



**Project
Space**

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I Know It's Not Enough
Anni Spadafora
July 5th– July 27th, 2013

5.20.2013, the Asian Village building, Chinatown, 3pm: After repeatedly running into each other at the Common cafe as well as in the elevator of the ramshackle building in Toronto's Chinatown where both Anni and Erica both have studios, Erica pays Anni a visit in her studio. The two women talk about the love of beautiful things, the pleasure of making, fabrics, feminism, labour, personal resistance, food activism, eggs, everyday life, and magic.

6.5.2013, the Common cafe, west Toronto, 10am: Erica runs into Anni in the midst of a morning notebook writing session. The two women drink coffee and talk about internalized misogyny, patriarchy, the changing role of women in society, capitalism, neoliberalism, precarious labour, and the iconic 1980s New York feminist film *Born in Flames*.

6.24.2013, residential street, west Toronto, 8pm: Erica meets Anni in the backyard of her home at dusk. They eat guacamole and drink cold beer and talk about love, family, dating, body image, childhood traumas, memory, desire, polyamory, public vs. private bodies, queerness, gender, finding meaning, living well, and Anni's upcoming exhibition. The following is a fragment from this conversation:

You describe yourself as having recently made a shift from working as a community organizer to "making work". What precipitated this change?

I was coming out of a year where I felt like my politics were on a roller coaster. I was doing a lot - for me - maybe not compared to other people. I needed a break from organizing community events and parties and I left my full time job working for nonprofits. I NEEDED A BREAK. I NEEDED A BREAK. I NEEDED A FUCKING BREAK!!! I came to making work in a more serious way as me trying to create a different type of contribution on the map. I felt my politics oscillating in this way that felt really intense and I wanted to commit to visualizing that.

I was feeling a dissonance that I think may be felt by lots of people in lots of ways - the dissonance between being a doer and a thinker. It has shaped how I make work, oscillating between projects drenched in theory and an injected, pronounced politic vs. just intuitively making and focusing on form.

What did you find yourself making?

My first project for this show was made very intentionally. I was asked to create an installation for an event hosting fat and queer activist Charlotte Cooper. I made a participatory soft sculpture piece called 'Fuck Assimilation'. It has two components: a rhythmic text-based banner repeating the phrase "fuck assimilation" that I used heavily at rallies last summer and a huge, fat ass.

What was important about that bum is that it created a temporary site of desirability. I created an opportunity for this bum to be touched, layed on, etc.: a series of quick moments of desirability. This is a fat ass and people are touching it, without having to assimilate despite its grotesqueness. I became obsessed with the idea of how these temporary sites of desirability could be gestures of resistance and sites where desirability could be lived, even if just in a quick moment.

Why is it important to you to make object-based work?

I want to honour how objects and materials allow for micro moments of resistance, safety, and desirability. One of the more recent pieces I've made is called 'Wasaga Beach'. I sewed hundreds of tubes of neon spandex, re-purposing neon craft ties from the 90s that I would knot and braid to make bracelets and other oddities as a kid. I have this vivid childhood memory of driving to Wasaga Beach while listening to Madonna's 'Immaculate Collection' with my mom and my aunt who was this loud, hilarious fat dyke. For me, it was one of my first queer and feminist memories, a quick glimpse into new articulations of gender and embodiment. They were performing a type of agency I knew even as a kid that I wanted to live. I am fully convinced that I remember this moment and my feelings in it because I was knotting in the back, touching that material. Ideas around objects, materials, and the touch sense holding memories and a sense of safety and belonging are not new, but what I'm further trying to explore is how the engagement with these materials and the memories that they hold are actually micro moments of political resistance, despite how quick or banal.

What does individual resistance as opposed to collective resistance mean to you?

Privately, I think that it means finding richness and moments of exhale and political resistance in everyday banal gestures. For example, fat activist communities often talk about how publicly eating is actually a huge gesture of political resistance and desirability for fat folks. This is the sort of quick nothingness that I'm interested in.

Publicly, (such as with making political work), I think it means a lot of vulnerability. The vulnerability of doing. I'm obsessed with ideas of vulnerability. But I also think there are a lot of blessings with that vulnerability, and so I think it requires a lot of gratitude. I remember watching a video with Louise Bourgeois in her old age mentoring a group of young artists. One artist said to her: "it's hard being an artist!". And she said: "hard?! you should be grateful!".

This is my first time writing a text for publication - I'm also really nervous and feel vulnerable. Writing always stripped away my armour - showed the cracks in my otherwise well maintained facade.

I love that. I hope that you include this in the interview.

Do you ever find yourself making work from a place that is not urgent not dissonance?

NO! This is my only motivation to make work. I can't understand making work without some sort of urgency. Even if it's just in my own body with a desire to make objects. For me this urgency ignites me asking questions. Not necessarily to push forward or move ground, but ask questions of anticipated viewers and of myself while making work. This responding to this urgency allows me to exist. Oh, Erica, I feel the urgency. God, I just feel it everywhere.

--Erica Brisson