

One day I was telling my mother a story. I couldn't remember the word for something, so I started describing the word to her. Not the thing the word represented, but the actual word: it's brownish and kind of wet, like wet hay. It smells like earth. It's in a corner. She looked completely baffled, almost shocked. From her face I understood that this was wrong. She didn't understand what I meant at all. And when I tried to explain, she kind of laughed and corrected me. Words didn't have colors. Or smells.

I was embarrassed. More than that, I was crushed. That I had so misunderstood the world. That I had been so wrong all along. It was a surprise to learn that language was so simple, just words and their definitions. It was so much easier than I had thought. And at the same time it felt like a terrible narrowing. Something important was lost.

Several years later, in my seventh- or eighth-grade English class, we began to study poetry. The teacher described various tools of poetry: metaphor and simile. Alliteration. Onomatopoeia.

He explained connotation, that words are more than just their strict definition. They have shades of meaning, of association or feeling. They have subtle implications. They have character. It comes from their sound and their shape and the way they have been used before.

As he was talking, I felt a sense of clarity. Of recognition. I understood exactly what he meant.

ZOE LEONARD, "Inside Out"

A bundle. A package. A packet, a parcel, a bindle, a sheaf, a bale. A heap, a stack, a pile, a bank, a body, a bunch.

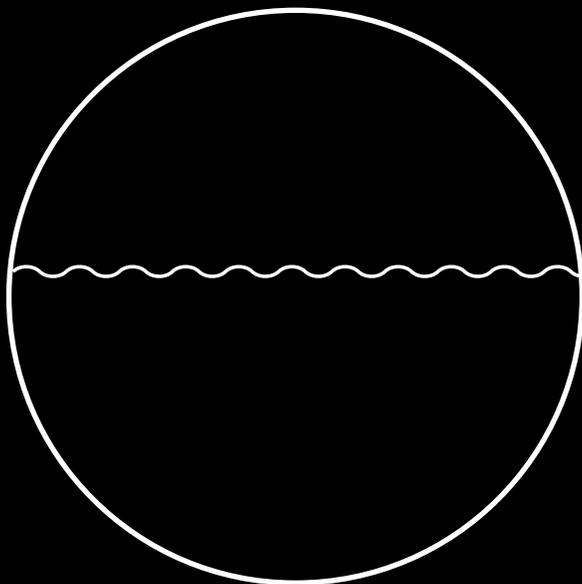
A box, a receptacle, a container, a holder, a carton, a chest, a crate, a bin, a compartment, a nook, a niche, a cubby, a cubbyhole, a pigeonhole. A pack, a trunk, a suitcase, a case, a jacket, a cover.

To wrap, to wrap up, to tie up, to truss, to encase, to jacket, to cover, to bundle, to bundle up, to embrace, to coat, to surround, to sheath, to girdle, to garter, to swathe, to swaddle, to cuddle, to bind.

James Castle stored his work in bundles and boxes. Wrapped them in cloth and paper, tied them into bundles. Put them into handmade boxes. Stacked up the boxes. The work itself is often a kind of bundle or package. He made books. Booklets. Leaflets. Chapbooks. Albums. Drawings bound into books. Folded into folios. Matchbooks made into book covers.

And he made coats. Constructions of coats. Drawings of coats, of jackets. Overcoats. Topcoats. Greatcoats. The coats have buttons, buttonholes, belts, and collars. And there are figures clothed in coats. Buttoned up in jackets. Blocky cardboard constructions, sewn together with twine, rope, string, thread, ribbon. They are sewn up, tied up.

ZOE LEONARD, "Inside Out"



horizon



There are open doors and closed doors, Views from one room into another.

From interior to exterior. These drawings evoke the process of looking as a kind of passage. In them, looking is neither entirely active nor entirely passive, but rather a dynamic dialogue with the world.

Making, too, is a dialogue. It is a translation of an idea or a vision in our mind to a material object. A transfer. A transference. It is, for lack of a better word, a language. A way to make experience and sensation visible. To create, then, a new experience for the viewer.

