

DESIRE AND THE IMPOSSIBLE

In choosing to represent something, you become a part of it, even after the fact of re-presentation. To depict something from life is to positively obsess. Katherine Hattam reflects the want and confusion in life that so many people as artists choose to repress. She includes the minutiae they exclude to communicate a point and in doing so shows a sense of a life having been lived, marks having been practised repeatedly for years - against an exacting compositional schedule.

For those predisposed to any mania, anxiety, or obsessive qualities good or bad, Hattam's paintings should appear like a normal projection of thought/thoughts at any given time, just like making a list. As her daughter, I can see her desires so clearly as we operate similarly on many levels. For instance, I see something and it inspires me and I wish I had been its creator. Just as I wish I'd been Ozzy Osbourne from Black Sabbath in the 1970s, who thought it might be a good idea to make 'scary' music, now known more definitively as the genre 'Metal'. Now it's harder to be an absolute creator. There's always so much that comes before you and what you have left after being exposed to so much choice is a myriad of choice.

Hattam has chosen to be a mother and a dedicated artist and nothing has or will come between these two things. Her work cannot escape the concept of family. It's a central obsession and always will be. She transfers the everyday into something worth depicting as if the viewer is a visitor in her house. It's her unstoppable need to draw, to put pen to paper - to do something that has made art her profession since she was a young girl.

As artist Alex Vivian puts it, I love how your Mum just does stuff. She doesn't talk about it, and before you know it she's done it. She just gets to it and that has inspired me to stop talking and just do... Young friends involved in art constantly comment, 'saw your mum last night at this exhibition and then she was going to another!' This dedication to art and all it embodies is

exactly what her work is about. Her desire turns into the actual. She captures her obsession and anchors it, so that her weighty consideration can rest - perhaps mean something later. Ideas formalise and come together out of trial and error. Looking and constant experimentation combine with her hunger to achieve what she wants from art. So there's something to be said for being a generational artist who relates and looks at what those younger than her are doing, as there's a fundamental freshness to be found in their choices and visual language. Looking and doing, two modes typical to her process, make the paintings sustain their original idea yet progress towards another wholeness.

My friends say that Rock'n Roll and Metal are men's worlds. This is hard to swallow when you're a woman and you want to play metal, like myself. Through perseverance though and absolute determination, the problem resolves itself i.e. if you don't go away then people eventually have to take notice. Hattam, as a young female-artist faced a similar deterring mood, maybe one that no longer exists. Through coming to my gallery Joint Hassles and building up a dialogue with young people, she learnt to take note of what they think and how they see things. In doing so, her work has benefitted and become something else. Simultaneously and devoid of ANY complacency, she continues to make work entirely her own.

In Inventory all of these things within Hattam's life come together to represent desire in that life and how to express and attain it, so that it becomes more of a predominant feeling in her work. The recurring imagery of past paintings - hair and paint brushes, Rodchenko's tea-pot and scissors - remain as reminders of her familiarities. The new inclusions: family pets, works she wished she had made, (Jon Campbell's 72 Derwents and Sidney Nolan's Tent paintings), her sister's Brooklyn windows - push through and take over to include new desires over and amongst the old.

Thoughts replace thoughts and ideas emerge without the artist consciously knowing how they got there. It's inexplicable as much as it is literal when applied to her repetitive symbolism.

In other words, these new works reflect a state of life and the pressures that go along with it. They show a progression in execution that still manages to speak in the incredible and incorrigible visual language belonging to Hattam that represents mood, change and constant drive.

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Harriet is a participant in 2010 Gertrude Street Contemporary Art Space Emerging Writers program.



Walking Track 2010 oil and acrylic on linen 160 x 120cm