

A black wire mesh cage hangs from a chain against a light, overcast sky. The cage is rectangular and appears to be empty. The background is a pale, uniform color, possibly a wall or sky. The cage is positioned in the upper right quadrant of the image. A large, solid grey rectangular area covers the left and bottom portions of the image, partially overlapping the cage.

*MEET ME ON
THE OTHER SIDE*

Julia Morison

28th October – 26th November 2011
Two Rooms Gallery

Catalogue text by Creon Upton



Fretful thing, 2011

THE MUD HAS KEPT COMING, AS IT ONCE PROMISED IT WOULD DO.
¶ A slick viscous lake invading streets and curbs and the ground floors of dwellings has sent residents onto ladders and up manholes to lay cushions and cans among dark musty rafters. Headlamps exchange blinding white stares. ¶ Outside, an anthroscape's replete composition is slowly erased: spaces filled, borderlines clouded, languages muffled by the simple white noise of a sleek rotten greyness that shines like the greyness of a corpse, announces deliverance from light. ¶ After its early onrush, the mud has become a barely perceptible flow—a million black springs in patient disgorgement. The roads a comedy of bog and saturation, just-graduated jalopies inert in unprotesting vanquishment. ¶ TV helicopters capture these mechanical failures live, as if that singular humiliation tells the story calling out to be told.



SHE IS THE QUEEN. She walks on her hands on a summer-green lawn, founds solitary camp-spots among the counterpanes of cold winter's dark, lies on a carpet narrating. ¶ If you ask, she will tell you—she takes seven sugars in her tea. ¶ Tripping all over her tongue while she talks—the mind outstripping the body. ¶ There are those whose bodies leave the mind behind. They bring to the world its shame, all its inadvertent evil—and all its love. ¶ While her kind give us art and give us cruelty. Always one of them in some deep shadow, in the disguise of ages, at the root and heart of old stories of magic or exquisite revenge. And you have no choice but to love them—with a fearful, impulsive, ham-fisted recklessness.

AT FIRST FOLKS WAITED—FEET UP, BITING ON SURVIVAL SUPPLIES BROUGHT IN FROM STORAGE AS THE SOLE AND OBVIOUS THING TO DO. ¶ But when the mud achieved between 17 and 21 cm indoors, across the region heads swung out from jelly necks. Eyes met over tabletops in a sudden onset of terror. Drawers and wardrobes were rifled, and great stacks erected with useable items atop. Then families made this peculiar journey, up into the roofs—made for such higher ground as their plots of ground afforded.



AND SHE SITS NOW, QUIET AND STILL. It is hot, and she is dry. The grainy mud on her pants and shirt and face and hands is crusty, loose, showering down as dust—like powdered dryness straight from a can. ¶ She waits, a slow silence taken hold, a perfect immobility, a keen but empty gaze at forty-five degrees down, hearing the whispered scrapings as she rubs the powder off her, forming it into slight conical piles like the precious ash remains of a ritual far away. ¶ Duties are shared. At last the brother—the Timekeeper—looks at his watch. Not secretly, but in apology—pushing back a sleeve slightly, hands dropping again, resuming silence.

FOR TWO DAYS THE RADIO SAID TO EXPECT THE MUD TO CEASE. It was aberrant, couldn't sustain, would flow seaward, subside. ¶ Stay high and dry. Do not attempt to travel. ¶ Now the sound of choppers punctuates the hours, the radio announces rescues underway. ¶ But this mudlake is round to the horizons, crusting at its edges like a cowpat—not flowing, but growing. Steadily, incrementally, upwards.

THE SMALL BODIES FIND MANAGEABLE ARRANGEMENTS IN THIS ROUGH-CUT WORLD. Little Buddhas rest their shoulders against the ancient air of the day. ¶ They have adopted the notion that Clarissa is with them here too. Clarissa's the Complainer. It's all that she can do. ¶ "It's just past four"—the brother, displaying the wrist. Afternoon rations, half a glass each. Clarissa will swallow hers down, but the siblings will sip: holding out is the only game they can play, holding out to be the one to take their last drop last. ¶ Clarissa says they are losing to evaporation. They don't listen to her.





Stubborn thing, 2011

AND HERE IS THE FATHER. His duties are to act and to react. His last trip down brought a moment's endless possibility of total mud immersion. So instead he's made a manhole through the roof. ¶ He's been out here for hours now. He notices the cold, his shivering grey-caked skin. ¶ The moon is high, and other roofs are filling up too. On the greasy face of the liquid moon below, it's all reflected in a picture that nobody thinks to take. There's fire up on one roof, and distant sounds of singing. A tall man sits. Another on his back, thinking, if we knew from the start we were on our own, we might have found a way out, thinking, I am looking up at the stars, I am looking out to the stars. ¶ Through the night come strange sounds—broken cracks, pterodactyl cries—mistranslated messages, saying, we have been here all along, if only you had thought to listen.

AND IN THE DARK SHE TAKES HIS HAND, WHISPERS, "CLARISSA'S GONE, WE HAVE TO TOO." And leads him through the night-time heaves of the house, crawling on raw knees, saying, "I knew there was something we could do, I knew it all the time." Saying: "That is why you have to learn to adapt. We have to learn to adapt." Saying: "You know I'm right don't you? Don't you?" ¶ They hold on, clasping one to the other, knowing if they let go, the strange possibility will pass. Feeling at first for the rungs, toes contracting over aluminium lines. But letting go as it takes them. A soft careless drift as it takes them. An enclosing that takes them from the inside out, from the simple propositions of ladder and rung, foot and mud, it and us. Giving up its rancid gritty coldness—becoming now indifference, and a dark luminous pale.



Netted thing, 2011

WITH HER TELEPATHY, WHICH HAS LONG BEEN KNOWN, SHE ANNOUNCES A GATHERING. It is like nothing they might have imagined. ¶ Friends come together in a place that is not a place. They are here and not here. Deep in a conversation that's in no need of ever becoming. Need does not abide wherever there may never be doubt. Where all things are, there are no things. Shapes are transitory accidents—awaiting their time, awaiting their transformation. ¶ It is silent like gambolling clouds. All is already proclaimed. There is only immanent announcement. Only discovery. ¶ Oceans call. ¶ You are not you. ¶ It is the difference between in and of. The difference between this irreducible certainty and a knowledge addicted to meanings and to exchange—to its economy of the discrete, of endless units and relations—where the rooftops strike out in series, and the raindrops fall out of the sky. ¶ It is the difference between saying and not saying. ¶ Shhh.



Lazy thing, 2011

Julia Morison studied graphic design at Wellington Polytechnic 1970 – 72 and painting at the School of Fine Arts, University of Canterbury 1973 – 76. Frances Hodgkins Fellowship 1988. Moet & Chandon fellowship and residency in Epernay 1990. For the following 10 years the tiny village of Oyes in France was home and workbase.

Returned to New Zealand 1999 to teach at the School of Fine Arts at Canterbury University. Julia's resignation in 2006, coincided with a survey exhibition *a loop around a loop* co-curated by the Dunedin Public Art Gallery and Christchurch City Art Galleries. New Zealand Arts Foundation Laureate 2005.

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 creative *nz*
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