

Danica Phelps
New York, 1971

Personal Statement

I have been making work about my everyday life for 23 years. My life is usually fairly mundane. It is these moments that I find people most relate to. I started by drawing everything that I spent money on- Rarely in a literal way. Instead, humorously abstracted. This practice began when I was struggling to make ends meet while finishing graduate school. I found that it helped me to keep track of how much money I had and helped me not to run out. Because these drawings comprised a story, I felt that I had to show all of them in each series.

As people started buying them, I devised a system of recreating each drawing by tracing it and creating another generation which contained information about who bought each one, where, and for how much money. This generation went back into the series. Some of the drawings have been generated up to 20 times, with each generation getting longer as the last one is purchased and more information is added.

Also, I invented a system of representing money coming in and out with one small green stripe representing a dollar coming in and one red stripe representing one dollar going out. The most recent project using this system is called "Income's Outcome". This series started with a gallery asking me to make a presentation at the Cologne Art Fair. I looked at my bank account on that day and started drawing everything that I spent that money on. I stopped drawing when that money ran out, deciding not to draw again until there was income from the sale of those particular drawings. If nobody had purchased them, then there would only be the original drawings. Instead, people bought them each time they were shown. Now the series has about 350 drawings.

The newest direction in my work has been fundraising for organizations who are helping to make the world a better place. This project started while I was listening to stories from refugees. For them, nothing was mundane, everything is a struggle and I wanted to help. I drew 41 mundane things in my life that I am grateful for, like watching my son sleep in the morning or drinking clean water from a water fountain. I auctioned these drawings to the highest bidder. The purchaser received their drawing when I received a check made out to an organization that I had chosen who provided what I had drawn to those who do not have it. I made diptychs that show the next generation of my drawing alongside a drawing of the work that the organization is doing. This project raised almost \$20,000. I followed that with a project about cleaning beaches that raised \$3000.

Currently, I am embarking on a project that is raising money for legal fees for women who have suffered domestic violence. These projects have a final manifestation in exhibitions that document the whole process. The resulting drawings are for sale in a traditional manner.

Critical Statement

The work of Danica Phelps gathers conceptual precedents not only by taking in account economy as a main theme of her work but also in the practice of the data capture, the exhaustiveness, and in the record of the facts, that have been a main feature of conceptual art.

Since 1996 Danica Phelps has been documenting all of her income and expenses through drawings in a system that becomes increasingly layered and complex. In this system, each drawing is a depiction of a daily activity and documentation of a financial transaction, and each dollar is represented by a single stripe of watercolor: green for income, red for expense and grey for credit.

The result is a huge personal diary, even if speaking of results is hard. First because the work is always in process, and second because the work in itself is almost not a work in itself but a tracing, a document of pieces of everyday life.

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Letter of intent

I am very excited to find out about this residency, particularly because you welcome children and there are not many residencies who do. Also, because I will be working on exhibitions in Europe next year, and it would be wonderful to make the work there.

My son is 11 now, and he has been the subject of my work since he was conceived. It would be very difficult for me to make work without him. He has also started to make the work with me.

He fully participated in the last project that I made, which is ongoing. It is a project about the ocean. We drove from San Francisco to Los Angeles, camping along the way. We stopped at beaches every day to remove the trash, bring it back to our campsite, clean it and make sculptures out of it. I then auctioned each sculpture in return for a check made out to different organizations who work to clean the ocean, help climate refugees, help refugees fleeing terror and oppression via the Mediterranean Sea, free ocean mammals from ghost fishing gear, fight for sustainable fishing practices, and combat climate change. We raised \$3,000 with this project. I also made drawings of everything I spent money on while we were on our trip, as well as drawings of each sculpture that was sold. The drawings and the sculptures were shown at Luis De Jesus Gallery in Los Angeles.

In the future, we will be traveling to beaches around the world to collect fishing line specifically. After it has been brought back to the studio and cleaned, I will be unraveling it to the smallest component (often a thread size) and then winding it into balls. After we have collected a substantial number of balls, I will install them along with drawings made about our travels.

There will be a number of iterations of this project. Iterations where the balls are shown as they are, and other iterations where the balls are unraveled and wound around a central pole or spike in the gallery. I will tie one end of the first ball onto the spike and start walking around and around the pole until the ball is unwound. Then, I will tie the second ball onto the first and keep walking until all the balls are unwound and there is a large sphere of fishing line which will represent each of the places where it was collected.

I hope to continue this project at your residency program, using the space to process and make drawings there on the different materials, such as fishing lines, collected at beaches in Europe. I will be working on exhibitions at NF/ NIEVES FERNÁNDEZ Gallery in Madrid and Galerie Judin in Berlin for the coming year. The exhibition in Berlin will be all drawings. The exhibition in Madrid will be drawings and sculptures.