

About Inside: A drawing exercise

By: Robyn A. Frank

A note

This piece was created in response to the COVID-19 pandemic in so far as I typically do not create interactive pieces of performance-art-writing. Katie, Trapdoor's curator, and I felt it important to prod at different opportunities to re-imagine the planned work for **About Inside**. While I hope those who seek opportunities for participation and activity enjoy this piece, I do not offer it in a spirit of productivity or normalcy -- not another suggestion of something for you to "do." Rather, I offer it as an invitation to reimagine the permeability of our boundaries-of-self that this moment (more than most) has stirred. This audio recording of this exercise has been created as well. You may elect to **just** listen — and I say **just** to single out the activity of listening, rather than to minimize it — which I believe to be an equally valid means of participating in this piece as well as in life generally.

Introduction

This is a guided exercise in place-making or place-seeking, a mutual activity of authorship for your present presence. It is an activity divested from correctness. While the flow includes steps and instructions, there is no correct answer, no outcome that is better or best. Here, we will simply be.

Materials:

8.5" x 11" sheet of paper/ material to write upon

Pen/ item to write with

Desk or a place to push on while you write

Chair or a place to sit while you push on what you write on

Window, or generally sitting facing an opening that offers long distance vision

Getting started

Begin with an 8.5" x 11" sheet of paper. Or any material you'd like. Because the world favors standardization and its related sense of order, so too we find comfort in it and accept its value as supreme. As such, this option has been suggested for you. In addition to your paper or material, you'll need a writing implement. I prefer a Uni Ball Vision Elite rollerball pen in black with a point size of .8mm. But, any writing implement will do. You'll also need a place to place your paper or material upon, such a desk. Ideally this desk or surface faces a window so that you can observe whatever is outside of it and thus align conversely with being "inside." Please sit comfortably in a chair that supports your back. Relax your legs so that your knees are at an obtuse angle (greater than 90°) and your feet loosely, but mostly, on the ground.

Lets begin

Please regard your paper/ material. Think about its orientation. I like to orient my rectangles in a "portrait" fashion. Where the long side is up and down, and the short side is top and bottom. I make pictures of places but they are portraits of places, and so you get the most of what is above and below the horizon this way. I think of this as an expression of inherent duality that is all things (white with black, up with down, good with bad).

So maybe your material is oriented in a portrait fashion. You decide, but do decide.

Now, let's imagine your paper or material *is* a place. Does it have a name? What if the confines of its edges were the borders of this place? Or its edges, your field of vision? What feeling can you articulate of this field, place-non-place? Articulate this feeling aloud now. We will pause as you do.

Next, we will draw a horizontal line. Draw this line wherever it is you feel the "top" and the "bottom" of your place meet — your horizon. You may consider it the line at which a surface and a sky appear to meet, or you may consider it the perceived boundaries of emotional experience, or capability. As you draw the line, starting from one side of the paper, say aloud, "***I do not know.***" Pick up your writing utensil and replace

from where it was just lifted. Return the line, drawing back to the other side of the page and say **“Do not know I.”**

This is where we stand. It is where we always stand, though we work tirelessly to “know.” And sometimes, big moments force us to see there is nothing to know. But chatter on our mind goes, filling in blanks to soothe itself.

Examining the area now residing *below* your horizon, imagine a place within your place, that is unseen. What feeling is in your unseen place? What is its contents? Its motivation? Desires? Within your space residing-below-your-horizon, imagine a wavy line. The wavy line can be tight or loose, long or short. Maybe there are multiple lines. Breathe in, conjure the corners of this unseen place, and all its feeling, and draw your line(s). As you do, say aloud, **“Within possibility.”**

Turn your attention above the horizon. Here, we will prepare to create a circle. A circle is a nice reflection of how our selves have no beginning and no end and forever becoming. I do not remember being born and I will not remember dying, so here I am, an assemblage of thoughts and ideas, perceptions and experiences that I tidy together in a linear fashion — peppered with the inflection of other narratives that are not my own. And though this assemblage of thoughts are really spots of mish and mosh that are re-member-ed every time a rationalization or prediction — a sense of order — is needed, it is ever changing. Always becoming. For that, we must not think of our self as something separate, or faithless - oh quite the opposite. Imagine your circle above the horizon. What size is your circle? Is it far above the horizon? Touching it? Imagine where and what size it will be. Breathing in, prepare to draw your circle with aspiration, with honesty, and actualization. With a sense of purpose that defies perception of good or bad, worthy or unworthy, but simply *is*. As you draw your circle (maybe you go round and round a few times), say aloud, **“Becoming is growing. Growing is becoming.”**

As you lift your writing implement, from the edge of your circle, place it gently on your writing surface.

Raise your chin and look forward. Find a spot that is the farthest you can see. Now, breathe.

Lowering your chin to look back at your place. Regard it. Has the feeling of your place changed? Is it the same? Articulate this feeling aloud. And, breathe.

Conclusion

If you'd like to share your drawings with us, we'll be reposting participants' work throughout the exhibition. Send them to us on instagram. You can find handles in the exhibition notes. @_trpdr_ or @robinafrank or post them on instagram and tag trapdoor projects and robinafrank. Thank you for listening. Thank you for being you.