HONORABLE MENTIONS

VOL. 1: FEBRUARY 2013

“Anyone who has never made a mistake has never tried anything new.”

-Albert Einstein
Eighty Things No One Told Me about Writing and Producing My Own Play

1. No one knows your artistic vision but you.
2. Lines will be misunderstood and misinterpreted.
3. Don’t compromise your ideas for the ease of interpretation.
4. It’s never perfect. Stop trying to make it perfect. Perfection is an unattainable ideal.
5. Choosing a title is hard. Don’t ask for suggestions from the cast and crew.
6. You’ll go through cycles of loving and hating your work. Sometimes, you’ll really want to throw everything you’ve ever written into a fire and never write again. Resist this impulse.
7. You have to find a writing process that works for you.
8. Structure is key.
9. There will be more rewrites and changes then you would have thought humanly possible.
10. Don’t be afraid to write poorly.
11. There’s nothing as scary as handing your new work to someone to read. They could read it in an hour, and be done with it, and tell you they hated it.
12. There will always be more time spend thinking and mulling over an idea than actually writing it.
13. Your characters become very close to you. You will know them better than anyone else.
14. Don’t get too attached to your characters. You must make them work for the attention and love of the audience. You have to kill your darlings.
15. It will be hard and frustrating.
16. When you ask for advice, no one will have the right answer for you.
17. That aside, talking through an idea helps.
18. Respect the people you live with. In my case, they were usually the ones who sat there and nodded encouragingly while I talked through an idea.
19. Start with a rough outline when you begin. That way, you don’t spend the majority of your writing process wondering how the hell you are going to tie all this together.
20. With that said, don’t feel bound to your outline.
21. Always bear in mind the technical and physical limitations of your script. Don’t write a ridiculous amount of scene changes or characters. Understand that the likelihood of your script being produced is dependent on the ease of production.

22. Just because you think it is funny, doesn’t mean it is.

23. Just because you think it is important and deep, doesn’t mean it is.

24. Just because you love it, it doesn’t mean anyone else will.

25. Don’t get too attached. Know that a good script is a lean script.

26. Respect your audience and their time.

27. Don’t waste time with philosophical debates or long monologues.

28. People don’t come to theatre to be lectured. In college, they get enough of that in the classroom. They come to be entertained — Remember that.

29. Sometimes what seems brilliant in the middle of the night is not nearly as amazing in the harsh brightness of day.

30. There’s an incredible amount of adaptation that goes on between a script being read aloud and it being performed on stage. Having the words “on their feet” is a completely different feeling than simply reading at the table.

31. Some days you will hate your words. Make sure the actors know that this is not their fault; you gave them the wrong words in the first place. Be timely in your rewrites.

32. Language is a vast and complex thing. For instance, the phrase “you are not a child” can be said in 3 different ways. “You aren’t a child”, “You’re not a child” and “You are not a child.” Don’t get too lost in the language.

33. Producing your own show is a giant leap from simply being the playwright. There is a lot more to the job than I had assumed. Don’t underestimate the amount of work involved in producing your own show.

34. Sometimes things seem like a great idea. Then, about halfway through them, you realize that it was actually a terrible idea. Planning a show right after a major holiday and before finals was a prime example of this.

35. Keep a to-do list at all times. Being a detail-oriented person is a key point of this job. If you don’t, things WILL slip through the cracks. Maybe something small, like forgetting to call someone back, but it could be something big. Your brain is not big enough to keep track of
everything; trying to keep all of this in your head is impossible. Lists help and will save your sanity.

36. Time management is important. Learn how to make schedules and more importantly, how to stick to them.

37. Scheduling around different productions is a huge hassle. We were working around the schedules of five different shows. Not to mention dealing with auditions and callbacks for next semester. It ended up requiring a lot of creative planning and late nights.

38. Ask people to work on your production who you like and whose company you enjoy. You will spend more time imaginable with them, working with them, conferring with them. If you are friends, that makes the process so much more enjoyable for everyone involved. This saved us and the show several times.

39. Respect the time in rehearsal. Everyone has better things to be doing with their time. Know that.

40. The stage manager is one of the most important people in the production. They are the delegates not only between the producer and director, but also between the actors and the crew. A good one can make or break your production.

41. Always be polite and ask nicely.

42. Bribes work. Pretty much any college kid can be convinced to help if bribed with food.

43. Find a director who likes your script. More than that, find one that understands your artistic intent. Nothing is more rewarding than having the director understand the motivation and impulse behind what you have written.

44. You will do it all. Baker, accountant, shopper, choreographer, musician, set dresser, furniture mover...the list goes on and on.

45. With that said, understand the beauty of delegation. People are there to help you for a reason.

46. Trust other people to do their jobs. You trusted them enough to ask them to work with you, trust them to do what you have asked them to do.

47. Know you don’t know how to do everything and you aren’t supposed to. Don’t try to do things you don’t know how to do. Admit your limitations and know your strengths.

48. I have absolutely no idea how to direct a show, light a stage, design a costume or how to play piano.
49. Everyone will have to do jobs that they are not accustomed to doing. Actors helping move furniture, stage managers running the sound board while calling the show, painting a stage after rehearsal. Find people to work with who will not pitch a fit about things such as this.

50. Always be pleasant to work with. No one wants to work with someone who is stressed out and takes it out on the other members of the production. Smile. Thank people often.

51. Don’t forget the simple fact that everyone here is doing this for free. There is no academic credit, no paid incentive and no contract tying them to this. Everyone is doing this because they want to, not because they have or anyone/anything is forcing them.

52. Make people want to work with you again.

53. A good rapport with people in the department will get you further than anything else, even further than bribes.

54. A motivated cast and crew works better than an apathetic one. You can’t create inspiring work with a cast that doesn’t care about the material. Make sure those on board care about the project. People will do things if they are asked. People will do things that they aren’t asked to do and will go the extra mile if they care about the project. This is especially true when people aren’t getting paid for their time and effort.