ZOE LEONARD, "Inside Out"

I was first drawn to Castle's work for its tactile quality, the matte surfaces of the soot drawings, their quiet and contemplative mood. The handmade feel of the constructions, simultaneously delicate and bold. As I spend more time with it, I am struck by how all this work fits together, is part of one body. He is specific and discerning; his voice is distinct. But he uses several different languages, engaging in multiple ways of looking, making, translating, and interpreting.

He worked with representation in the traditional sense but also with abstraction, using shape and pattern. He drew from direct observation and from memory. He drew from photographs, printed matter, and television. Sometimes he took familiar subjects and inserted them into other settings, creating surreal images. He rearranged his own work and drew it. He worked with systems of language and order. There is a relatively small but significant number of drawings that relate to the kaleidoscope. A subject or image is broken down and repeated in the facets of a fractured hexagon, and the six triangles fit together as one drawing.

There is something kaleidoscopic in his work as a whole. He has a fairly limited set of subjects but revisits them again and again through different media and with different approaches.

ZOE LEONARD, "Inside Out"

ARIADNE'S THREAD IS LITERALLY A LIFELINE; FOR A WRITER, TO HOLD THE BALL OF STRING IS TO HAVE THE BEGINNING AND END OF SOMETHING, AND ALL THE TWISTS AND TURNS IN BETWEEN: TO GRASP THE STORY, AND TO KNOW ITS UNFOLDING. CAPTURE DIARY FRAGMENTS LIKE VIDEO CAPTURES, SCENES RECORDED AND FORGOTTEN. I AM LESS SEDUCED BY HER TRANSFORMATIVE PROSE POWERS, AND MUCH MORE CONFRONTED BY THE DISABLING NEUROSIS THAT ENDED CATASTROPHICALLY. I SHITTING GUTS OUT ALL OVER FLOOR. I REALIZE THAT I WRITE ABOUT BEING DEFORMED AND REMADE BY THE THINGS I READ. AND I AM TRYING TO WRITE IN THE FORM OF THINGS THAT I WANT TO READ: DIARIES, FRAGMENTS, LISTS. AND THIS JOY IS VERY DEEPLY RELATED TO THE JOY OF INTOXICATION, JUST AS IT IS TO THE JOY OF CREATION. MOVE TOWARDS IMAGES RATHER THAN WORDS. I FALL ASLEEP SOUNDLY BUT AFTER AN HOUR I WAKE UP, AS THOUGH I HAD LAID MY HEAD IN THE WRONG HOLE [...] I BELIEVE THIS SLEEPLESSNESS COMES ONLY BECAUSE I WRITE. WITH HER FREE HAND SHE STAUNCHES THE FLOW FROM HER NOSE WITH A BIG WAD OF TISSUES. WE TELL OURSELVES STORIES IN ORDER TO LIVE. THE NUMBER OF HOURS WHEN I SIMPLY LIE ON THE BED WITHOUT READING OR THINKING WOULD SHOCK YOU I SAW THE SKY, A FEW STARS AND A LITTLE GREENERY [...] HOW WAS IT THAT I DID NOT SEE THAT SKY BEFORELITTLE DID I KNOW I'D BE THE CORPSE THAT WOULD ARREST MY OWN TAKE, BUT I STOP MY SELF: OUT OF SUPERSTITION NEVER WRITE SUCH THINGS, OR SPELL OUT MEDICAL ANXIETIES. PROLONGED ENJOYMENT IN LOOKING AT BOOKS, LOOKING AT PHOTOGRAPHS, LOOKING AT ANYTHING. AN ILLNESS WITHOUT SUFFERING IS A GREAT PRIVILEGE. "A WRITER IS SOMEONE FOR WHOM WRITING IS HARDER THAN IT IS FOR SOMEONE ELSE." -THOMAS MANN. ARRIVE IN PARIS AND BEGIN TO WALK.

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Turtle



Stream
Channelization



Weasel



Rattlesnake,
Muskrat,
etc.



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Turtle



Stream
Channelization



Weasel



Rattlesnake,
Muskrat,
etc.

