

Aura, A moment Eternal

By Debbie Pryor

Louise Meuwissen presents a body of work, *A moment eternal* that lavishly swarms and manifests. Conjuring the multiplicity of light and dark, the works are a journey of sugary sweet bursts of colour through deep, murky and at times uncomfortable tones.

From her exhibition debut in 2013 Meuwissen demonstrated a strong understanding of narrative and composition, with a large scale embroidered work that at once caused audiences to step back to observe the expansive footprint, while drawing viewers in to be swallowed up by her incredible creation of detail and storytelling. Meuwissen also revealed a process of making that was somewhat rebellious, showing a curiosity around textile traditions to which she would not conform. This curiosity would lead her practice to opportunities that many employing craft skills could not follow. *Cosmos (Time Warp)* introduced Meuwissen as a new voice with a formidable approach to colour and texture, and a narrative that is at once undefinable, yet familiar.

The works within, continue this narrative, and perhaps more so than any other in the artist's oeuvre are a return to her origins in painting. Trained throughout her childhood and teens in watercolours and oils, Meuwissen's then photo-realistic works exploited humble household waste, the beginnings of an ongoing investigation into 'desire regurgitated'¹¹. This underlying at-odds thematic is one component of many that allows the work to balance between unsettling and hypnotic. Meuwissen undeniably toys with the tension between vulgar excess and the serenely exquisite; reaffirming that beauty is subjective. The distinction between the sublime and the grotesque can be found within the decadent use of materials, creating a cataclysmic push and pull. Explosive colours nestled into lacquered dull tones of beige and grey simultaneously create satisfying and unsettled affections. A cacophony of not only colour and tone, but layers of movement conducted through texture, scale and refracted light, affirming Meuwissen's masterful, painstaking curation of each individual element within the whole.

Many of the materials employed have been scoured from discarded garments and adornments that were at one time coveted by an owner, hand crafted or imported at great expense and holding much meaning, now acquired by the artist through a process of generational discardure. Like the layers of memory that haunt or sustain a life, this layer of material provenance creates an aura, an effulgence within the works.

In the tradition of painters such as Turner and Rothko the embroidered pieces create a narrative that is blurry, evanescent. Blankets of both the rich and the dull articulate suspended moments, almost dreamlike with unsurmountable detail, detail that might not obviously or seamlessly relate to the next. The swarm is at once disorienting yet comforting, defying time and language. This ambiguity within Meuwissen's storytelling allows the viewer to be present within the work, allowing an entry point within each piece.

Like a sink hole, a black hole, a vortex, an aura; each work creates a sense of transportation to the unknown, a place or space determined by the viewer's meditations. Each manifestation (each artwork) suggesting the exploration of deep time, deep thinking. Often with works that require such labour the hand and the subconscious are entwined, the pieces representing a physical realisation, a phenomenon of thought processes. Trapped between space and time, romantic sublime.

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Debbie Pryor is an artist, curator and writer based on Kurna land in Adelaide. She is the Artistic Programs Manager at Guildhouse and has held leadership roles in artist run initiatives, galleries and arts organisations across Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide since 2000, including as Firstdraft co-director and Craft Victoria curator. Her artistic practice investigates language and materiality employed within the crafted object.

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¹ Artist quote from conversation with author November 4, 2021