55. You can’t strike matches on stage. You can light a lighter on stage. You cannot light anything on fire, even if it’s in your script.

56. Respect the fact that you are sharing the space with classes and other productions.

57. Know that you are the lowest on the totem pole. You are literally one step above the janitor when it comes to priority over who gets to use the theaters and movement labs. Understand that. Accept that because resenting that fact won’t change anything.

58. No one knows you need help. Ask for help.

59. Starting tech week rehearsal at 10pm can make everyone tired and grumpy. Bring candy and sugar to cheer up the cast and crew.

60. Candy makes actors full of energy. It also makes them crash about an hour later.

61. Student productions are fueled by caffeine. Bring coffee. Treat people to coffee.

62. Nothing will ever go according to plan. Take into account the element of unpredictability.

63. You will call in every favor you have.

64. Don’t take those favors for granted. People help their friends, not people who ask too much of them and don’t give back in return.
65. There will be a point that the project is no longer in your hands. Don’t resist this.
66. Learn not to stress about the little things outside your control.
67. Take care of little molehills before they become giant mountains. They will inevitably become mountains and you’ll curse the day that you said “I’ll take care of it tomorrow.”
68. Take it one day at a time but don’t forget to plan ahead.
69. Late night rehearsals make everyone goofy and then grumpy. There will be a point in a late night rehearsal that there is nothing more to be done. Learn to see that point and stop for the night. Working past this point will be counterproductive and detrimental.
70. It will take way more time and effort than you would have thought humanly possible. It will control your life.
71. Give yourself more than 25 days before the first rehearsal and opening night. Just trust me on this one. A frantic rehearsal process is an efficient one, as everyone knows that there is no time to mess around, but it also means the stress is incredibly increased.
72. There will be a point that you never want to do theatre again.
73. You will start living in the theatre building during tech week. There will be nights that you won’t leave until 1:15 am. You will probably contemplate sleeping in the building. Resist the impulse.
74. You will become nocturnal. Learn to nap. Sleep is important to staying a sane person.
75. Don’t forget to take care of yourself. Learn to relax when you have time to.
76. You will hate the show. You will hate everything about it. You will probably think it’s terrible. It may be terrible. Know that you are opening no matter what, so you should best make it something worth seeing.
77. Understand that a process like this is a workshop process. There will be a lot of changes. Work with people who are flexible and won’t pitch a fuss when you cut their favorite line.
78. People love praise. Tell them what they are doing well. However, don’t lie. People can tell when you are not being sincere.
79. Pick a title early on. Stick with it. That way you have a consistent marketable name. People will know what you are talking about for the entire process, instead of calling it by its earlier name. It makes your project seem unfinished and flaky (which is only partially true).
80. **It** will be worth it. All of the stress, the hassle, the nightmare, the worry, the late nights, the confusion, and the utter hopelessness about the state of the show. Then it will be done. And it will be worth all of it.
Bon Appetit, statement
Lauren Tromp

Bon Appetit. 2012. 48” x 28”. Nupastel.

The assignment was to create your doppelganger, and since I am vegetarian I decided to portray myself consuming on piles of meat. When I was deciding how to map out my piece, I felt that my portrait should only cover a little less than half the page. This allowed me to fill most of the page with the dining table covered in meat. I decided to use a large sheet of paper for this piece because I wanted to make it more confrontational. Also, I wanted the viewers to feel uncomfortable when looking at the mounds of grotesque meat on the table. In terms of the medium, I decided to use nupastel because color adds to the revolting sensation that the meat gives off.
Last fall I had the opportunity to teach an honors course at NIU for the first time. As someone who has a passion for teaching (and providing opportunities for students to learn and engage with each other) I eagerly undertook the challenge. The class focused on examining sports through a sociocultural lens and exploring such topics as: race, gender, socio-economic status, politics, education, deviance, etc., all in the world of sport. For this class I completely revamped my assignments to help better immerse students into the content. For instance, students (in groups) worked on either completing a newspaper analysis or interviewed a participant in a sport. Although, taking this chance with honors students could have blown up, it quickly became clear that these assignments were going to be success. Specifically, an equal number of students choose each assignment (which is one key indicator letting a professor know that the workload for each assignment is about equal) and they produced some outstanding work. Students who completed the newspaper analysis collected papers from two major outlets for an entire week, compared these papers in relation to sociological concepts and contemporary research, and then drafted a full report on their findings. Students who elected the qualitative interview, formulated questions to ask their participant (centered on a specific sociological topic), transcribed interviews, and then compared the perceptions of their participant to research in the field. As a professor, I was impressed with not only the quality of the work produced, but also the ability of groups to work cohesively and proactively – I would definitely enjoy the opportunity to teach honors students (and use assignments similar to these) again in the future.
Albert Einstein said, "A person who has never made a mistake has never tried anything new". I would add that a person who has never made a mistake has also never done anything right. And a person who has never done anything new has never really done anything at all.

Last semester I studied abroad in Phuket, Thailand. The experience was certainly transformative.

Studying abroad is a gamble. You don’t know who you are going to meet, what awaits you beyond the airport nor what you are going to experience. There is truly no way to prepare yourself for the unexpected.

It is only when you are trying new things and making a lot of mistakes that you are really learning. Last semester was my second time studying abroad. Between my first experience and the last, I have learned more than in my previous 7 years of formal education. For others involved in extensive ventures outside of the classroom, whether in travel or work, I imagine they would say the same.

The classroom is a limited and limiting device. Albert Einstein’s quote is self-evident of this. Making a mistake in class can lead to failure. Classrooms should be remodeled to encourage mistakes. Because the important thing is not whether or not you do it right the first time, it’s the fact that you are trying and that you don’t give up.

