

Reflections on Jill's Transcripts

Pauline Sameshima – May 2014

1:30-34

from the outside looking in
my life looked pretty put together for a long time
I came from an upper middle class family
my dad was the captain of the Police Department
my mom was a prominent school teacher
I just always looked pretty put together

1:45-47

I had this whole professional life on one side of me
and this whole drug-cultured side on the other
I held that together pretty well for a while

1:123-128

the one thing that I liked about church
was when I was there
my mom treated me really well
she was so nice to me
when we were there
and the minute we left
it was just the opposite

I remember thinking

I don't want anything to do with a hypocrite
if that's what Jesus and the Bible is all about
I'm going the other way
and I'm going to be the best of that kind of person I could be
that was a real conscious choice that I made early, early on

1:165-170

people see drug addicts and alcoholics as bad people
I believed that about myself for a really long time
and it took some intense treatment
and working with people who were really committed with me
to realize that I wasn't a bad person
I just did bad things.

Jill's construction of good and bad, right and wrong, and other dichotomous perceptions of the world led me to work in a medium that intentionally is both front and a back. Jill's actions are controlled and calculated and yet seemingly "wild". There is a hardness to this medium, a tautness that is demanded, and a danger. When pulling the fishing gut taught, it can easily

abrade the skin when wrapped tightly around the fingers. When too much pressure on a knot is applied, the 10lb fishing line easily gives way and snaps.

Jill sees two opaque sides to her identities, the professional on one side and the drug-cultured side on the other. The plexiglass and fishing line medium represent a transparency – the interconnectedness of each side is reliant and dependent on the other. While I determined that the drilled side (rougher surface) would be the back, also where I placed the knots while working on the pieces, the “back side” was actually the focal view when I created the works. The front and the back are arbitrary choices. Similarly, in Jill’s life, the drug-cultured lifestyle was integrally part of her professional life whether she admitted it or not. The image that also spurred the medium was Jill’s story about her dry cotton mouth.

1:551-556

someone said to me the other day
“wow, you have pretty healthy teeth for
using meth that much.”
my mouth was always so dry
and I always had cotton-mouth
so I had a toothbrush
if I wasn’t smoking a cigarette
I had a toothbrush in my mouth
and I was brushing my teeth
trying to get the cotton-mouth to go away

I wanted to create something that represented the web-like cotton covering that implies a tangledness and entrapment. Jill also used the word “shroud” and “cloud of protection” in her interview.

2:26-49

I tried to shroud my kids with this cloud
of protection
they knew what was going on
even if I didn’t get loaded in front of them
I was loaded in front of them
ninety percent of the time

Plexiglass 1: Constructing Control: Filling the Void (Circle)

1:152-155

m addiction
took that pain away and it made me feel different
filled that huge hole that was inside me
I felt pretty in control
so from there on out
I drank or used drugs

to feel different
to keep that void full

The medium and random patterns attempt to express the bitterness, anger, and confusion shared in Jill's story. Her efforts to control and maintain are calculated efforts to fill the void she perceived.

1:129-145

I have an aunt and an uncle who lived about sixty miles away
my mom's brother was an eye doctor
they had a great home and a great relationship
I used to spend a lot of time with them
in the summers at their lake cabin
they drank
they weren't alcoholic drinkers by any means
they would have a glass of wine or a beer here and there
to their face, my mom was so sweet to them
when we were away from them
they were going to hell
heathens, you know, because they drank

I remember thinking in my young little mind
that if that's what drinking does to you
I want to drink and be like my aunt and uncle
and not like my mom

I had gone over to spend the weekend
and they had a wine cellar in their basement
I intentionally went down to the wine cellar
put a bottle of their wine in my backpack
and took it home with me

I thought, you know, I'm going to be like them
and so at ten years old
I drank this bottle of wine in my bedroom
and got drunker than I ever remember feeling
passed out – got sick, passed out
and I woke up the next morning and I thought
oh, my gosh
this is the answer
to all my problems

The fishing line develops the sense of continuity in the struggle in recovery—the tension in maintaining the “recovery mode” is ever vigilant and demanding.

