

Fascia Lines

Laurie, Katie —

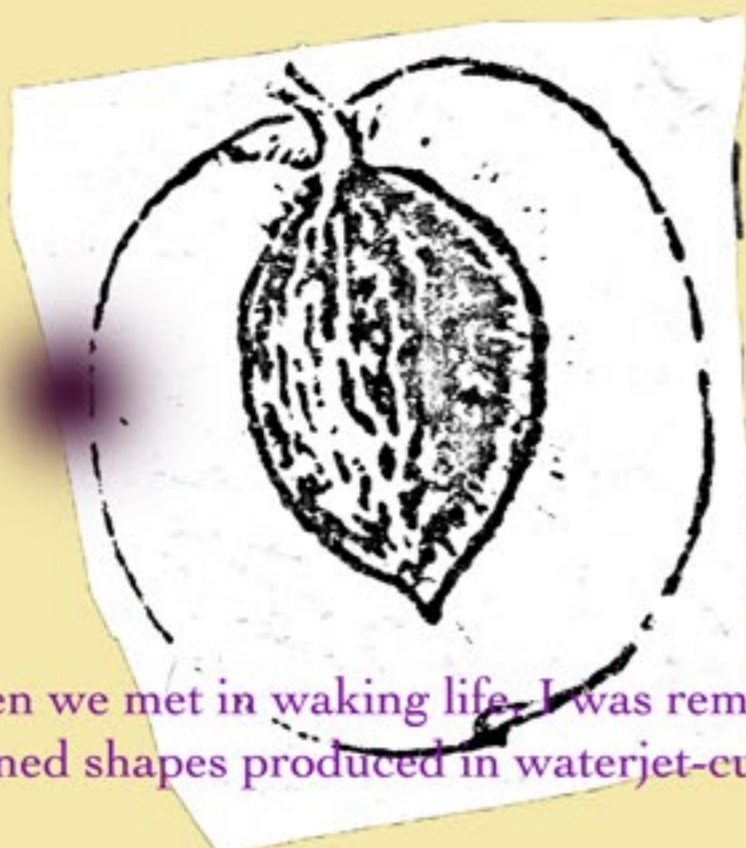
Lately, I've been speaking with you both about how you tend to work on the floor. That is, you're making images horizontally; with your eyes turned downwards and a curve in each of your spines. Katie, I can picture you sitting with pieces of loose canvas, legs extended in what's almost a ninety-degree angle, adding new layers of paint. Laurie, perhaps you're crouched or kneeling, treading back and forth around a large piece of photographic paper, spilling and spreading darkroom chemicals in wide arcs. As for me, I'm cross-legged on the carpet, laptop balanced on my thighs, some extra notes and papers near my left elbow. My right foot is falling asleep.

What remains in your bodies after a long day of work in the studio? Of course, there's no start or end to this—to your work or mine. Do you know this idea of the "small dance," from the choreographer Steve Paxton? It's the dynamics of alignment and flow we enact in our bodies, even in moments of so-called perfect stillness. We're in a constant state of adjustment and balancing; an infinite micro-choreography. So, when you're working in the studio, when you're biking around the city, when you're sleeping, when you're reading, when you're eating—these movements aren't distinct, but continuous, connective. They stretch, bend, and contract, they constitute one another—it's an ongoing dance.

Laurie, Katie—how do your floors support you, what postures do they prompt? What kinds of images get made in that proximity, that curving-over, that encircling of arms and legs? I feel a sense of ongoingness in your respective practices—they are filled with gestures that are never finished. More layers are to be cut out and worked through, new tones will emerge under reactive chemicals and light. There are new support systems to stretch and fold across; new skeletons for new skins.

I've gotten up from the floor—I took a break to stand in my kitchen and chop some vegetables. Now I'm sitting at a desk, left leg crossed over the right. I'm taking notes about fascia and touch; I feel a slight stiffness in the back of my neck. Laurie and Katie: all this time, I've been carrying our conversations in each of my postures and I know there's more to come.

Talk soon, xo
Daniella



¹Laurie, when we met in waking life, I was reminded that your studio-mate Nadia Belerique often works in this manner: large, flattened shapes produced in waterjet-cut steel. The brain is funny that way.