The classroom doesn’t foster the development of individuals who have a hunger for greatness in every aspect of their lives, a hunger for developing a mind that is supple and capable of extraordinary initiative and a hunger for living up to their potential in this world. Partially, this is due to the classroom’s grading system, which inherently discourages experimentation, which after all, is at the foundation of creativity.

We would be wise to evoke Albert Einstein once again, "‘‘Imagination is more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited to all we now know and understand, while imagination embraces the entire world, and all there ever will be to know and understand.’’"

The world needs more irrational and unreasonable people. People who demand the extraordinary and the impossible and who reject the limitations and standards are the ones who advance our understanding of the world the most. They are the ones who, like Einstein, deserve our deepest gratitude.

Let us recognize the unheralded ones in our lives who uplift and inspire us with their uncommon humor, ways of thinking, abnormal genius and stubborn non-conformity. These mavericks have a knack for going their own way, and we owe them our appreciation. They are our future Einsteins.

Rising to potential, living out dreams and embodying the burning flame of passion – this is what awaits the man or the woman who dares to do something new, who dares to make a difference, who risks- nay, who welcomes- mistakes!
Studying abroad challenges you to see the world in a new way. Being taken away from everything you were once familiar with is enlightening. It pushes you beyond your comfort zone. It seduces you into discovering deeper parts of who you are.

For me, being abroad made plain the choice we all have in every moment of our lives. In each moment there is but one choice which can never be taken away from us. That is, our freedom to choose our attitude.

I had this revelation during my first experience abroad. I was ill, sleeping under a mosquito net on the top bunk in a small bedroom with my 2 homestay family brothers in Northern Uganda. I contemplated withdrawing from the program and returning home. I was not feeling well and was enchanted by the allure of my comfortable life, surrounded by familiarity and loving faces in the United States.

Suddenly, this mirage shattered. The truth was, I wasn’t at home. I was here. Returning home would be psychologically equivalent to failure. Not the failure of making a mistake, but the failure of fearing mistakes. It would be a mental indicator that I wasn’t strong enough to survive this. That is when I learned that whether or not I was strong enough was a matter of attitude. And although the fact of my fear may be beyond my control, my freedom to walk with fear or walk away from fear was my own.

Strength is not an imposition from external circumstance. Strength is inside of you. Greatness is inside of you. I realized that I was bigger than my discomfort. When I encountered similar circumstances last fall while studying abroad, I simply reminded myself that I needed to be bigger than my problems, bigger than fear and bigger than failure.

This lesson is more valuable than any one provided by a curriculum in the the state of Illinois. I may have never learned it with such potency, had I not decided to try something new. Had I not risked making a mistake, I would have never known what it feels like to have a transformed life. The lessons I learned while abroad were a result of living Albert Einstein’s advice, “A person who has never made a mistake has never tried anything new”. And a person who has never tried anything new, has never really lived.
Q: What do you like about the new honor’s house over last year’s?

A: One of the best things about the new honor’s house is the amount of privacy everyone has. I really enjoy having my own bedroom and only having to share my bathroom with one other person. The private bedrooms make it easier to block out distractions and get homework done when needed. The next best part about the new honors house is the lounge. It is an open and inviting place to relax or do homework. The big screen TV is also a big perk of the new honors house. Having the laundry room only a couple steps away versus being in the basement of the building is very convenient as well.

Q: Is there anything you miss about Douglas?

One of the small things I miss about living in Douglas was having a larger window in my room with a view of Central Park. I also sometimes miss sharing a lounge with everyone who lived on my floor. Even though I enjoy the small family feel of living with only twelve people per cluster there are times I miss having free access to the whole floor. Even though we are more separated as a floor this year compared to last year the Honors House Leaders have done a good job of bridging the gaps between the clusters on each of their floors. The last thing I miss about Douglas is having Dog Pound Deli right down stairs.

Q: How do the Honors House events compare with last year’s?

I think that both this year and last year the honor’s house events have been very fun. The University Honor’s Program always does a good job of hosting fun events throughout the semester, but one big change is that we no longer have an honors lounge where all honors students can meet up. In Douglas there used to be an honors lounge downstairs in the C/D cafeteria where the Honors Student Association would host their meetings and where floor war events took place. Each week every house leader used to hold lounge hours so that students could go down to the honors lounge and play board games, play ping-pong or watch movies on the big screen TV.

Q: Anything else worth mentioning about your experience in New Hall thus far?

It seems that one of the biggest questions this whole year has been how students feel about the new honors house versus the old honors house and sometimes that is a hard question to answer. It is almost like comparing apples to oranges. It has been awesome living in the honors house the past two years regardless of what building it was in. Both Douglas and New Hall have their own perks and downfalls, but I have always enjoyed living with fellow honors students and I am happy that I chose to live here both years.
I still vividly remember my first college experience. My family dropped me off here at Northern Illinois University and left me in the hands of the University Honors Program. I was so nervous to leave my dorm room to go down to the cafeteria to sign in for the freshman Taft Retreat, but I knew I had no choice. I can still remember to this day the first person I introduced myself to in the cafeteria and how scared I was to walk up to a complete stranger and say hello. Luckily, not long after this, a large group of us started to congregate and everyone starting talking to one another.

The whole first day of the retreat was packed full of different activities and a great amount of our time was spent listening to older students who informed us on various college related topics and gave us tips to help us survive college life. I recall sitting there listening to these older students talk to us and in my head I knew how useful the information was, but I constantly found myself distracted. My mind was full of questions and my body full of anxieties. What if I’m not cut out for college life? What if I fail all of my classes? How am I going to decide what to do with the rest of my life? What if I don’t fit in? This last question was at the forefront of my thoughts by this time in the retreat. I grew up in a small town, so it did not take me long to feel that I was out of my element being surrounded by students who mostly came from big cities like Chicago. When we had free time I constantly found myself being the oddball as conversations constantly revolved around towns I had never heard of, restaurants I had never ate at, television shows I had never watched and bands I had never listened to. As the retreat continued, it seemed everyone else was finding ways to establish common ground between one another except for me. They latched on to commonalities and I stood there wondering if I had made the right decision.

