

Stepping Stones

Helen Gory, 2020

Corona virus, lockdown, isolation. With time to reflect, I see our lives akin to stepping stones. Life's strange coincidences shape our personal stories and form our memories and our behaviours — these are recurring themes within my art practice.

We see playful protagonists, wilful, strong and shadowy. The blond-haired, dark-skinned female holding the sword in *Seeking Perfection* has begun the process of remaking the other females in her own image. They seem ambivalent about their future. Will they end up like her? Why are we afraid to embrace individuality? Should the importance of physicality so heavily outweigh the nurturing of our inner selves? Three women in *The Beautiful* stand tightly together, the boundaries between them literally blurred, in support of one another and in solidarity with all of humankind. One hand moves to grasp a flower in symbolic protection of Mother Earth; another clasps a parchment as a symbol of the written word of civilisation. Archetypes, of sorts, these figures represent the essence of what makes us human, and beautiful.

Midnight Flight, *Play Me a Melody* and *Garden of Eden*, are surreal fragments of our lives. The female in *Play Me a Melody*, is brazen with desire yet pensive; the dog is her shield. Blindfolded in the *Garden of Eden*, she is being dragged along by butterflies — willing helpers though their own lives are tenuous. All the while the one that is blindfolded is able to give warmth to her loved ones. The older woman holds her brow, worried the jungle will consume them all. Sitting alone with a crow over her shoulder, *Midnight Flight* seems ominous. Yet the woman's naked torso is at once vulnerable and strong. The crow represents spiritual or emotional change. These intelligent birds give us insight into situations around us and help us adapt as needed. *I Love You* embodies a surreal narrative not without a touch of humour. We see a river of blood flowing through the middle of a large heart, imploringly yet boldly saying, 'I love you'. A masculine face wearing rabbit fur ears upon a female body holds a camera, both gazing out at the viewer, speaking to the poignant absurdity and vulnerability of being in love, and not being perfect. In *Stepping Stones*, one woman sits cocooned sewing herself into the blanket while the other standing up is bursting out. Same path, different choices.

These paintings are literally transparent, using watercolour, glitter, charcoal and graphite. With deliberate visible markings that are inherent within the artwork, my art practice speaks of desire, displacement, acceptance and transformation.