

Domestic Creatures

My recent paintings and prints are informed by daily and nightly wanderings in the suburban neighbourhood in which I live. Glowing rectangles of night-lit windows, the grids of garden gates, horizontal blinds that frame and obscure what is glimpsed within. These apertures are employed as pictorial devices to organise and disrupt the picture plane and are themselves the subject matter of many of the images. The domestic as a *verb*: containing, hiding, taming, protecting, concealing ...

Human beings are largely absent but the images are redolent with the

sense of human presence. Ornamental plants and well-kept hedges tell of a longing for the exotic and hard work in the garden on the weekend. Alongside the unseen human – neighbourhood cats, dogs, birds, the sky and the moon – conjure up a sense of something entirely more savage, kept just at bay. There are forces at play. The domestic has its dark side.

As an artist and a mother this landscape is fertile and familiar ground for me – ripe with mystery and poetry, pulsing quietly and insistently.

Samantha Cary, 2019



Cocktail Hour, 2019, oil on linen, 30 x 40cm

Bungalows at dusk. Windows reflecting violet skies, others flooded by internal light sources. Computers, flat-screen televisions, bulbs glowing behind printed blinds, illuminate paintings within paintings. A pigeon flies overhead. A gull stands on a chimney pot after rain. Dogs sit behind window blinds in places usually taken up by cats. Other dogs are stockaded in gardens behind fences and gates. A street lamp in slanting rain and a car in a driveway behind fancy wrought iron filigree. Velvet sky. The tops of picket fences, zips of hedges, emerald green lawns: Hopper-esque devices, stepping the viewer into Samantha Cary's suburban world.

Nearly all these rectangles of paint and ink are as stills taken from a slightly out of focus Film Noire picture book. These haunting paintings are literally windows onto cul-de-sac domesticity, on the edge of town, as dusk turns to night. Vacant of bodily human presence, they hint at lives encased and lived in the streets around Cary's hometown of Berwick. As she writes in her introduction, the structures behind these paintings are "pictorial devices to organize and disrupt the picture plane and are themselves the subject matter of many of the images. The domestic as a verb: containing, hiding, taming, protecting, concealing" ...

Because this imagery is gathered after dark, the pictures' flattened compositions are reduced to shapes

of colour devoid of detail. I like the way they make me scrutinise them for hints of life, as if I were physically tipping and tilting their surfaces to catch the light. While alluring, their minimalism divulges little. Full of atmosphere, their lack of specificity, beyond flattened colours and the catalogue variations of the shapes of domestic vernacular architecture which to quote Larkin are parodies of fashion, indicates a way of life. They conjure up a particularly British slant on how we like to portray and house the way we live. The lights are on and animals are waiting patiently for their keepers, but time stands still, as if we were peeping in on a particularly Lynchian take of Sleeping Beauty's suburban castle.

Beyond and between the houses and their contrasted ashlar and rusticated finishes, their garden-centre conformity, I feel the joy, intoxication and concern for the plurality and fragility of our natural world. Cary hints at the enormity of something altogether more powerful and at the same time more under threat. I find myself grieving at that lone bird dipping in flight between gardens, and the dogs hemmed in by cement and glass. It's as if she might be suggesting we have made a prison for both ourselves and all that live with us on our throttled planet.

Tom Hammick, East Sussex
August, 2019



Cordyline, 2019
oil on linen
33 x 26cm



The Zone, 2019, oil on linen, 120 x 140cm



At the End, 2019, oil on linen, 30 x 40cm



Cross-section, 2019, oil on linen,
16 x 22.5cm



Gateway, 2019, oil on linen, 120
x 140cm



Night Patrol, 2019, oil on linen
120 x 140cm



Bird watch, 2019, oil on linen, 33 x 26cm



Dog at the Window, 2019, oil on linen, 26 x 33cm



Pussy Cat, 2019, oil on linen, 19 x 25cm

Silent Dog, 2019, oil on linen, 19 x 25cm

Yard Time, 2019, oil on linen, 16 x 22.5cm

Night Yard, 2019, oil on linen, 19 x 25cm
(bottom right)





Ever Green, 2019, oil on panel, 20 x 15cm



Cat and Cream, 2019, oil on linen
40 x 30cm



Grey morning, 2019, oil on linen, 33 x 26cm



Light, 2018, oil on panel, 20 x 15cm



Number 9, 2019, oil on linen
16 x 22.5cm



Storm, 2019, oil on linen
30 x 40cm



Pink Dog, 2019, oil on linen
16 x 22.5cm



Afternoon Shade, 2019, oil on linen
40 x 30cm

Fatherly Lookout, 2019, oil on linen
19 x 25cm



Poster on reverse: *Dark Side*, 2019, oil on linen, 120 x 140cm

Prices on application and for further information contact

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