involved with from what book to read next to which artist to study. I’ve noticed this continuous flow of subjects since my first year in college and have always found it to be some sort of magical spell. The geography class would somehow compliment the art history class which would somehow fit with a topic from the statistics class. I don’t know if it has to do with perception or coincidence, but it is a welcomed way of life. These links within all the themes I come across have become an ironic meandering path with splits and deviations. Without this convoluted map I think imagination would fade away. And it’s imagination that is needed when the world seems upside down.

Despite the questionable weather patterns and the ravaged earth, I am able to accept it and follow the curves in the path to new destinations. Like running on a new trail, I always run farther than planned just to see what’s beyond that twist and that turn.

Archive

Diana-F in January, 2012

Sometimes I play with a camera from my collection without any specific agenda but to just make some photos. I never think to put that roll of film together and call it a series, but during the preparations for this particular edition I became inspired to conceive of such an idea. Some of the images in this series are included in the ongoing project entitled Gods and Goddesses (Ephemeris). The photos on this roll record a very cold and wintry day spent with David as we walked around certain areas of Pittsburgh. This activity was a favorite pastime of ours when we lived in the city, and holds so many great memories.

The full roll of film (16 exposures) is sprinkled throughout this document.







Look and Listen

Which projects have only surfaced in thought and have yet to materialize? Which projects have been started and would be satisfying to finish? Perhaps now is the time to take on these aspirations. Finding out how experiences connect is part of the journey, and they are found not only in the beginning, but all along that trail.

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Thank You

A continuous artist statement, Inside Studio 280 is a quarterly report on creativity and constructive endeavors in and around the world I share with you. I hope you enjoy it and that you find evident beauty this season. Look for the spring edition of Studio 280 around May 6, 2019.

Winter 2019 | Experience | jessicakalmar.com
