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April 5, 2022 - Alexandra Drewchin, aka Eartheater, is a prolific multi-instrumentalist, composer, singer, poet, choreographer, and visual/performance artist based in Queens. When not touring, she's active in the New York performance scene. Among other things, she recently completed her first film, *Cunter Gatherer*, played the child in a three-night run of *The Fool*, an opera by Raul de Nieves and Colin Self, at the Kitchen, and made an 80-page Eartheater choreography book called *M. O. M.* comprised of poems written in "body language."

As told to Brandon Stosuy, 2413 words.

Tags: Music, Writing, Art, Process, Anxiety, Multi-tasking.

On being patient with your projects

Multi-instrumentalist dancer and artist Alexandra Drewchin, aka Eartheater, discusses why no creative idea is a waste of time, being proud of what you make, and the importance of to-do lists.

You do a lot at once. How do you manage it all?

A lot of it is letting things breathe—which, I think, is a counterintuitive approach sometimes, especially stimulated by the brainwashing mindset of capitalism. It's about how much can you cram in and how much you can churn out. Ultimately, I think that compromises the quality of the events, music, work, and relationships that come out of it.

The idea of doing a lot, but carefully.

There's nothing wrong with having a spark, an idea, and nurturing it as long as your inspiration lasts. Then you can put it in a drawer, and that inspiration will come back. Of course, it's everything in moderation. You can go too far and drop the ball. What I've been finding with myself, as someone who "suffers" from ADHD "disorder," is that it's okay to have a library or archive of ideas happening at the same time. I'm someone that reads two books at the same time, that makes two albums at the same time. As soon as I lose that initial interest, I need to breathe.

Another aspect of my breathing theory is that if you're doing a project, it's okay that everything will be a mess. It's okay that your room will totally fall apart. That's like the exhale. Then the inhale is when you're done and you clean everything up. It's almost like a celebratory thing, when you clean up. Cleaning up is celebratory. Chaos within the creation is great—you know the special pen is underneath that pile of paper and it's all organized in this crazy way. No one else would understand it. It's like your natural amoebic understanding of your process.

Do you think it's okay to abandon a project? Like if you start something and then you move on or decide that this is not what I wanted to do. Or do you see it as never abandoning, and you might always come back?

Having the courage to be brutalist about your work is important. Whether you're attached to the work and it's hard for you to let it go, or whether it's just too much of a push and you have to let it go... I think that's a good thing to have in your toolbox. But having an idea is never in vain. Life for me is about learning, so if you learned within that process, wherever you got to that dead end or that opposition, you've still gained whatever you have to gain from it because you've learned something.

Nothing's in vain. You learn and it's okay. I've certainly abandoned things—there are things I should've abandoned. There are things that I gave way too much time to, but when I look back, I was doing it because I knew was learning something. In my moments of feeling the most discouraged, I try to tell myself that it's worth continuing because of what I can learn.

Are you self-taught in your music and dancing and everything?

I'm completely self-taught. I'm somebody that says that I can do it before I can to survive. Every single

job I've had, every single thing that I've done, I've just said that I can do it before I can do it and then I learn that way. A little bit of pressure always helps.

And I love procrastinating, actually, because that pressure at the end really helps. A lot of the process happens without the gears crunching, too. If you know it's happening and you know you're putting it off, I find myself thinking about it in the back of my head but in a more romantic poetic way. It almost feels like the algorithm is engaged. Then when it comes time to harvest it, you go in there and be like, "So, what have you done?" Pick all the fruit.

What's your impulse to do so many different things?

Too much comfort wrecks the intellect. That's one part I'm so excited by, and I know it works for me. You want to relieve the pressure, that stagnant nightmare and monotony and switch it up. It's also certainly induced by the internet and the way that everything is multimedia now... It even feels weird saying "multimedia."

I feel like I'm trying to make films with my music. I see a record that feels like a film to me. I see the scenes. I see things play out. I see the characters and the monologues and the arcs of narrative. The way that film uses juxtaposition as a strategy in maintaining attention or asking questions and creating a thought process.

My favorite part of making film through music is the reduction. It's like you're paring it all down to this feeling that you can then use. That's why I love music and I think that's why I like music that's really cinematic. It allows me to have a cinematic quality to my life, which maybe diffuses some of my overly bloated emotions, which are not constructive.

Do you find anxiety useful?

I think that anxiety, to a point, is useful. Cortisol exists in our brain for a reason. I think that understanding the given chemical components and being able to manage and appreciate some of the stigmatized chemicals is useful. The highly examined mind and chemical makeup of the mind right now is really interesting to me. If you say anxiety, I feel like it has a negative connotation. I think it can be really useful. Unless it's to the point where you're not expressing yourself well, but that's part of the story. That's part of the beauty.

I really love to talk to anxious people. I really love to listen to people that I can tell are having anxiety and then carefully move through that with them. Some people will be like, "Oh, that person's really hard to talk to." I'm like, "No, they're not." You identify that there is something there, so it's like how do we move through that? I think kindness ultimately, I suppose. Of course, we don't always have the patience to do that. I think that would solve a lot of problems. I think there's too much pressure on the person expressing, as opposed to the person listening. There should be more listening. People need to listen more. I need to practice what I preach, obviously.

How do you know when a project is done? When do you say, all right, this is done, I can move on?

