
Sent: August 19, 2011
From: "Amanda Ross-Ho" <amanda@amandarossho.com>
To: "Ruyell Ho" ruyell@att.net
Subject: **Just a piece of cardboard;-) How are you**

Dear Dad,

Sorry to be so slow in getting this to you. In my defense, I've been thinking hard about how I might write about your work. This is a tough assignment, because, as you know, you are both my dad and alongside mom, the first artist in my life. As a practitioner in the field *and* your daughter, I know better than to even try to approach the task of evaluating your life and work without bias. So while there is part of me that can hold your work in the light of art history and consider the evolution of your practice within the broader context of contemporary art--there is the other part in which you are my *good old dad*.

When I was very little, I asked you to teach me to be an artist. As you will remember I was very precocious, (I'M TAKING OVER) and I recall clearly that during our first 'lesson' I demanded flatly that you explain exactly *what art was*. You thought about it for a long time, and then explained it like this: Art, you said, is a language. An artist's job is to invent a language, and with that language the artist can say anything they want.

Around the same age, I had a very hard time with math. I simply could not wrap my head around the abstraction, so much so that it would bring me to tears, late nights spent at the kitchen table erasing holes into my newsprint workbook. You, the degreed mathematician, tried to console me by recounting your own early epiphany with the medium. "It isn't about answers...it's about *ideas*." One morning, after a particularly difficult (and lost) battle with long division, I woke up to find (only) the sums miraculously penciled into my gray tattered ditto, the pressure to seek answers relieved--leaving in its place the freedom to indulge in the satisfaction of the work.

Recently, I asked you about *your* work. You told me that you endeavor towards SIMPLICITY as an expression of your utterly SIMPLE lifestyle, a tautology that initially left me shaking my head NO, again demanding a sum to the problem. And yet this seemingly vacant feedback loop somehow accurately diagrams the impossible: the uncalculatable equation for existing in

the present moment, a here and now that is constantly in motion. The redundancy is a necessity. It is because it is.

I objected openly, saying, “But... YOU? YOU are ANYTHING but simple!”

“Well of course”, you said, “Being simple is very complicated”.

There have been authored lessons, and then there are the things I’ve learned without being told. From you I know deeply—fundamentally--that what you see speaks infinitely more about what is *not there* than what is in front of you. That opposition is at the foundation of all meaning. That for every silence there are volumes, for each moment of solitude, a love affair, for each freedom, anchors and responsibilities and oppressive tethers.

For 36 years I have watched you feverishly document the evolution of form with the self-conscious intent and meditative repetition of a personal diary. Like cells in a lifelong animation, your images chart the journey of a sole life form and it’s ongoing adventures—moving through landscapes, constantly shifting in mood, attitude, and vulnerability. Each image is a snapshot, a map pin, a screen grab, a YOU ARE HERE--coordinates describing the one to one sensation of real time. A mirror, cuz you see, it’s live. The instant one of these coordinates is fixed, a new one comes along. And still, the evolution is hardly linear. If anything, your organism aims to *devolve*, maneuvering subtractively as if in search of its origin or seed, or for that which is necessary (and sufficient) only.

This is your language. Your language, were it to have a conventional legibility, might tell a detailed and lengthy account of a Civil War battle, sing a bawdy Joe Cocker song, or elaborate on the vast and documented intelligence of The African Grey Parrot. It might recite, word for word, a conversation that occurred on Saturday, August 16, 1969, for example, or announce, as if for the first time, the astonishing existence of a several mile-wide fungus, or possibly ruminate on a very specific (and fascinating) theorem within space-time mechanics. But it doesn’t. Instead it holds its tongue and keeps moving.

Congratulations on your exhibition Dad, I love you.

xox
Amanda