

## Making Art in the Dark

In truth, we heard tell it all might go, for the chop and to the wind, so to speak. What could we do, we did not do much it seems. Just the way things are, I guess. They said it might come to an end, and it did just that. She was gone, no more she, no more guests and no talk, no notes, no sit in a ring. No call to be still, to look, to hear, to think and note things or not, or just hear notes in the head. No need to read all those words, in a room. All of us, were no more.

We slept in, some of us. More time I spose. For what you might say? Well, to sleep, to read those old notes if we wish, make art, do our thing. Did we miss it? We just went on, still went in. Not to the room, not to sit in the one ring as the one right kind of space for all to be. Each found a bit of space some place and made stuff. Kept on, thought a bit, when they could, stuff they knew, stuff they had heard, kept what they had tight close. They did their best, from the old notes.

They did talk, some of them. Not so much and not in the one place no more, not in a ring, how it once was. They asked and were told, no room, no funds, no more she, no need. Just make art, do your thing. It's fine how it is. New phase. Get with it. There were doubts. Some read, on their own, made notes, tried to talk, form a new ring. No her, no guide, no guests. Notes got old, talk got stuck. Most did not do so, took the time to make with less book weight, less words on their back. They, we, we all made and just said, 'do I like it, or not?' and in the end, so what? Those that read showed their stuff, used words and tried to talk. There were fights, words with words, and in the end words were out, done, just not so cool. To make was in, won out. If we can't all talk, share words, we won't at all. It's dumb.

Some, the out of words, the not cool, went out, up town, to see art, find a place to share their words, seek new ones. Some came back; fought back by doubt, by art speak, in fear. Too much for them on their own, the art, the words, the text and crit. At least it was safe to make here. They'd paid to be made here, to learn how to make it here, had they not? We thought we would make do with what we knew, on our own with the bit we still got from them. We had no choice. No bridge, no her, no room, no safe ring to float thought. Best just to make, not think, not read, not speak, not hear so much. Best not to touch books and get lost in all that. Just do.

The books got shut. The room of books got shut.

She, the room, the ring, all talk went out of mind over time. No one came with new words. We made art and just made more. Day in day out, make an art, an art, an art with no need to think why, or who or how, or where or when, past or now. No what if. We lost touch with the books, how to write or speak to the world of art in the broad sense. Let it go past us, not said.

Time.

These days I wake like a corpse from sleep after a shift. We sleep on words, made a good bed out of all the old books we found. It is dark all the time but I have my crack in the wall boards to get a glimpse of a front or a back, or two from time to time. Just names, just words we don't say no more. I dress in work gear all the time, wake or sleep, like all the rest to get on with the line. We make art.

In time, with no words in or out, we found the more we made and the less we thought the more it all came to be kind of the same. An art was an art. We each made and what we made swam in the same pool so to speak and all went the same way in the end. For a while, to be fair, we did ask why that was and try to think on it, put it in words. We just got stumped for a way to find out, or ask, or say things about our art and why we did what we did and if it has been done or not and how to change the way we did it. No one kept a note of what had been done or was best, what was liked or not and why. There was no one to show it to, with chat or not.

I guess we have all been in the same space for all this time, each in the same kind of art grind; it was bound to be like that. We made art and gave up the talk and cos they were all kind of the same it did not count who had made them in the first place, or when they were made or that kind of thing. Why spend the time to do our own stuff for no sense. We lost pride. We had a laugh about it. It was a sad day. The things we made just were and there was no call to make a big deal out of it. We made a thing out of it. What else to do? Right now each art we make is just about the same as the next. We got so good we can make art fast, in the dark too. We don't stop. Why would we? Once it's made its done and no need to look, or think, or feel a thing about it. It's a new way not to think, so to speak. We all do it.

We use the same stuff to make as it is cheap, we have it in us, and it does the job. We make in the one shade more or less, that is the same each time. Why change it. If it works why break it. The same people have made art in this space for a long, long time. We don't leave. This is what we do. Our space is full of our art. Up to our neck, our mouth, our nose, our eyes. Art on top of us. We stay on top of it. We live, make art and some of us have done and do die here on the job.

We don't need to say too much about it, what is there to say? We just put them out of sight and mind in back of the stack of books and keep on to make the art. New ones come. It works out so we keep the line just right and don't slow the art work down. My kid was born right here in the dark, and will stay in the dark and make art all the time. Make art right where she is, if she can't get up, til she dies. Make art all the time she don't sleep right there on the book bed. She made art as soon as she could walk. Born to it with no need for a thought in her head or a way to say it. If she asks, it's what we do. Which she doesn't, she can't.

One day, when she was real small I lost her for a while in the dark. We held up the line to search. There is no where to go from here that we could think of but still it was a bad time for the line and for the work. We found her by feel in the dark in the books of all places, sat right there with a book in her left hand and some kind of card she found in the right one, held to that bit of light. I said we got to make art on the line but she hiss back and made me look at this card by that bit of light, that old black and white still shot of a set of folk. Just a bunch of folk, all past. They pose as a group, kind of stiff. Each holds a book to their chest sat round a small gal, she with specs, and a swish of hair. She smiles, they smile, though it might as well be some kind of a death with all the black crepe arm bands, and her with a bunch, in bloom like a wreath on her arm.

The kid turns it over to point at a scrawl, a word writ by hand that I don't know, and asks me to say it. I test the word in my head, with my mouth; get a feel for it and how to say it, let it out. The line is stuck with me and here I am with a kid and a word to sound and a burn in my gut that I know so well as the need to make an art. I tell her the word, real low, '*Jouissance, Jouissance*', and in the dark she might smile though I can't see it.

It is ours, I say it as I tuck that card and its one word back in a safe book, a big tomb right by where we lay our head and sleep, and take her and me back to the line in the dark. She likes it, the folk, she, the word, and from time to time we find that book, that card and that word and say it out loud, each to each. Then we go back to the line and I squat and she squats and we make art.

Catherine Linton, February 2013