



1 April—29 May, 2019

Sonja Porcaro

Small Moments: the city
wakes, the city sleeps

The Exhibition Space Residency,
Presented in partnership with City of Adelaide

themilladelaide.com

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SUM
OF
ALL
ARTS

THE MILL

The Air Between

Linda Marie Walker

“Artists are like clouds.” (1)

At the heart of Sonja’s art is abstraction; everything in reach, by sight, sound, touch; works carry traces of other works (see shelf); we see what we see as we move, one view, then the next, mixed messages. (2)

There are numerous kinds of memory, and each, for each person, is unique – experiences, conversations, educations, accidents, excitements; they constitute, continually, the invisible world of emotions (see coverings).

The object’s insistent presence, *there*, is visible with/to us, abstract and familiar; it/you are physical, material, hard, soft, heavy, light (see five boards). Each object unto-itself, and with other objects, in space (an ‘object’ too), carefully arranged; we’ll probably stay upright, bend a little, stare from above, and walk around the logs; we could though sit on the floor beside them.

As far as the eyes can see, there are objects; we say this-and-that, yet the thing is as-it-is; these things call thought, and then call more thought – it’s strange that a thing (log, rod, bottle, drawing, board) becomes a thought, leaps onto the thing, thinking the thing will return thought with thought. There’s never before been that log with that grain in alliance with that piece of black sparkling felt; three senses combine *there*; they’ve come ‘to pass’. Sense is tenuous, slipping away (see net pouch). We hear ‘talk’, we hear ourselves ‘talk’, we try to explain ourselves – what we read, what worries us, what makes us laugh; we ‘talk’ with our own words, our peculiar, particular and acquired, repeated, sounds, hoping someone will hear, understand. All around, other people talk in other languages, telling stories of their lives as they too go about their days on earth; we don’t understand (even three words: sunset (Il tramonto), sunrise, city) unless we share their language (see edgings).

The objects/sculptures/drawings are fragile and considered; they’ll vanish – into smoke, storage, efficacy, history; they’re also intricate, and delighted to be seen; leaning, sticking, floating. Looking, one wonders: what is that, what does it do? It’s arrived and transitional (like us); we only know that ‘thing’ because Sonja made it, we would never have met it otherwise (see crate, a container for grieving). Form/material reveal, contradict and extend each other (as idea, value, sense) (3); they have their own height, width and depth and are ordered in specific proximities (to each other, to doors, corners, windows). They are figures, in fleeting positions, their rhythms internal, ephemeral; a swirl of felt, a border of white (fluffy snow), glints of glitter, a geometry of netting, knots in boards. (4) Rhythms change with circumstance – age, health, finances, weather – and happen all-at-once and in combinations, by surprise, shock and chance (see crate/logs).

Sonja’s practice is informed by minimalism as well as abstraction, and is acutely spatial; restrained and exuberant (ecstatic, funny, exaggerated) works emerge from fugitive patterns, and treasured people and beloved (diffuse) places, recognizable but enigmatic (see wall works/ postcards). Abstraction does *just that*, it brings life alive; Agnes Martin wanted to give form to the immaterial in her (minimal/abstract) paintings; she used

“elements that had no correlate in the physical world – the point and the straight line”.
(5) And when she titled her paintings she referred to nature: *The Tree, Cloud, Mountain, Wood*. The known world becomes more than itself – infinite, extraordinary.

Consequently, there are reasons an artwork is-as-it-is; concentrated woven reasons are not spelt out; we don't see 'reasons', we see (before us) single, various 'things' that are, in their turn, remembered – like the inverted 'v' frame with the felt fan perched on top and the pink fan clinging to one leg. Sonja has vivid childhood memories (the East End Market; her parents' shops and migrant heritage), as well as translation-memories, and recent memories of motherhood; rituals develop over a lifetime (see folds). Coupled materials suggest layers of thoughts/feelings and invite other and others' thoughts/feelings; the viewer must be *there* though; grief and loss, the personal and the impersonal, the woman and the city. (6)

Logs are cut for carrying – their 'insides' clasped to the chest – from the paddock to the home to the fire. The log, once tree, transforms to ash. We mourn the tree; the log is comforted; coloured cloth (flourishes) draws our empathy to their substance, their grain and bark, to their forest (see nine logs). Long logs can become timber then crates for lettuces/apples, and then are empty and open to/for anything, wheels for instance (crate/cart), or remnants of fabrics (cocoon/talisman).

