

The Artist's Assemblage

Honors Thesis

**Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Bachelor of Science in Geography**

In the College of Arts and Sciences
at Salem State University

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2014

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December 2013



AN

ARTISTS

ASSEMBLAGE

**The Artists Assemblage:
Creating a Professional Website
&
Discussion of the Artistic Process**

*A thesis created
by
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*B.S. GEOGRAPHY
ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY
2D ART MINOR*

(COMMONWEALTH HONORS)

*December 2013
Salem State University*

Table Of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	4
Preface by Nicholas Gilroy.....	5
I. Introduction.....	7
II. Supplemental Inputs.....	9
III. Personal Statement.....	11
IV. Travels & Blogging.....	15
V. Crafting & Gaining Perspective.....	23
VI. Web Site & Technical Creation of this Project.....	27
Resources.....	29

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I want to thank all those who have helped me to grow... A plant takes sunlight, water & the soil to grow-our relationships with others are like the minerals in the soil. Small and simple words of encouragement are like the minerals in the soil-without them we wouldn't grow, but they are not obvious in their guidance.

Of course my family, Mom, Johnny-o & EVERYONE who is always interested & supportive of what I'm up to now & what my current project is.

I want to say a special "I appreciate you" to my loving Kai who is always there for me & reminds me that yes I'm crazy, and it is precisely because of that, that I am the amazing artist & woman I am.

I also want to thank Professor Haig Demarjian for his amazing prep-talks, anecdotes & references. He has been like the map-holder for this project. As I would get lost in my own creative output, he would steer me in the right direction. He has shown me that I am not alone in the endeavors of an artist, and that one should never, never, ever let the magic of creation fizzle away.

I also thank all those who have helped me make it through Salem State University, especially those amazing professors in the Geography Department. I couldn't have made a better higher education decision when I decided to come here. They have put up with me quite nicely.

PREFACE:

THE BERLINERS

NICHOLAS GILROY
SALEM STATE UNIVERSITY
STUDY ABROAD EXPERIENCE
SPRING 2013

A Journey Begins.

There is nothing like the feeling of wheels touching down in a foreign country. I don't speak the language, except for the five words I crammed into my skull from the German handbook that kept me entertained through the flight. I rattle them off one more time in my head: *hallo*, that one is easy it means hello, *danke* (thank you), *ja* (yes), *nein* (no), and the big one *auf wiedersehen* (good bye). Collecting my luggage is easy because upon exiting the aircraft I am herded with fellow passengers through the maze of the airport. Nothing is spoken and actions are instinctual. The chaos is yet to come; the whole meet and greet area where families and chauffeurs mingle. After passing through the emotional reuniting of families and friends I am unceremoniously cast out. Its as if the airport spits me out, an unwanted morsel. I'm on my own, well not truly. My companion in adventure is with me.

Erin picks up where I leave off and we exist in a seamless manner, traveling together feels so natural, a perfect adventuring duo. There is no sign plastered in bright colors telling us where to go except out. But out is such a big unknown, how do we get out and go to the right place, without any prearranged method of transport? Erin and I decided this time around to leave it to chance, to travel in the moment in the un-known in as fearless as a demeanor as we could muster. Our eyes scan and we both light up as we see a café. We are not the only ones as other passengers draw in like bees around a hive gathering and collecting food and coffee, a welcomed chance to acclimate.

Fresh squeezed juice and a croissant with ham and cheese is the ticket item. My stomach grumbles, I haven't eaten since 5:30 a.m. when Erin and I left the tiny village of Rocca Grimalda back in Italy. Nor did we find time to eat at the airport in Milan, since we ran from security check- point to the plane and boarded. The cheap European airlines that cost \$12 dollars to fly from Milan to Berlin doesn't include food, let alone a checked piece of baggage, but it is still worth it. Ok I digress, something in my stomach and a sense of normalcy returns; we got this. Well until I remember that I can't speak a lick of German, but still a smile is on my face remains

because that feeling of adventure is kicking in. Somehow, while traveling I feel more at home, than in any home I have ever lived in.

We find ourselves riding a sleek train from *Schönefeld* airport of into the city center of Berlin. We exit at the *Alexanderplatz* station and transfer one stop to *Senefelderplatz* station on the orange line. We are in a quaint neighborhood, an organic grocery store on one corner and a café with Berliners milling in and out on the other. We walk about one block and find our home for the next couple days, the East-Seven hostel.

