

The Gigantic Interior.

The starting point of *The Gigantic Interior* was the ruminations on 'the gigantic' by contemporary US poet and literary critic, Susan Stewart.¹ She speaks of our experience of the gigantic in terms of our relation to the landscape: the natural world that dwarfs us; its vastness can instil terror on the one hand and on the other inspire a heightened aesthetic experience of surprise and astonishment. 'Landscape' isn't limited to the material world however – an internal, emotional landscape can be just as powerful and influential, just as terrifying and conversely, just as uplifting.

Each of the three participating Adelaide artists has responded differently to the underlying concept of the exhibition. The curved passageways and light-filled voids of the vast Adelaide Convention Centre have influenced their formal and material choices, as well as the placement and arrangement of the artworks.

Liz Hetzel's *Earthskins* continues her practice of painting outdoors, on the ground and under the sky, and were made following a recent road trip to Central Australia. Her large, horizonless canvases, Turner-esque in luminosity and colour, communicate the essence of Australia's gigantic interior. But her creative process which she describes as a sort of 'collaboration' between materials, the ground and the weather, mitigates against any romantic pomposity and brings earth and sky together. Swirling colour pools of gouache settle and dry in depressions formed by undulations of dirt and stones in her backyard.

The late Adelaide artist, writer and zine publisher, Shaw Hendry (1963-2010), wrote an inspirational editorial titled 'The Wide World Awaits'² in which he used the conceit of the humble Milky Way chocolate bar to ruminate on the vastness of our galaxy. Often it is an appreciation of what lies within our immediate reach that allows us to make sense of the bigger things out there.

Turning the gaze inward, and another gigantic interior looms large. It is this inner landscape which fascinates Simone Kennedy. Her varied practice, that includes painting, animation, photography, sculpture and installation, continues to explore the complexity of the mother/daughter relationship. For *The Gigantic Interior* she has focussed on the 1959 song by Nina Simone, *Ne Me Quitte Pas* (Do not leave me). The chocolate bar in this case is a personal traumatic incident from the artist's own childhood; the big galactic picture encompasses issues of abandonment, loss and ultimately survival.

The subtitle of Susan Stewart's book is *Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*. Elizabeth Bevan has used the idea of the gigantic interior to extend her practice of creating assemblages that reference domestic interiors, as well as touching upon larger ecological issues. Like Stewart, Bevan is very aware of context: the gigantic can be fully appreciated only when contrasted with the miniature, and it is this binary that underpins her collection of signs of the everyday.

'We are enveloped by the gigantic, surrounded by it, enclosed within its shadow'.³ The Adelaide Convention Centre is itself a gigantic interior and an ideal place to contemplate this.

Olga Sankey

¹ Stewart, S. *On Longing*, Duke University Press, 1993 (Originally published by John Hopkins University Press, 1984)

² Hendry, S. 'The Wide World Awaits', *Vitamin Episode Two, August, September, October, 2004*, http://www.vitaminarchive.com/episode/vitamin_2.pdf

³ Stewart, S. *op cit*, p71