Laurie —

The night before we planned to meet in your studio, I had a dream about our very meeting. In the dream, we also intended to discuss your work in preparation for the show at Projet Pangée. I asked you what you were planning, and you described a series of large sculptural shapes cut from sheets of metal.¹ I listened and I drew them on a sheet of paper: wide, outstretched palms with fingertips pointing upwards. You corrected me—what I thought to be hands were in fact meant to represent bundles of coral, with bulbous finger-tendrils extending to the ceiling.

We're talking together—is this still my dream, or a humid Sunday afternoon in your studio? You're speaking about interiority and exteriority, about guts and sediments and Lynda Benglis' spill works. Before us, a long piece of photographic paper runs horizontally, almost like an oversized frieze, across a structure of steel wall studs. You mention that the long print is several years old—you covered it with drips and pours of darkroom chemicals, then left it unfixed and unused. Over the years, its textures changed under different lighting and atmospheric conditions. On display at Projet Pangée, this process will continue. It's something I've always loved about your practice—it has its own language for change, its own deep time.

Of course, corals are living creatures with exoskeletons, their outsides constitute their insides and vice versa. Your installation at Projet Pangée has more of an affinity with this idea than I initially recognized—a large skeleton-architecture with curving flex-trac spines, both internal support and external display. This stretch of photo paper is backed with shiny bruise-purple duratrans—a film material that's equally light-sensitive. Both sheets are so skin-like. They have a deep porosity, absorbing the environment and metabolizing what they can. Do you feel an empathy with these materials, Laurie? Watching them react and change must be like watching something living. A creature with a different life cycle, maybe. How does that relationship, that collaboration with an inhuman body, affect your human one?

In that dream, I'm not sure why we could not simply look at your sculptural work directly. Why did we resort to translating my crude drawings in pen? I was unable to ask you. Yet, maybe this letter isn't much different—just me trying to know your work from within a different body.

Thanks for the continued correspondence,
D



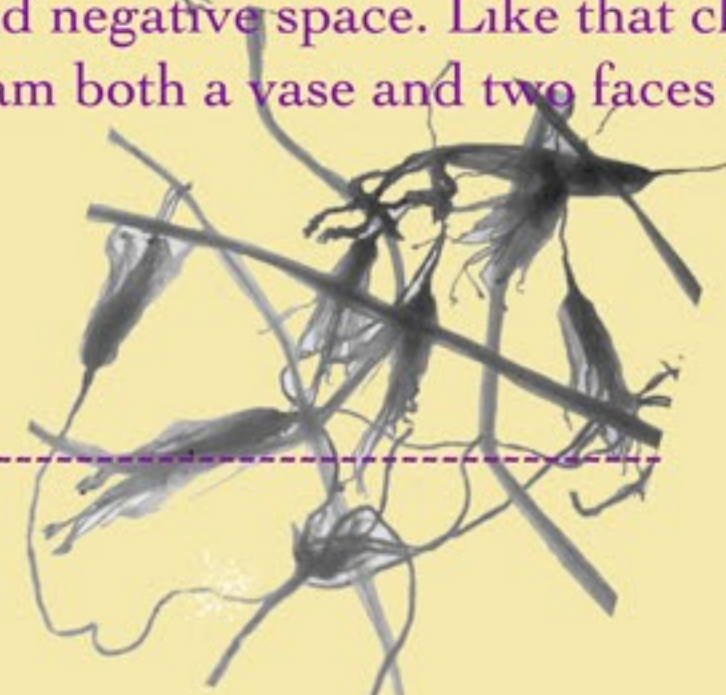
Laurie, Katie —

I did a beginner's experimental dance class recently, where we were paired up and made to drag our palms across our partners' bodies, tracing fascia lines up legs and torsos. This is what I know about fascia: it's supposedly the connective tissue between our muscles, research says, but so little is known about its mechanics, its intelligence. Another friend tells me that fascia has a directionality, a "grain"; that surgeons are mindful to move scalpels in alignment with its flow. ("Like woodworking," she clarifies). On some level, I also learned this under that dance-class partner's hand, their palm drawing fascia lines up and down my body in slow, mirrored spirals.