I. INTRODUCTION

Who I am

I am an artist, and I believe that everyone in some way, takes the form of "creator" in their own lives. This simply means that I have no real way to define what separates me as an artist from any other person. I can only know my own feeling and story (or stories) as an artist, in the modern world. I can hope to reach back into history and find a warm tone, or a cool tone, or a particular smell or texture, but I can't know anything, truly, that I do not experience. I do know, for sure, that what I experience is translated onto paper, canvas, metal, wood, and fabric as art. It is woven and stroked with emotion, questions or feelings. I create simply because I truly have no other choice. I feel incomplete if I am not translating and evolving something via "art."

I am fascinated with the tiny little aspects of the world and the big unusable things, and everything in between. My art and crafts often reflect a fascination with the world around me, and the surroundings we live in.

By nature of the minds active role in the creation of the work itself, I cannot escape the fact that thought and subconscious ideas seep into the fabric of my work. The artist's art is the vessel taken toward transformation, as art and artist journey to the physical state. Art, as a physical embodiment, is then able to elicit emotion, sensation, memory and motivation from the viewer.

When I set out on this project, I visualized the outcome as an approach to marketing or branding. I would attempt to understand how to market myself as an

artist in the modern world. As I have continued to dive deeper into the belly of my artistic being, I find myself retreating from this goal into trying to explain the pure sense of myself.

This project has not been easy, it has been rewarding however. I have had the chance to share and analyze my work with others, and this has begun to expose themes throughout my work that I may not have noticed otherwise. I found myself moving between the roles of creator and biographer.

The difficulty isn't in the art, and isn't in the questions about the world, because those are always there, and will always be there. The idea here is to find pivotal moments in my work and to examine the main themes of my work, and to give examples of that. From there, I will explain the main themes and motivations. From there, explain how art fits into my life. This thesis will explore what being and artist means to me, and why we are compelled to create. By looking closely at the interconnections in themes in my work, I will attempt to develop a sort of map of who I am, why I create and what inspires me.

reaches into my paintings and drawings. Our travels create the maps on which we can imbed our own textures of experience.

TEXTURES: Texture can be both physical as well as idealized. Textures almost become the feeling we have when we visit a particular place. We can explain place as a certain energy or way of looking, but this combination of look and feel creates texture. Another piece of the idea of textures is that “place” implies a sense of time and history. A fabric, or a texture, implies this sense of time and history as well. There was a plant that grew, it was then harvested and then its fibers spun into thread. That thread became a woven cloth; much like the different people, establishments and events that create the threads in a place. Without these textures, there would be no need to travel as the sense of adventure would be lost.

ADVENTUROUS: Being adventurous is tied tightly to this project. Without a sense of adventure, or need to discover, we cannot know what other perspective we might gain. Without adventure, we cannot dream, or begin to think beyond our current experience. Without adventurousness there is little to life, and we will never feel a different texture between our fingers, or in our mind. The more texture we become accustomed to, the greater appreciation we have of others and the deep our sense of self.

HEART CENTERED: Being centered comes from feeling secure, grounded and valued. Being in touch with the heart of your being gives you a sense of truth and purpose. Being heart centered as an artist means that I feel and know that my creations are valued,

especially by myself, and by those I love. It means that I am actively creating and being authentic to my artistic needs.

AUTHENTICITY: Being authentic is the heart of being an artist. Being an artist means that we are seeking a truer sense of the subject in our work, and why we are dealing with that subject. Our art is always a true version of ourselves, a direct expression of our experiences and our perspectives in a visual form.

All of these concepts begin to form the map of my creative world, and put my work into context where other can relate.

III. PERSONAL STATEMENT

Geographically Approaching Travel

With a Bachelors degree in geography, it should be no surprise that I am fascinated and beguiled by the world around us. Our surroundings shape the experiences we have, the opportunities we embrace, and the actions we take in a profound way. The space in which we find ourselves can have an overall feeling, climate, culture, architecture and topography. All these aspects change our experience. It is because of these reasons that we not only actively experience our surroundings, but our surroundings actively impress upon our experiences.

I never wanted the typical college experience, and I don't think I have had one. I've road tripped, studied abroad, and started my own online shop. I've worked at three different cafés and acquired more family & friends than I am able to count. These

experiences are what build our perception of the world around us; our experiences in life are what create the stories we tell ourselves and how we view the world.

