

Originally I began researching Emily Dickinson not knowing what sort of angle I planned to use in doing a research paper. Then I had an idea to create a piece of art and found that I wasn't the first to have this idea. This idea of linking someone else's interpretation of what they wrote about and then expanding on it with the artist's own seems to directly relate to the reasons for doing a research paper in my opinion. Research papers are useful because they cause you to learn on your own and find information that you may apply in a useful way.

I believe that Emily Dickinson wrote in order to help herself deal with the world that she lived in which was made difficult by a nervous condition, which kept her from a normal life. With reference to Emily Dickinson the artist, one cannot speak of misfortunes at all. "A sequence of internal conflicts to which they gave rise, and the final psychotic breakdown all conspired in a unique way to make way to make of Emily Dickinson a great and prophetic poet. Emily Dickinson psychic imbalance and eventual collapse allied themselves on the side of her genius. Not at all one dimension only, but in several, Emily Dickinson's psychopathology was friendly to her creativity" (Magill 485).

This lack of an ability to share her words led to a reclusive nature and perhaps a loneliness that comes through in her writing. She demonstrates the uniqueness of her visual perception in her words. It can be surmised that this might be a reason that she had so few photos or other likeness' done in an age that was fascinated by photography. Asked at age thirty-one to supply a photo of her, Emily Dickinson replied, "could you believe me - without? I had no portrait, now, but I am small, like a wren, and my hair is bold, like the Chestnut Bur- and my eyes, like the sherry in the glass, that the guest leaves- would this do as well?" (Longworth 54)

Few people, if any, will dispute the view of Emily Dickinson as an artist. Whether an artist is a writer, musician, painter, actor, or something else they share something in common, the artists of the world are "hypersensitive in some way" (Nicky Moser), They don't always see things the way others do. Dickinson wrote about life, her life, the way she loved, the things she felt. She was known to be very reclusive, some might say a manic-depressive, those with mental illness are said to have a skewed or radically different sense of reality. Choosing to live life internally within the confines of her home, Dickinson brought her life into sharp focus. For she also chose to live within the limitless expanses of her imagination, a choice she was keenly aware of and which she described in one of her poems this way: "I dwell in Possibility-." (Meyer 748)

Universal themes run through good art and literature alike. Also an artist must be multidimensional as well, in a sense that they must be able to connect with their audience in a wide variety of ways. Dickinson was both. "She wrote as both the doubter and quester, probing the mysteries of death, immortality, and eternity". (Faust 164) "Her poems represent a broad range of imaginative experience. They are rich in feeling, wide in their knowledge of nature, books, and geography, and expansive in their vision. Much of this due to the exposure to Amherst College near her home." (Cody 32)

Whether it's a visual form or literary form of art both forms attempt to depict the world in a way that the artist sees it. Sometimes an artist decides not to share their

views. Sometimes their insecurities prevent them from that or they just decide that the nature of their work is too personal or private to share. In my opinion that's a shame, the rest of the world probably misses so much substantial work because of this. Literature and art often have an influence on those that view them. The world would be so much less rich and meaningful without them.

It is also meaningful that we acquire the knowledge of past generations from their creative artistry and learn from it, also to expand on it further. If a visual artist reads a poem and that poem sparks an idea in that person's head and then they begin to explore and relate to what is said they might create something to give a better picture of their interpretation. By doing this they take something of great beauty or meaning and more effectively communicate it to others rather than if only one form was used. "Many of the artists have used Dickinson as an inspiration have transformed her text in a way were that they have turned her written language into visual objects. Although these works of art are based on specific texts, they are not straightforward illustrations of E.D.'s literary image. Rather they convey a more generalized feeling of ambiguity, contradiction, and heightened, sense of visceral perception." (Danly 67)

It may also go in reverse. Many poets have written on the basis of a photo or painting or such. "Gertrude Stein, influenced by Cézanne, Picasso, and Cubism, verbally elaborated on visual invention. She reached in words for new vision formed from the process of naming, as if a first woman were sounding, not describing, "space of time filled with moving."(Howe) Emily Dickinson, although mostly used examples from nature and life experience in her writing.

