

Becoming as practice as performance as Becoming: I am the orange, and You Can, Too.

It's like I can't unsee it. You find meaning in what you assign meaning to. This, I suppose, is the exercise of art.

In some past, an orange was just a citrus fruit that I'd eat sometimes. Somehow, through some accumulation of decisions and acts, an orange now is not, and never has been, simply a citrus fruit. Now and forever, the orange is some container, a sign in dissolving the boundaries of time and space, to see beyond the veil of this plane of existence, some fissure collapsing past, present, future.

There are approximately 1,200 steps from her door to my door, depending on length of stride. There are approximately 120 to 200 breaths in between her door and mine. I am feeling into each on the exhale. In between her and me, now there are approximately twenty-five oranges, two rotting and one half-consumed lemon, and a *greatfoot*, at this moment, a moment now already passed. The oranges, et al, already transforming, will continue: whether they are consumed by birds or humans or rot: some matter of Becoming.

I do not know which will be run over by cars, redistributed by nocturnal critters, or consumed by *humams*, peels discarded to be slowly worn into the pavement. I do not know which others still might sit patiently waiting, day by day slowly disintegrating, until they succumb to the elements. I do know that each

of them will transform, after I shared some present moment with them, marking them and releasing them intentionally into the world. Each will Become something wholly still themselves yet entirely new.

This method of marking time and space is an effort in understanding: what is, was, yet will never be, what could be, what is but *not yet* or could be but *can't now* — past present future all held in an open palm and wrapped up in a peel placed on the sidewalk or under a mattress or in a chain-link fence or the hand of a person in need. This is a moment fleeting.

I exhale, one of the approximately 150 breaths in this well-worn trail I've traveled back and forth, of some thousands of exhales. On this exhale, I'm imagining the tin can telephone drawing me to her that we dreamed up together the morning after the first night I'd stayed with her. That night I'd ask, "Are you into cuddling?" She'd tease me, "No." I held her. We didn't kiss (what could be/what is but *not yet/could be but can't now*), but I told her I lived just a few blocks down, and we made our plans for that tin can telephone (what *can't now/not yet*).

Now I can't unsee it: a thread marking time and distance (a *not yet, not yet, not yet*). We could measure this impossible distance in strategically placed oranges, or time in how many "I love you's" I failed to utter or

how many cigarettes I've wanted to smoke this week. I'm learning the pleasure in a want left unfulfilled. I'm learning to measure distance and time as a heartbeat. How far is she from hearing mine now? How many times will it beat before I get the words out, too stuck to my tongue: I love You. In time, like my hands still sticky from the *greatfoot*, and the scent lingering in my lungs. How long can I hold on to the taste? How long will it sting in the breaks in my skin? I wonder how her lip is healing or already healed? If the *greatfoot* burns or stings in a painful or pleasant way, or a bit of both?

I'm having difficulty understanding this construct of time. How long does it take for a gap to close? For insurmountable distance to Become closeness once again? I am holding a Future in my heart to heal the Present and the Past.

I cut open fruit and let the acid drip into me. I hold it to my face and walk the block to breathe in the scent. Let it sting. I'm feeling into it. I love You.

You can't unsee it. An orange on the other side of the fence I pass everyday now on my way to work, marked *#transformationalorangesculpture*. It waits patiently. What I can see and can't see simultaneously: the orange transforming its insides to Become a goo held in a container.

We heal in relationship to ourselves, others, and the world. Like the fruits marking this distance of *could be/not yet/can't now* between two bodies and infinite worlds, I am transforming in unexpected ways.

"The self is also a creation, the principal work of your life, the crafting of which makes everyone an artist. This unfinished work of becoming ends only when you do, if then, and the consequences live on. We make ourselves and in so doing are the gods of the small universe of self and the large world of repercussions."

— Rebecca Solnit, *The Faraway Nearby*

I believe in Grand Transformations. I believe everyone can hold an orange in their belly and Become. This artistic practice is a sculptural process in Becoming: transformations of matter/transformations that matter, the ongoing, unfolding practice of creating self in collaboration with everyone else making themselves to create worlds and possible Futures. This is a practice of making art/objects in a process of evolution of self: what does it mean to make yourself?

A small split in the peel festers and gives way to mold, then rot. If I peel open before the wound festers, I can consume the pulpy gooey insides, to Become something new. To peel open entirely and consume offers new possibilities in Becoming. I am breathing in the Potential.

Healing, after all, is not about Becoming whole, or arriving at any destination of completeness. It is to see the possibility of a Future and embody that in the Present. It is an ever unfolding, nonlinear process. I am the orange smashed into the sidewalk, run over in the parking lot, squished under a mattress in the trash, waiting patiently to succumb to rot on the other side of the chain-link fence. I am the orange digested to Become forever part of a stranger who found me somewhere between here, the Past, and some Future. I am the orange discarded, to slowly dig down, bury myself, and sprout something new: some impossible fruits.

I am the orange transforming, healing, in the simultaneous holding of broken and whole, Future and Past Selves contained in a peel: as Adrienne Maree Brown states, "Healing behavior, to look at something so broken and see the possibility and wholeness in it" (*Emergent Strategy*).

Hello my name is Liz.

To ask yet again, If I change my name, what is your name?

Hello my name is Liz Clay.

Hello my name is Liz Clay Tide.

Hello my name is Liz Clay Tide Cloud.

Hello my name is Liz Clay Tide Cloud

— I don't know what my name is anymore.

Love, what are you Becoming?

Transformations aren't cheap. I'm digging, with dirt-caked hands. I'm gnawing hungrily at my Past in process to some Future. I can be gentle with myself in process. Desire, after all, comes from a position of lack. I am an orange in love with possibility, living for the horizon. An orange in segments is no less an orange. This practice of utopian embodiment is "a way of insisting that, even if we can't get it now, we can get it, in some other way at some other point in time" (Jan Verwoert, "Exhaustion and Exuberance").

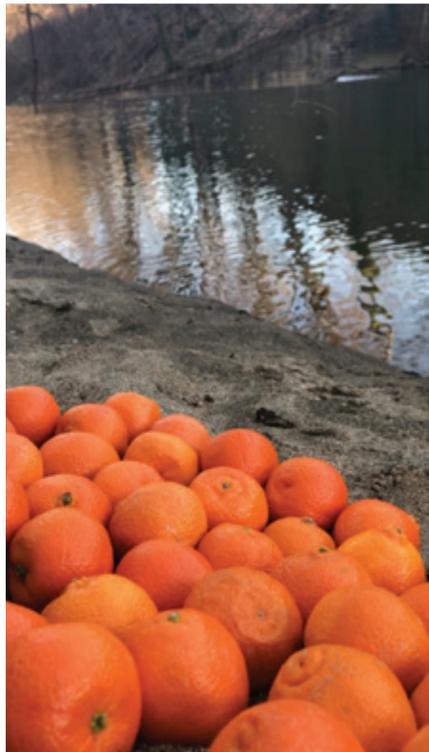
I'm staring into my eyes in the mirror, seeing all iterations of self contained in this body. Every version is here in these eyes, in this skin. Each past self and each self to come, here in this present, to love each and every one generously.

I am always a work-in-progress. But also I'm exhausted. My heart pounding in my chest. May this crack the surface of what has kept you in isolation.

I can't now, but I will.

I am the orange, and You Can, Too.

Can't unsee it.



Liz Clayton Scofield, *#transformationalorangesculpture*, 2019. Images courtesy of the artist.

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