



JANE LOWBEER

THE PREPONDERANCE OF THE SMALL

June 3 - July 1

Opening Sunday, June 3, 2-4pm



Image: *Happy Stones, Perhaps I*, 2017, monotype, 19" x 25".

THE PREPONDERANCE OF THE SMALL

Essay by Ann Jaeger

Jane LowBeer invites us to join her contemplation on the significance of the unremarkable, the quotidian, the impermanent in *The Preponderance of the Small*. At the beginning of the new year in 2016, LowBeer consulted the poetic wisdom of the I Ching, the ancient Chinese book of divination, and the resulting reading gave her the title of the exhibition:

THE PREPONDERANCE OF THE SMALL

Success.

Perseverance furthers.

Small things may be done; great things should not be done.

The flying bird brings the message:

It is not well to strive upward,

It is well to remain below.

Great good fortune.

LowBeer's exhibition juggles counterpoint and confluence of the machine-made and the natural, the objectification and abstraction of ordinary things. It leads us through tangles. It reveals rhythms born of repetition. Her fresh use of the language of line is omnipresent, as conclusive and unpretentious as a sumi-e ink painting. *The Preponderance of the Small* is reminiscent of a walking meditation, as if rambling over the rolling hills and forests where she lives. It is a wayfaring for our perception of the assembled object, sparsely drawn yet easily recognized: a wooden spool of thread or the cast-off shell casing of a hunter's bullet, small bottles with caps or stoppers, a knife, a tiny man on a horse, a small house plant, milkweed pods and goldenrod galls.

Using printmaking, collage, and assemblage, the exhibition begins with monotypes that portray arrangements of machine-made and found objects. It transitions to animated objects that describe a strange co-mingling of the natural world with fabricated objects, and finally brings us to a sculptural installation that lets us experience natural forms as graphic form and line. LowBeer employs a low-key neutral palette reminiscent of Morandi, by which all things become egalitarian and yet quietly emanate their presence in space. These are the colours of twilight or a rainy day.

On the main floor of the gallery, the viewer encounters contemporary still lifes rendered in large monotypes and collage on paper. The objects depicted are stripped down to the barest smudge, mark, and shadow, yet still recognizable. The large monotype *Night Kingdom* portrays a table with randomly arranged tools – a glue gun with cord, ruler, screwdriver, oil can, scissors, tape measure, spent tube of paint, small figurine on a horse – from a dark but lush palette to a spare black and white rendering, as if the turning on of a light caught them off guard. LowBeer captures a majestic stillness and quiet personality in each of these lowly objects of service.



Image: *Night Kingdom*, 2011, monotype & drawing, 30" x 55".

In other monotypes, such as *River of Life*, similar objects appear drained of colour, as LowBeer focuses on their pared-down shapes, and the images become abstract. In *Inventory*, she imposes a sense of order, grouping similar things or using a grid to order them. The conforming pill bottles are replaced by irregular stones, the electrical cord by a maze of grasses as seen in *Happy Stones*, *Perhaps I* and *II*. We come across the emergence of the cultivated landscape in

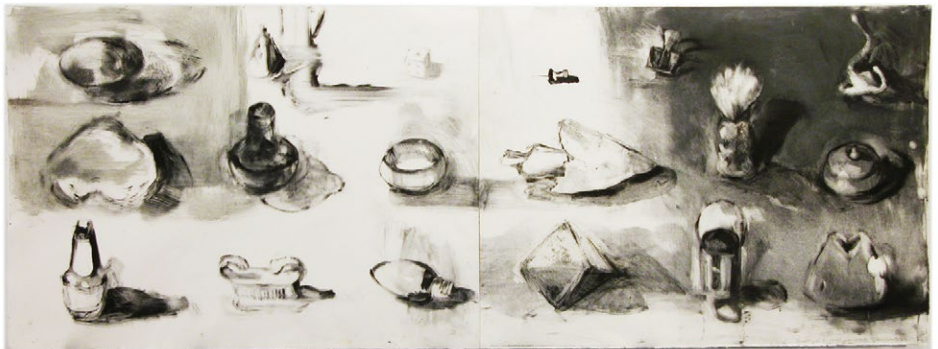


Image: *Square Table*, 2009, monotype, 39" x 41"

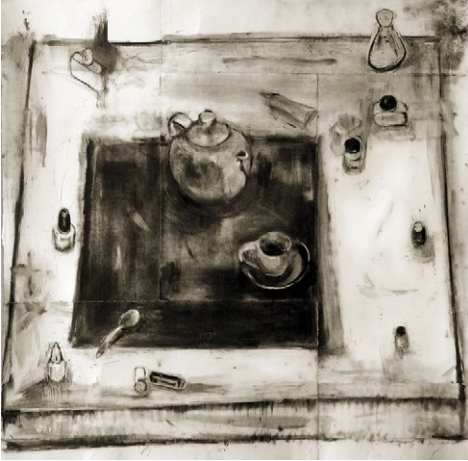


Image: *Square Table*, 2009, monotype 39" x 41".

