

Belinda Fox's art is rich in its materiality. From the movement of her hand ink drips, swirls and reticulates in an exploration of what it means to be human at the start of the 21st century. Images of conflict and tranquillity, of hope and doubt, of the military tank and the Bodhi tree, inform a broader discourse of fragmentation in our contemporary society. Pursuing these ends, Fox has built an impressive reputation for her delicately rendered and layered works.

Day to Day at Beaver Galleries demonstrates an artist in transition. Fox's practise, at its root, has an iconography and sensibility derived from extensive travel through Asia expressed predominantly in works on paper. More recently, though, Fox has found greater inspiration in more immediate influences and has begun painting on board.

Works such as 'Swell' 2010, painted on ply, speak directly to her recent experience of motherhood. The silhouette of a baby is borne by a swirling current. In the familiar either/or situations Fox presents the viewer, the child may be held aloft or alternatively submerged by the raging waters. If the child is representative of optimism for the future, then the foaming sea might depict both the opportunity and adversity that our future will undoubtedly contain. The success of this painting, and of many of the works in Fox's oeuvre is in its universal relevance that is based on personal experience, as well as its assured execution.

Indeed, in her handling of materials, Fox makes the transition to board look an easy one. Familiar elements from her prints and works on paper remain. There are the stains, drips and fine line work re-imagined in a more painterly picture surface. In *Day to Day II-V* 2010, several elements conjoin to create an ambitious work that is intimate in scale. The scenes of the five panels present an almost cinematic narrative, albeit a silent one. Despite the struggle in one panel of a match of tug-o-war, or the welcoming gesture of a ghostly child figure in another, the work is imbued with quietness. This is only reinforced by the motif of the Bodhi tree. In its display, the installation of the works is almost shrine-like.

While there is a spiritual element to Fox's paintings, it is not necessarily a religious one. Rather it is identification with an ideology for responding to conflict in our daily lives. In 2006 Fox visited Mt Kailas in west Tibet, considered to be the centre of the universe by Hindus and Buddhists. It has never been climbed. Instead, pilgrims walk the fifty-three kilometres around it. Just as Fox identifies with this concept of the prayer and the offering – of walking around the mountain rather than climbing it – her works aren't confrontational. Instead they imbue a seductive beauty that encourages pause and reflection. Her works don't sermonise: they offer breathing space. They are her offering for a better world.

And while previous bodies of work have at times been subject to a brooding darkness, in *Day to Day* Fox appears to be coming into the light. Optimism emerges in spite of, or perhaps in response and defiance to, the continual presence of conflict. Her ever-growing palette reflects this shift from the earth tones characteristic of her earlier work to a richer colouration.

Among this optimism, however, an increasing fragmentation cannot be ignored. The works *Rewind* and *Rewind II* 2010, depict delicately rendered lotus flowers that are spread across multiple boards. It is as though the works have been pieced together from a severed whole. *Day to Day VI* represents, in diptych, the destructive eye of a storm and its counterpoint in the new growth of a magnolia branch. The tension is palpable.

The fragmented nature of Fox's compositions is further highlighted by the motifs that seemingly appear and disappear in the picture plane. The 'empty' silhouette of a figure or the dissolving leaf of

the lotus make it difficult to determine which elements are present and which are absent, revealing a precarious balancing act in the works exhibited in *Day to Day*. Ultimately, though, it is the viewer that must decide which way the scales are tipped.

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