Looking back now I cannot believe these thoughts ever crossed my mind. Here I stand over a year later and I happily consider Northern Illinois University my second home. I know now the feelings that I felt during the Taft Retreat were feelings that many of the other students were probably experiencing as well. I felt so alone when in reality most of them were probably just as scared as I was. It took a little bit of time after the semester kicked off, but before I knew it I was making friends with people who lived on my floor and who were in my classes. I started to get involved on campus in organizations that fit my personality and interests, and I started to feel more relaxed. I am proud of myself for overcoming my fears and anxieties and transforming myself from that scared freshman into the involved student that I am today. I could not be more thankful for the amazing new friends I have made and the wonderful administrative staff I have met. They are the ones who have helped support me when I have needed it most during my time here at school away from home and who have helped make Northern Illinois University my second home.
The honor of being named Northern Illinois University’s 2012 Student Laureate for The Lincoln Academy would have to be considered the highlight of my year. What places the accolade at the pinnacle of my academic career would undoubtedly be the extraordinary competition that my fellow students placed before me for the award. As a fully engaged and active student, I am cognizant of the numerous other students that have accumulated an impressive resume in regards to their academic endeavors. The mere thought of simply being considered at the same level as these fellow scholars is worthy of my humble gratitude and cause for moments of self-reflection. I am struck by the scholarship, leadership, and most of all the service that these phenomenal students have rendered to society.

Annually, the Governor of Illinois, who also serves as president of The Lincoln Academy, charges each public four-year degree granting institution to select its most outstanding graduating senior. At NIU, at the beginning of the school year, the University Scholarships Committee entertains nominations for
this charge from faculty based on the combination of a student’s academic and extracurricular activities. Students at NIU that have both exceptional GPAs and are highly active represents a considerable number, therefore, the nominees must have set themselves apart from their peers with an impressive array of achievements in and out of the classroom. As the Student Laureate becomes a representative of the university, a lengthy curriculum vitae is not merely enough. The nominating faculty member must address how the nominee, as a student, has not only developed as a person but also as to the contributions they have made to their fellow students, the community, or beyond. Service usually becomes the key to isolating the best of the best.

When I talk with many of you about what you have accomplished while at NIU, I am excited and awed by the thoroughness of the list of scholastic achievements and leadership roles you have conquered in such a short span of time. But surprisingly, I must continually dig to reveal service-related activities that you ostensibly maintain as irrelevant. If there remains one lesson I must inculcate to my fellow students throughout this year, it is the true value of your service. Service, to a larger community, will not only help set apart nominees for Student Laureate and will complete a
seriously lacking component on most resumes, but beyond the lines on paper, it has the obvious positive outcomes for all those involved. Service shows the true character and value of a person. It is indicative of the person that should be representative of a larger entity especially a university for in essence, shouldn’t a portion of a student’s path through education lead to the ability to provide for the world as well as themselves.

Most do not wish to promote the service that you provide to the community as a means of self-aggrandizement or for the purpose of self-promotion, rather you take it as a matter of course, the way you were brought up, or as a self-fulfilling need to give back to a community that has given so much to you. I respect and appreciate this manner of discourse in respect to assuming one’s responsibility as a member of the community. The adherent problem of course with this taciturn approach during your collegiate years is that it is also a time when you must cultivate your experiences in a manner which heightens the awareness of others to your specific talents, traits, and abilities. Your altruistic traits must not be dolefully displayed with chagrin nor should they be capriciously or deliberately advertised in an ostentatious manner. A simple, subtle and humble description of one’s service related
activities should prevail to accentuate the character of the provider. To the point, this is not the time for anonymity in your contributions nor is it the time for boasting of them either.

The three most appropriate services rendered to society are usually in the form of time, talent, or treasure. Knowing that the average university student is far from independently wealthy, time and talent are the two attributes that are prevalent for consideration. Heroic deeds of conspicuous valor or solving long-standing world dilemmas are not obstacles that must necessarily be subdued to achieve success. What is essential for success is supportive, cooperative or serviceable assistance at any level to humanity or the betterment of the world we share without consideration for compensation. Reading to children or visiting elderly, serving at soup kitchens or on food drives, donating blood or walking for the awareness of a disease are all examples of heartfelt service that many of you perform modestly on a regular basis. These simple examples may also service as an indication of the greatness that you can achieve as your life experience continues beyond school.

I enthusiastically encourage all of my peers to continue in your efforts to excel at these wonderful service commitments and to explore the possibilities of expanding upon them through your
own initiative and inventiveness. Many of the greatest human accomplishments in regards to the betterment of society have their roots in humble beginnings like those in which we are involved in today. Embrace the opportunity that you have before you and challenge yourself to improve upon it for others. By taking the spirit of service to heart we can bequeath a better world to the next generation. I have met many of my fellow students at NIU who are the true embodiment of the greatest characteristics that this nation has to offer.

The Statement of Purpose for the Lincoln Academy of Illinois states that the academy exists “to honor individuals whose contributions to the betterment of humanity have been accomplished in or on behalf of the State of Illinois, or, whose achievements have brought honor to the state because of their identity with it, whether by birth or residence, or by their dedication to those principles of democracy and humanity as exemplified by the great Illinoisan whose name we bear. [Also the academy is] to honor senior students at each of the four-year, degree-granting institutions in Illinois for overall excellence, in both curricular and extra-curricular programs. By celebrating the Great Citizens of Today and encouraging the Great Citizens of Tomorrow, the Academy acknowledges that our
state and nation continue to need what Vachel Lindsay called “Lincoln-hearted” men and women.”

