

A review of: Becoming on the line: Painting and the genesis of form

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On reviewing this piece, I was hesitant as to whether it should be treated as an essay of images with an accompanying artist statement, or as an essay on the creative process using a case study - the writer's own practice - to illustrate. Essentially I believe it to be both, which is why I shall refer to the author as the writer/artist, and will argue that one or the other line of inquiry be taken to add strength to what is an interesting investigation.

The writer/artist bravely tackles the subject of the creative process, a highly subjective topic that is fraught by the multiplicity of artistic practices today. Especially in regard to the chapter entitled 'Morphogenesis' it is clear that the writer is an abstract artist to whom the creation of form is paramount. I think it is important for the writer/artist to make this point at the outset, as the emphasis on form does not account for the myriad ways and different mediums in which artists work today, notably where the "idea" is chief, and the "form" is consequential.

However, the writer/artist treats the subject of the elusive creative process with sensitivity in the tradition of Romantic poetry, which I think appropriate in the context of an artist's statement. The Romantic poet Percy Bysshe Shelley describes this approach in his own essay *A Defence of Poetry*,

Poets are the hierophants of an unapprehended inspiration; the mirrors of the gigantic shadows which futurity casts upon the present; the words which express what they understand not; the trumpets which sing to battle, and feel not what they inspire; the influence which is moved not, but moves. Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world (Shelley, 2001/1840: 45).

The writer/artist honors the ephemeral subject of the creative process by dancing tantalizingly close to the "truth", and treating the reader to moments of insightful clarity, without diminishing its indefinable qualities. If it were an artist statement I would argue that the text over-complicates the work, moreover I thought the word choice was intermittently erroneous as I struggled to grasp the meaning at times. But I also happily surrendered understanding in favor of catching glimpses of the intangible creative process of which I am familiar with through the writer's use of sensory imagery:

From micro to macro and vice versa, with each iteration it gets clearer that the particular image on paper is but the skin of a bubble of life, lusciously liquefying into richness. (94)

As mentioned there were moments of clarity and succinctness that really sung, such as the use of Aesthetics as a complex verb by the artist, "combining the 'sudden' (intuition), the 'gradual' (aggregation) and the 'edge of chaos' into a fertile event." (92)

I also found this quoted passage one of the strongest in the text:

I wish my art as a passageway, a corridor into the dynamic ambivalent line between self and other, between intimate and alien, between certainty and the unknown; to mark through aesthetics the possibility of transition towards a new perspective. (92)

As an essay I would advise that the writer acknowledges their subjectivity and/or the specific creative practice (morphogenesis); more clearly trace the connection of causality to the central question of open-endedness, as well as the artist and substrata; carefully edit and check the text; and use the artist's practice to illustrate rather than justify the essay's conclusions.

As an artist's statement I would advise that the artist pare back the text to allow the works to be the hero, and illustrate the connection between their practice and the central question of open-endedness; and fully embrace their ability to describe their creative practice in a more abstract manner.

Reference

Shelley, P. B. 2001/1840. A defence of poetry. In M. Travers (Ed.), *European literature from Romanticism to Postmodernism: A reader in aesthetic practice*: 43–45. London: Continuum.