

POEMS ABOUT PAINTERS (AND ONE POET)

Peter Belton

BENEATH LORCA'S MOON

(2016)

She has seen horses again.
Green and quick, they have come to her
for dark blood money has fingered her guitar:
And, the silver music fails.

Dreaming green tresses float
about her waist, above her fingernail moon.
Swords and rushes, spines to bruise the
flash of thighs and wetness.

On green earth beneath
she once told me she had no other lover;
her green tresses floating in the silver moonlight
slipping around her nakedness.

Strangers bang at the door.
Green; Oh how the green water presents the moon.
A body floats beneath the fountain's tresses;
fingered through with shivered light.

The song rubs across
where hands cannot go. It is the song of the blackbird
who comes and goes singing of longing; of regret; of hope
cut at the wrist.

And I would dream again of green.
And, a silvered ship upon slipping seas.

REMBRANDT'S MIRROR

(2013)

All said and done, they left the bankrupt with only a mirror which shattered anyway, through distraction, collapsing the hours spent in half-light before a window of white canvas into a stare. So much time to think.

Thick with the dusty stuff of pigment let him paint an inch thick, for we must come to this. Saskia with blood in her mouth. Geertje's exhausted eyes, puzzled with weeping and Hendrickje lifting her shift; lowering her eyes.

NO TITLE AND NO THING

(2013)

So everything signifies and Kurt Schwitters lugs his valise laden to the next trainstop. Ambleside from Hanover: Handover hands thick with worrying paste and patches; tickets from Neverwas to Maybe and Stumbledown, revealed in the small nervousness of torchlight.

FLAT OUT (AN AFTERNOON OUT WITH MAX)

(2000)

Today I saw fish
Wandering the sky's edges
Puffing the blue with pink tails,
- heard the trees scratchy chatter
through the tiny mouths of birds
while the wind tickled hair
on my belly.

RUKENFIGUR (FOR CASPAR DAVID FRIEDRICH)

(2017)

He will wear his painting as a garment,
a sedimentary cloud where pigment becomes
atmosphere; the flux of gloaming light.

No thing urgent here. Shorelines
finger the liminal and there is breathing beneath
the measured tread of the wanderer:

His questions are about thresholds;
about delivered epiphanies for the returning man
and nascence within the mystery of stillness.

ALAN PEARSON, THE PAINTER, IS WORKING AN OPERATIC MOMENT (2017)

What is it that signifies *with* this tension between the thinness
and thickening of pigment, seen now as its own transported light;
stretched and imploded like chicken guts pushed and pulled ?

Colour and shadow battling it out in the tight theatre of Hades.
We read the painted song, defiant, operatic in its wide sweep of largeness,
projecting gestures which would swallow the span of hands.

A baroque imperative; pulsation and rhyme tighten the frown
of his Gordian knot to pronounce this painted moment.
Blood and song in this canvas of heavy breathing.

**ON THE WEIGHT OF AN EGG: (AND PIERO DELLA FRANCESCA'S MONTEFELTRO MADONNA
AND CHILD)** (2014)

As Piero noted: Egg signifies the pregnant Virgin, drawing our gaze into a sanctified place.

There is weight in an Egg: all that promise of nascence to be nurtured.

Gravitas.

Unblemished by imperfect features; this face of the Virgin shines with mystery.

Inscrutable.

Piero then saw and Leonardo noted, however, with translucent lightness an Orb floats.

Weightless.

Being weightless, there is no tension nor transcendence. No effort to be. Symmetry is

Stasis.

And, should we seek reflection in a perfect Orb, we might succumb to delusions of our own weightlessness.

The bloodless Orb, the perfect sphere, has no time for the chaos of being.

Now, the Egg; that is a different story.

THE TRICKS

(2014)

The trick of poetry lies in parenthesis

Which is to say, between breaths.

The trick of painting lies in palimpsest.

Which is to say, it's rubbing over.

As Picasso said to Marius de Zayas

over another bottle: 'to find is the thing'.

TEASHOP GIRL, CORFE, JULY 1978.

(2014)

Sat in that chair where you are sitting now,
she said. A younger girl then. Now standing in the
dappled light of the tea shop. She regards my company
and keeps her silence as tactile as this solid
envelope of settling light.
As it was with Frances Hodgkins.

That is how juxtaposition works on us.
It puts the dance into recollected things, like
memory, in which realization becomes; is,
the self portrait to be found.
We both knew, Miss Hodgkins and I,
she said.

Peter Belton is a graduate from the University of Canterbury School of Fine Arts and has a Master of Fine Arts from RMIT University, Melbourne. He is currently teaching at the Southern Institute of Technology. Prior to that he was a Senior Lecturer at the Dunedin and University of Otago Colleges of Education. Has also worked as Art Curator at the Southland Museum & Art Gallery.

- Footnote: In July 1978 I went to the picaresque village of Corfe in Dorset, where Frances lived out the final years of her life. My enquiry at the local teashop elicited a surprising response. The woman who owned the shop had been working as an assistant in the same shop through her teenage years in the 1940s. Frances was a regular visitor but was so poor that she would only ever buy a pot of tea and a scone. Then she would request the girl to sit at her table, in order that no one else would intrude into her world. Together, they sat in almost complete silence. Frances had few, if any words; probably explained by her thoughts remaining 'in the studio'. Nonetheless the girl regarded this as a companionable, even privileged relationship. She told me where to find Frances' studio: it had become a craft shop. She also told me that it was found that Frances slept with piles of newspaper over her bed in an attempt to keep warm.