

Late summer, and how is it already 2018?

Dear Stranger,

I send this letter to you at Las Cruces Gallery in Austin, on the occasion of the exhibition of "Correspondence," the new work of my dear friend, Ana Esteve Llorens. I live in Brooklyn, and most likely I won't have the chance to come to Austin and see the show. You do. For this, I am envious. I've experienced Ana's work at solo and group shows in Richmond, Virginia, where we both met nearly a decade ago as art students in graduate school at VCU—she as a sculptor and me as a fiction writer. I remember pieces that engaged me physically and emotionally through variations of color, shape, and media chosen, manipulated, presented with Ana's subtle eyes and heart, her hands, her mind. Thinking over it, it's clear that Ana's labor and her gift is giving form to feeling.

Though I haven't seen "Correspondence" in life, over the course of this past summer, I have been following its progress in phone calls, emails and digital photos. Below you will find fragments I've selected of our correspondence from the last months—chosen pieces from subsequent emails and alternating between Ana's voice and mine. In these fragments, I hope you'll find a sense of wholeness in the process of making this work and in the humanity behind it.

With love,



6.25.2018

Hello Amira,

I hope /
Austin /
I'm attaching studio shots, these are images of the process, more that the final pieces. But I wanted to share them with you, because that's how I think the final work comes into being. /
I imagine /
I'm excited /
HUGS!

6.26.2018

This is all very exciting Ana! I love the childhood elements and the way you explain /
This guy is funny and sweet /
I'm glad /
and also happy (and a little terrified!) /

Sending love from Brooklyn,
A

6.27.2018

Yes!!!! /

Hugs,
Ana

7.4.2018

Dearest Ana:

I loved /
It makes me think of Richmond and when we met, of sitting around the small round table in the kitchen at the house on Strawberry Street where we met, where we both lived, but never at the same time. I think also of your studio in the building on Broad Street, of visiting you there while you were in the midst of creating some of those big grad school projects and loving the feeling of being in that utilitarian space. /
galleries and coffee shops in New York, and I think of Austin and of San Antonio and waking up with you in an airstream trailer in some random person's backyard to hear of David Bowie's death /
The image of you sitting, tethered to a loom /
thinking back to childhood, conjuring the dining room table you ate with your parents and siblings, recreating your childhood bedroom in Oliva, so far away from Austin, but also so close for your act of recalling, transforming it. You are actually inside of the memory in a way, it emanates from you. To meditate on it helps me think /
The last thing I want to touch on /
walked to the Brooklyn Museum early in the bright hot sun, devoured the Georgia O'Keefe exhibit. You walked me so close to the dresses and we looked at the stitching and admired her devotion to making her life her art. And was it that time or another when we

saw /
It's independence day. What does that mean /
Please send me more soon!

Much love,
Amira

7.9.2018

Querida Amira,

thank you so much for these beautiful paragraphs /
As the 18th of August gets closer and I'm forced to
make decisions, I see the work concluding, for now /
To ensure continuity between /
I will /
I found inspiration for this piece in an unfolded paper
packaging /
I think of this set of drawings as a way to split /
I'm thinking of making /
I will decide /
And there will be your words! /
Today it's 74 degrees, and it's been raining all
morning in Austin!!
I love it, I miss you!!

7.18.2018

Dearest Ana:

I hope this message finds you /
I am writing you from /
my southern road trip, in a small cabin in someone's
huge backyard in the country outside of Asheville /
I love everything /
Your words and thoughts /
Unfortunately (or fortunately?) our internet reception
is terrible here, so /
By designating things "natural" we seem to be
bestowing them with some idea of purity that I think is
ultimately very harmful, as it correlates that anything
not pure is objectionable, punishable, destroyable,
etc. So to break this apart, I think we must
acknowledge the impure and, as far as making goes,
devise and work through processes that feel useful,
conducive, natural. This brings me to thinking about
your work, about what you are doing as you adjust
your vision and move forward in the dark. /
I imagine you in your studio with all that great light,
considering how /
here I am in this strange valley, alone too, writing /
In our loneliness, there is a correspondence, a
knowing that the work we do in our solitude is, in
essence, who we are, and also our way of reaching
deeper into ourselves and reaching towards each
other. /

Correspondence--I love this as a title. It's a concept
that flowers out. Letter-writing is the first thing that
comes to mind. I did a lot of letter-writing as a child
who moved around a lot, to make sure the friends I
missed didn't lose track of me. There is certainly a
loneliness to it, when I happen on those old letters

and their responses. But there is something else, too,
the sense that by attempting correspondence I was
creating something new, figuring something out from
myself and beyond myself. I was practicing vision and
voice. /

Audre Lorde, begins her short essay, "The
Transformation of Knowledge Into Language and
Action," like this: "I have come to believe over and
over again that what is important to me must be
spoken, made verbal and shared, even at the risk of
having it bruised and misunderstood." Lorde is
decidedly very political in her writings, and yet there is
an essential truth here that can apply in so many
ways. Is there always a risk in attempting
correspondence? I wonder how you feel that in your
current work. My chosen medium is words, and there
you are, moving into the material world. Another
quote, this time more pointedly about what you do
and from John Berger's "Steps Towards a Small
Theory of the Visible"--which I think I shared with you
some time ago now--"The modern illusion concerning
painting...is that the artist is the creator. Rather, he is
the receiver. What seems like creation is the act of
giving form to what he has received." Are you
receiving or creating today? I'd say it's somewhere in
the mysterious territory between both of those things.
I wish this for both of us today.

Sending love,
Amira

[A picture of the sorbet-colored sunset sky in
Asheville]

8.5.2018

Dear Amira,

apologies for this 18 days delayed response! I have
been working and distracted /
I'm in Austin, 93F right now, not too bad. /
I have also finished /
I recorded it last night /
there is a third piece that I have not described to you /
Do you remember when we saw "The Broken
Kilometer" on West Broadway? /
And there is one more thing I wanted to share /
takes the form of a letter /

I can't wait to hear more about your trip. BIG BIG
HUGS!

Ana

[A picture of the sorbet-colored sunset sky in Austin]

*Amira Pierce is a Senior Language Lecturer in the Expository
Writing Program at New York University. She has had short fiction
and essays published in literary journals, both online and in print,
and she is currently at work on a novel. She receives
correspondence at amirawpierce@gmail.com.*