

Stephanie Jones

Windmill Trust Scholarship 2002

I applied for the Windmill Trust Scholarship in 2002 as part of the process of returning to study. In the following year, I began a Masters degree at the ANU School of Art and used the scholarship in two ways: firstly, to invest in a new computer (an essential tool these days, not only in terms of academic research but also for studio practice), and secondly, to assist with a work-in-progress exhibition called *baby cakes*, which took place in July 2004.

The group of drawings included in this exhibition, *A Decade of the Windmill*, are one of the outcomes of my recent studies. They form part of an ongoing series titled *The Shadow of Love* that I am further developing for a solo show later this year.

This series of drawings, as with all of my practice to date, focuses on the domestic. I am interested in the house as a surface upon which lived experience is inscribed, and at the same time, as a site that produces and constructs subjectivity. In other words, as both a physical and psychological space.

Although much of my work is grounded in specific personal experience I do not really consider it autobiographical, for I am not concerned with telling a particular story, and certainly not *my* story. Instead I have found the concept of "autotopography" useful. This is a term that refers to the idea of representing the self through a spatial and situational methodology – where the emphasis shifts from traditional narrative means (such as memoir and testimony) to the notion of acting out or performing the self.

The Shadow of Love maps a topography of emotional themes – from desire and longing, to absence, loss and mourning. In each drawing a single figure, based on my own shadow, is rendered within the "negative" spaces of a textured wallpaper surface. The drawings are brought into being through the simple method of colouring-in, a labour intensive process that is as seductive as it is therapeutic. And it is here that "I" might be located, in the space of *practice*, where so many things are rehearsed, enacted, produced.

A number of references are played out within *The Shadow of Love*: individual titles are appropriated from poetry and popular music (mostly love songs) while the nature of the decorative material used, in combination with the figurative aspect of the work, relates to Charlotte Perkins Gilman's short story *The Yellow Wallpaper* (1899). But most of all, the series is informed by the Greek myth commonly known as "the origin of painting" (or drawing).

Pliny the Elder, in his *Natural History*, tells of a Corinthian maiden who, learning of her lover's imminent departure (a soldier due to go to war), grasps a stick of charcoal from the fire and traces the outline of his shadow as it is cast upon the wall. This legend describes the supposed birth of art, and I find it intriguing that not only was the first artist a woman, and that her medium was drawing, but that the image she inscribed was upon a wall – the architectural surface of her home.

And even more so, what I find especially resonant in the tale is the idea that art arises from a passionate embrace, an entanglement of love, loss and longing. That drawing in itself is always a kind of *drawing out*, a *drawing away from*, a *drawing back*. That "the origin of the graphic image is in the portrait, and that the origin of the portrait is in the desire for protection against the loss of the object, and the loss of identity."¹

Stephanie Jones, February 2007.

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¹ Victor Burgin, quoted in conversation with Geoffrey Batchen in *Burning with Desire: The Conception of Photography*, MIT Press, 1997. p.113.