The honor of being considered a “Lincoln-hearted” man is beyond description to me. When the medallion was placed around my neck at the gala ceremony in Springfield, I was able to raise my head to see my children gazing at me with broad smiles. I knew my scholarship, leadership, and most of all, my service, would serve as a model of positive characteristics for them to follow and be proud of which is also beyond description to me. I anxiously wait to see which one of you will add your unique contributions of service to your stellar academic performance and be named the 2013 Student Laureate.
Ode to Kaitlynn Hughes

I’m trapped in confusion.

a place where clouds live.

where they’re dark grey and laced with a thick ribbon of teenage awkwardness.

The hair on my arm does handstands as I saunter thru the electric smog.

The cloud darkens.

I look down to check the visibility and can see to about my knees

Something twirling beacons me to its warmth.

The number of somethings twirling increases and

the sound grips n massages

as the warmth intensifies

like a shy spark on kindle, light slowly grows where the twirling is

Each light matures into a Hue.

Each light is a steady, colorful haze.

I approach cobalt curiously.

The light becomes clearer and I see that it’s an outline of an oval

shaped opening as wide as shoulder length.

Standing on the outside I peer in and see a wall.

I need to be in there.

I extend my hand and dissolve

to passively float through the opening.

Loosely I’m reassembled and left floating in front of the entire picture I saw from the outside.
A colossal pillar extends from a multicolored bog. It captures my eyeballs. They roll up a rut of a pathway that wraps around the pillar. The rut is neat and the loops around the pillar are evenly spaced vertically. Gaseous figures are near and craving the neat rut.

Fuchsia flavored gas sprints to the base of the pillar and slams into the mouth of the rut. Lime has a machine of strings and springs and catapults ½ way up and lands in the rut. And frantically tires to stay still and pretend it fit. Crimson liquefies itself and ties to flow. It boils over and weakly leaves.

This place is cold. The air is sharp and the bubbling bog moans. Approach the pillar and physics dies. I can see the top perfectly. A small group of defined solid cobalt people converse and touch and laugh and smile. They have something I need.

I’m at the mouth. I touch the bottom of the rut and its cool and slick, it leaves a film on my hand. I want to leave but the group seems to be getting bigger. Theyr having more fun. Now that I see them clearly they inhale joy and exhale a dense cloud of loneliness in front, behind, in me.

At the mouth. I put my gaseous chest on it. Failure berates my will as the need for acceptance folds three times on its self. Am I even cobalt?
Quickly im loosened and shifted away from the rut,
over the bog, thru the serrated air, out the cobalt oval.
back to hazy safety.

Now the cobalt oval has lost its shine
colorful twirling somethings compete for my attention;
The warmth no longer interests me
The melody of twirl calms and quits
I could live with these clouds.

But this green won't quit.
The color asserts itself thru the crowd of its peers
the heat is on my face; its blinding
crawl for the green and there’s a triangle shaped opening illuminated
Emerald.

I consciously disassemble and enter thru to see
colorful gases fight for a ziging rut on a tilting pillar.

I try to return to the murky safety outside,
a wide, emerald-encrusted fiber sticks and wraps around my chest and back
and compresses my body into solidity to lift me.

while rising my body finds a suffocating emerald steam.
it feels good. I clench my body to wait for stillness and
im placed on my side. I take my first glimpse of light
and a voice convinces me to stand.
I stand to her having the fiber tethered to her sternum as it’s softly pushing and flowing from the soft air around us. I follow the shining emeralds to myself and see that the fiber is thru my chest.

She extends a foot toward me and I begin to reminisce on a non-existent past that we share. with every step she takes the phantom past becomes more real and vibrant to me.

She lifts her hand and I begin to reminisce on our platonically intertwined future. She uses her entire hand span to put it around the fiber. The fiber squiggles from her hand movements and the wavelength of the fiber fills me till we both share the one.

I look past her to see were surrounded frantic gases slamming themselves into an invisible barrier Theyr everywhere. trying to get in.
R, 101st Airborne, 1st ID, Air Cavalry, Statement
Ryan Orlowski

R, 101st Airborne, 1st ID, Air Cavalry. 2012. 31” x 36”. Personal army uniform worn in Iraq, cut into strips, hand-woven on a four-harness loom.

Cutting and weaving my personal military uniform is a metaphor for how our lives are tied to each other and also connected to history. While most of this work is woven together, there are still many strands left loose and hanging.

With each strip of fabric I cut, a memory pulsed through me: memories of unspeakable atrocities, memories of brotherhood and friendship, memories of separation, memories of missed events, memories that are wonderful and horrible simultaneously. I attempted to cut away the pains of war. It was difficult to cut up my uniforms that symbolized so much. Many times, as I sat alone at my loom, my eyes would begin to water at the thought of missing my youngest son’s birth, his first steps, and his first words. As I cut through the uniform, I’d relive explosions or screams—sometimes I had to stop because my hands were shaking too much. When I cut my boots, I could feel the dusty earth in every pore as I re-experienced my friends’ injuries as well as my own. Then I began to weave myself back together again: I would remember the brotherhood and camaraderie and weave my hopes and dreams, reminding myself of the ties that held us together.

As I worked, I wanted to honor my brothers and sisters-at-arms, as well. This weaving is also a memory of the men and women who have gained permanent residence in my heart, and those whose names I never learned—as we stared off into the dusty horizon. We are all tied together in this tapestry of life.
RED 45, statement
Kasia Stachowiak

RED 45. 2009. 21.75” x 2.5”. Intaglio, chine colle, found paper.

My interest in found discarded materials, objects, natural materials, and architectural floor plans influence the way I construct and manipulate print media. Having a background in sculpture has inspired me to explore many diverse possibilities linking 2D and 3D. I explore and push the traditional boundaries of printmaking with other mediums while creating compelling new artworks. I appreciate each material and object that is part of my work as does the Japanese concept of aesthetics -“Wabi-sabi”.

