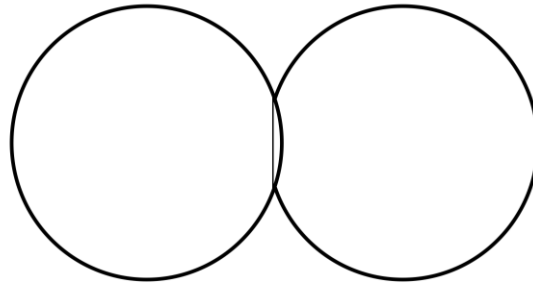


FrameWork 3/23

Erica Stocking on Rhonda Wepler and Trevor Mahovsky

A Visit



I brought your hands in my pockets to see *The Pool in the Shell*.

I didn't want to inconvenience anyone by bringing along your whole body. Sometimes it is preferable to be discreet. Sometimes detachment allows one more flexibility.

Looking around with your hard hands heavy in the soft crevices of my pockets I keep thinking about how it took me a long time to find a picture of my Nana without sunglasses on. Since I was old enough to remember her, she was always wearing sunglasses—even indoors. Perhaps, you wonder, what prompted me to look in the first place? I was looking for my own reflection in the eyes of someone who loved me of course. And I couldn't see or remember hers, so I was missing a piece of mine.

You might not relate to this as you don't have eyes, or the hands I temporarily removed, but I'm sure you can imagine it.

As if glimpsing her eyes would enable some lost and buried piece of myself to emerge. Shifting us back in time to when my body was small and whole. Her love wrapped around me, caressing the contour of my body, pressing against my form, remembering the shape that I am. Like a death mask, a curvature in time and space maps the contours not of an edge but of a boundary. A topographical space forming in reverse a cup: between what was and what is.

A gathering,
a pause,
a black hole,
a moment of gravity fulfilled in an unlikely place.

The material here has snuck in from behind. A shadow other, captured but not held. There is contact, negotiation; some parts have resisted. And some areas through their lumpiness reveal an

FrameWork 3/23

other already embedded within the form that a direct encounter just wouldn't allow.

Standing in the gallery and reflecting on the studio, you and I are both caught between spaces.

Flattened in an eclipse of bodies.

Your hand slips to the surface of a saw hanging on the wall, as if it could be lifted out of its marriage within the eclipse.

Your hand stretches to touch a leaf, recoiling at its illusion and the delicate assault of an intentionally stray strand of hair.

The encounter reminds me of a line from a poem:

Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean.

Tears from the depth of some divine despair rise from the heart, and gather in the eyes on thinking of the happy autumn days that are no more....

Or it goes something like that at least.

I should love to think of tears being idle, pooling together until their accumulation causes a gushing forth across a face, across a page, through an idea. Moving from singular to plural, plural to singular—arising from a feeling, a feeling that arises.

When the kids were little, I bought a set of professional face paints that looked much like the watercolour tray we are looking at now. It was well used over the years, and it was a pleasure to paint with—thick pigment that when mixed with water slid smoothly on skin. The best kid's face paints I ever found were actually sticks of high-quality watercolour paint: easy to hold, non-toxic and water-soluble. The professional set migrated from the studio to the bathroom cabinet where it segued into the array of teen makeup trays of blush, eyeshadow, and liners that now dot our bathroom.

What lies beneath
the beneath now absent?

Topographical remains, fragile and malleable in their arranged field of trifectas, invite the urgent desire to dive in.

Turning in and in and in again on oneself. A material gives itself for the replication of its own image.

Is this what self-love feels like?

Gorging on oneself in an autophagic ecstasy of forms never finished, always slipping into and out of each other—surfaces sliding, resisting, pulling at the edges of what is possible to see and what is possible to imagine.

We take a moment you and I.

We decide we are interested in the internal relationships in the artworks. It feels like they echo our relationship. Each object belies a negotiation of two absent players: A container and its paint, a head and a leaf, tools and their handler, a poster and a saw.

FrameWork 3/23

What is the weak force we are orbiting?

Your hand is hard and cool against mine, and my hand slips around it, pressing its plaster against my hot cheek. Light pools in the back of my eye, on the concave side of the retina. The dry pigment of the air meets the cornea and I blink. Colours blur, mixing and spilling forth. What is the precarity of the non-autonomous? What is the position we are looking from?

The word *subjectile* pops to mind as quickly as it slips away, continually resisting my grasp of it. I don't fully understand it or expect to; it is as pervasive and overlooked as a body's fascia.

A subjectile asserts itself from the ground it was, from the ground it arises within.

A subjectile ground is a precarious one, never fully committed to one side or the other, giving it the ability to betray at any moment as it stretches in infinite topographical directions.

A ground can be structure, a starting place, a home.

A ground can be pigment, a stone can be ground.

A ground can contain.

Your hand is a ground; a subjectile body asserting a need to materialize this experience, and it takes over:

Crusty green, bluish pink... crumbles on the edges of uncertainty.

A single hole in. Multiple holes out sprinkle separated clumps.

A pad to pat one's face with, a puck to paint one's space with.

Curling edges meet cut flaps, describing space, lifting out and up — the ground becoming figure.

On the ground

In the ground

Skirting around

Round spaces.

Over and over and over.

Precarious shapes to hold

Imprinted possibilities

Around

A pool in the shell of what was.