Making with modest materials in a meticulous way, and in response to the space, requires continual adjusted listening – to concepts/properties and ambient conditions; inducing vague tensions requires junctions/distances that operate by millimeters: gaps, angles, slants, intensities (see corner, newspaper).

In an age of dispiriting politics, with language used to mute, enflame, and destroy, delicate things are welcome (see deeply-felt sorrow fans); fighting back seems ineffectual, whereas creating poetically is vital: “Rather than erect unyielding monuments to world-historical ideas, [Richard Tuttle] leaves frail traces of specific intuitions.” (7)

'Small moments' assemble (starlight, particles) from endless liveliness; growing/selling, cutting/carting, caring/working; flashing colours/shapes cross roads, pass through doorways; it's impossible to know what another's life feels like, or what has happened and will happen to *that* life; there are infinite differences, unimaginable 'selves' and sensations (see yellow).

I saw a small painting by Emily Kame Kngwarreye (1989); a field of round lapping shapes, pink, brown, white, yellow, black; the edges of the shapes soft, the painting overall evenly weighted, the sides of the canvas painted with stripes. On a nearby plinth was a metal watering-can painted in pinks and mottled with grey and white, also by Emily Kame Kngwarreye (1993). (8) They weren't made to 'go' together; they kept each other company in the gallery; similar in size, and different in kind; Emily's work, it's quiet abstraction and use of colour, is resonate for Sonja (see linings) – sound, song: “[a]ir is what is left common between subjects living in different worlds.” (9)

Sonja Porcaro *Small moments: the city wakes, the city sleeps*

Porcaro's sculpture and installation work uses everyday objects and humble materials to create restrained and poetic works, often investigating notions of memory, uncertainty and the fluidity of language and representation. In combining intimate, hand crafted objects and materials with more robust structures, Porcaro's work references minimalist traditions often through gendered perspectives.

'Small moments: the city wakes, the city sleeps explores the idea of daily rhythms and rituals enacted within the city, with repetition (both as an investigative idea and formally through processes and materials employed) featuring throughout its duration. I will explore rituals/rhythms connected to the city of Adelaide (in particular to the Central Market, with reference to early childhood memories) and investigate the rhythms enacted by those who inhabit, work in and visit the city also, with attention to the various languages spoken within the city and beyond.'

Sonja Porcaro graduated with Honours from the South Australian School of Art, University of South Australia in 1993. Her work has been shown nationally and internationally, including exhibitions at the Art Gallery of South Australia, SASA Gallery, the Contemporary Art Centre of South Australia, The Experimental Art Foundation, The Australian Centre for Photography, The Performance Space, Artspace and at Viafarini (Milan, Italy).

About the program

The Mill's Exhibition Space Residency program is presented in partnership with the City of Adelaide. The program positions artistic process to the fore, allowing audiences direct access to creative research and making. During this residency The Exhibition Space operates with a studio-like mentality opening the creative process to the public.

Essay notes

1. Richard Tuttle, *Richard Tuttle Interview: Artists Are Like Clouds*, see youtube.com
2. One thing after another; see Robert Morris work *Continuous Project Altered Daily* (1969); see Donald Judd, *Specific Objects*, online: atc.berkeley.edu/201/readings/Judd-so.pdf
3. Sense loses sense easily; it *does/doesn't make sense* is easy, suspending sense is uneasy; the loss of sense is imminent; "how our world makes sense", then; and this is ongoing: "to change the sense of sense". (See Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Sense of the World*, trans. Jeffrey S. Librett, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1997, 8/9
4. Yvonne Rainer, *Continuous Project – Altered Daily* referred to in 'Kinesthetic Drawing', *The Art Of Richard Tuttle*, ed. Madeleine Grynsztejn, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 2005, 170-179
5. Madeleine Grynsztejn, 'A Universe of Small Truths', in *The Art Of Richard Tuttle*, *ibid.*, 25
6. Lauren Elkin, *Flâneuse, Women Walk the City in Paris, New York, Tokyo, Venice and London*, Vintage, London, 2017
7. Robert Storr, 'Touching Down Lightly', in *The Art Of Richard.*, *ibid.*, 103
8. Riddoch Art Gallery, *Interpretations, From the Riddoch Collection*, curated by Melentie Pandilovski, 27 April – 16 June, 2019
9. Luce Irigaray, *The Way Of Love*, trans. Heidi Bostic & Stephen Pluháček, Continuum, London, 2002, 67

Image: Sonja Porcaro, *Work in progress*, 2019, glitter netting, paperclip, approx. 11 x 15 x 14 cm
Photograph: Sonja Porcaro