The artwork blends visual historic artifacts depicting my life of past, present and future. These pieces also represent layers of my life experiences represented in repetitive patterns with subtle autobiographical content. The idea of using everyday discarded materials or objects is exciting to me as each of the found materials are irreplaceable.
Shakan, statement
Michelle Stewart

Shakan. 2012. 17” x 21” x 11”. Wood, spoons, deer antler.

Ever since I started creating artwork, I always liked to combine different objects and make something new and unique from them. Although I enjoy working with many different media, sculptural work is where I have really found myself being successful and the happiest.

I have not yet chosen a certain path in which I want to go down or dedicate my work to, but I am currently just taking all of my ideas and trying to bring them to life. Sometimes I do not know what the outcome will be, but to me, that is the most exciting part. Shakan is a great example of what not knowing what a certain process might create can become.
Squidtestines, Statement
Graehound

Squidtestines. 2012. 12”x18”. Acrylic ink, acrylic, watercolour, coloured pencil on bristol.

My work is an attempt to reconcile multiple styles, media, and emotions in a distillation of personal perspective in often curious, bizarre, or conventionally “gross” subject matter. I do not aim to tell the viewer anything I cannot claim to understand, which is why the majority of my work involves self-portraiture. I do not wish to directly lecture the intricacies of larger world systems as I am still grossly ignorant of my own shortcomings and therefore how to objectively frame such things. I seek to visually empathise with my audience through what I experience and they might relate to through technically detailed images in an intimate, almost illustrative format. My artwork is catharsis on a level accessible and receptive of others without demanding or necessitating their inclusion and acceptance. It is the very embodiment of selfishness and selflessness in paint and pencil.
In my life I have found no moment more powerful than those seconds on the starting line right before the start of a race. In that moment you are a body of complete focus and potential. In college, art has become my race and it is here that I must channel my focus and show my potential. My art is my intimidation and my starting line (as shown here) is the entrance to the School of Art.
In the summer of 2012, I took part in the NIU at Oxford Program at Oriel College in Oxford England. It was the highlight of my time here at NIU. We studied at the beautiful Oriel College and lived at James Mellon Hall in a historic part of town. It’s crazy what you can see at Oxford! In a few blocks I was able to see where Dr. Roger Bannister broke the 4 minute mile, the pub where J.R.R. Tolkien frequented, the Ashmolean Museum, the Oxford city museum, the book store straight out of Alice in Wonderland, the Great Hall from the Harry Potter Movies, and even the bar where President Bill Clinton smoked.....things.

I didn't restrict myself to Oxfordshire; I went all over, both on scheduled program trips and on my own. From the Avebury stones to Stonehenge, from Wales to London, from the Globe Theatre to see Henry V to Stratford-on-Avon to see Twelfth Night, from Kew Gardens to Parliament, from London to Paris, I saw so many things that my mind is racing just trying to remember it all!

I loved Europe, and while DeKalb is a charming little town in the middle of nowhere, there is no place I'd rather be than Oxford!!
This past fall, thanks to the help of the Honors Program Provost Study Abroad Grant, I took the opportunity to intern and go to school in London, England. It was an opportunity of a lifetime, because I have never been outside of North America. I signed up for the three month trip through a program called Educational Programmes Abroad, or EPA, because not only was I fulfilling two class requirements at the University of Westminster, but I was also able to gain valuable experience and professional contacts as an intern at the Palestine Exploration Fund Museum in London.

My living conditions were better than I could have imagined. Unlike most Study Abroad programs that arrange dorms or host families for their students, I lived in a large flat with three other girls right in the center of London. We had complete independence with all our endeavors, and the location was superb because most places were within walking distance.

The people in my program (there were ten of us in all) were from all over the world, and I made additional friends in my classes. In London, there was so much to do and see, and so many friendly people who were willing to experience the city with me. I visited Westminster Abbey, St. Paul’s Cathedral, The British Museum (about 10 times), the London Eye Ferris Wheel, the Tower of London, and so much more. I even received a private tour of Parliament because one of the other students in my program was interning there. Because I am a musical nut, I saw Wicked, the Phantom of the Opera which originated in London, and of course you can’t go to London without seeing Sweeney Todd. In addition, I took a bus up north to York and Derbyshire to see Yorkminster Cathedral, the old medieval walls or York, Hardwick Hall, and Fountains Abbey. Then, I took a train south to experience ‘Zombie Day’ on Brighton Pier, where the locals walk around dressed up as the living dead.

While in England, I learned that once you are in Europe it is so much easier and cheaper to travel around the continent. I took this opportunity to take a plane to Italy for a weekend. We landed in Rome and spent a whole day in the beautiful historical city. We saw the Colosseum, Palatine Hill, Capitoline Hill, Vatican City, the Pantheon, Trevi Fountain, the Spanish Steps, and so much more. The next day we took a bus to Florence and then rode Segways through the medieval streets. On our last day, we took a “Best of Tuscany” tour where we got to visit Siena, San Gimignano, and Pisa. As part of the tour we had wine-tasting and lunch at a prominent winery in the middle of the beautiful Tuscany Countryside. The entire Italy trip, including the plane and train tickets, hostels, and food, cost less than my roundtrip plane ticket from Chicago to London, so it was well worth the trip. The other students in my program also took the opportunities to go to Paris, Prague, Amsterdam, and Barcelona.

