



Time Spent in the Waiting Room

So we stand here, you, me and the catalog essay. An art critic usually writes the essay that accompanies the catalog of an exhibition. The typical contents include: a brief bio of the artist, a history of the artist's work, and the context in which the work fits into art history.

Well this show is about dismissal. No artwork on the walls or in the catalog, but there is a catalog essay! An essay about rejection and how it plays into the ever-winding road of the artist's career path.

Opportunity sought. Material submitted. Anticipation built.

Result: DENIED.

Ugh.

Truth be told, it stings. Yeah. The denial comes in different forms, as you can see in the exhibition.

There is the email that is addressed to you, personally. The one that you feel was written specifically to you. The poor writing and lack of attention to detail interrupt the attempt at a personal connection. That is as close as you will get to personal direct connection. As with all other rejection and acceptance letters, there are no specifics as to why you were chosen or dismissed.

There is another version of this, the form letter. Yes it is addressed to you personally, but somehow, you sense that these words in the message are recycled.

The space between the dejected and messenger widens. There is email that sends you on the hunt to response to this particular opportunity. The results are in...visit the site to confirm where you stand... So you go to the site, sign in with your username and password. Look and find the results as stark and direct in front of you. Ouch. What makes it worse? The fact that you looked for it. You looked for the result because you want to know that what you are going to do next.

So what do you do when you see the bright red X's net to your pieces? Nothing! That's what you do. There is nothing to pack. No dates to mark on your calendar for artwork delivery or the date the show opens. You forget about the show, maybe. You move on. Not because it is what the books say, but you have to. Because you know your value and the value behind your artwork, this opportunity was never an end anyway. It has merit. Deep down, you remember what David Bayles and Ted Orland said in the book *Art & Fear*, "Some art, by its very nature, is subversive. By leading the viewer to experience the world through the very different sensibilities of the artist, a good work of art inevitably calls the viewer's own belief system into question." (p66-67)¹

There are those emails that inform you of the results indirectly. You are a part of the mass email to all those that submitted to this opportunity ad as you read you realize that the list of artists in the

email is of those that were accepted. All of a sudden your experience is reminiscent of the school days where you checked the roster to see if you were picked for the team.

Last and definitely least, are those organizations that don't respond. You are still waiting on a response as to where you stand with them. One such opportunity has already posted a Call for Artist for the next season.

Wow. Yeah, it is like that sometimes or at least a few venues.

Ok fine. Onto the next opportunity, that's what the books say, anyway. Right?

Not this one either? Sigh. Wallow in the negative feelings a bit. Yes, a certain amount of wallowing is due. You put the time in produce the materials in the format that they require. You waited for weeks or months.

Now there are more parties involved that just the organization and the artist. They are the artists that you discussed the fellowship/grant/residency with, the dealer who was ready to promote the success, and the supporters that wrote letters recommending you for the fellowship/grant/residency.

So there is that awkward moment where you have to decide what to say to these people when they ask, "What ever happened with that thing you applied for?"

Uhh. Um, yeah, about that...

Sometimes you hope they forgot about it so you don't have to relive the disappointment, but these are your fans they deserve up to date information. How do you tell someone that believes in you that the decision makers said "No Thanks?" You have to find the words. They have to be words that let them know that you are keeping on in spite of this set back.

The positive responses from your fans are uplifting. The disappointment is less great. "You win some, you lose some," they say. Keep making work. The fans, the supporters want to see you create they want to see the work.

In the meantime, keep creating work. That's the advice in the books. The books don't tell you how to deal with the hoard. The work that piles up and threatens to consume the space you worked hard to acquire. Daring you to keep creating and push yourself forward and backward at the same time. Forward in progress for progress' sake. Backward in assessing the value of older pieces and whether they deserve the space they occupy.

Time passes and you wonder, "was this piece as great as I thought it was? Did the authorities have it right when they said 'No.'"

In any regard you look forward to what acceptance feels like.

--- Carol-Anne McFarlane, March - April 2014

¹Bayles, David. Orland, Ted. Art & Fear. Consortium Book Sales & Distribution, Inc. 1993.