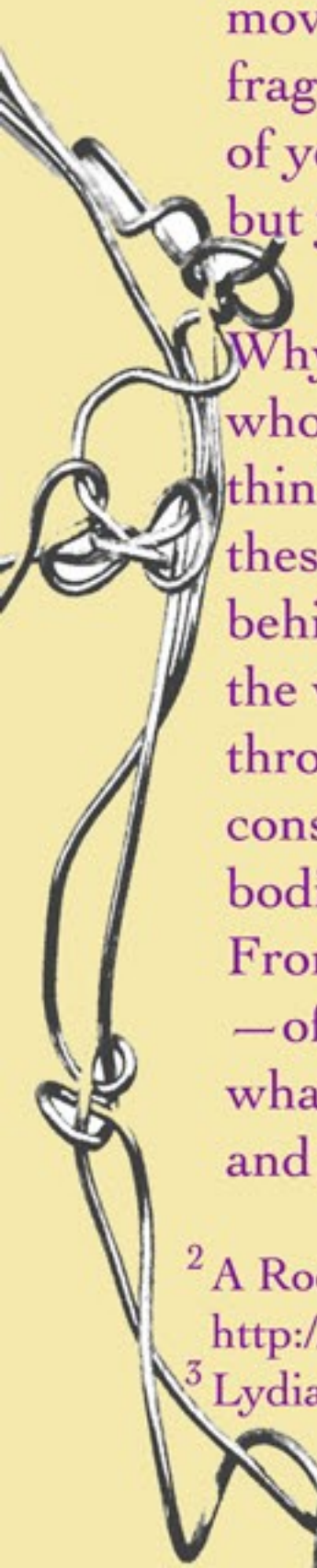
So, fascia is the connective tissue between our muscles, but maybe we need to complicate what "between" even means in this context. Apparently, fascia is goopy and viscous—simultaneously liquid and solid. It's a perpetual state of in-between, coating and merging with our muscles, forging complex systems of communication across the body that we can only begin to understand. What is one muscle without the fascia that frames it, that constitutes its movement? Perhaps there aren't such clear-cut separations between the parts of ourselves. Maybe we are shaped in the separation points—both figure and ground, internal and external, positive and negative space. Like that classic optical illusion: I am both a vase and two faces in profile.

Hmmm,
D

Katie —



I know we're here to talk about your paintings, but I saw your performance with Shelby the other day.² As we watched your choreography framed through the windows and doorways of that room-like structure you built, the audience was invited to move around and seek different vantage points. I can understand why, but I couldn't bring myself to change my point of view. A shift in perspective wouldn't have given me a bigger picture, wouldn't have given me the wholeness of your movements. Moving would have only supplied different fragments of your work. Plus, I was getting such joy out of your shadows, those moments with nothing in sight but your fingertips emerging from around the corner.



