Rainier Maria Rilke once remarked that poetry can only emerge from within. You must write what is personal, of what you experience, of what you see, love, and lose:

[...]

Rilke (1984, 7-8, 8-9, 10) urges the young poet to begin this inward journey and that if “your everyday life appears poor” then complain not to life, but rather “admit to yourself that you are not enough of a poet to call forth its riches”. This “turning-within” and “immersion in your own world”, he writes, will create a work of art that “has arisen out of necessity”. The creator must be a world unto themselves and find everything within themselves and Nature.

With her Kin series of works, the artist Jahnne Pasco-White, creates a notion of pregnancy, birthing and mothering that is a quintessential “turning-within,” while also gently reorienting the viewer’s notion of “within.”

For this she uses colour, shape and texture rather than words. This inside is not entirely a private space, not just the mother and baby’s world, but rather one that is entangled with many others. The poet and the creator are also mother and world. The baby is poetry, art that emerges from within—literally.

The writers invited to respond to Pasco-White’s Kin project by her partner N.A.J. Taylor have all oriented themselves toward Pasco-White’s art from their own worlds—personally, conceptually and empirically—and each have situated themselves carefully, both geographically and theoretically. While formulating my response, I returned to Rilke’s book for comfort as the terrible fires ravaged my adopted home and to hide from the fear of losing my mother, who lay in a hospital a bed a world away from the burning coasts of Australia, in the cold and wet city of Portland, Oregon. I realized that the personal was in fact at the heart of the diverse responses you have read in this volume: we are all writing from our own places and experiences. We variously live in bodies as mothers, offspring, scholars, artists, and these bodies find their sustenance in our homes, families, and communities. These places and experiences call to the provocations dried into the paint of these pieces to which we were asked to respond: the call to rethink our connections to family.
those that are with us, those who nurture and sustain us, gives us clues with her art. We remember and care for pencils, papers, canvases, and keyboards? Pasco-White of our art that are just as important as the paints, pens, pain beyond the limits of how we were raised and taught? think about creation, connection, love, loss, destruction and exhausting, but it must be done (Fishel, 2019). How do we in the kitchen—and as mothers—is care work. It is often and I are both mothers—for instance—and we are both we are never a single organism.

If we think beyond the biogenetic relation, Jahnne and mothers, too. visionaries” (Fishel 2017, x; 2-3; 50; 98) … and painters varied, magical forms to acknowledge the motley crew of Whitman, along with bacteria and helminths, guided these reflections on how our messmates, like border walls and graffiti. Ozguc challenges us to think new guiding fictions and metaphors that can “imagine human cells by 10 to 1. Whitman provided the necessary poetic counsel to able to create a body and its worlds with the poetry of Walt Whitman, along with bacteria and helminths, guided how we imagine a “revised domestic ecosystem in which we can do the careful, slow and messy thinking” that needs the theme of becoming-other and making kin with the many “ways of understanding energy exchange relations between species. Using symbiogenesis and the parasite as symbiotic partner to evolution, this focus can then be “an opening into understanding both children and parasites as profoundly intimate and vital gifts” and one of the “ways to understanding energy exchange relations between species.”

Engaging the artist’s first forays into painting in situs on the wall, Umut Ozguc travelled the farthest from the human body and its internal messmates to examine the theme of becoming-other and making kin with humanmade landscapes. For her, Pasco-White’s artworks conjured memories of the Separation Wall in Palestine and the agential and relational capacities of spaces that are often found in unlikely places, “messy and unlikely spaces” like border walls and graffiti. Ozguc challenges us to think through Spinoza: if no one knows what a body can do, then reflecting upon what multiple others can do together can stimulate political and personal change. As Rilke penned to the young poet asking for advice, perhaps we must cling to the experiences that everyday life brings us. A poet must write of sorrows, wishes, your belief in beauty with a fervent and quiet humility. It is this that Pasco-White art brings to us: a reflection of the artist’s everyday life. Her joy in the many others who she counts as kin.

References


Jahnne Pasco-White: Kin

Published by Art Ink and Unlikely Publishing, in Melbourne, Australia

artink.com.au
unlikely.net.au

Unlikely Publishing is supported by The Centre of Visual Art (CoVA) at The University of Melbourne

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Editor: N.A.J. Taylor
Design: Hayman Design
Copyeditor: J.M.L. Taylor

Jahnne Pasco-White is represented by STATION, Australia

Jahnne Pasco-White acknowledges the following organisations for sponsoring the project at various junctures: Australian Council for the Arts, Martin Bequest for Painting, Gertrude Contemporary, Art Gallery of New South Wales’ Mora Dyring Memorial Studio Fellowship, Bendigo Art Gallery’s Arthur Guy Memorial Painting Prize, Yarra City Council, Moreland City Council, Regional Arts Victoria, Monash University and the Australian Federal Government’s Department of Education, Skills and Employment. Several individuals, identified by the tremendously supportive staff at my gallery STATION, acquired works that enabled printing the book in hardcopy. Jahnne is especially grateful to her partner Nico for his unwavering commitment to her practice and to this book, and their daughter, Oslo, whose entry into their lives gave rise to this body of work in the first place. The project’s ultimate shape and form benefited from being intimately nurtured by family, peers and friends, as well as intellectually nourished by the dozen authors who dedicated time and energy to write such thoughtful chapters.

N.A.J. Taylor is greatly indebted to each of the contributors to this volume—and the peer reviewers—for meeting every editorial demand made of them during an extraordinarily difficult 18-month period, both individually and collectively. One of the joys of editing this book has been to document the grace and grit of his partner Jahnne as an artist, whilst observing these same qualities being developed in her mothering of Oslo. His own mother, Jan, deserves special praise for her editorial assistance. He would also like to acknowledge Simon Hayman and Samantha Lynch at Hayman Design and the team at Art Ink, as well as Norie Neumark and Jan Hendrik Bruggemeier at Unlikely: Journal for Creative Arts, for agreeing to co-publish this volume.

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Distribution: Art Ink, Australia
First Edition of 750
ISBN: 978-0-6450166-0-4
Printed by Gunn & Taylor, Australia
Paper: Ecostar+ 100% Recycled Uncoated, 120gsm, 250gsm
Stephen Clay, 120gsm, 250 gsm