

Casting space

As a child, she had wanted to eat colour. The primary palette had seemed the source of all life. She had especially hungered for rich blood red. The hunger was soon tempered. Instead of hot-headed desire, it spread through her body.

She carefully recorded minutiae of landscapes in still life, in particular the arrangements and colours of flowers. She traced branching veins and patterns of progressive clusters, enlightening the unseen.

Just as she was drawn to nature, she was drawn to movement. When her head was light with possibility, or dark with impossibility, she tried to pin down time, to make it visible. Going beyond delineation, her motion habituated and composed, she yielded to a chink of light, a flaw in the arrangement.

She weaved space, reconfiguring it, her arms reaching out, hands shaping and fingers fanning. She pushed glass over the paint, imagining the earth being re-created every second, with each movement. She had experienced the angles, each re-creation, since her birth, her relationship with spacetime intimate. In a certain light, she could see its projection. Then time became visible. It did not stand still or pass, but was with her, a constant.

She worked the space with her body, spreading her palette; at times expressed in sharp seismic folds, strata of sound and movement; at other times floating as city lights, silent and still. There was room for chance in the corrugation of bleeding colours, and in layers of veined circles, patterns of infinite reflection.

She watched a pigeon glide overhead, tracing loops through the sky, and wondered whether every inch of ground and air space had been occupied, even momentarily. She imagined how existence would look if each moment was laid one on top of the other, and thought how memory is like that, an accumulation of moments, the present cast in the light of all previous moments.

Beyond the window stretched the body of unending space, its topography mapped by buildings, roads, cars, a racecourse, horses, grass, trees and flowers. Blocks of space animated by lone souls, slivers of space animated by congregations. She followed the contours of this space body, inverting it to a solid state and all that was solid—the buildings, roads, trees—to mere outlines. What then became of mass? As the cast that moulded space, mass was fleeting. She was fleeting. The buildings, roads, gardens, and the earth—all were fleeting.

A response to Anna White's exhibition *Away...Towards*.
Ruth Learner, Melbourne, May 2010.