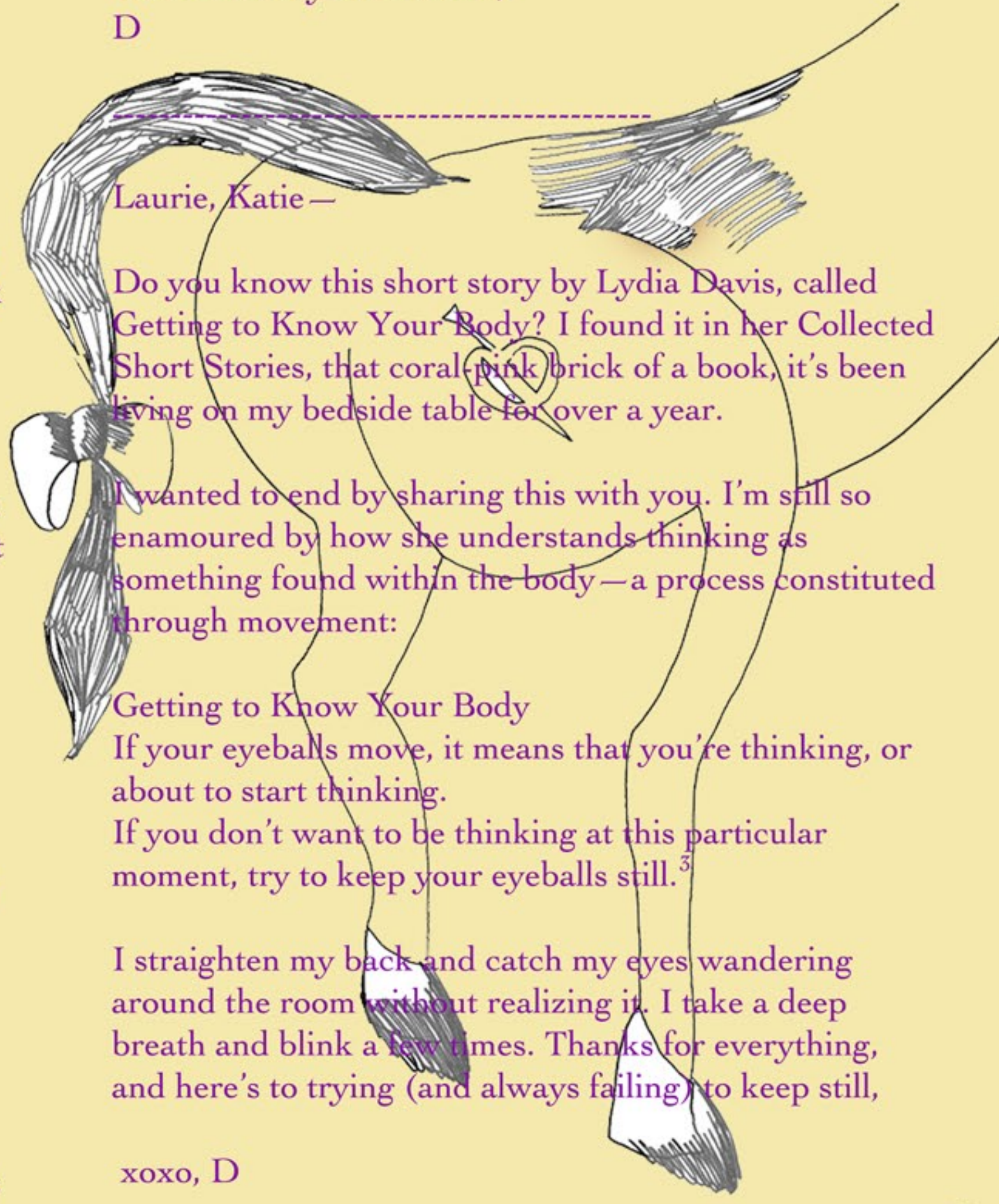
Why do we always feel like we need to access the wholeness of something in order to understand it? I'm thinking about your paintings differently now; about these glimpses of arms, legs, torsos. What's concealed behind layers of paint. But again, maybe "concealed" is the wrong word here—it's not like half a body seen through a door left ajar. These painted figures are constituted by what accumulates around them, by bodily edges that dissolve, re-shape, dissolve again. From what I understand about the way you work—often you don't even know where they will emerge, what postures they will take. Rather, you build up paint and pencil until a body can be found in the sediment.

(Katie, I feel such an affinity with this way of working—I'm not sure if I've told you that before. I think my practice is similar, maybe; ideas congeal through writing sentences, I'm not always sure where I will end up. On my better days, I recognize that there's intuition in that; following how your body metabolizes certain ideas in language—or, cutting with the grain of the tissue.)

But once again, I digress: I was talking about concealment. I don't feel like the bodies in your work are necessarily hiding behind something. Rather, they keep unfolding in ways that complicate their boundaries. Like fascia, they are viscous creatures—both liquid and solid. When you spend time searching for these figures in layers of paint, does that change how you think about your body, how you move through space, how you sit on the floor in your studio? At this moment, my posture is formed by my spine curving over my laptop, but it's also in the humid air meeting my skin, this couch cushion under my legs. When I spend time with your work, I feel more attuned to my edges, to the ways in which they warp and blur.

Yours in fuzzy boundaries,
D

Laurie, Katie —



Do you know this short story by Lydia Davis, called *Getting to Know Your Body*? I found it in her *Collected Short Stories*, that coral pink brick of a book, it's been living on my bedside table for over a year.

I wanted to end by sharing this with you. I'm still so enamoured by how she understands thinking as something found within the body—a process constituted through movement:

Getting to Know Your Body

If your eyeballs move, it means that you're thinking, or about to start thinking.

If you don't want to be thinking at this particular moment, try to keep your eyeballs still.³

I straighten my back and catch my eyes wandering around the room without realizing it. I take a deep breath and blink a few times. Thanks for everything, and here's to trying (and always failing) to keep still,

xoxo, D

² A Room To Perform by Katie Lyle and Shelby Wright, performed at the Summerworks Performance Festival, Toronto. August 12th 2018, <http://summerworks.ca/artists/a-room-to-perform/>.

³ Lydia Davis, "Getting to Know Your Body," in *The Collected Short Stories of Lydia Davis* (New York: Picador, 2009): 569.