Traveling & Building Perspective

I have found that only by being outside the normal setting can I begin to gain a perspective of who I am, what I want and what that looks like. Travel is an integral part of being a modern human. Investigating the functions and experiences of being an artist has shown me how I interact with the world. I intend to analyze how, artistically, my personal experiences & creative modes of expression influence my body of work. These experiences are exclusive to my own experience, with a particular fascination with the importance of “place” in my work. As an interactive compilation, and a place outside of the context of physical space, I developed an artist’s website.

Journeys of Significance

Some of the most impacting experiences last for longer periods of time than a few weeks. Two of these experiences; a seven week cross country road trip and a five and a half month abroad experience have given me more newness and sense of direction than any other points in my life.

The trip I took across the country lasted for seven weeks, and my driving buddy, partner in crime, and steady boyfriend Nick spent the entire seven weeks with me. We only argued in Texas, right up to the New Mexico border, and then just started laughing. We made the trip no problem. Beyond having no issues, (except locking the keys in the car in Arizona while it was running-oops-) we learned more about each other, our desires in life, our creative styles, and driving preferences than we could ever recount. I

remember lots of moments vividly, and I especially remember on conversation we had about art and what it means to follow your dreams. We were both adamant that we should never let anything such as money get in the way of our artistic dreams. These moments create valuable connections in our brains; once we establish our connection to art, we can't rightly let it go without thinking twice.

Having returned from this experience about one week before my first semester of classes, I was ready for the ways this new collegiate perspective could guide me and show me my world; through study, research, and academia.

My second long-term journey was my first step outside the U.S.A. context and into my often sought after European world. From the time I was aware of what college even was, I was hooked on the idea of studying abroad. Study abroad, the glorious climax of the life of a University student, the last hurrah before setting foot into the "real world." I would finally get the chance to see the world, not just read about it or watch it on a screen! Experience other cultures, people, and places and see history beyond what schools would care to tell me in classes.

So, come the fall of 2012, I was filling papers, meeting with this person or that, connecting the dots, and playing introductory Italian language games. Come the time around my birthday, I would be flying over to Florence, Italy, the birthplace of renaissance art, and the heart of the European culture. Just stepping into the taxicab from the airport, I was immediately hit by Stendhal Syndrome; or also known as hyperkultureremia or Florence Syndrome.

The symptoms I experienced were some bouts of immoveable teary-eyed awe and heart palpitations while experiencing the streets and sights of Florence for the first time. This is not an uncommon experience. I took this instant input of inspiration and ran with it. This was the beginning of what has turned out to be the most influential time for me as an artist thus far in my life.

My time spent in Italy introduced me to so many of the masters' works that I became aware of the potential in human kind. I began to see the ability we each possess, and created some of my most significant work yet. Along with time spent traveling and finding hidden gems in Italy, I was able to travel to the mountains and cities of Poznan and Warsaw in Poland, Budapest in Hungary, Berlin in Germany and Paris in France.

In all of these places I would draw and record my experiences in journals and on a blog. I was the most creative I've been and was able to get a sense of who I am in the world. Or at least forget my ego in a sense and try to simply take in the world around me. Traveling gives us the ability to stop projecting onto our surroundings and to allow them to impress upon us. Taking the constant in-put of new information, and creating visual art and responses to it on paper.

With the dream of traveling abroad fulfilled, and back on American soil, which my father is happy about, I am ready to take on the world as a professional artist and cultural geographer. There is more art to create, more people to meet and a wider breadth of perspectives to admire. It also means it's about time for another epic adventure.

IV. TRAVELS & BLOGGING

Flash forward past the stories I love to tell of personal "importance" which end up no more important than the leaves blowing in the wind, and you'll find me in knee high leather boots, and a dark plaid, wide-collared wool coat, traipsing the cobbled streets, and experiencing the feeling of a fresh romance with the streets of Florence, Italy. Not only did Nick and I drive cross country together, we set up our study abroad experience together too. While we drove cross country, I kept a blog, so it felt only nature to do the same while in Europe.

The first day of our journey, I was instantly inspired and blown away by all of the art and culture around me. Not only was I shocked by the sites, but history and the scope of time started to really seep into my understanding of the world. The following what I wrote on the first day spent in Italy in our little apartment by the water.

