

Chaos Theory: In Search of Balance (2006) Artist Statement:

This work illustrates an autobiographical journey of thought and growth. The spark of inspiration came from watching a dear friend, French Clements's original choreography set on a group of students from Simon's Rock College in Great Barrington, Massachusetts on December 3, 2005. It was a three movement piece entitled *A Guide for the Perplexed*. In discussion with him afterward about my reactions, I expressed my impression that it was about trying to find a balance between being a kid—not letting go of childhood, while trying to figure out and prove one's self as a competent, legitimate adult. This was a journey he and I were both in the middle of at the time, each having individual experiences, and supporting each other along the way. French's reaction was of gratitude and pleased agreement for giving him insight into his piece in a way he hadn't thought of before. Upon further reflection, I began to become more conscious of my own journey with this struggle for balance and answers, wallow and itch in the unknown, and explore through the eyes of an artist who I am and who I was becoming.

With these thoughts, in my mind I decided to create a painting using mixed media. I didn't know what it would look like, but I knew it would be abstract and consist of many found objects. Another reaction I had to French's piece was that I wanted to watch it again. It was beautiful, striking, whimsical, and serious and there was so much happening on stage at once I felt overwhelmed. I realized that this is often my reaction to life, especially when I am in a new situation: a strong desire not to miss any detail. I wanted to recreate that same uncomfortable curiosity in reaction to my piece.

I began by doing research. I was intrigued by the title that French chose and asked him for the source his inspiration. Learning it was the text of a philosopher I had never heard of; I sought the original and took notes. From that text I discovered some intriguing language and was interested specifically in the concept of the inevitability of change and the many human reactions to it.

This inspired me to revisit contemporary social theory, specifically Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus*. I wanted to be able to stay in a space of deconstructing what I was constructing, turning everything upside down and inside out. Deleuze and Guattari write about strata—layers to describe society. They also use a rhizome to illustrate the theory that everything is connected to everything else and must be so. I liked grappling with the concept of ordered chaos and how to represent that visually. I wanted to represent elements of a "social machine" that "sorts and labels" everyone in society and how this concept is connected with personal identity. I also played with the socio-theoretical concept of Baudrillard's image and copy from *Simulacra and Simulation* while exploring the question: "What is real?"

I started thinking about balance. In the balance between childhood and adulthood, I wanted to represent both and the sometime tug-o-war that they played. Balance became a central theme not to necessarily achieve, but to strive for as change and balance are in constant duet. I also wanted to explore the being in-between of childhood and adulthood. What does each mean? What do I want it to mean? What parts of each do I like and what parts do I not like? I delved into old journal entries and other drawings and musings I recorded over my adolescence and departure from it. I was fascinated with process and wanted to make sure that not only the emphasis was put on the process, but that the finished piece represented the process.

All the while, keeping my themes and questions in mind, I was collecting things: found objects, words, phrases, notes, experiences, doodles, sketches and other visual representations. I did not begin to create the work until the project was ripe (October of 2006). I worked on it for a few days and soon reached a sticking point. I had a strong desire to finish it, but knew if I forced it that I would never be satisfied, so I put it away. At this point I wrote: "There are so many things that I see which all connect and overlap. The potential is amazingly strong, but looking with the outsider's eye, everything is disjointed, chaotic and random. How do I communicate with subtle elegance and messy truth that everything is really all connected?"

On December 3, 2006 my grandmother passed away. She was an artist and I was very close to her. A few days after the news, I felt compelled to work on my painting as I grieved. In reflecting on who she was as a person, who I am in relation to her and my artistic journey over the last year, I found some answers to the questions I struggled with about balance in life and seeing order in chaos. I believe that she found this balance and lived her life with humor and grace. I attribute the inspiration for the completion of my painting to her and know her artistic spirit guided me to finish the work.

As I look back, I feel that I have achieved exactly what I set out to portray in my painting. The themes are there, the balance is constantly shifting, my personality and my autobiography are layered in with all the questions I had while creating it and some of the answers too. I feel that it is a piece about life, not just my life. I enjoy showing it to people because I feel they can connect with it in their own personal way. It is a guide for the perplexed, but whether it answers the questions one might ask, isn't important.