3:94-100

it doesn't matter if you've been clean a month or twenty years
when you start using, your addiction picks up right where you left off
my disease doesn't go back to square one
it stops and stays where it was when the drugs ceased to be used

Plexiglass 2: Constructing Control: Breaking my Rules (Cross)

1:193-217

I started doing this bargaining game with myself
I would only use after I got off work
and then only at home
just a little bit before I went to work
I would never use it in my car or at work
then it got to the point where
I said never on the premises
I lived a mile or two away from the medical lab
so I would fly to my house at lunchtime
and get high and then come back

all this bargaining thing in my mind was
telling me I'm still okay
I'm not breaking my rules

but my rules always changed
and then it got to be
not in my office
so I'd go out to my car
and then pretty soon
I had stashes all over my office
a pen on a necklace that I used to carry around
you could open up the pen
and it was full of methamphetamine
people would say, "Can I use your pen?"
"No!" I guarded it with my life

meth breaks down all the barriers
that process probably took nine months or so
a year maybe
once I started this whole bargaining with myself
my mind was just playing all these games with me
and because I had this good job
I convinced myself that I was okay

Plexiglass 3: Constructing Control: One Step at a Time (Diagonal)

1:398-412

they say the only thing that you have to do
is to change one thing in order to get clean and stay clean
and I thought, wow, I can do that
they told me the one thing was everything
that just terrified me
I have to change everything in my life?
I can't do it
I heard a speaker
When I was about four or five months clean
he said, "You know, it was really helpful to me
when someone told me that you can't change everything
but you can work on one thing all the time."
I could wrap my mind around that
so that's what I started doing
just working on one thing
all the time in order to get better

1: 415-432

they say, "Don't ask what; ask how."
and the how is learning how to be honest
open-minded, and willing
I don't know how to be honest
my whole life was a lie
I was a pretty convincing
one thing about drug addicts and alcoholics
is we're really smart people
I could convince you that I love your blue sweater
and you're saying, "this is black"
I could twist it up
and make you think you're wearing blue
when you're really wearing black
I'm just this convincing – convincing liar
my whole life was a lie
I lied even when I didn't need to
and so here's the principle of learning
how to be honest in order to get healthy
and I said, "You know, I don't know how to be honest."

There is disarray. There are images of cutting and slicing with anger in many parts of the transcripts. Imagery of lines and emphasis on certain lines are evident throughout the transcripts.

2:406-413

my daughter looked at my picture
and cut it up with some scissors
it just crushed me
'you know, my mom might be fat now
but she could never not do drugs
and I don't want to see her again."
and she just sliced the picture in half

Plexiglass 4: Constructing Control: Tangling Thoughts (Synapse)

1:513-542

at six feet tall and a hundred pounds
my legs looked like my arms
I could barely hold myself up
I was about at the end of my rope
my heart was under so much strain
trying to keep me alive
it had been months and months and months
since I had put food in my body
or actually chewed or eaten any kind of food
my brain never told my body that it was hungry
I remember the last thing that I put in my body

one of my friends make me this rice dish
that had butter and cinnamon
and sugar
it was kind of sweet
that was the last thing that I could actually eat
I literally could not make myself swallow
there was nothing firing in my brain
to tell me to swallow

This piece attempts to express the tangled constructions in the neural pathways. There is structure and yet, the workings are open and lose. The ends are not tied off.

3:434-461

I had to start listening to totally different radio stations
because everything in my life reminded me of using
people talk about triggers
if I'm awake, I'm triggered
there wasn't, for a really long time
a day that went by if I was awake
that I wasn't high or in the process of trying to get high
you've got to learn how to live life
because just being awake is a trigger

changing my whole mindset
I really started to believe in the
what goes in is what comes out