

An abstract painting on an easel, featuring a central text overlay. The painting consists of expressive, gestural brushstrokes in shades of brown, black, and white, set against a light background. The easel is made of wood and has a shelf below the canvas holding several tubes of paint. The background shows a cluttered studio space with various art supplies and a book titled 'CELLO SONATA'.

victoria lewis

unanswered questions
in the garden



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To the Stephen who stood by the sea.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to thank Juli Lowe for her open, sincere mentoring and thoughtful interest in my work. And Karl Griffiths-Fulton for taking on this small project during COVID, for his patience with my inconsistencies.

I am indebted to the heroic teaching efforts of Ian Gardiner without which I would never have understood the mind.

And to Stephen Cone Weeks my colleague who's friendship, belief and encouragement span decades of my life.

Who is speaking?

Paula Heimann

Early 1950s. British Psycho-Analytical Society.



ARTIST'S STATEMENT

My work acknowledges three convergent intellectual preoccupations:

- Surrealism's exploration of the unconscious as described in Andre Breton's recounting of the object in the flea market. ¹
- Christopher Bollas' psychoanalytic writings on object relations and the shadow of the object. ²
- Buddhism's naming of this world we inhabit as the *unforgetting world*. ³

I see my childhood self alone, absorbed in this world of illusions, moving two tiny dolls with their shoe box home like chess pieces through sunlight and shadows on the dense pile of a carpet's patterned surface.

Aware now of that child as a self articulating absorbed ways of being, my work essentially retains this initial process of play with objects and their wordless implications.

There are many thrills inherent in this endeavour. The ongoing search for the object of desire and the crystallizing moment of discovery are two extremes that were enacted even in my early documentary photography as I scoured my immediate environment for that significant, resonating image.

In this body of work documentary subjects are replaced by objects found in box-lots at auctions, on shelves in second hand stores or more prosaically, on eBay.

In the studio several objects in which I sense an unknown relationship dynamic are chosen and arranged on the mirrored surface of my still life table. The mirrors' reflected space serves to visually engage as well as mimic my understanding of the complexity of consciousness.

Next I photograph the arranged objects from various angles, looking for that riveting combination of light and form.

Viewing these photographs on a large computer display I select several because of their apparent possession of that wordless unthought something, that '*je ne sais quoi*.' The ensuing editing process may involve cropping, enlarging and most recently considering the image through different coloured filters.

The actual painting process is further exploration and discovery. Attention to the quality of the brush marks is an ongoing discipline.

I experience the initial sketch with its unselfconscious gestures and apparently limitless options as the most exciting stage of the painting. The future appearance of the image is still largely undetermined. Few options have been lost.

Later will come questions about the degree of specificity to give the space and forms, the degree of finish to pursue. The amount of closure to seek.

Hovering around this central question of finish exists the tension of satiety. Mine and the viewers, a delicate balance between my aesthetics and those of the unknown viewing other. Proceeding past my point of engagement turns the play into proscriptive labour. This most difficult decision of ending remains central to my concerns.

The small images in this catalogue continue my ongoing explorations of this larger project.

Victoria Lewis
Stratford
April 29, 2021

1. The significance of these objects, Breton claims, lies in the relationships formed between the objects and the subjects who identified them. As Breton put it at the conclusion of his account of his flea-market encounters: 'The finding of an object serves here exactly the same purpose as the dream, in the sense that it frees the individual from paralyzing affective scruples, comforts him and makes him understand that the obstacle he might have thought insurmountable is cleared.' (Breton 1987: 37)

Roger Rothman (2016): *Object-Oriented Surrealism: Salvador Dali and the Poetic Autonomy of Things, Culture, Theory and Critique*. Downloaded from academia.edu.

2. The transformational object seems to promise the beseeching subject an experience where self fragmentation will be integrated through a processing form.

...the aesthetic moment constitutes art of the unthought known. The aesthetic experience is an existential recollection of the time when communicating took place primarily through this illusion of deep rapport of subject and object.

Bollas, C. *The Shadow of the Object: Psychoanalysis of the Unknown Thought*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1987

3. You need to remember that the mind is generating our experience of each moment. In the first moment when we see an object it is neutral. There is no strong meaning attached to it. But in the next moment you recall previous experiences with something similar and then you start relating to your generic image of your previous experience not to the object that is currently before you... it triggers a memory of strong attachment from the past and then we impute that happiness is coming from this other... Buddha Shakyamuni chose this particular world to be reborn in because it was called the unforgetting world and the reason it was called that is because beings have such strong attachment that we never forget our objects of attachment. They are present in our meditation sessions, they are present in our meditation breaks, they are present in our dreams.

Kelsang, Yonten. "Affectionate Love." Autumn Retreat. October 2010. Kadampa Buddhism Canada. Haliburton Ontario, private cottage. Teaching

Red Chair, Pink Dog, 2020.
Oil on linen. H 20 cm. W 20 cm. (8 in. x 8 in.)





Imagine You Have Never Been to Kansas, 2020.

Oil on linen. H 20 cm W 25 cm. (8 in. x 10 in.)

It Was Always About the Father, 2020.
Oil on linen. H 20 cm. W 20 cm. (8 in. x 8 in.)





You See an Object in the Space Before You, 2020.
Oil on linen. H 20 cm. W 20 cm. (8 in. x 8 in.)



He Could Only See Himself in the Reflection, 2020.
Oil on canvas. H 20 cm.W 25 cm. (8 in. x 10 in.)



It Was Not Personal, 2020.

Oil on aluminum. H 27.9 cm. W 35.5 cm. (11 in. x 14 in.)



There Was No Other Option, 2020.
Oil on aluminum. H 30.4 cm. W 40.6 cm. (12 in. x 16 in.)



The Suit Was Always Lined with Silk, 2020.
Oil on aluminum. H 40.6 cm. W 50.8 cm. (16 in. x 20 in.)

Naming the Face in the Moon, 2020.
Oil on aluminum. H 40.6 cm. W 50.8 cm. (16 in. x 20 in.)





He Remembers the Sound of the Dress, 2020.
Oil on aluminum. H 50.8 cm. W 40.6 cm. (20 in. x 16 in.)

The Lure, 2020.
Oil on aluminum. H 40.6 cm. W 50.8 cm. (16 in. x 20 in.)





She Pretended to Be Dead, 2020.
Oil on Aluminum. H 40.6 cm. W 50.8 cm. (16 in. x 20 in.)

Just Look into My Eyes, 2021.
Oil on aluminum. H 40.6 cm. W 50.8 cm. (16 in. x 20 in.)





Seen But Not Heard, 2021.

Oil on aluminum. H 40.6 cm. W 50.8 cm. (16 in. x 20 in.)

Looking at the Rag and Bone Man, 2021.
Oil on aluminum. H 40.6 cm. W 50.8 cm. (16 in. x 20 in.)





Unanswered Questions in the Garden, 2021.
Oil on aluminum. H 40.6 cm. W 50.8 cm. (16 in. x 20 in.)

And from the Earth Flames Appeared, 2021.
Oil on aluminum. H 40.6 cm. W 50.8 cm. (16 in. x 20 in.)





ARTIST'S BIOGRAPHY

Victoria Lewis completed undergraduate degrees in Asian Studies at the University of Windsor and in Studio Arts at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design. She received a Masters Degree in Fine Arts from the University of Windsor..

Her work is in various public and private collections and has also been shown in group and solo exhibitions at the Art Gallery of Windsor, Gallery Stratford, the Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa, the Photographers' Gallery, Saskatoon, Espace OVO, Montreal and Amos Eno Gallery, New York City.

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