

Cheselyn Amato
Artist's Statement
September 2, 2019

I am an interdisciplinary visual artist, spoken text & sound performer, and space/place designer and maker working across the disciplines - 2D, 3D and 4D - with an emphasis on enacting contexts the experience of sublimity, awe, wonder and delight. These visual circumstances are activated via the orchestration of visual props and cues as well as sound and colored light phenomena along with interdisciplinary performance. My work reflects and chronicles my lifelong spiritual, aesthetic and humanitarian journey. I have been teaching art students for decades and have recently added spiritual care and bereavement counseling to my toolkit as light worker and doula for personal, social, societal and global transformation and for the triumph of justice, love, beauty and abundance.

Everything I make is designed as a trigger or context for the experience of enchantment, wonderment, awe, and delight in the face of ever-present uncertainty. And, I work across dimensions with whatever media – including drawing, painting, collage, montage, photographic and digital media, sculpture, installation, sound, performance, video and other visual effects – that can most strongly hold and carry my intentions as I go along. I work in an interdisciplinary mode in order to envisage this poetics of spirit, mind, heart and body. I feel compelled to use whatever media and methods necessary to activate the experience of awe and immanence. I am celebrating the power of positive thinking and feeling, and offering an invitation to active commitment to discerning and reaching for each our own fullest human potential. Everything that we really need is always with us!

Big questions and every tiny sensation are of equal interest to me. I love contemplating what we, human beings, are, and I love experiencing infinitesimally subtle shifts in thought, feeling, perception, and action, and in color, pattern, arrangement, possibility, and significance. I am committed to beauty that is revealing, that both transports and grounds at the same time, exacerbating the sense of living forces. I am interested in the exacerbation of the sense of living forces and I use material, method and form as tools to explore and amplify the qualities of immediacy and authenticity. Any material, gesture, action or appearance can become imbued with significance depending on intention. Beauty is a certain kind of calling to attention, an invitation to meet sublimity face to face. The kind of beauty that interests me is that which honors experience itself with emphasis on sensation, vitality, invention, re-invention and awe. I make work as a tool to encourage and generate thoughts, feelings and actions that honor the most expansive in us, our capacity for love, generosity, and humility.

My work is both process and product. I must work, labor my way toward the values I hold each and every time. The work is a means to understanding and fulfilling the opportunity we receive as human beings. When I arrive at the height that I may, then the work has also arrived. The processes of making emerge out of the need and desire to find pace, like breathing, like the surf. The combination of effort, labor, repetition, idea, image, and passion seem to lead to the experiences of liberation, freedom, beauty, love, compassion, recognition, revelation and action.

I am interested in sublimity, awe and delight particularly as these qualities appear and present in the most ordinary moments and materials, and often accidentally or incidentally. Generally poised and ready to experience marvelous visual events whenever and wherever, I am not per se dedicated to any one medium, but rather to whatever medium serves in some sense as a carrier of unexpected wonder and

surprise. Upon opening up the box top of cardboard packaging glued for the sake of utility, unpredictable and wondrous shapes of glue residue and torn paper come into being. How captivating is the moving image captured on a wall of light streaming through oscillating foliage or the marvelous spectacle of reflected and projected effects of light-activated color radiant film, a wild and delighting spectral extravaganza.

I have been saving all the 8 ½” x 11” sheets of paper that I have generated since my earliest school days as well as all that have come across my path. And, I have been transforming them into manna, food from “heaven,” namely, that which sustains, on a daily basis ever since. I have also been saving product packaging including printed and die-cut cardboard, rigid plastic and other materials. All of this detritus becomes a document, evidence, vestige of life lived every day in real time and real space. In some way, the existence of existence is made all the more poignant, and oh how awesome life is – every single instance and every single tiny remnant does say so.

My installations are intended as safe and inviting multi-sense inter-sensual places built as ingathering, inclusive spaces for healing, sharing, and delighting, and for ah ha moments of self-awareness and awareness of others. These circumstances are designed as incubators for problem solving and the development of action plans as well as to inspire, foster and enable intersectional and counter-oppressive education and practice. My goal is to create contexts that inspire and instigate both contemplation and action. My work is an invitation to pay attention for the marvelous, wondrous and positive possibilities in all that is, including in the tiniest bit of discarded material.

It is the degree to which any one of us delves into our identifiers – who we are – that attracts us to our sources and resources. In my case, some of the defining identity factors include being a world citizen, a woman, a mother, a wife, a daughter, a sister, a friend, a colleague, a Jewish girl from NJ whose city of origin is NY. Grounded in Kabbalah, the Jewish mystical tradition, I also deeply appreciate global spiritual traditions. I am in continuous, active engagement to discern tools for positive transformation and change. I am moved by the fact that we are at once free and determined. There is a beautiful, and at times terrible, conundrum in simply being born into this world...at any given time and place and under whatever conditions. It is a mystery coming into being – into existence – that has and continues to compel my attention both as a person and as an artist.

In holding the deepest respect and affection for the delicate and vulnerable dynamic between individual identity and experience and the many different social constellations that we are part of – from the most expansive identity as human beings to community membership as citizens in countries, states, cities, towns, and families for example – I give myself permission to travel as deeply as I will into what and who I am both to know myself which I believe serves both the meaning and quality of my own life, but also makes me a more capable social being.

I make art to live and live ever more deeply my own life, to make myself available to myself and to others, to celebrate that we may do so, and to acknowledge, celebrate and finally advocate for that attitude and desire in anyone else as well. I think it goes like this: If I can know and be myself, then I can appreciate and support the same for others.

I wish for each and every soul the greatest opportunity that may be so to live forward with zest toward wholeness!