

A Gentle Man (Part II) (1975-2029)

Exhibition Audio Description by Becky Beasley

The Gallery

The gallery is 10 metres wide and about 24 metres long. The ceiling height to left on entering is 5 metres and, to the right is significantly lower, at 3 metres high. The gallery sometimes has a wall where the ceiling lowers, creating two spaces, but for this exhibition, the wall has been removed and so the gallery is one large space – like an open landscape revealing the entire original architectural floorplan.

The Floor (an artwork)

The entire floor of the gallery has been laid with a pale green linoleum which the manufacturer has named, Wellness Green. I have used this green several times before in exhibitions. It's very calm and creates a relaxing, natural overall tone. As the gallery is so large, the entirely pale green floor creates a very expansive sensation, like an open meadow in Springtime. Across the floor, a series of hand-cut linoleum designs have been inset flush into the floor. To the left on entering, towards the far end, black linoleum silhouettes of The Great Lakes of North America have been inset into the floor. They were drawn by myself

and then skilfully hand-cut in linoleum from my paper templates by the linoleum fitter. They are at a scale of approximately 1 to 300,000. So, to give a sense of the relative scale, Lake Superior, the largest of the Great Lakes, for example, which is 563 kilometres wide, is 1.75 metres wide in my silhouette.

Lake Ontario, the smallest of the lakes, is my favourite in linoleum, as it is quite tiny, at just 90 x 30 centimetres. There are three mid-green coloured metal benches positioned around the lakes.

To the right-hand side of the very far end wall at this end of the gallery, there is a tall narrow window – about 2.5 metres tall and 1 metre wide- which lets natural light flood into the gallery at this end.

To the right on entering, towards the far end of the gallery, set into the floor, is a large, hand-cut, black linoleum lake, titled, 'Lake Faulkner'. This lake is about 3 metres long and 1.9 metres wide and is cut from the silhouette of the profile of the face and neck of American author, William Faulkner. He has a slightly chunky bent nose.

There are three benches positioned around Lake Faulkner.

In addition, set into the flooring around the gallery, there are ten other inset elements around the gallery floor. These have been aqua jet-cut for me by the manufacturer as they contain words and are too detailed to be hand-cut. The

words are cut in black linoleum and set into circles or ovals made from the same Wellness Green as the rest of the floor. Two of these are 1 metre diameter circles in which are phrases which are written out in a full circle around the inside of the circumference.

One of these reads, 'When? You say. I answer you. When I have circumscribed my sphere.

This is a citation from the wonderful fragmentary, 'Notebooks of Joseph Joubert', from 1800.

And the other reads, Ursula Le Guin "I am a man." Gustave Flaubert "Madame Bovary, c'est moi."

The 1 metre diameter of the floor element means it is a very neat size for a person to stand inside the blank green centre with the text all around one. There are also two 50-centimetre diameter circle elements. One has the word WEST, in capitals, with an arrow below the word, pointing to the left. The other has the word EAST in capitals with an arrow below the word, pointing to the right. These have been oriented correctly within the gallery: EAST points due east and WEST points due West. The circle means that as this floor tours with this exhibition the arrows can be turned and re-oriented correctly at each venue. There are also four 50-centimetre-wide lozenge-shaped smaller elements which have been inset around Lake Faulkner each with a phrase or single word: A lake in a forest. A bench under a pine. Drinking water at night. Clearing.

There are also two older linoleum text works set into the floor. Both of these are 1 metre diameter circles in which there are phrases which are written out in a full circle around the inside of the circumference. One reads, Depressive Alcoholic Mother, and is made with a salmon-coloured, or granite pink ground with letters in Baskerville typeface which have been aqua jet cut in a petrol blue colour and is from 2018. The other reads, Highly Sensitive Person, and is from 2021. It is cut in the Wellness green linoleum, with the words set in a contrasting "concrete grey".

The H. S. P. Curtains

(in collaboration with Joe Rizzo Naudi)

Directly ahead, about 2 metres away from you on entering the gallery, is a tall, soft pink-linen, vertical curtain-like sculpture which is hung from the lower ceiling. As you move into the gallery space, you will find that there are in fact three of these hanging works in a row, side by side, with one metre gaps between each of them, so that one can move freely between them. They are slowly rotating at one revolution per minute. They are soft and sweeping, almost dancing around, quite playfully, animated. I imagine them like cartoon curtains, but which have been animated from delicate pastel-pink watercolour illustrations.

