

clearing: a fertile exhale

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“you could let it all go, you could let it all go/ it’s called freefall, it’s called freefall” - Rainbow Kitten Surprise

“Revolution isn’t about vanquishing the Darkness—it’s about carrying a light through the valley of the shadow of death. So someone else might see it. And they might join you.” - Timothy Hucks

Adrienne Rich describes the journey to “an honorable human relationship” as “a process, delicate, violent, often terrifying to both persons involved.” Though I believe Rich envisioned multiple separate persons when she wrote *Women and Honor: Some Notes on Lying* (1975), the silent committee of all versions of a person or a people cannot be dismissed from this conversation.

Because there is no place where “an honorable relationship” with others and the world around us exists without the same kind of relationship with ourselves, how do we sustain and replenish ourselves through such a daunting task? What is the invisible but certain string around our teeth that pulls us higher, still? It is unknowable that things will get better. It is unknowable that we will be able to hold onto the comfort and familiarity of expired patterns without the restraints required to sustain them. But in the same way we assess the risk of an undertaking by the probability of harm or level of terror, may we also allow ourselves to accept the equal or greater probability that, at the very least, we reach a place where we can stop holding our breath.

“A fertile solitude is a benign forgetting of the body that takes care of itself;...A productive solitude, the solitude in which what could never have been anticipated, appears, is linked with a quality of attention.”

Hannah Ehrlich’s journey of creation necessitates an intimate, patient and reverent relationship with the passing of time, the internal unknown and a divorce from the safety of absolutes. Cradled between Adam Phillips’ exploration of what he refers to as “a fertile solitude”, and Louise Bourgeois’ declaration of the necessity of solitude to the artists’ actualization, Ehrlich echoes the journey of constant becoming through a process that is inherently taxing, long-suffering and defined by change. Through the blending and distortion of multiple textile practices such as macrame, crocheting and sewing, Ehrlich invites us into a universe where the process is also and always the destination.

Positioning herself as an inner-world scuba diver, she dedicates herself to the use of destruction and ambiguity in service of transformation—coating fabric in paint to stiffen, bleaching and hand-dyeing strips and ropes of both bought and found materials, playing with scale to affect how the body of the viewer reacts to the work. It is purposeful that works exhibited multiple times be presented in different orientations, with new additions or subtractions noticed from previous iterations. In devotion to the cyclical nature of living and the clairvoyance of seeing the next form of what’s in front of you, Ehrlich illustrates an intricate

understanding of destruction as an essential part of conjuring new worlds; here between these frozen knots and stripped threads is where we learn that releasing ourselves from the terror of the unknown frees up our hands to hold our next best things. Lean in, and breathe along the way.

“And still the question remains: to what do we risk entrusting ourselves in solitude? Although God is no longer our perpetual witness, we have our own available ghosts, our constitutive psychoanalytic fictions—the unconscious, the good internal object, the developmental process, the body and its destiny, language.” -

Adam Phillips

