



*Sympathy!*

Connie Wilson

August 1-September 14, 2024

My girl is a sandwich board for real. She was giving me a sign that day while we walked to the Little Island. On the Little Islands there were tons of tourists, and these black and white painted wheels that kids would spin into psychedelic patterns for themselves and their parents. The wheels were scattered around the narrow walkways that make up the park, and created some additional clots beyond the obvious Instagram viewpoints that were constantly choked up with couples and families. Mostly from Asia and India, as far as I could tell. The French and German families were back in the Cuban restaurant where we had just eaten an OK lunch. We were set between them in a Swiss way.

As we wend our way up to the wee pinnacle of the island, brushing past tourists and walking through their photos, I get a bit upset thinking about how me and my girl's profiles are gonna be caught up in the metadata of all these photos. We're very private, and we just have a different kind of vibe in life than queuing for selfie by the water. There's an opening in the wavy folds of concrete, so you can see the stems that hold up the whole 'bouquet' of four-hundred 'pots' that make up the Island. The stem forest looks fragile and hairline cracked-up already. It's much more beautiful than the surface of the park, which is marred by tourists. Down there it's just the singular dream of Barry Diller via Sir Thomas Heatherwick. I tell my girl that I think they should really have emphasized the underside of the park, which looks so cathedral and inspiring, whereas this part feels insipid and empty despite the teeming. She nods woodenly. I marvel at the stitches on her brow (she recently underwent surgery to splint her sinuses behind two small metal pieces so that her entire forehead could be set back a few millimeters) and how she is a healing presence in my life. She softly parts her mouth flap and tells me baby, why don't we go there tonight—we can take the kayak.

I switch on my headlamp as we paddle into the undercroft of the Little Island. The switch sets off a bright tapestry behind the eyes of the bats hanging upside down all along the seams of the vault and between the spindles. I peer back at my girl, who is giving no reaction, just sitting there behind her paddle, marveling. I dip my paddle in the dark water and push. I can see a plinth a little deeper in, near the low-point of the park's dangling belly. There's a dollhouse on it. The little windows are illuminated, and there's some vague shape standing in them, it looks a little like my girl. I turn around and see her sitting there, totally mute and not betraying her reaction as we approach it. I ask her, does she have something to tell me? But she doesn't say anything.

We step inside the dollhouse and it's all brushed white. I see my girl's bell-shape and hear her voice chime bluey, in a moment of domestic bliss. There in the undercroft dollhouse, I realized that we're just Barry Diller, Sir Thomas Heatherwick, and Diane von Furstenburg except if they were broke with no money. If I could just be cured of not having money, then I would also support my husband's quixotic dreams. I would also foist my concrete flowers on the entire city, and strangers would know and love me for them. All the world is graciously accepting my bouquet. I see their broad smiles and feel like the ocean will never overtake me or my park. That night between the smoldering heather wicks in the dollhouse a portal to the Dillerverse von Furstenburst open, and my heart past thru it.

– Uma Payne

Connie Wilson (b. 1993, Belfast, Northern Ireland) received her BFA from NSCAD University in 2016 and an MFA from the University of Guelph in 2021. Recent exhibitions include dacodac, Zürich (2024); Chris Andrews, Montreal (2023); Pumice Raft, Toronto (2023); Franz Kaka, Toronto (2022); Christie Contemporary, Toronto (2022); The Plumb, Toronto (2021); Calaboose, Montreal (2018). Wilson is currently based between Toronto and Athens, Greece.