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INSIGHT: AN INVITATION

by

Joyce Bingeman

A THESIS

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INSIGHT: AN INVITATION

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Advisor: Karen Kunc

My abstractions originate in my relationships to my mother, father, and self. Visual entry points of whiteness, flatness, and organic shapes become a language and form of communication that speak to my connections with my family. They begin as quiet and contemplative works with minimal use of color and imagery that oscillate around an ovular organic form and shift to more colorful pure abstractions.

Working consecutively with a similar shape in size and appearance came naturally to me as I began putting paintbrush to paper. My impetus was to complete a form and reveal its edges with gesso – lines that connect in infinity with muted color, making a shape embedded within the charged white around the spaces. It was months later that I attended my first ultrasound and saw a tiny circular form surrounded by deep space; its mark resonated within me.

Shapes and text became even more meaningful to the work after the unexpected passing of my father. Organically rendered pages with quasi-biblical phrasing collaged on top began to correlate with my grief. They transformed from random religious poetic sentiments into a manual on what it means for me to grieve with words like: “The cold damp terrified her” and “There was a deep silence.” The text, which meditates on sin and wickedness, relates to conditions that I concern myself with as a Christian. Inclusion of found phrases from the discarded library book *Infelice* began as a curiosity to explore textual

conversation in abstract work. Out-of-context quotes from a nun scolding a little girl about killing her pet dove became odd poetic phrasings, which intrigued me.

The language of the shapes also connects in all of the works due to the pervasive reworking of the surfaces. Sanding represents a physical change of the page. My act of removal is a process that reveals a more unified or complete image. Each page, crafted over a series of months is worked, layered, sanded, and drawn upon again. The labor and intensity within each page represents my desire to offer the viewer a gift at my show, where they are invited to engage with the pages through prompting text to sit, contemplate, and take one from the wall.

A small space, built by two walls at my thesis exhibition welcomes the viewer to spend time in a room where formalism and experience meet. I provide two benches in this space, which invite an opportunity for a collective experience. Taken from my church, they symbolize my connection with my community and where I spend my time. Through communal participatory actions I invite the viewer to become a part of my community. This setting is meant to coax the viewer into a moment where their only task in the world, right then and there, is to be present in the intimate space. This is achieved by viewing the work through the lens of a prompt on the wall or taking the time to sift through the imagery and choose which piece they want. Within here lies the insight for the viewer.

I do not remember when we began using the word with each other in conversation but somewhere over the years my mom and I began referring to the fateful events in our lives as “kismet” (kis met / 'kizmit,-,met/ *noun* destiny; fate). A true lover of random occurrences, my mom always marveled at the kismet of her zodiac readings, once choosing a life-changing career due to the prediction of a Chinese fortune cookie. Kismet became a dialogue between us for all of the things that we could not communicate, such as my

deepening move towards faith and spirituality or her occasional frustration with her lot in life – it was all just kismet.

Perhaps then, it too was kismet the evening she began painting a sketchbook as a gift for me from an old textbook titled *Insight*. Every night, settled into the couch long after work, she would flip the page, paint a spread, and wait for it to dry. Sometimes the paintings took the form of milky whites drifting to pinks and browns and other times she skipped passages and pages where the text was too important to cover. Maybe she had run out of that one color in the paint-by-number set left over from her younger years or maybe she felt the need to switch things up. Either way, every night she would flip the page and paint.

My works on paper incorporate all of these elements: through stages over time, including screen-printed text, painting over the text, various choices of materials and fortunes written on the back (fortune source: *Infelice* by Augusta Jane Evans). My thesis exhibition presents an installation of these works in which the viewer is welcomed into an inner sanctum space and offered an invitation – a gift of art and of time to contemplate their inner world. My communication of generosity is a chance to be a part of something larger and a chance to participate in an event guided by kismet and insight.

