Friday, January 18th, 2013 (Mom's B-day)

Il Primo Giorno della nostra Avventura

I feel inspired after seeing the artists out today, despite the cold. Although it was only about 50F. I did a quick sketch in my new sketch book from Christina of Nick on our street waiting for our keys!

This is absolutely amazing. I keep saying "I just died" and after a while I started thinking, "why am I so morbid?" But I think what I mean is that every moment here is like a piece of something is falling away, my eyes are more open, maybe all I mean is that I am in heaven? It's an overwhelming feeling of beauty, perfection, love of the beauty of life, like I am just highly aware of the immenseness of this opportunity and the beauty of this place. Every corner and structure, every person, everything is just beautiful. I think it might be the jet lag in some cases, I mean I was gawking at the drain pipes with little flur de lei's on them... but the patina is literally on everything.

Ok, ok, maybe not the fridge or the sink or pots and pans we

have, but it sure feels like this place has an antique feeling to it. I could drink it in. I can't wait for the spring to set in. It is supposed to be in the high 50's this week sometime.

I was thinking of how this place has more character than I've ever seen any city before. More beauty. I have never seen a city so beautiful.

Even in the first day of being in Florence I was beginning to shed some old perspectives and feeling the respect that art garners in that city. This in itself was inspiring, but in those first few days, it was difficult to try to sit and draw something, there was just too much to take in before trying to capture it on paper. The culture shock was such a great ride for me. There wasn't much that I didn't like to experience being different.

Everything we have to adjust to creates a stronger sense of who we are, and ability to see the more significant lessons to learn in life.

All through out my time spent in Europe I continued to learn and stay open and alert to anything new that would come my way. I remember telling Nick at one point that I had this sense that I was about to learn something, something big was about to reveal itself, but I just don't know what. Looking back on that sensation now, I feel as though that was the sense of being a true artist, feeling and believing that I am an artist, not just a crafter.

Near the end of our study abroad experience, I wrote a blog that really exemplifies the idea of how valuable travel is to our lives. I try my best to capture why I felt like the experience of study abroad was so valuable, and to share what little nuggets of value I could.

Sunday, June 23, 2013

HOW TO SPEND THE FINAL NIGHT OF A POWERFUL JOURNEY

A.K.A. How to Spend a Semester in the Most Beautiful Country, the Land of Bella Vita, and Not Leave Kicking and Screaming

“What a journey this has been. I can't imagine having missed out on the opportunity to come here, to spend a semester abroad. I have learned more than I ever could have gained any other way. There is something about traveling and seeing other culture, and different places that allows you to see that there is no one answer, and, frankly the answers don't really matter that much, its more about you and how you can manage to use all the answers possible to change yourself. No, not change yourself, thats not what I mean...

What I mean is, traveling opens doors to see things in ways you never thought possible, and this allows you to let go of your blinders and to expand your "box," the protecting walls that we like to build. Traveling means not only going past those walls, but hopefully dismantling them so when we return we don't step right back into the comfort zone.

I think it might feel a bit something like this traveling quote I found a while back to read and remind myself of the purpose of travel.

“Adventure is a path. Real adventure – self-determined, self-motivated, often risky – forces you to have firsthand encounters with the world. The world the way it is, not the way you imagine it.

Your body will collide with the earth and you will bear witness. In this way you will be compelled to grapple with the limitless kindness and bottomless cruelty of humankind – and perhaps realize that you yourself are capable of both. This will change you. Nothing will ever again be black-and-white.” [Mark Jenkins](#)

This is the concept which I was going to try to create a visual of in my final work for Watercolor class, but being so abstract made it difficult to articulate to my professor who wanted to discuss our ideas fist, so I went with the house, maybe you remember.

While traveling I've met more great people, ate such amazing

food, visited some new-to-me parts of the family, and tried our best to never be %100 lost, but never %100 percent found either. Traveling can be done with a map, you can drop a pin, and you can ask for directions, but I hope that every traveler is never truly %100 percent sure of where he is, because that would mean he isn't traveling anymore.

Perhaps, it might feel something like this:

“Traveling is a brutality. It forces you to trust strangers and to lose sight of all that familiar comfort of home and friends. You are constantly off balance. Nothing is yours except the essential things – air, sleep, dreams, the sea, the sky – all things tending towards the eternal or what we imagine of it.” – Cesare Pavese

But I think the real reality of travel is more like this:

“Wandering re-establishes the original harmony which once existed between man and the universe”.....Anatole France

Because that is really what it is, the chaos and the being off balance and the brutality isn't outside of ourselves, its ourselves and our outer shell trying to protect us perhaps, or falling away with a kind of struggle. But its a good thing. That is why when we miss the bus and even though another is coming in an hour, we cry. Or when we can't speak the language surrounding us and the big mean lady doesn't really care if you figure out how to get into the subway, you turn around and try again.

