

Brooding – Shedding – Unravelling

In this concentrated Mother Zone, temporal and material traces of labour, care, and investment settle like sediment and breathe through an accumulation of charged objects, emotions, specific scenes, and performed actions associated with parenting.

Poignant transitions and transformations abound. From the intensity of hands-on mothering evident in Honor Kever's evocative photo-based *Brooding Rooms* to the ritualistic unravelling of knitted and crocheted hand-made blankets in the "unravelling room," *Shedding* distills and reflects upon the cycles, tensions, and depth of feelings experienced in raising and detaching from children.

In Susan Shantz's sculptural assemblage, remnants from a childhood archive, including a boy scout scarf, stuffed toys, a desk lamp, a rag doll, a xylophone, a baby blanket, and two wooden stools are meticulously enveloped with transparent stretch wrap – an intimacy of associations bound together, a symbolic memorializing of familial history, a type of holding or processing prior to release. The layers of transparent plastic only partially enclose the objects, allowing us to see inside, as if exposing and offering a glimpse into an interior or psychic realm. Recollections and a transitional state appear to tug at each other, asking us to question: what is being shed, and what remains?

In one of the video pieces by Lezli Rubin-Kunda, the artist is on her hands and knees eating Cheerios off the floor; she appears to perform a psychological state of motherhood, what she has called "practicing humility." Embodying the mother's presence and actions as the reassuring glue that holds things together, the artist's reclining body has quite literally become an armature for her children's Lego experiments. As the Lego fabrications extend and morph around and on top of the mother's body, she seems to be caught in a contradiction: she has become the foundation upon which her children's efforts materialize, but she has also become somewhat invisible as they take bolder steps beyond her boundaries.

At the core of the project, the scaffolding and the heartbeat, are the four, large-scale black and white photographs by Honor Kever, made over 30

years ago, which retain their impact as a performative mapping of the silences absorbed in the everyday acts of mothering. In the skewed grid-like structure, the scenes within a kitchen, a dining room and an upstairs landing are distinctly off-centre, generating a sense of disorientation, anxiety, and raw emotion as one notices in-process activities but a distinct absence of human presence. Unattended water runs in the kitchen sink, cupboards by the back door are thrown open, a bare lightbulb casts a mysterious sense of surveillance, a half-eaten lunch for two remains on the dining room table, a rag doll is abandoned on the floor. One scans the domestic interiors for signs of reassurance, but narratives of turmoil accompany the chopped vegetables waiting on the counter, the muffin trays waiting to be removed from the open oven, and the “do not disturb” sign quietly adorning the bedroom door knob.

A release or “shedding,” is most pronounced in the “unravelling room,” a space of meditative deconstruction where the artists (and gallery visitors) sit and unravel hand-made crocheted and knitted blankets sourced from local thrift shops. As the lovingly crafted, ordered worlds of stitching things together are slowly undone and transformed into soft, unwieldy piles of yarn, a sense of letting go and unburdening resonates. In this direct engagement with literal symbols of nurturance, we enact and recall the lingering of a familiar touch or caress, a sentiment and rite of passage that is therapeutically released in the physical act of unravelling.

Joan Borsa, March 13, 2019 (a reflective interaction with the work as it was being installed)