One artist Roni Horn's method for interpreting the words in Dickinson's poetry Roni Horn incorporates her audience into this poetic process of "circumference" by visually disconnecting the usual syntax of Dickinson's language. Each blue plastic letter of "My Business is circumference" is cast into its own three-dimensional aluminum block and stands alone. Horn distributes the blocks (seemingly random) across the floor, as she says, to force "the view into a physically dynamic reading of the text-a movement that is metaphor for engagement." It is left to the viewer or reader to recognize the Dickinson phrase and reconstruct its meaning. (Danly et. 82) This shows the process one artist took interpreting and manipulating Dickinson's verses from a letter. Horn and Dickinson may share many similar personality traits due to the similarity of their work not in a literal sense but in the way they choose to let their viewer or reader into an understanding of who they are through their work.

My Business is Circumference-
An ignorance, not of Customs,
But if caught with the Dawn-
or the Sunset see me-
Myself the only kangaroo among the Beauty....(Danly 83)

In this passage Dickinson is commenting on her public persona and the ostrification because of it. Horn perhaps has this same suspect of others view of herself. Was it prophetic that this woman who looks and acts like a man was named Roni? Always dressed in man-tailored clothes with close-cropped hair, Roni has spent her life perceived as a man. The pitch of her voice lies somewhere between genders, and she speaks somewhat slowly, seeming to measure her words as she speaks, making a curious movement of her mouth and jaw, as if she were almost tasting what she was saying. (Seidner 70) Horn and Dickinson may share many similar personality traits due to the similarity of their work not in a literal sense but in the way they choose to let their viewer or reader into an understanding of who they are through their work.

Often one might take a poem's meaning and see how it works in someone else's life in a parallel manner to your own.

It might be lonelier

Without the loneliness-
I'm so accustomed to my Fate-
Perhaps the Other - Peace -
Would interrupt the Dark-
And crowd the little Room-
Too scant- by Cubits- to contain
The Sacrament- of Him-

I am not used to Hope-
It might intrude upon-
Its sweet parade- blaspheme the place-
Ordained to Suffering-

It might be easier
To fail- with Land in Sight-
Than gain- My Blue Peninsula-
To perish- of Delight- (Danly 74).

If I were to do a piece on a Dickinson poem it would be the one above. The piece not be a literal illustration of the poem but rather just mean to interpret the poems feeling that it gives me. It would be a clear glass dome in which a very small dark figure of glass is encased and trapped in a bubble. The thickness of the glass would add to the sense of isolation and hopelessness that come through on the poem. The piece would then be placed on a waist high pedestal with the poem painted on the top in a circular fashion so that when the viewer would look down into the piece they would see the distorted words would be visible through the glass.

Although he does not currently use Emily Dickinson for his work perhaps artist Jack Pierson would be able to relate to this poem. After being asked about the sense of loneliness and isolation in his work, he answered, "That's what maybe makes it universal. All

art deals with loneliness on some level if it's doing its job."(Seidner 104)

"What, exactly, is Dickinson's appeal? In part is it her fantastic language: the words with destabilized meanings, the dissonant hymnbook cadences, the distinctive tone of voice: defiant, witty, spiritually yearning but skeptical, emotionally fervent but guarded." (Cotter) All of this I agree with. But in addition I think it is also the universal nature of her writings. If one is able to identify with something then it makes it that much easier to learn from and the accusation of knowledge is what makes for the greatest people. Emily Dickinson learned from her contemporaries and influences and many artists have learned from her it is this that defines the human evolution not physical changes.

I haven't yet created a piece based on Dickinson's work but this paper has opened me up to some places where I might influence for what ever I do. Dickinson is often able to put into words, things that I would have a difficult time expressing in any other way but my art. I'm grateful to her that sometimes I can just read and say, "I know exactly what you mean".