Being a history major, there are so many places that I have read about but have only seen in pictures. My study abroad trip brought these locations to life for me, and it really changed my life. The Earth seems so much smaller and accessible now, and I cannot wait to travel the rest of the world.
There was a small grocery store near my neighborhood. It was only a few minutes away walking. In spite of its small size, it was known for its wide variety of candies. When I was young, I was very chubby, maybe fat, and this store was an ideal place for chubby kids like me. I loved to eat anything sweet, especially “Ring Candy.” The candy was very attractive, interesting, and shiny; it almost seemed like real jewelry. I enjoyed keeping the ring after I had consumed the candy portion of this sweet treat. Every time I went to the store, I had to have at least one ring candy. I collected the rings, they were precious jewelry for a little chubby kid like me.

One day, when I went to the store as usual for the ring candy, the store was closed and people were moving the goods out of the store. I asked the people there what was going on. They told me that the owner of the store had just moved out to a different town. I was very young, about six years old, and hadn’t seen anyone move out before, I didn’t know anything about the moving process. At that time, the only thing that I thought of was the precious jewelry in the store, the ring candy. I thought I could take the store and the candies in it if I moved in before anyone else. This little chubby kid ran back to his house and packed his stuff to move into the store. I was in a hurry, I felt I needed to move in before anyone else took my ring candy. I remember this time being one of my busiest times, and today I look back and laugh. As an international student from South Korea, these kinds of stories helped me when I had hard time in this new country. These events reminded me of my childhood in Korea when I suffered from the cultural differences in America.
When I packed my stuff and ran to the store, I didn’t know anything. All I wanted was the candies. It was similar to when I moved to America. I didn’t know anything, but I just wanted to have a better education and more opportunities. Since people seemed so different from me, such as their culture and physical appearance, I didn’t expect any friendships in school. For me, school was a place where I studied, and that was it. I hadn’t imagined that school would be a significant place in my life, and I hadn’t imagined that I would find some precious jewelry in it through experiences I had with people in school and on the soccer field.

I attended Timothy Christian High School in Elmhurst, Illinois, a small private school of about 400 students and about thirty faculty members. Due to its small size, the people are strong in unity. It’s not just the students, but also the faculty members that know each other well and talk to each other often. People know each other’s names, unlike bigger schools, students seemed to know everything about their friends and really care about them. If someone was sad, everyone would cheer him or her up. If someone has good news, then everyone is happy and celebrates with him or her. Since they care about each other, they attend every school event to show support. The plays were always sold out, and they always had the biggest and the loudest fans at the sports games. This kind of friendship was not only reserved between the best friends but also was offered to others students and newcomers, like me. Despite out differences the students still include me. The first day of school in America, I was scared of meeting new people, but people greeted me kindly. In spite of my bad English, they attempted to speak to me. Due to the differences that I have, I was unable to open up my heart to people. I avoided everyone and didn’t quite get along with them.

If you were to ask me what my favorite place at the school was, I would say the soccer field. This is where I first talked to people with an open mind, and then later, an open heart. Since I enjoy sports, I joined the soccer team, but I still had a hard time talking with people. During the season we sweated together, endured hard practices together, and celebrated victories together. At one game, we didn’t start off to well. We just had difficulties in many ways. After the first half, the score was 4:0, and no one said
anything. The first twenty minutes of second half wasn’t good either. The other school scored one more goal within five minutes, we were dead silent. With ten minutes left, when each one of us started remembering the practices and cheering each other on, we could play our game. In ten minutes, we scored six goals. For eighty minutes of the game, they had the game, but in the last ten minutes, we changed everything. We had the momentum of the game. With the crazy result of the game, we learned how to play team sports, and our team got closer and stronger. These experiences with people who became my friends gradually changed me. I talked to people more often with comfort, and the differences that I had, maybe the fear that I had, was gone. On the green grass, under a scorching sunshine, the fear and barrier of ice inside of me melted.

On that soccer field, we won three regional championships in a row: two consecutive sectional championships, and one state championship. No one could have guessed that this small school with its 400 students had a great athletics program. We spent a lot of time on that field. During the seasons, water and Gatorade were the only things that saved us from dry throats. I recall one day, during practice, we forgot to fill the water jug, and we had fitness that day. We were unable to have a drink of water for two hours, and the practice got harder and harder. After it was over, everyone ran for water, and the feeling was unforgettable when the water touched our parched throats. I surely didn’t enjoy those hardships, but now it’s truly precious memory. Memories of the time that I spent with my first American friends, these friends who opened my mind and eliminated my fear, made the school and my experiences there more significant.

When I was young, I went to the small grocery store very often, and I bought my ring candy all the time. At that time, the store was very important to me, but the store itself was nothing special. It could be less special than other stores in terms of its size, but the ring candy made it special. The thing that makes a place significant is not the location or its size, but the thing that it contains. My high school isn’t different from other small Christian private high schools. Maybe it seems like it has limited chances compare to large public schools where people can have various other experiences, but the people and
memories on the soccer field made this school significant. The people and memories gave me chances to win Team Spirit Award in soccer in 2008 and 2009 and to become a President of Student Government in 2009. This small school gave confidence to a foreigner to adjust to this new environment, and I appreciated everything that happened in this place. In this new environment which is 6,885 miles away from Korea, I found my new home, and whenever I had hard time living in America, I thought of this new home and relax my tired body and mind. As I collected the ring candies when I was young, I collected the memories from my high school, the new home and keep these in my mind. The friends and the experiences in soccer became the ring candy in this significant place in this country.
The Kaleidoscope

The boy could see all the colors of the world through his kaleidoscope. Swirling, twirling, whirling together in patterns of light and color and beauty—fracturing off in different directions, breaking apart and coming together, mingling with each other constantly. Some days, he wished the real world were more like the world inside his kaleidoscope, where all the broken bits made peace with each other, and blended into one.

