

September 2020

Cranes have long been symbols of peace and good fortune in Japan and most of Asia. Sometimes a 1000 paper cranes are given to an ill person or ailing country. Sometimes a single crane is placed beside a newborn's crib as a gesture of fortune for the child's life.

Since I was introduced to origami cranes a few years ago by my friend Maria, I have made them endlessly. For me they are a way to take the best intentions in my heart and convert that energy into a folded gesture to share with someone I wish peace or love or good fortune.

With thread taken from bed sheets, towels and the hem in the jump suits I have here in this cell, I string cranes and hearts which often hang over the door of the cell, brushing my face when I am taken to recreation in handcuffs. Sometimes guards express pleasure at seeing one and I welcome them to take it. Some guards boldly ask can they have this or that one, and I never turn them down. Trying not to be seen by anyone, they sneak it into their pocket because here the sharing of good will is forbidden.

I would like to tell you all what I would like us to work on. Or rather, I would like to present an idea I have, and see what you all think of it--and see if we can shape a project together.

I would like for us to first learn how to make origami cranes. This took me a while to get the hang of, but I'm very confident that you all can do it. Does anyone know how to make them already? Can you help others work through the instructions Laurence provided? I will ask Maria to help you all, if you would like?

After we learn to fold cranes, the next step will be painting or drawing a crane that we have folded. I don't know what your preferred media is, but I would love to know. Would you type me a little message telling me a bit about yourselves and what sort of materials you like working with?

I like everything. It just depends on how I'm feeling, but paint is my favorite. Oils, acrylics and watercolor. I also love collage.

So what I'm thinking is that we will paint or draw a crane using our preferred medium on our preferred surface. The size is up to you individually.

After we paint our cranes, I would like us to have a discussion about who in our lives have been a source of good fortune for us? Who have been sources of peace? I would like for us to consider this because it has been my experience--and maybe you can relate to this--that so much of my good luck in life has come from people in my life or people I have met along the way. The peace I have had in life seems connected with help that I have gotten from others. So what I would like us to consider is some of the people in our lives who have been a source of good fortune or peace. And how we are all helped by another.

I would like us to write a couple paragraphs about how this person has been a source of good fortune to us. And for our last part of the project, I would like us to gift the painting to the person and take a photo portrait of the person with the painting. In this way, we are making three finished works of art: an origami crane, a painting of an origami crane, and a portrait of a person with a painting of an origami crane.

In addition, I think the work gets us thinking about the meaningful connections we make in life and we also give these persons a chance to be honored with our art. And being that art is a deeply human practice and the making of it adds dignity to our lives, with our work we will be gifting the world, I hope, with the dignity

of our humanity. And a bit of good fortune as well.

What do you all think of this idea? Would you like to add something, remove something? Scrap the whole thing and find something else to do?? Don't worry about telling me this isn't a good idea: I know I sometimes think I'm working with a good idea but I end up being the only one feeling that way:) So don't mind telling me how you all feel. I want us to do something we all feel good about, okay??

Peace and love,

Obie

