

Alone, but so at home

Lotte Frances

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Here it is: something intimate, but distant, superimposed. The gaze tries to find things to resolve. Almost-figures of movements or blobs conspiring but never forming into something recognised—some not-quite-an-eye looking back, an orifice winking shut. And still it holds you. Demands sense-making, analysis, feels too familiar to dismiss: LOTTE FRANCES PAINTS NONSENSE.

Bullsh*t, please. Look. This shade of blue, reoccurring like a sky, slightly smogged, a dawn in winter, cold and crisp but not unwelcoming periwinkle—loneliness, perhaps, but not something altogether sad. Some bright unripe plum red, red of blood and wine, pale oranges of fruits—ochre, as if spilled out lava-like from the earth. They come together, over one another, layered, but not combining to some other shade. Instead the colours act like varieties of lichen—fungi and moss making new species, infinite in combination. Smearing or revealed to some new emotion. Some seemingly impenetrable dung-coloured brown scratched away to reveal sweet purple-red. Like a crusted memory we have solidified in childhood, unearthed, in the adult mind, in new bright light. A lost detail remembered, an expression finally understood—one thing peeling off, two things not combining into something new. Like the feminine and masculine? NO TOO EASY TRY AGAIN. More like halves, reuniting, NONONO. Still too easy. More like many things as layers of the same, revealed through what is peeled away. This scratching—these lines or jags or smears—unearthing new things in each painting. Oscillating lines like vibrato, made visual. Like a caterpillar's meal across a new spring-leaf, like the scuttling of an ancient cockroach seen centuries later in stone, like scribbly gum bark scratching. Like the tentacles of a subterranean jellyfish, pulsing, or an imagined extra-terrestrial skin, fuzzing. The shapes and lines that come together to make these paintings feel organic in matter while birthed from the murky layers of the unfathomable mind. We can, in some future, imagine this work being felt. The observer finding an emotion unrecognised, resonating, something unconscious, deep-felt, splattered on the wall in front of them.

—Kat Gibson

Katerina Gibson (they/she) was born in 1994. They are a writer and a bookseller living in Naarm. Their stories have appeared in Granta, Overland, The Lifted Brow, Island Online, Going Down Swinging, the Meanjin blog and the Kill Your Darlings 2020 New Australian Fiction anthology. Most recently, their short story 'Fertile Soil' was the Pacific regional winner of the 2021 Commonwealth Short Story Prize. Katerina is a 2021 Felix Meyer Scholar and holds a Graduate Diploma in the Arts (Advanced) w/ First Class Honours from the University of

Melbourne (2019). Their debut collection Women I Know is forthcoming with Scribner on the 6th of July. Katerina is represented by Caitlan Cooper-Trent at Curtis Brown.