

Approach with Love

The pump shed is a fragile shell. Located down a path through a wood and by a stream, it barely has an inside at all — just a porous skin, open to the world. This shed has become a site for delicate enquiry. Planted by the Seedling folks, art wells up around this place. The shed is in a constant state of being re-imagined by artists and their visitors. There is an elemental cycle of making and leaving that takes place here; ideas sink into the ground like good rain after each exhibition.

Cathy Frawley pays close attention to the two hundred and forty perforations in the walls and ceiling of the pump shed (placing an eyeball to each one). She has discovered two hundred and forty different worlds and, as she photographs them, strange and beautiful landscapes emerge. There is something 'Lion Witch and Wardrobe' (a childlike delight) about all this. In Cathy's hands these perforations become finger-pokes into unexplored territories — she finds a portal into a new universe where another eye might see a hole.

Every day, before heading to the studio, Cathy takes a walk between the yellow line of the road and the creek that runs beside it. The starting place for her artistic enquiry is the continuum of loss and renewal. A daily walk is part of this process. When I first met Cathy she was working with a small pouch of letters; her father's things, lovingly kept. She was making work that referenced the folding and unfolding of these old letters, the memory of the paper analogous to the recollection of a loved one. It was quiet, devotional work mapping the links between a father and daughter, the pause between words and the neglected under-story of objects (she made entire installations for the underside of tables). Cathy describes her art-making as ...

an autobiographical story, one of love for my parents and family, which acknowledges the gift of my special vulnerable kin.

Love is at the core of Cathy's work, as both approach and subject. Her work suggests a shift in perception, gently nudging the viewer towards a position from which the world is seen more slowly and with greater care.

She writes of her approach ...

it's to do with an opening to unconditional love and not death as closure. The ability to walk in the sun despite what the weather is internally or externally, and too, the ability to traverse difficult terrain (the punctures, bruising and still do it continually in love of all things equally. Perhaps because of this [approach] the terrain becomes easier to manage.

Not far from the pump shed is a big tree. You will notice it for the 10 pouch-like, hand sized objects slung over it and the chair waiting for you beneath it. These embroidered pockets seem to be the inverse of the shed's lost iron: they contain found fragments. Cathy invites you to add to this many-coloured collection. She wants to hear about the things you have found through loss — transcendent small wonders, your safe journey over difficult emotional terrain. In Cathy's hands art-making is akin to the writing of a love letter to her viewers. She hopes you will write back.

Cathy has taken 240 pieces of loss and transformed them into beautiful moments. She has captured these exquisite glimpses and now hands them to us, warmly bound in the snug memory of safe places and hand-worn pockets. She hopes that you take away not only this beautiful object (this artist-book, this catalogue) but that you also take with you the potential for renewal from this intimate and generous art.

Sasha Grbich 2010

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