

# Narrative Resonances

I unashamedly make painting works in colour that 'hold' stories. They are containers for something larger (and sometimes more mysterious) in our lives. There is a great tradition for women artists to create 'personal' stories in painting, and I feel free to work conceptually as well as tell stories through paint, colour and form.

Stories are compasses and architecture; we navigate by them, we build our sanctuaries and our prisons out of them, and to be without a story is to be lost in the vastness of a world that spreads in all directions like arctic tundra. To love someone is to put yourself in their place. Empathy is first of all an act of imagination, to have compassion for others - a way of travelling from here to there.



I like to think of painting as syntactical narrative. Like syntax in language they arrange words, and ideas, using similar 'principles' and processes. There may be rules; in form, composition, use of space, and colour... yet because our perceptions respond differently to visual narrative structures, there is 'tactical' play in playing with space, and the relationships between figures. There is huge potential to re-order, and re 'version' events infinitely

Stories pull viewers in, make demands, intrigue and play on the viewers' imagination. Narrative is one of the four rhetorical modes of discourse. Painted images cannot be so dramatically changed in response to audiences, as a voice, yet discursiveness lies in and around the picture plane. Viewers add layers to the text non-verbally as they naturally ask the question: what is the story here? Especially when one or more figures are embodied.

There is movement between each image, each colour and our eyes rove around them, making relationships between them. This is not unlike an eye moving over a page of words, re-ordering the ideas, and creating in some way, a version of meaning, in relation to their own lives and understanding.

'We tell ourselves stories in order to live, ...to save us, and stories that are the quicksand in which we thrash, and the well in which we drown....a few stories are sinking ships, and many of us go down with these ships even when the lifeboats are bobbing all around us.' (Rebecca Solnit)



Whatever the 'syntax' there is always chance and decision. Whatever the personal narrative there is imagination and commonality.

Painting is a process of creation, even a kind of 'solitary séance' of self but shares the potential for new ways of seeing or understanding our lives and the world around us.

note to self:

The working of personal and communal memory in the writing of history, always contains a creative, fictive element. This fictive element is often seen as a threat to history, but as history depends on narrativity and representation, this fiction is unavoidable. Integrating subjectivity in this process of historiography is a positive action. It opens history to the voices of all, and proves that history is not a question of facts alone, but in its essence always a form of narrativity, of story, created by the process of telling.