He heard the rumble of trucks and looked up, glaring as the convoy of soldiers rolled past. They had been coming past this stretch of road for a long time now, entering and leaving the city. This group was coming back from a battle, the boy could tell. Their uniforms were dusty and worn, and some were stained with dark blood. The men’s faces were tired, grim, their eyes haunted with the ghosts they had seen in the long dark nights of war. One of the soldiers was gazing longingly at a picture he had pulled from his pocket. One was tracing the lines of his machine gun with his fingers. One was glaring out sullenly at the landscape that was passing, but he was not really seeing anything. One was rewrapping a bandage that had come loose from the arm of his friend. One saw the boy with his kaleidoscope and raised a hand in a half-hearted wave, giving a half-hearted smile to the boy he was protecting, who had never wanted his protection.

The boy put his kaleidoscope to his eye, ignoring the soldiers, the constant reminders of the war that had come to his country, focusing on the patterns inside his own, perfect world. He was thrown to the ground in panic as the landscape behind him erupted, revealing insurgents, fanatics, who easily tossed their heavy roadside bombs into the midst of the convoy. The boy was screaming in terror as the soldiers leapt from the trucks to avoid the blast. The rat-tat-tat of machine guns shattered the sky—the faces of the soldiers were no longer weary masks of the exhaustion that had hidden their constant alertness. Their expressions were filled with anger, fear, and grim determination, and the terrified boy had never seen anything more terrible, more beautiful.

A shattering explosion sent every man to the ground, and the shrapnel ricocheted over their prone forms, landing behind them, nearer the side of the road. The remaining soldiers stood slowly, carefully, and the insurgents still living melted away into the background. The soldiers collected their dead and dying, carrying the bloody bodies across their weary shoulders. The soldier who had waved at the little boy knelt next to him now, and the boy looked up at the concerned face.

“Are you alright?” he asked. The boy nodded dumbly at the foreign phrase as he tried to understand the unfamiliar words. “Are you alright?” The boy said nothing, but when he tried to sit up, a searing pain split his side and the soldier eased him back down. “Don’t try to sit up, son. Just lay quiet.” Another soldier approached, tapping him on the shoulder. He nodded and whispered a few words. The second man looked down at the boy, and his eyes filled with an awful sadness before he nodded and turned away.
The boy craned his neck to see the epicenter of the throbbing pain. The twisted metal glinted in the sunlight, slick with his blood. The boy started to cry, and the soldier squeezed his hand.

“It’s okay, son,” the soldier said. “It’ll end soon.”

The boy’s eyes suddenly lit up, and he weakly lifted his other hand, holding the kaleidoscope out to the soldier. The man gently wrapped the boy’s fingers around the little instrument, but the boy’s eyes begged and his lips formed pleading words the soldier could not understand. He took the kaleidoscope, and the boy smiled.

“I’ll take good care of it,” the soldier promised. The boy nodded, and his tears stopped. His hand fell to the dust beside him, and his eyes closed one last time.

The soldier looked through that kaleidoscope once and saw the perfect world the little boy had seen—all the pieces in the world coming together. And he wondered why the real world was not more like that one.

Many battles later, resting in the scant shade of a narrow alleyway in the city, the soldier reached into his pocket and felt the kaleidoscope he had forgotten about. He held it up to his eye, but the glass had been broken, and the device was useless. The soldier sighed and pocketed it as he was called to another battle.

As the world fractured to pieces around him, he thought about the kaleidoscope, and the perfect world it had once contained. He thought of all the colors of the world swirling, twirling, whirling together in patterns of light and beauty—fracturing apart, but constantly reforming, blending together, becoming one. He thought of the little boy, who wished the world were more like the one inside his beloved kaleidoscope. He thought of how that world was gone, shattered glass in a million pieces all that remained of that precious cosmos. He saw the war around him, saw what the world had become, saw the world splintering apart and never rejoining together in that kaleidoscopic picture. And he began to cry for the universe, for that unachieved dream, for that broken world—the shattered, useless, and yet precious kaleidoscope.
Vegan Mac N’ Cheese

Even vegans get cravings for mac and cheese and this recipe won’t leave you feeling guilty after your third helping. Packed with tons of vegetables, there are very few calories and fat in this dish. I eat it when I’m sick, after a good workout, and when I cook for friends. Did I mention it’s cheap, too? If you’re willing to try a classic that’s been veganized, this is the dish for you.

Ingredients

The “Cheese”
1 1/2 cups cauliflower, chopped into small pieces
1 cup light coconut milk (found in the Asian section)
1 cup water
7 garlic cloves, chopped
1 1/2 teaspoons miso paste (found in the health food section)
1 teaspoon soy sauce
2 teaspoons Dijon mustard
1/2 teaspoon salt
Lots of freshly ground black pepper
2 giant tablespoons of white flour

The “Mac”
1 1/2 cup whole-wheat pasta, any shape
2 tablespoons canola oil
Half a block of firm tofu, cut into small cubes
2 cups broccoli cut into small pieces
**These vegetables are some of my favorites in the dish. You can sub anything you like: zucchini, cauliflower, peas, even roasted butternut squash!

How To:

Put the cauliflower, coconut milk and water into a medium saucepan and heat on the stove over medium high. After about five minutes, add the chopped garlic, miso paste, soy sauce, and Dijon mustard, salt and plenty of freshly ground black pepper. Stir every so often for three to four minutes and you should notice the sauce starting to thicken. Stir in the flour and then turn the heat off.

Now is time to boil the water and throw in your pasta. Meanwhile, in a big skillet, heat the oil on the highest setting and sauté the cubed tofu. After it starts to brown, add the broccoli and any other vegetables you like. When the pasta reaches al dente, dump into a colander and proceed to take the vegetables off the heat.

Take your “cheese” sauce and blend until smooth in a food processor. Put both the vegetables and noodles in a saucepan and then slowly add as much sauce as you wish on top. I usually have enough sauce to save for the next day with a new batch of pasta and veggies, but you may want yours extra creamy. Serve with fresh pepper and enjoy as many heaping bowls as you like!