Something I feel that is very true and very important to remember is that we are always moving towards more opportunity, more change, more chance to travel. And, that it's all part of the greater journey. Because it's not about the destination, as cheesy as it sounds. It's the truth!

When Nick and I drove across the U.S.A, he gave me a card at the very first day of our drive, and it said "it's not about the destination, its about the journey." I think that is one of the most valuable lessons about LIFE that I have really truly learned, by trying to do that so many times now.

I wonder where the next journey will take us? What would you picture out this window? What is your dream journey?

“I soon realized that no journey carries one far unless, as it extends into the world around us, it goes an equal distance into the world within.” – Lillian Smith

See you in the good ol' U.S.A. on Wednesday peeps!

Ciao, Arrivaderchi, Buon Viaggio!
-Wren & Kai

Even beyond learning what I did from travel before leaving the study abroad experience, I continued to process my experiences while visiting with family in a small town in Northern Italy. I was spending time reading, hiking and painting, letting the months of newness soak into my artistic self, after months of new input. Near the beginning of our final bout of international travel, from Italy to Berlin, Germany and then to Poland, I read the book *Eat, Pray, Love* by *Elizabeth Gilbert* and loved the way she structured the written account of her journey. She also went on a power journey, and has already inspired many people through her book. Gilbert dedicates herself to herself through out the book, and that is exactly what any person hopes to do at any moment of life, and especially while traveling. I wrote this post just before going on that last journey.

Wednesday, May 29, 2013

See-Love-Learn

My version of Eat-Pray-Love

*I just finished reading this book, *Eat, Pray, Love* by Elizabeth Gilbert, and I really enjoyed it. I had the feeling that I should read this book probably three years ago around the time when it came out. But, I am really happy that I waited, because this was the moment to delight in it. Reading it after having lived in Italy for **almost 6 months** made this three-part memoir a way to take a look at what traveling like this can do for our souls. Powerful stuff.*

My experience won't be as easy to wrap into a nice handy novel, mostly because I'm not a novel writer, but I did buy a particular notebook, (100% recycled for only €3!) I have written a bit, but I am not sure if the voice will sound the same as when I am back in the states. I write when I am inspired to write, so, today you're getting the lucky experience, not my notebook!

The way Gilbert approaches her life is so honest and inspiring. She is funny, genuine, and significantly aware. Traveling through Italy and through India and Bali gave her such a unique growing opportunity designed specifically for her life. Of course, each of us have our own pathways.

*For me, my journey was based in Florence, and traveling from there. A clearly more of a student-style journey. But, the significance of traveling can't be ignored. The ability for humans to experience outside of our typical environment is so good for us. We need to see all the potential out there so we can better know what suits us and what we really **desire** not just what makes us comfortable...*

Here is my three word wrap up for now.... (because there is still more to come! A.k.a. Poznan, Poland to visit Dan, Pola and Felunchik [I can't spell in English, forgive me Russian speakers... :)] and Berlin, Germany-The city I originally wanted to study in this whole time. (Very excited for this upcoming trip! -June 10th! to keep y'all up to date!)

SEE:

*The seeing part of this trip for me one of the most beautiful and fertile elements. What I mean is, every where you turned there was a beautiful building, with a rich history and the potential to cause major lawsuits if you smudge it! Ok, its not that pristine here in Italy, but there is just SO MUCH BEAUTY. I remember writing a blog when we first arrived about the over saturation and the extreme reactions (*ahem... crying in Piazza's at the sheer beauty of it all... realizing my insignificant place in history...etc...).*

*But the **ART**, the **SIGHTS**, the **PEOPLE**, the **FOOD**, the **CHOCOLATE**, **PASTRIES**, **GELATO**, **PIZZA**... ok the last four were all food.... but that is what Italy is all about. The Bella Vita, il Dolce far niente, Bella Figura... all of these sayings are things Italians live whole heartedly every day. I don't know if I've ever seen an Italian, not close their eyes to enjoy the first bite of a*

meal before. I know that they know how to make something from nothing too! Pomodoro, Mozzarella, olio, and basilico? The most perfectly balanced dish anyone has ever made for the summer season. And pasta? Lets not bother going there, I'm still here and I'm nearly having withdrawal symptoms. How did seeing become food???

