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Interview with Emily Loker

Emily Loker

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Interviewer: Catherine Fisher
Interviewee: Emily Loker
Makers@PPL, Portland, Maine
4.25.2015

CF: We're here at the Portland Public Library for Makers @ PPL and Maker's Fair. This is Catherine Fisher. It's the 25th of April, year 2015, and I'm here with Emily Loker. She's going to talk about her creative process. What you like to make, right? So why don't you tell me: what do you like to make?

EL: Sure. In college, I was a writing major, so I made a lot of words. I also appreciated visual art, so I took quite a few art classes. But unfortunately, since I graduated from college, I haven't been creating as much. Work has sort of taken over that.

CF: What is your work?

EL: I work as an Americorps VISTA at Preble Street.

CF: Do you get to do creative work there with them at all?

EL: I did a little bit of story collecting last summer, but otherwise, it's mostly working with food stamps and with summer meals. It's mostly just expanding access to federal nutrition programs. So not very creative. [laughs]

CF: Would it still be words if you had more time, do you think?

EL: Music also has always called to me. Music, and I'm looking into taking a continuing ed course at MECA, so more ceramics also.

CF: Ceramics, nice. What will you make when you get back into making, as far as ceramics? What would you like to do?

EL: I really like functional pottery. I made a dinner set when I was in college. I also like to connect my interests, like my activism interests, so food justice with ceramics. I made plates with vegetables on them, and ... I'd like to continue that.

CF: That's really such a great idea. Do you think that you'd be able to bring that back to Preble Street in some way?

EL: Certainly. The obstacle that I've come across for ceramics is that it's very resource-intensive. You need a lot of financial capital to even engage in the art, which is too bad. I

see it more musically - there's a higher possibility that I could incorporate that into my work. [Music is]-a much less financially burdensome art.

CF: Right. And what kind of music? Do you play an instrument, or is it your voice, or ...

EL: Yeah. I play the guitar and banjo.

CF: And do you sing?

EL: I do.

CF: Do you get to do that now, perform at all?

EL: Yeah. I do sing in a choir, so that's nice.

CF: Great. Does that feel good to you?

EL: It does, yes. It definitely does.

CF: Would you say at all that where you live and where you make things, or where you hope to make things, is important to your process or your product?

EL: Definitely. I moved here from Wisconsin, a fairly small town in Wisconsin, and I think moving to Portland, where the arts are such a central focus and encouraged in the economy - I mean, there's the Picnic series [indie craft fair and music festival held in Portland, Maine], there's the Merchant Company, which is all local artisans - I think all of that just opens your eyes and engages you in a way that, when you don't see art all around you every day, and people working as artists, it doesn't do the same thing. So, I think, definitely, Portland, as far as being exposed to art and being inspired by other people's art, is a really great place to be.

CF: I do wonder ... touching on not having enough time to make art because of work, because of making a living, and then also the financial constraints of particular kinds of making ... Would you want to say something about that, in terms of the population that you serve at Preble Street? Would you say that making is a luxury, in a way?

EL: I think certain types of making are types that are less financially accessible. There are so many different types of making. I think that creative expression, in itself, is not a financially-inhibited thing. Like I said, song is always one way. There was an improv club at Preble Street for a while. All of those ways to engage with people that don't necessarily have the financial capital. I think it's just a matter of being creative and engaging with that population in that way. It's, to be honest, lacking in that community.

CF: Thank you. Is there anything else you'd like to leave us with?

EL: No, thank you very much.

CF: I really appreciate it. That's great.