

Everyday feeling

For most of us, knowledge of our world comes largely through sight, yet we look about with such unseeing eyes that we are partially blind. One way to open your eyes to unnoticed beauty is to ask yourself, “What if I had never seen this before? What if I knew I would never see it again?”

- Rachel Carson, *The Sense of Wonder*ⁱ

I’m reading an interview with Jedda where she’s talking about making this show *Printers and portals* – the show you are likely standing in now. I’m scanning the page looking for clues. I need clues. Because in the dissonance between the work and what the artist tells us about the work, lies most of its meaning. I’m reading the interview and halfway down the page it’s as if someone has taken a highlighter to the tail of a paragraph and it’s only now, on my second or third pass of the page, that the neon is suddenly clear. She is describing her process and her relationship to the work. She says, *I almost stop breathing for a second when I realise I’m about to share this with the world. But did I already share it when I felt it?* That last sentence stands proud of the page. Later I re-read an email Jedda sent me a few weeks ago, in it she’s written, *Fuelled by feelings*. How did I miss this before?

When it comes to describing art or experience, there’s a silent rule that *feelings* are to be avoided. *Feelings* mean so little because they encompass so much. It’s a lazy word—like *beautiful*—and one that that we may use it too lightly. It’s not specific enough and, when it comes to the why, not *good enough*. But here’s the rub, I can’t follow that rule here. Because feeling, for Jedda, is the engine and her work is its transcription.

Susan Sontag spoke of her crusade against the “distinction between thought and feeling. . . the heart and the head, thinking and feeling, fantasy and judgment . . .”

We have more or less the same bodies, but very different kinds of thoughts. I believe that we think much more with the instruments provided by our culture than we do with our bodies, and hence the much greater diversity of thought in the world. I have the impression that thinking is a form of feeling and that feeling is a form of thinking.ⁱⁱ

I almost stop breathing for a second when I realise I’m about to share this with the world. But did I already share it when I felt it? In feeling, as in thought, we are transformed. We make rules for feelings because they are so hard, too hard, to define. And so, feelings enter the world nestled in the sameness of emotion—anger, happiness, fear—that which flattens feeling into something digestible, understandable, actionable. “There’s never really nothing”, Chris Kraus writes in her essay *Sentimental Bitch*, “there’s only ever the problem of describing what there really is.”ⁱⁱⁱ What is art but an attempt to patch the gaps in our understanding – a record of the self seeking to understand itself through transcendence? A matter of asking, what if I had never seen this

before? What if I knew I would never see it again?

What would it look like to capture feeling, and how can we apprehend it? Through the processes of filming, weaving, and painting, Jedda chases transcendence. Each work is a ritual observance that honours everyday feeling. And this is work—as in labour. Filming takes time. Weaving takes stamina. Painting takes courage. It takes *work* to translate feeling. In the video *Desert painting* she steadily paints herself out of (or is it into?) the landscape. Through the drawn-out, laborious process of weaving, she inverts and records some common aphorisms, O λ O λ and CALM; the labour required to make the weavings resists the pithiness of the words. Across a series of thirteen watercolours she registers the body in flux again and again. The scale of the watercolours tells us a lot about their making; they're small enough to fit in a book and carry around and the paint is quick drying enough that the pages of the book can be slammed shut before someone passing by can see what it is you've made. These are private, urgent records that are made as fast or as slow as they are felt.

Feelings resemble the senses. They are fleeting and tricky and they tell us where to go. Emotions, being distinct from feelings, are only a substitute; for living, for speaking, for sharing a corner of our inner world. Emotions are powerful, bigger than us. Feelings *are* us. Jedda's work enacts a world where feeling is as good as one of the senses. For her, art is a vessel—an attempt to tell it like it is. Because exactly what it is, is too hard to say.

-Stella Rosa McDonald

ⁱ Rachel Carson, *The Sense of Wonder*, New York: Harper & Row, (1965)

ⁱⁱ Susan Sontag, in *Susan Sontag: the complete Rolling Stone interview*, Jonathan Cott, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, (2013)

ⁱⁱⁱ Chris Kraus, "Sentimental Bitch", *Video Green*, Semiotext(e), (2002)