Oh, right, I'm in Italy.

LOVE:

Loving is truth.

I have learned more about loving. Loving who you're with, loving where you are, and loving every moment of your life with all your heart, simply because, its all so beautiful. If you can learn to keep your heart as warm as when summer sun kisses your face in the morning, that soft smile, every moment, then life's secret is yours to keep.

Italy gave me so much opportunity for me to love myself, and enjoy. Simply enjoy! I think that this is a characteristic of travel. By traveling we have only our own self to answer to and exploring our world causes us to explore ourselves too.

I found some amazing friends, a juice bar and a yoga studio in Florence. I found the perfect rose garden, SOY gelato that I didn't feel too guilty about, and I found a great little face reading nook. All of it. The perfect life. Simple. And the good news? This I can create for myself anywhere. The beauty of that is that I can enjoy any surroundings, and place, beach, mountain, highway, any place of my choosing, can become my personal temple and sanctuary. See? Traveling doesn't just open many doors, it removes the doors so we can see the whole sky.

LEARN:

And, learning.

I leaned so much.

I learned about myself.

I learned about Kai.

I learned about history, and art and places, and how to read train-station schedules.

I learned how to communicate in Italian. (I say communicate because I don't know if I'd say I can speak Italian, but I can communicate what I need well enough..)

I learned so much. And I am still learning. That is the beauty of it

all. I read a quote by Ghandi today that said "Learn as if you'll live forever."

I think not only did I learn, but I learned that we should do as Ghandi says.

When should we not do what Ghandi says???? :)

Love you all from the bottom of my heart.



Figure 1 Vineyard Overlook in Rocca Grimalda

V. CRAFTING & GAINING PERSPECTIVE

I had started a shop online and sold some of my work, but before I had traveled cross country I never felt the sensation of being a “real” artist. After spending such a long time in Europe and Florence, Italy, I feel that I am an artist, and can say so with confidence. One of my favorite quotes about life and how best to live it, comes from Dianna Vreeland, who was the editor for Harpers Bazaar for many years. She changed the face of fashion at the time and made creating a magazine an art form. Mrs. Vreeland said, in an interview that “The only life worth living is the one you know you want and you make it yourself.” (Vreeland, *The Eye Has To Travel*.)

We make ourselves, and the decisions we make craft our world. The surroundings we experience are not an accident; this is why nature is so satisfying to be immersed in. We didn’t have to make any decisions to create it; all we have to be in nature is ourselves; no pressures of decision-making.

Craft fairs have broadened the scope of viewership for my work. Selling at my first craft fair allowed me to see that people, whom I didn’t know, see value in my creations and exchange currency for them. This was such a rewarding experience. Giving a gift is an exchange which is satisfying in a different way, but selling work makes an artist feel like they are a part of capitalism and valued by that construct of society. Some, such as Lewis Hyde, author of *The Gift: Creativity and the Artist in the Modern World*, would argue that an object loses its cultural value and meaning once it enters the main stream. When we take them out of the traditional gift-giving scheme, we remove them from the exchange of more than just the object. We give a gift because of

the personal significance. The stories, the tradition, or the emotional support objects are imbued with. Selling on Etsy.com is a great platform, but I enjoyed the interactive and personal connections we are able to make when selling face to face. This is the part of being a crafter that sets you apart from others. It is one thing to create, but another to really know your craft and be able to share that with others.

Crafting allows us to create more of the things we have in our life, creating more by hand starts to add value back into life. We are our art because we create based on our experiences so the more we experience the more we can create. There is a danger of too much input from the world around us- hyper inspiration can create a bogged down feeling-too much to process makes for no creative output; being overwhelmed.

This is why traveling is so vital. Traveling allows us to reboot and remove all of the barriers; it is like pulling all the crap out of the sink drain, and making room for the fresh new clean water to flow down. This can be short term get-aways, these look like meditation and yoga and time spent in nature for me, but travel looks more like long term travel journeys, such as the 7 week road trip or the 6 month study abroad experience. The long term truly allows us to reexamine how we look at the world around us. If we are only away for a short while, we cling to our old habits and they become more apparent in the stark contrast and we might try to protect them, cling to them for comfort. As we acclimate to a different culture around us, we are then able to shed the old habits and learn to create something new. This is when we recharge our creative output.