I will describe the specific shape and form of each of these sculptures in a little more detail now.

They are each 2.4 metres tall from the floor, by 2 metres in length and 1.25 metres in width. The fabric has been sewn at the top over metal rails. The rails have been welded into the shapes of the capital letters, H, S and P.

They are hung from the ceiling with cables which have been attached to motors set to rotate at one revolution per minute. And so, they are slowly revolving in space. The soft dusky pink linen is hung so as to just sweep the floor as they move.

So, these are my dancing H, S, P curtain sculptures and they are quite joyful to observe. You might like to brush the moving linen with your hand, or stand between them with your arms extended, and feel the soft linen slowly brushing against your palms.

H.S.P. is an acronym for Highly Sensitive Person after the title of a book by academic, Elaine Aaron, first published in 1999.

The Lakes Tables

To the left on entering the gallery, is a large, previously undescribed area between the revolving curtains directly ahead of you, and the Great Lakes and benches which, as I have described earlier, are to your left at the very far

end. So here, in this previously undescribed middle space are six black, table-like sculptures.

The tabletops of five of these have been cut in black MDF from the same templates as the Great Lakes linoleum flooring beyond. The tables are each 72 centimetres high and have slim tubular black metal legs. The tabletops themselves have been inset with a dark charcoal-coloured furniture linoleum, which is smoother than flooring linoleum, and almost silky, to the touch.

The sixth table is the largest, at about 2 x 1.5 metres and is made from the same materials and from the same silhouette as Lake Faulkner, albeit at a size about one third smaller than the floor lake.

Each of the six tables are set with small arrangements of objects – primarily hand-made vessel-like ceramic items and some vintage printed matter. I will describe these in more detail later.

So, these black tables appear quite like three-dimensional shadows of the lakes' linoleum flooring elements.

The Walls

To the left on entering the gallery, on the very far end wall, behind the Great Lakes linoleum floor, are hung two 1 metre wide flat-screens on which are playing parts one and two of my four piece video work, 'A Gentle Man'.

To the right, on entering the gallery, on the very far end wall, is a 4 metre wide video projection which shows part three of the video work. At right-angles to this, on the right-hand adjacent side wall is another 4 metre wide video projection showing the fourth part of the video work. So, parts three and four are presented as large projections onto the walls around Lake Faulkner.

The light at the right-hand end of the gallery is dimmer, as there is no daylight here, and comes primarily from the projected light from the large wall projections. My intention is that the right-hand end of the gallery feels like a shady place, like a clearing in a forest and, as such, is soothing in contrast to the lighter aspect of the other day-lit end of the gallery.

Along the walls of the larger left-hand end of the gallery there are a series of framed black and white photographs which have been installed on a series of shallow oak picture shelves, so the frames, instead of hanging flat on the walls, lean back slightly.

This was intentional in allowing the framed photographs to have a more physical presence than when they are hung flat to the walls. The picture shelves are made from light oak and are each either 2 metres long or 1.5 metres long and each holds a sequence of two or three of the framed photographs.

There is a sense of pacing and composition to the hanging of the shelf sequences, which stretch the full lengths of the long gallery walls. This extension of the horizontal line through the modularity of the shelves is intended to highlight the length of walls in the larger end of the gallery space, and to be experienced through linear movement. I imagine children running along its full length.

The small groupings of the framed photographs leant on the picture shelves are sequenced in a repetitive yet tidal rhythm – using sequences of alternating close-up photographs of a fig tree and a pair of hands holding various natural objects. I will describe the photographs in more detail later.

Within music, composition with a repetitive yet tidal rhythm, often utilizes, 'ostinati', a term which means the repetition, or repetition with slight variation, of musical phrases or patterns, and can create a soothing, hypnotic, or "wave-like" effect.

Within the pastoral landscape form of the exhibition, the works described thus far are all expressed through organic curved shapes and forms. The composition of the restrained horizontal line of the picture shelves, in contrast, might function as the equivalent of a horizon line, and the photographs expressing a space beyond their flat picture plane, their 'views'.