

## **Everywhere Else**

The cat's paw is large enough to cover the mountain crest; his tail is as long as the sunlit gully. But look more closely, you can see that the mountain top is the edge of a dense cluster of loops drawn on a sheet of cartridge paper, folded many times. And the cat, having walked across the mountain range, has been sent on his way, relieved that his paw did not leave a mark on the paper.

Three figures sit cross-legged on the floor in a room whose function is unclear. Two windows frame views onto a London street and the door in the wall opposite opens onto a kitchen that stretches the width of the house. At the kitchen table a girl sits, her sulky head is bent over a book. Mounted on the wall behind her is a piece of cartridge paper, folded many times, covered in hundreds, thousands of tiny little loops, drawn in ink. Beside the drawing, on the mantelpiece is another drawing, smaller, this time perched rather than hung. This one is made of tiny lines drawn in pencil over a painted surface. A horizon line splits the canvas, creating on the mantelpiece, in the foreground, a smoother profile, more hilly than the rugged mountain range that lurks behind in the alcove.

As she draws, she daydreams, different voices weave in and out, stories on the television, conversations in the room. She is in a state of almost mindless concentration, at any moment her attention can wander. She slips to a summer meadow high up in the German countryside. Sitting there in the afternoon sunlight, just before the shadows of the surrounding mountain peaks fall across her lap. She wonders how she can feel a stranger in her own country. When the room comes into focus again, she is in another place. The paper on her lap is covered in many patches of tiny loops. How will they ever meet? When the joins are invisible, you can lose yourself in the middle; when the upper edge is neat, you can journey along the horizon.

The walls in this room look like they are covered in loops too – but up close it is possible to see that these are figures, lots and lots of small numbers. These are financial indices, specific quantities with particular functions, which appear here as surface ornament. In the opposite corner, two sofas are placed at right angles to one another. On the floor between them sit

three women, a cat and one half of a pair of shoes. On one sofa art catalogues and CVs spill across the cushions. Behind the other sofa is a long box containing a large drawing, rolled up. This is a drawing of another room, by another hand, drawn from memory.

This is a room that matters, but that she was never quite part of. It was his room really, a room that he lived in before she entered his life, a room in which he may have loved others. To draw it is to conjure it into existence, to try to hold it down, to remember it as it was for her. The lines she draws are clear-headed and precise. She draws in a light hard pencil, sometimes in graphite, sometimes in colour. She draws in perspective with the certainty of an architect. But the point of convergence never holds still. From where she is looking, the room shifts in her memory, her focus changes. Looking back into the past, there are many places where eyes might meet.

Between the two sofas, a second door leads out into the hallway, where an elegant staircase winds its way upstairs, to a room overlooking the garden. This room will soon contain one of her large perspective drawings. There is talk of a tent filled with her cushions to be placed in the centre of the room, where you can lie back and watch him talk of his journey.

He travels hard, day after day, moving through corridor after corridor, to try and understand the geometry of the place. But no one on the inside will tell him where he is. If he doesn't know where he is, how will he know who he is? So he draws himself a map on the palm of his hand to remind him of where he has been, to remind him that 'he is in the house'.

She too has been on many journeys, back from where she has come. Sometimes she uses the folded paper as a diary, one square per day. To remember days and places, she makes marks, one after another, slowly filling up the paper. Sometimes she records a now distant journey, marking all the squares at once, with no sense of sequence. If you fold and unfold the paper you can read one place next to, rather than before or after, another. In the patches of light and shadow she has made over time you can see the horizon of a mountain which you might have visited last summer.

In Hanover, this time, not London, three figures face a mirror. A man with wet hair is seated in the foreground, bending his head downwards only half his face is visible in the mirror. Behind him a woman leans forward with a pair of open scissors in her hand. She is cutting his hair. (Years down the line, cross-legged in the room full of numerical figures. We will see her profile again.) There is a third person, the face is obscured by a camera, two hands adjust the lens, a photograph is taken. The photograph shows three artists, who today live somewhere else.

The light from the window hits her face in profile. She sits next to me on the floor, cross-legged. A third woman sits opposite, her back to a sofa. We talk of where we have come from. She was born in Russia, or was it Poland, or perhaps she said Australia. It is hard for me to remember her story, but it was also hard for her to tell. She comes from somewhere between fact and fiction. I tell them I was born in Dubai, but have moved from place to place so many times that London is my home, simply because it is not everywhere else.

July 2003

The essay was published as 'Everywhere else', catalogue essay for artists Jan Peters, Martina Schmid, Silke Schatz, curated by DomoBaal Gallery, London (October 2003).