

Likeness

I notice that when I want to define today, I reach for history. When I want to define why I write, I reach for someone else's words. When I want to define labour, I use time. When I want to define art, I use the world. This sort of gentle and deliberate counterpoint proves the subject, without improving it. The point of these exchanges between things, is that what is lost is as vital as what remains. By doubling [and even dodging] the subject, the subject is raised in relief.

For Sally Anderson, the subject is the self and when she wants to define it, she uses landscape as an alternate. Her paintings often cite places that could be found on a map; places that Sally spent time as a child, as a girlfriend, or as part of a family. But to focus for too long on the familiar topographies of the map would be misdirection, because although they allude to the terrestrial, the territories these paintings chart are emotional.

Anderson works in parallel with her environment and, accordingly, her paintings continue to arrive in pairs. Together like this, yet apart, they remind me of messmates, hands, wolves, water, glass and other signs with echoes like clapping, walking, nodding or the simple repetition of a single word. The subject is most accurately rendered by comparison. In *Unfolded Bedroom, Dancing Rooms, Rooms Holding Hands* [all works 2017], the body is hinted at through the architecture and iteration of intimate domestic space. The work suggests, through the proximity of flesh and linen, bedframe and limbs, that the body finds its logic when it meets its double.

Anderson's paintings define the blindness associated with looking back and returning to ourselves in time. Via a type of exquisite erasure, she layers painted landscape upon painted landscape until sedimentary layers form. [If she were a writer, she would hand in the final draft and insist it be published with all its corrections and original errors in tact.] Her paintings are born from indecision, arousal, recollection and delay. They account for the type of double vision with which we view our fractured selves. They are provisional even as they are absolute. In linguistics, the process of elision refers to the times when certain sounds are omitted to make words easier to pronounce. Anderson undertakes this sort of necessary elision in her own work, dodging the subject so that it might become visible.

Over time, Sally's paintings have begun to subtly repeat and address themselves; time demands this sort of revision. Her paintings contain nascent works that may take root elsewhere as new paintings, or remain wholly invisible. Sally describes these subterranean scenes as "possible paintings"

and in this way, alludes to her treatment of painting as an indexical form. Indeed, several of Anderson's recent paintings quote—in her own hand—the works of her partner, the painter Guy Maestri. [*Guido's Landscape of Tweed Valley on Blue with a View Between The Pandanus and Your Landscape of Govetts Leap on My Landscape of You or You Guy's Tweed Valley with Mirra's Yellow Lilies on Nanna's Walls.*] These visual amalgams play with the history of the readymade and indicate a sort of emotional and intellectual honesty wherein Anderson [as the subject] finds it essential to call her context into account. In the same way, her slow and lingering titles recall the painting's origins as feeling and correspondence.

In the spirit of return and revision, I rewrite (and therefore rethink) an account of Sally's paintings that I gave earlier in the year. These paintings are made intaglio, with histories and figures sunk below their surface. They are like wombs or libraries—where gestation and absorption are tacitly implied. They are evocative of our desire to be invisible and yet still be wholly known. Likeness might be a form of substitution—but it is never without regard.

-Stella Rosa McDonald 2017