

Elizabeth Ashe

Artist Statement

My artwork is rooted in domesticity and travel, wherein home is holy and sanctioned, habitual, private and wary. Even threat is something beautiful. I am keyed into the expanse and claustrophobia of sharing domestic space with landscapes. As a Californian, I was taught to be careful of earthquakes as soon as I could crawl. I was taught to never start a fire outside alone, because wind could sweep embers up the coast and burn a whole mountain. I witnessed that my dad's temper was scarier than any earthquake and learned how to pack-house in an afternoon. I learned to forget about my little brother and protect my mother. I watched birds and wondered about their stillness, ability for flight and their migration patterns. The drawn-to and repelled-from-danger and safety dynamic holds sway in my work. Line quality is crucial, be it ink, welds or sutures. I appreciate the closeness and intimacy of using unexpected materials that otherwise, look dangerous or forgettable. Mountains also take on bruises, to examine domestic violence and isolation, but also strength in numbers when the pieces fit back together. Lately, I have begun a series of floral paintings. Flowers are a gift in times of celebration and grief, and I want to emphasize this personal, thoughtful token. I create sculptures which invite viewers to interact and reposition how they encounter space. I also write poetry, paint, and capture photographs and lost sounds in relationships and landscapes.

If I were asked to say what is at once the most important production of Art  
and the thing most longed for, I should answer, A beautiful house.

William Morris

House and space are not merely two juxtaposed elements of space. In the reign  
of the imagination, they awaken daydreams in each other, they are opposed.

...

In the intimate harmony of walls and furniture, it may be said that we become  
conscious of a house that is built by women.

...

If a house is a living value, it must integrate an element of unreality.

Gaston Bachelard *The Poetics of Space*

I say Mother. And my thoughts are of you, oh House.  
House of the lovely dark summers of my childhood.

Czeslaw Milosz *Melancholy*

Every time I moved I hoped again.

...

Space does not exist, it is just a metaphor for the structure of our existences.

Louise Bourgeois

How to be Restless

I'm not here to teach you poetry.  
I'm here to teach you  
to hold onto the restless.

To move: v. [*moov*] 1- Pass from one place to another. 2- To sell, to advance, be sold.  
3- Change of residence. 4- New influence impresses itself to cause a change.  
5- To have a closet full of suitcases and boxes, floor to ceiling, ready. 6- Active.

The story could spark from a bedroom scene, an ax smashing a TV.  
*Turns out, the demise of a television is an implosion, a bomb.*  
*A recreation 25 years later is unwise. I bought an ax, though, and a television set.*

The story could start from a marriage.  
*There is no duty, in marriage. Only threat, measured risks, steam, a child.*  
*There is leaving. Paperwork. A dog.*

The story could catch on, with security and surveillance. A home should feel safe, right?

Four walls, a lock on the front door, private property with city taxes.  
*Surveillance shuns any sense of security. To hear a click every three seconds,  
when on the phone and to know the click is foreign.*

The first thing friends ask me, is “Where are you?” – not “how.”  
“How” is always the same fundamental of ‘good, swamped, making art, traveling.’  
“Where” changes – Baltimore, Chicago, Provence, Dublin, NYC, Pittsburgh, Santa Fe,  
Seattle, driving with a broken odometer; surrounded by semi-trucks and no radio reception.  
*Ask me what it’s like, to move.*

To move house is a glass of water.  
A male canary’s song suspended in a Victorian cage.  
Perceived, necessary, repetitive.  
*There is a crux involved – letting go of something you swore to it, or yourself,  
that it mattered enough to always keep, because it fills a void.  
The canary died.*

Why I collect – to create a *here*.  
Why jars and labels, boxes and tissue paper, this is what concludes as “safe.”  
*Some would call these attachments excessive. Life was lived, with these items. Labor traded to  
exchange for them, create them. They should maintain a suit, clear or dark; make them a  
microverse. Even placed in a rushed pile against others, they will be okay.  
That isn’t excessive, but accepting.*

What’s it like, to flip a house and do it a dozen times? More than a dozen?  
It’s cosmetic. See the flaws, fix them.  
*It’s – Don’t get attached. Don’t stage tea parties with your cats or friends or hammock full of  
stuffed animals. It’s a home phone number less constant than Mom’s work number, noticing we  
always move to a 3 or a 5 address. It’s learning the basics are salad, scrambled eggs, a roast,  
pancakes, spaghetti, tacos, and not expect anything else, because the other pans are packed.*

When aware, behavior is the discursive of *holy*.