

Untitled (Abstraction)

I am somewhere different today. I am in a small room at the back of the house that has a low ceiling and no skirting boards. It also has a half-painted floor and a big dark smudge in the middle from when the builders were here and they were messy and left their footprints everywhere. Lots of things have happened since we started this room, so it got half-finished and then I moved in, and it has stayed that way. It feels a bit cold and empty like it doesn't know how to be a part of the rest of the house yet.

I have tried to make it nice. I have a lovely old mirror that I am sitting in front of and my desk fits neatly into the corner next to the window and there is enough space for me to paint several large paintings, I just need to be sure that I move everything around all the time to make space. But that is ok. I like arranging things in the studio because it keeps your mind ticking forward and making new connections. It is something I often say to my students. I say, 'why is your studio the same as when I was here before?' and they shake their heads, and so I make them get up off their chair and move things around with me.

It is so important to renew the way you look at things often. If they stay in the same place, then it is harder to move forward and see clearly. I have just moved everything around recently because I had someone come and see my work for the first time in a long time and I made sure that I changed where everything was so that I could think about what I am doing. But that was several weeks ago and now there is nothing here because I had to empty everything out when my partner's family came to stay so that his younger brother could sleep in the room and I was too embarrassed of everything so I turned all of my paintings around to face the wall.

I am finding this difficult to write all of a sudden and I don't know why. I think it is because I was going to say my room but instead I changed it to my studio because I felt like saying my room made it feel like the only place in the house that is mine, that I am separate from my partner or something and then I stopped and put my head in my hands and felt a huge wave of sadness wash over me. I am having the same kind of sadness each time I start a new paragraph, as if it is hard to leave the last one and start a new one. Why is starting again hard? I don't even know what I am doing but there is something that has changed and it is making me feel unbearably sad and I do not know if it is something that is as concrete as an end or if it is the anticipation of something new.

I actually got up early today to write because I have not been able to in a long time. I have been trying, desperately trying, but I have found it really difficult so today I put on a wash and made a coffee and came and sat in my little studio at the edge of the house but as I started to write I could hear my partner walking down the stairs and I immediately felt alone. I had started to change 'alone' to 'loneliness' then but I changed it back because I do not know if it is both of us or just me. I am also not sure if it is his loneliness that is making me feel lonely and why there is this feeling in the house. I wonder if he feels it too? It is strange isn't it, not to ask your partner these things. Perhaps this is the sadness and why I stay silent and still by his side because I cannot bear to feel the loneliness that we both hold. But if it is just my loneliness then why is it so acute when I am near others, not next to them but near them, in their proximity but just out of sight. It makes me think of that saying, 'passing ships in the night' and then I think of my mother, and I wonder if the loneliness is mine or it is just something that I carry?

There's something about covering things up here, which is the opposite of the purpose of this writing because the purpose of this writing is to uncover things, to dredge them from the seabed and bring them up to the surface and give them mouth to mouth so they can finally breathe. There is also a lot of not knowing, and questions. I think this is the most questions I have ever asked in such a short time, and I hesitate to do it because I feel like it is not proper writing to ask so many questions, but the truth is that I really do not know. I do not know why I feel this way. Why I am scared and why I feel so lonely. Sometimes it feels like the world is going to end, in fact I woke up last night and I knew that the world was ending, and I was so scared, not for me, but for the child that I might have in the future. It is hard being this age because there is a kind of imminence that I have never felt before, a feeling that I have to rush things because there is no time and I feel it, not just from me but from my partner too. I know how desperately he wants a baby, and I think I do not.

I have had to take a short break just now because I thought I had typed 'I think I do too' but I actually wrote 'I think I do not' and now I feel very sick. I have been going back and forth in my mind about what this means, and I am worried that it is something I have to acknowledge as the real truth and that scares me.

Why am I so scared of the truth? I think it makes me feel inadequate. When I see my life laid out in front of me, I think I see a family, I think I see me with a child but now I do not know what this image means. If it is in fact the truth, or if it is just what I want it to be? And what do those words mean? Do I now not want a baby, or do I not want a baby ever? How do I know what I want? My partner wants this so much from me and when I see young mothers holding their baby it makes me feel like I would like that but there are also things that I am terrified of. I am terrified for my body, that it's just another thing being put inside me and that, as soon as I have the baby, it will be taken away from me, like all the other times men have taken from me they will take my baby too and I will be trapped again, a mother but also a hostage of other people's expectations.

I do not know if this image is an image that has come from TV, the image of fertile women, having babies and being motherly to things, because that is what they are made for: silently holding things to their chest. You do not often see images of mothers alone, separate from the rest of the world and shouting. When women are alone they are not mothers anymore, at least I do not assume they are and this is part of the problem because, the other image that I see, the one that stands opposite the image of the young, fertile, red-cheeked mother is an old grey lady that is all skinny and weak from never receiving any love. Loneliness has aged her, and she walks around naked like a spindly dying tree with her feet stuck into the ground and there is no one else there.

This woman, she feels like she has been there for a very long time and her age and loneliness is important, it is like she has been forgotten and there is something of the natural, something that cannot be disputed. I have been watching lots of zombie movies recently and they are all infected with some kind of natural fungus, often turning into trees and things that look like they would be at home in a forest except they have a hunger for human flesh. The particular scene I am thinking of, the one I watched the other day, was of a girl walking over a snowy mountain, and the ground started rumbling beneath her feet and these old empty bodies all crawling with shoots and leaves started emerging from the ground and running after her and it makes me think that this old tree lady is the truth and that I am afraid because I am not ready to succumb to what she needs and that is for me to be eaten, entirely and wholly by her.

The truth cannot be disputed, it is indefinite, and it is immortal.

I think I am partly afraid because I do not want to end up alone. But isn't this a universal fear? When I asked my partner why he wanted a baby he said that we need someone to look after us when we get old and I thought what a strange thing to say, even if that's what you thought, you wouldn't say it for fear of sounding selfish, would you? But he is just being honest and isn't that the point of all this to find out how we really feel? Perhaps this is why, at this time in our life, there is this heavy image of a baby because my approaching infertility is a reminder, not just of my mortality but also of his? It is certainly an archetypal fear, but it doesn't feel inherently me. I do not know if this is something I am carrying for my partner because he feels it so deeply or if indeed it is mine too.

I think this is why I found it so hard when his parents stayed and why I find it so hard with my mother because all they have ever wanted was to have a child, it's almost like it is their purpose. My mother says she doesn't expect it of me, but I know she does, I know it would totally devastate her if I didn't because then the cycle would be broken, and she would have to face the loneliness of her own mortality. And it is the same with my partner's mother and perhaps why he also feels this unrequited longing because it is what has been passed down to him.

It is so hard to untangle all these things, everything feels laden with shame and an unwillingness to face it. It reminds me of the fear I face when I start a new painting. I guess it is a common problem because when I think of artists and what it is to be one, I think about the process, and I think about making but also the bit before where it is just you looking over a big pool of nothing. Like I am an old forgotten oil rig sat at the bottom of the deepest sea, where it is cold and dark and the prospect of ever seeing anything has long left, not even a small little fish or piece of seaweed drifting by. Perhaps the pipe is broken and in need of repair and just waiting for a ship to come over ahead and drop down some men in deep sea diving suits that can tend to it so that it stops leaking oil everywhere, even though it doesn't want to. Whenever I hear of oil rigs leaking, I do not blame the oil rig; I blame the men that have put it there, so why do I blame myself?