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The Long Goodbye

Sidney Meret Williams
Bard College, sw1279@bard.edu

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Sidney Williams

The Long Goodbye

Sidney Williams gets bad stomach aches.
She aches and she aches.
She aches to the sound of electronic harps in the morning.
She aches in the absence of sunlight.
She even aches while she rests on a body of coils.
But, in the mean time,
she might as well do something about it.
So,
she uses her hands to contort and spread and scrape things.
It momentarily distracts her from the aching
but not always.
So she spreads particles of pigment floating in oil over knotted cotton.
She pinches pulverized mineral blocks into something that might not carry its own weight.
She makes paintings and photos and ceramics
and forces them to sit together on a bench,
whether they like it or not.
They don't have a choice otherwise,
because they are inanimate, of course.
But, for the moment, they are given life by her acknowledgment of them;
acknowledgement of their displacement.
Her paintings and photos and ceramics embody themes which don't necessarily enjoy the presence of
each other.
They coexist in tension.
She might have an urge to bring them home—
broken or whole.
But their home hasn't yet realized the missing has gone missing.
And day by day the missing and the missed memories of each other corrode,
until the other is only a nagging feeling,
usually mistaken as a stomach ache.

What happens when two strangers sit on a bench? Descending from different origins but arriving at a single point. They are accumulations of memories, experiences, DNA sequences, all of which are a mystery to the other. What decisions did each stranger have to make to end up side by side at this moment in time? Two strangers separated only by the reaching fibers of their pants. Maybe one is repelled by the other, hoping to hide the sweat building around their temples as they press away with all their might into the armrests bounding them together. Electricity builds up, repelling and pulling simultaneously. Hairs stand on end.

I am interested in how the physical boundary of art relates to the boundary of the body, whether it be the edge of a canvas or the tip of a finger, the corner of a photo or a curl of the lips. My paintings are bound by the edge of the canvas, and they know it. I am bound by my body and mind, though I can extend myself beyond my definitive confines through the act of making. What do I chose to communicate with the resources I have? What are my own intentions?

Making art is a venue for me to communicate a feeling, a thought, an experience. It is a way to expel energy. I paint and draw and sculpt characters, blobs, and positions of form and color. I begin working without an image in mind. One line influences the trajectory of the next, and so on, until I find a form I want to develop, enhance, or erase. I look for new forms in preexisting ones. I contort lines into an abstract forms as well as figurative forms. Eventually, the abstract forms and the figurative forms begin to merge. We look like the blobs and the blobs looks like us. I try to paint from the gut, allowing intuition and improvisation to lead me until rational thoughts throw their two cents in. I am having a conversation with paint, as well as a conversation with a previous decision. Some conversations are bitter and some are sweet. In the process, I am simultaneously learning about the material itself and how it responds to what I am telling it to do. My intention and the material react to one another. I react to my past reactions. Two strangers sitting on a bench. Do they speak?





