

I WILL

NEVER

FORGET YOU

NOT FOR ALL

OF MY DAYS

For this exhibition of seven works in seven rooms Emily Hesse has interrogated a moment in her life, the passing away of her father some five years ago, and tried to understand what this has meant for her, what it means to her now and what her relationship with him meant during her childhood. The works are personal and affecting, but also poetical. They reflect the complex relationships between two individuals who are so similar and yet incontrovertibly individual. Each work is a trace of that which is left behind: the impermanence of each of these pieces, made specifically for the space in which they are shown, is a response to the transient nature of relationship and the shards of memories that remain from what once seemed such secure moments in our lives.

'We do not remember days, we remember moments.' - Cesare Pavese

All That Remains

"We would only sit at this table to eat the pheasant that my father had shot: I remember feeling so small at the big table eating this disgusting pheasant".

All That Remains takes a childhood memory, sitting at the big table being forced to eat pheasant. Together with *When I Was Tall* it looks at ideas of individual smallness: how as children, much as we want to be BIG, we always also seem to crave moments of smallness, being able to hide away and be enveloped by our surroundings. The clay the has been piled onto the table and bears the impression of the artist's body was dug locally at South Gare near Redcar.

That Which Is Yet To Be Recorded

Ideally, this would have been the last piece in this show, however it being first highlights the fact that we make our own memories by the moment. They are not defined or limited by time or order. *That Which Is Yet To Be Recorded* is a room filled with moments yet to be documented. Lined with light sensitive photographic paper the room itself becomes a recording of what takes place during the art fair. The building of the Saltburn School holds so many memories for so many people, and this installation can be seen as a manifestation of that. The recording technology is old fashioned: paper recordings, just as they were when Hesse was a child. Something to hold. Something to keep.

Now I Am Tall

Now I Am Tall carries this idea of smallness forward, a reconstructed childhood den. The den is lined with fragments of children's clothes. Lit dramatically from within we can see a conflict in moods between the cosseted interior and the almost sinister exterior. The colliding of these two emotional states perhaps reflects the often ambivalent relations that we have with members of our own family loving them deeply.

Sheds have a notable presence in contemporary art, Cornelia Parker and Simon Starling being examples that come to mind, but it is perhaps the potency of the shed in everyday life that attracts Emily Hesse to the subject. The shed, a hastily assembled, perhaps crude, but certainly temporary structure is a source of refuge. For the adult, and especially the adult male, the archetypal potting shed at the bottom of the garden is the space to which they might retreat when the pressures of domestic bliss threaten to overwhelm. The realms of childhood imagination though have their own answer to the garden shed, in the form of the den. In some instances this may indeed be a shed: fans of English satire might recall H.H. Munro's (or Saki to give him his pen name) short story *Shredni Vashtar* in which an isolated young boy seeks solace at the bottom of his malicious cousin's garden where he has constructed his own empire, ruled over by the tyrant god *Shredni Vashtar* in the form of a pet ferret that the boy has hidden in the shed. This gleefully gruesome tale set the benchmark for Children's fiction which writers such as Roald Dahl lived up to so persuasively.

A den though can be anything that the child's imagination allows it to be, a reflection perhaps of just what an essential part of childhood it must be: a hollow in a bush, a couple of planks nailed to a crook in a tree becoming an impromptu tree house or even a bed sheet fastened to the back of the settee. Gender role playing suggests perhaps that for girls this is as likely to be a Wendy house for serving tea to friends, whilst for boys it becomes a fort from which those same friends, having transformed to invading armies, can be repelled.

Hesse's installation *Now I Am Tall* is redolent of just such a childhood den. The building itself was once a former child's playhouse, taken from a local allotment and reconstructed exactly in the gallery space. Inside the hut, Hesse has lined the walls with fragments of fabric taken from children's clothing. So in a sense the work is all about feelings of security, but there is an edge of uneasiness about it too. Just like Saki's short story the realisation of the sanctuary also brings with it a realisation of just what you might be seeking protection from. The viewer is confronted by this dual understanding through the drama of the shed's construction, rickety and tumble down it looks like a witches house from a fairy tale, whilst inside the illuminated scraps of fabric bring warmer memories of childhood. The starting point for this work might well be Hesse's only recollection of wanting to be small and of having a place to hide, and likewise the scraps of fabric are taken from clothes that once belonged to the artist's own children. The feelings that the viewer experiences when confronted by the work though, takes us all back to experiences of comfort and fear that were so much part of all our early years.

Priceless.

Much as programmes like *Cash In The Attic* seem to have persuaded us to part with our family heirlooms for a quick financial fix, for a previous generation. *The Antiques Roadshow* helped us to believe that the trinket our grandmother won at a fair was a priceless treasure. We scoured car boot sales and charity shops to find more, to complete the set. It created a generation of collectors. China quickly became a favourite. It was an industry for which Britain was renowned and companies such as Wedgwood, Royal Doulton, Royal Crown Derby and Portmeirion did not hesitate to offer us the antiques of the future. We bought, we displayed, we treasured: but what happened when we broke?

Children can be clumsy in their exuberance and their parent's prized collection may pay the price. *Priceless* reflects upon this moment and what we might do to put it right. Two identical bone china pin dishes have been broken by the artist. One has been hastily repaired with sticky tape: hoping that the parents won't notice for just long enough. Its twin though is repaired with gold leaf. This references an ancient Japanese tradition known as *Kintsugi*: rather than attempt to hide the repair, this tradition emphasises the break with gold coloured lacquer. It suggests that for a pot to be broken through use is a mark of dignity and should be celebrated. In contrast to Western traditions, repaired ceramics can be more valuable than "perfect" ones, as they have had a life. *Priceless* considers how a child might try to make good their accident in these two different ways.

Drawing on objects

A series of drawings that Hesse has been developing over a period of around 5 years. The use of oil paint on found objects articulates the potential and beauty that the artist finds in everyday objects: the stuff that surrounds us. Each drawing reflects the starting point from which Hesse might subsequently develop one of her collage or construction pieces for which she is most well known.

Inside

My Father was an unknown person to me. Something which became even clearer after his death. I had loved and did love a person I had never known. He was troubled and lived in the darkness, hiding the truth. Yet many people loved him without knowing who he really was.

This film based work depicts the entering of a sealed barn. The sun from outside touching it's walls like a searchlight. The view from the interior being tunnelled and blinkered. Life taking place outside it's walls. The death brought out into the daylight.

The Truth

The explicit meaning of this text piece perhaps needs little explanation. Coming at the culmination of the personal journey that the artist has taken us on thus far though it perhaps causes the viewer to question what they have already seen and their responses to these works as well as to how we individually narrate our lives.