I am also always looking through thrift stores, searching for supplies, wool sweaters and fuzzy blankets, collecting items to create the tangible world around me. Looking for potential. Searching for the transformable upcycling projects. I am always searching for the piece of clothing that is unlike anything I've seen before, the skein of yarn that I instantly can feel slipping to my fingers as I crochet, the objects I make have a new take on the experience in a particular place, making themselves useful now. This is the taking of threads from one place and time to another, becoming something different.

This is the process of art. Taking pieces of life experiences, create something visually different, often texturally different and conceptually altered to form some new experience. Creating to define the world around me as something new and different something that cannot be put into the boundaries of any place, but are firmly rooted there. Like tying a balloon to a bench, something that wants to fly, and with the help of adept fingers, it can be untied. Being able to see the potential in a place, in an experience. We shape the world with our own eyes, yet it all matters what we do with the experiences we acquire. It is all about our perspective, or how we see the world around us.

The other important part of the creation of art is the feeling of being a part of a community. Being part of the social network that surrounds us is more than something anyone can experience in a two-week travel experience. We can stay at hostels, and meet new people and see art museums, but we can't begin to delve into the culture around us if we are only meeting other people on the same quest. And when we travel, we want to

feel a part of the local culture somewhat, but we often can't quite feel right at home because of the nature of our "outsider" identity. We are prone to look a little different, certainly speak differently, and dress differently. Our eating habits will vary greatly, and our body language and way of communicating will seem foreign-and that's exactly because they are. We need to feel different to become comfortable in our own skin. It is easy to hide in an environment where we know what to expect. We can find ways to blend in without looking like we're struggling, or feeling like the strangest person in the world. All we have to do is keep our mouths mostly shut, and look like everyone would expect us to. This is why traveling is so fresh and novel. We are different, and it is how it should be. We can choose to shed this sense of "normal" because it's all relative to the experience, or we can accentuate the differences and create a more clearly defined version of the way we are.

This is why it is so fresh to create when we are in the space like this. Once we have the chance to shed the stories and the shell we have created around ourselves, we can begin to create straight from the heart of ourselves.

VI. WEBSITE-PROCESS & TECHNICAL CREATION OF THIS PROJECT

Throughout this process of reexamining my creative life, I have been able to learn many technical skills. I am not new to creating a blog, but to build a website with a program such as weebly gave me more freedom to create a look which fit my personal style, and which fit the artwork more seamlessly. I had never had to scan large work before, and I am still new to Photoshop. Beyond the creation of the artwork itself, artists should have a way to catalog their work.

Scanning and processing all the pages of my work gave me the unique ability to look back through my work and not just flip through. It gave me the ability to really look critically at my work again, and to assess all I had learned. Watercolor skills I've developed and experiences I had throughout the trip that were captured in my art. Most of the times when I would stop and draw became the moments that are most vivid in my memory. Through drawing, I literally enhanced my experience and my ability to recall that experience. The way that drawing is processed through an artists mind is different than facts heard on a tour.

Once all of the images were scanned and in the computer, I processed them through Photoshop, saving them in three different formats, for easy sharing and usage. I learned never to put an image online which is more than 72dpi, or pixels per square inch because that's as good as its going to get anyway, and any higher dpi only creates more loading time.

Setting up the website was also a breath of fresh air; away from technical saving and file changing, and back into a creative mode. I was able to categorize my work,

highlight the pieces I like best and show the images that best represent my time spent away. The site I used, Weebly.com, was flexible enough to allow me to express myself without compromising the work to the technological interface. This site has created a personal geography of my work.

This website will allow me to add as I grow and create more work as well. Even now, I have a series of Mono prints which will make their way into the portfolio on my website.

Every artist should have something to easily share and showcase his or her work. A website bridges our fast passed world with taking the time to really examine the careful work done by an artist. By creating this site, I have been able to find central themes in my work, the significance of my major inspirations, and how I can best share my work with others. As an artist, there is nothing greater than learning to savor the journey. As we do so we can continue to grow, expand our awareness of the world around us and with this expansion, keep creating more art.

RESOURCES

The blog which I kept while in Florence, Italy can be found at:

<http://erinandnickinflorence.blogspot.com>

The website which was created for this project can be found at:

Erinburkeart.weebly.com