

Art Through Dialogue: Krie Alden Lets Her Audience Speak

By Jenny Gaol Published September 30th 2014 for the Swarthmore College Daily Gazette

Art exhibitions tend to be one-way dialogues in which the artist attempts to convey a message to the viewer. The viewer is separated from the work and artist by formality and a ceremonial observance of art. We usually imagine approaching the work with care and respect, shuffling around the hall in hushed tones. The voice of a lady with a British accent floating from rented headphones, telling us what the piece is about. Krie Alden's *Untitled: What You See or What Do You See*, presented at the Fringe Festival, challenges the standard dynamics between the artist and the viewer.

After I walked into the unassuming gallery and saw a table full of different colored mechanical pencils and stacks of paper tags, Alden casually greeted me and described how to interact with her exhibition. She explained that she doesn't title any of her work. "Take as many tags as you want [and] any color of mechanical pencil, and name my art. I will try to reproduce it into [more] visual or auditory art," said Alden.

I named one piece *Frankenstein*, but other people named the same work *Bicycle Crash* or *Interracial Sexual Attraction*. "I want the audience to speak," said Alden in reference to the random segments of black duct tape with hot pink lips taped on the wall, ceiling, and floor. "Every time a person tells me what they see, I get a new perspective of that work. I am inspired by their words."

For this exhibition, she spontaneously chose "pieces that intuitively came to [her]." I admired the artist's ability to identify what her instincts told her and to disengage with her thoughts. It takes skill to deliberate and analyze, but it's even harder sometimes to let go of that comfort and control--to just trust your gut.

Even when hanging the works, Alden made spur of the moment decisions, such as keeping the packaging materials on certain works and using the materials to create a new piece on the spot.

A cardboard rectangle with the durable plastic pulled taut over it hung on the wall, creating a transparent canvas. Using mixed media in her works, Alden created multimedia art featuring motion images, music, dance, and poems derived from the words written on the paper tags, giving the audience a voice in her work. "Art is a constant conversation of texture and color," said Alden.

In a kind of "canvas-ception," Alden projected onto the transparent canvas a video of herself dancing nude in front of the same transparent canvas. In the video, Alden projected a poem on to the canvas and her body. All the images in the video were very segmented with a low frame rate, like a security camera recording. The music being played on repeat in the background, "Let's Roll" by Yelawolf feat. Kid Rock, represented the essence of Alden's exhibition. "It ain't about the money / I'ma blow it all / I made my own lane / Let's roll! Lets roll!"

As a person who plans out her week on Google Calendar as a form of procrastination, I act and make my decisions based on evaluations and logic. I often try to suppress my intuition. Thus, I initially had trouble understanding Alden's videos and struggled to find meaning in them. But the cyclical nature of the looped hook from "Let's Roll" helped me relax and put me in the state of mind to allow a more free-flowing stream of consciousness. It's only after entering this mentality that I came to appreciate her work.

The video projected on different types of surfaces (her body, the plastic canvas, the wall), creating a blur of the words of the poem. Just like her other abstract art, the words are subject to interpretation. No one answer is right. What you see is your own perception and reality. To you, it is the truth. Her nakedness showed her acceptance of the raw form: complete intuition and freedom from the constraints of the standards of society. Having the words of her viewers literally projected on her body, she embodied their voices and recreated them into a work of art. Alden tore down the wall between the artist and the audience.

Here's the link to one of the poems she created during her interactive show currently on SoundCloud