

The Effects of Light

Thus we cover the universe with drawings we have lived. These drawings need not be exact. They only need to be tonalized on the mode of our inner space.

Gaston Bachelard¹

In their collaborative exhibition *Silver Linings*, Zoe Freney and Jessie Lumb present us with artworks that express the feelings, daydreams and memories elicited by their respective and quite contrasting home environments. Through her deliberately quick, impressionistic paintings, Freney conveys the spaces and comforts of her Adelaide Hills home, while Lumb, who is currently based in Port Moresby, responds to the visual and psychological impact of the security screens surrounding the compound where she lives. Both artists implicitly disclose their individual emotions in oblique but complementary ways.

Zoe Freney is influenced by Gaston Bachelard's thoughts on the home, and her work seems to exemplify his consideration of the idea and the actuality of home and how it shapes one's awareness. The home can be a refuge, a place to which we return to nurse wounds inflicted through our interaction with the world, or a place in which ideas and feelings germinate and are shaped and contested. She feels comforted in her home and visually records its features, as if she is jotting in her diary. The features she records, such as furniture, towels, books, kitchen canisters and pets, seem unremarkable and may seem like so much clutter, but they are very personal and symbolically powerful. Such personal objects might have sentimental value beyond their practical usage and vivify the house by transforming it into a home, a container of memories. Her looser painting style conveys the sense of haste with which paint must be applied when other commitments are pressing.

Freney's work thus offers us the home that floats into consciousness when daydreaming. Her earlier work has often been concerned with the dynamics, feelings and pressures of motherhood, with the home as the setting for her theatre of parenting. This body of work exudes unconditional love and welcoming warmth, even extending to fanciful imaginings – of a world outside or of unicorns – enlivening the gallery's antiseptically white space.

Jessie Lumb's earlier work has often involved very subtle intrusions into familiar locations, such as a sprinkling of glitter in the cracks of footpaths, to draw attention to the space and our usage of it, its potential meanings and significance. Here, Jessie seems to feel locked in, albeit for her own protection, but she transforms imaginatively the protective barriers of her compound into colourful abstract imagery, as if to neutralize the sensation of entrapment and to open her mind and heart to the potential of the visual stimuli created by the ubiquitous barriers. Her images are not intended to be naturalistic representations of the effect of light through Security screens but are inspired by that effect. The form of

the work is pared back to the point of unrecognisability, as if all the negative connotations have been elided and only the outline is retained.

In an email to me, Jessie says,

“Eventually, I guess as I settled in to life here, I began to do what I am best at and started looking for the small things, the silver linings, the beautiful moments that always exist in pretty much all situations... I started seeing the flowers that grew on the barbed wire fences, appreciated the artistry in the hand painted security signs, the funny waves of the security guards at my compounds when they realised it was me. But especially the patterns of the security bars on the windows and the shadows they cast – all were different and were painted different colours.”ⁱⁱ

This exhibition reminds us that we take for granted our freedom and comparative safety, privileges that are not to be assumed as given in many other parts of the world. In a gallery that is itself protected by barred windows and doors, this exhibition draws attention to our vulnerability and the illusion of the safety of home we create for ourselves.

- Chris Reid
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ⁱ Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas, Beacon Press, Boston, 1994, p12

ⁱⁱ Jessie Lumb, email to Chris Reid 7 April 2019