Above, actual pill bottles, bright yellow, are stacked against a black background; below, images of various-sized bottles roll by in a scroll. Real measuring tapes are posed above their drawn counterparts, accompanied by a festive row of door stops and an ink bottle. This work is grounded in the artist's early involvement in puppet theatre. LowBeer calls these crankees visual poems. They are intimate, rustic, interactive reflections on the virtue of the small.

Standing within the room is a slowly rotating plinth with a small paper forest of drypoint flowers and leaves, cut out in the fulsome shape of trees, their trunks made of found multicolour bullet casings. In *Small Things #1*, objects lining a narrow shelf reimagine other bullet casings by using them as mounts for sundry objects – a bow tie, a wire spiral, a toy figure, a charm in the shape of an animal - now raised out of obscurity, their usual associations spent, playfully snapped to attention. As in life, our attention is inexplicably drawn to the chance encounter, asking us to question what is real and what is important.

In the loft gallery, along one wall are lines of wire with what, on first glance, appear to be rows of birds casting soft shadows on the wall, but on closer inspection are seed pods of false indigo and milweed. Birds are a recurring theme in the exhibition and are echoed in both the crankees and this installation. They are the fragile messengers alluded to in the I Ching, the music makers, the flicker of light and shadow through a forest, the envoy between heaven and earth.



Image: *Small Things #1*, 2018, found objects, metal, 4" x 11".

Square Table with its dramatic central focal point based on a formal city park scene. LowBeer reveals, then erases intersecting lines with ghosted renderings of the table's edge – spacial demarcations that echo Diebenkorn's landscapes.

And further to the theme of rambling is motion. In the small gallery, we encounter the delightfully childlike crankees – small manual theatres. Two pegs are turned by hand to change the relationships of layered scenes printed, drawn and collaged on Japanese paper. A split screen offers a static scene on top and the manual animation below, inviting us to invent the story.



Image: *Installation detail*, 2018, false indigo pods, wire, mirror.

In the centre of the room mirrored circles embrace each pillar at the base, dissolving the floor into pools of reflection. Black and silver wire footings swirl and float like water eddies and are topped with upended dry stalks of garlic roots and blackened seed pods that mimic water flowers. The effect is playfully abstract, a 3-dimensional caricature that emulates the marks of her monotypes and drypoints, with associations of traversing a formal garden. In defiance of the natural order, goldenrod galls shoot out from the central wooden pillars. What was commonplace is now unsettled, and our minds recall the traditional yarrow stalks thrown for I Ching divination, while reconfiguring them as a kind of explosive punctuation to the other forms presented in the installation.

Overhead and central, inverted branches suggest roots that dangle from above, reinforcing the inversion theme: as above, so below, as within, so without. The microcosm is a reflection of the macrocosm. Spanish poet Antonio Machado writes, "Wanderer, there is no road, the road is made by walking." *The Preponderance of the Small* reminds us of the value of wandering, of discovering ourselves in the journey, of the great good fortune that ensues when we stay present with the ephemeral in our daily lives.

BIOGRAPHY

Jane LowBeer's art practise is printmaking and mixed-media art. She studied printmaking at Atelier 17 in Paris and has been a practicing artist for over three decades. Her work has won numerous prizes and can be found in private and public collections including London's Victoria & Albert Museum and the Bibliothèque National de Paris, France. She is a member of Loop Gallery and her monotypes can be found at Open Studio and The Rukaj Gallery.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The artist would like to acknowledge the support of the Ontario Arts Council and personally thank Richard Peachey.



Image left: *Inventory #2*, 2010, monotype, 35" x 41". Image right: *Light on Little Things*, 2007, monotype, 28" x 28".



Above: *Rendez-Vous*, 2014, Crankee: wood, printed paper, found object, 8" x 24"
Cover image: *Installation detail*, 2018, false indigo pods, wire, mirror.

EVENTS PROGRAM

Artist conversation with Curator: Sunday, June 17, 2 - 4pm.

This is a free event, please email your RSVP response to communications@vac.ca.



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GALLERY HOURS

Monday: Closed

Tuesday - Thursday: 10am - 9pm

Friday - Sunday: 10am - 4pm

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