

Double 54"x 74"

Text by Emily Cormack, Melbourne, April 2017

Life (bedrooms) in plan.

A Sharing Economy

There was a great deal of tea. Crumbs were left on plates, and were brushed from fingers as they got back to work. There was a puck, thrilip, pop, puck sound as the women needled in and out, in and out. Each woman held thoughts of the same friend in their mind, as they inched out her story in thread. The green angles of youth, the alternating strip of light and dark, and the red centre of home. The quilter's outstretched legs were warm beneath the large soft fabric and almost touched as they worked.

Muffling cover

A compulsion to smoothness inspired them. The thickness of it denied creases and wrinkles. Its material characteristic was to smother. To wrap and cover with a muffling certitude. It was tight in seam, and so complete, as it arched under and over the pillow. Covering completely, wholly enfolding, thick as fondant. The infringement of skin or hair or fluid, unthinkable, beneath the seamless bed cover.

Body weight

They came home to the room upended. Clothes tipped, boxes emptied and strewn. The violation was complete. Lace curtains torn from their track, and clumped like a slumping body was the quilt. Flung with force from its anchor points, the carefully sewn corners were like elbows, propping its huge weight so that it leaned on its mass. The underside was revealed in parts like varicose veins glimpsed, too high on thighs. Her arms ached as she held the quilts weight trying to shake order to its form.

informe

In the factory they referred to them as "nets". A loose term for the stacks and stacks and stacks of bedcovers that they produced endlessly with vast, large handled machines. The nets trapped and covered all at once. The jobbers threw them into the slicing machine cutting neat angles where bed legs, heads and pillows would slot. Strong metallic arms clamped them aloft shaking the strange flat forms, stumpy limbs and odd slits, which were then folded and folded and folded.

Covering with Mathematical Frock Coats

"What it designates has no rights in any sense and gets itself squashed everywhere, like a spider or an earthworm. In fact, for academic men to be happy, the universe would have to take shape. All of philosophy has no other goal: it is a matter of giving a frock coat to what is, a mathematical frock coat. On the other hand, affirming that the universe resembles nothing and is only formless amounts to saying that the universe is something like a spider or spit."

Georges Bataille, "Formless", Documents 1, Paris, 1929, p. 382 (translated by Allan Stoekl with Carl R. Lovitt and Donald M. Leslie Jr., Georges Bataille. Vision of Excess. Selected Writings, 1927-1939, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press "Formless", p. 31

Biographical notes

Esther Stewart lives and works in Melbourne, Victoria. Her work is represented by Sarah Cottier Gallery, Sydney.

Stewart completed a Master of Cultural and Arts Management, University of Melbourne in 2012-2014; a Bachelor of Fine Arts, (First Class Honours), majoring in Sculpture and Spatial Practice at the Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne in 2010

Solo exhibitions include, How to Decorate a Dump at Heide Museum of Modern Art in Melbourne, 2016, Behind Closed Doors at Sarah Cottier Gallery in Sydney, 2016; Display Home, the Act of Living at Firstdraft in Sydney, 2015; Timeshare at Station Gallery in Melbourne, 2015; Endless That's the Problem at Utopian Slumps in Melbourne, 2014; Geometric Colour at Craft Victoria in Melbourne, 2013; Makin' Plans at Utopian Slumps in Melbourne, 2013; Carton at Rearview in Melbourne, 2011; and Futurity at TCB in Melbourne, 2010

Group exhibitions include, Painting. More Painting at ACCA(Australian Centre for Contemporary Art in Melbourne, 2016, Sir John Sulman at The Art Gallery of New South Wales in Sydney, 2016, It's only castles burying at Station in Melbourne, 2016, The Aggregate and the Algorithm at Tristian Koenig in Melbourne, 2014; A Representation of Space at Víctor Lope Arte Contemporáneo in Barcelona Spain, 2014; Never Never Land at Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery in Sydney, 2014; Painting/sculpture/floor work/wall work, Ground Exhibition, Stockroom, 2013; Foldout at the QV precinct in Melbourne, 2012 as part of the New Babylon project supported by Next Wave Festival; Wall Project no. 6 at Obus in Melbourne, 2012, part of the Craft Cubed Festival; Group Work at Mr Kitly in Melbourne, 2012; House Me Within a Geometric Quality at Platform Contemporary Art Space, Flinders Street Station in Melbourne, 2011; Debut VII at Blindside in Melbourne, 2011; and Fresh 2010 at Craft Victoria in Melbourne, 2010

Her work was also displayed at the following art fairs: Spring 1883 at The Establishment in Sydney, 2015 (with Sarah Cottier Gallery and Station Gallery); Spring 1883 at The Windsor Hotel in Melbourne, 2014 (with Utopian Slumps); Art Copenhagen at the Bella Center in Copenhagen, Denmark, 2014 (with Victor Lope); Art Bodensee in Dornbirn, Austria, 2014 (with Victor Lope)

Commissions include Darling Point apartment with Chenchow Little Architects in Sydney, 2015 and the 2015/2016 Fall Winter Men's range for Italian based fashion house Valentino

Stewart was the recipient of the Sir John Sulman award at the Art Gallery of New South Wales in 2016, Next Wave Festival (Kickstart award) in Melbourne in 2012; Rearview in Melbourne in 2010 (solo exhibition award); the Friends of the Victorian College of the Arts in Melbourne (Undergraduate Award) in 2010; the National Gallery Women's Association in Melbourne (Undergraduate award) in 2009; and TCB inc, in Melbourne (Blair Trethowan Award) in 2009. Stewart received grants for new work from the Australia Council in Sydney, Arts Victoria in Melbourne, and NAVA in Sydney in 2013.