When you just really love it. When it's done, it's suddenly not part of you anymore. You can listen to that song and you can appreciate its beauty without it being connected to you. It's not until you've made that last micro-edit. If you haven't made that last micro-edit, that's the umbilical cord. That's the thing that's connected to you that you can still change or channel into. As soon as that is done, it's like the wings bloom, blossom out of it. It's a butterfly and it flies away and then it does its own thing. Then people ask you questions about it and you're like, "I don't know, ask it."

It's a magnificent feeling. I think I've only felt it twice, with my last two records. I've tried so many times to put out records before that. I was 26 when I put out *Metalepsis*. I remember being 17 and telling myself very firmly, that if you don't put out a record by the time you're 18, you're a failure or something. The thing that stopped me was because I didn't have that feeling. I could never achieve that feeling. I remember; I did this thing. I love sigils. I like writing things down. If you want them to happen, write them down.

I started being less hard on myself and then I started to identify what the problem was. I liked my songs but when it came to the recording process, I didn't. I would just write down these wishes. It was like, I hope that one day I would be able to create something that I do deeply love. I loved the process and I loved the obsession and the dedication but I still wasn't making things that I really loved. Everyone's different, but I'm a really self-scrupulous person. I'm really hard on myself but I think it's worth it. I waited until I was 26 to put out that record... I was proud of it. Feeling proud of something is really something worth living for. Waiting and allowing it to wait.

Because of the internet, people know things at an earlier age, and also expect things faster now. I think people now feel like at a certain age, if they haven't achieved a certain level of success, they're a failure.

I think that's a thing that's happening right now. It's beautiful but I think it can be destructive because whatever that voice is in your head, it's not yours. It's someone else's. It's something that you've learned. If you didn't have that voice and if age wasn't a thing, so hypothetically, if age wasn't a thing, that just wouldn't matter. Age shouldn't be a thing.

Everything is too rushed. It's interesting, because we're also in a time when people are the most healthy. People will live longer, if you want to get down to the nitty gritty. People also are not so pressured to start families. If you don't want to start a family, you don't have to. Or that can happen later. Time is malleable. I think we measure time by the speed by which we absorb information. Does that make sense?

We're just gathering and putting out so much information. Everything is on steroids and it's beautiful. I think it's beautiful and I love it. There's nothing to be scared about with that. It's fine. It's natural, beautiful, amoebic growth. The internet is alive.

You were saying you were into writing sigils. On a more basic way, do you write, like, to-do lists?

I definitely write a lot of lists. I think notebook culture is so special. You can see the timbre, if you will, in your hand. Some days your list is super neat and some days it's really crazy and there's a doodle and there's a thing. Then you're also like, I heart Greg, heart. Writing everything digitally, I think you lose that subtlety. I saw a really good meme recently that was like, art is missing the ... and it's just a really weird scribbled thing. I was like, it's true, yeah. I think that having a notebook, writing journal entries, writing down the date, are all really helpful. It's relieving.

To-do lists are great. Sometimes, I'll put "taking a shower" and "doing my laundry" on a to-do list because crossing things out feels so good. Sometimes you need that, you know? I really think lists are cool. I want to get into real cool structured listing. My friend Reese Cox, who one day you'll interview because he's a genius, but he's very under the radar, Reese is incredible. I was at his house and I saw his list, I was like, "Oh, cool list." One on the list, it was collaborate with Alex and he went over there and crossed it out. I was like, "Oh, yeah. Nice cross out."

I don't remember how we figured it out or what the conversation was, but I learned that it was his year list. It was his list for the year and I was like, "Cool, I don't think I've ever done a year list." I love that. It'd be cool to have a hierarchal month, two month, three month, four month, year. I think that timelines are great, I'm all for that. Charts, yeah. Lists are really important.

Sigils are different than lists but they are lists. There's power in the sigils. I'm just going to get a little bit kooky for a second but you know, I don't think it's a coincidence that the word spell is a homonym of spell. I think that when you write something down and saying a word is like creating, we think with our thoughts. I really do believe in the power of that. Then sigils are just a step further. My favorite sigil that I do and that I hope that everybody uses is: "May the opportunities that only I can specifically fill, that were made for the talents in which I possess, my specific ability, may they become shown to me and may I have the discernment to notice them when they're there." It works.

Alexandra Drewchin recommends:

MEMORIZE QUOTES - I've been realizing the importance of actively installing voices in my thoughts and conversations by planting seeds of useful poetry by people that truly have pierced some of the thickest veils. I suggest memorizing quotes by Octavia Butler, Angela Davis, Helen Keller, Billie Holiday, Rosa Parks, and Harriet Tubman. Their voices take root and become a part of you.

FIND A GENTLE HORSE - Get on its back and feel your two gravities collaborating. Then maybe ponder how far we've come as a species because of the kindness of horses. This will cost you more than a falafel but less than a NYC 8th-unless you've got friends with horses-in which case please help hook it up.

LISTEN TO *FETISH BONES* BY MOOR MOTHER - Follow her. Go to her shows and read her poetry. She is about to go on a world tour in April so find her wherever you are.

GO SEE FLUCT - If you are too far from NYC then have someone in your nearest city book them. If you are in Europe then they will be touring with SOPHIE in October. If you're beyond these zones then get lost in their website Fluct.tv.

BEFORE YOU LOOK AT YOUR PHONE FOR NO REASON - Do 50 kegels and ten 20 second long holds. I don't know any science behind this but when I remember to do my kegels regularly I retain better focus while reading and generally feel smarter-in addition to the physical benefits.

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Vocation

musician, visual artist, dancer, choreographer


Fact


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