



Transformer Press

Lise Melhorn-Boe

I am an artist who has been making books as art objects for over twenty-five years. I have often used other women's stories as the inspiration and text for my work. I have been struggling with my health since my mid-twenties, some problems caused by or exacerbated by art materials, and discovered a couple of years ago that I had breast cancer. I then learned that I had extremely high levels of heavy metals in my body, which my doctor attributed to growing up in two communities with smelters. He also felt that the cancer and my chronic infection could be attributed to the heavy metals contamination. I realize that there are probably many others, whose health has been compromised in some way by their environment. I decided to make a body of work on this topic, and have recently spent four months researching connections between health and the environment, as an Artist in Residence at Queen's University. However, I am, as always, interested in personal stories. Please answer these questions on a separate page. The questions are to be looked at as triggers to help you to share your health journey with me. I am looking for stories, not just one-word answers.

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Questionnaire

If you are blessed with perfect health, and don't feel this questionnaire is relevant, please look at questions 7 to 12.

1. Tell me about your childhood. In what kind of environment did you grow up? For example, did you live near an electrical transformer or transmission line? in or near an agricultural/industrial area? near a gas station, print shop, dry-cleaning establishment? Was there a lot of tension in your family?

2. Do you remember a time when you woke up most mornings and felt good? What was that like?

3. When did you begin to feel unwell or out-of-balance? At the time, what did you think was the cause of your problems?

4. What is/was your profession? What is/was your work environment like?

5. Tell me about your health history. Have you been feeling unwell for months? years? What avenues have you pursued to regain your sense of well-being? Have you had good or bad experiences with MDs or alternative practitioners? How have your concerns been treated by professional, family members, friends? Has anyone told you "It's all in your head?"

6. Do you attribute any of your health challenges to an environmental cause? By environmental, I mean toxins in the air, water or food at home, or at work, or materials that you use(d), or physical or emotional stress in the family or workplace

7. Being "sick" is very stressful in itself. How do you deal with this? Prayer, meditation, music, writing, dance and exercise are some possibilities. What works best for you?

8. Are you aware of any health hazards with the following?

Living/working close to an electrical transformer or power line or a microwave or radio tower.

Carrying/using a cell-phone. Wearing/using an IPOD/portable tape/DVD player. Using a computer. How far do you sit from your computer? Do you leave it on all the time? If you have a computer at home, where is it situated?

Using a blow-dryer.

Using tampons or disposable sanitary napkins.

Having a clock/radio near your bed. Using an electric blanket/ water-bed heater.

Wearing make-up, nail polish. Using hair-dye, antiperspirant.

Cooking with Teflon pots/pans.

Drinking out of plastic bottles, micro-waving food in plastic containers.

9. Would you like further information about any of the above? (See #13)

10. Are you concerned about environmental problems? If so, how are you dealing with it? Have you made changes in your life-style? Are you angry? Are you politically active? Creative? Depressed? Why have you chosen this method of expression?

11. If I were to use any part of your story in a work of art, do you wish to remain anonymous? May I use your first name only? Whole name? Would you like me to get your approval for the specific text that I'd like to use? (See #13)

12. Would you like to be on my mailing list for future questionnaires, or for notice of exhibitions? (See #13)

13. May I have some contact information?

Name and Mailing Address and/or e-mail address. Phone number optional.