

KATIE WATCHORN

dry brimmings

3rd October – 23rd November 2024

Liminality, dates and meal-deals

One of the noteworthy vicarious pleasures in writing these texts, lies in inviting artists to provide thoughts, in written form, that are as tangential and random, even, as they can bare; revealing, without being potentially embarrassing. You just never know what you are going to get, and as such, they provide much of the textual meat and potatoes. Such is indeed the case with notes from Katie Watchorn, including one of the neatest narrative parables for practice upon which we have stumbled. Depending how this goes – and no one ever really knows – we may well let it have the final words.

In the meantime... Katie Watchorn professes/confesses to taking her practice out on dates, multiple ones in some cases, before the potential relationship is either consummated or politely shown the door. For years, it was beef fat; the 'main squeeze', that is, until it got ironed (hot squeezed) onto an old, and *no-longer-waterproof* waterproof jacket as a new protective surfacing - fat on skin to repel water. Elemental (dear Watson). The quintessence of a honourable break-up, putting something into service as well as out to pasture... a journey from one thing to another. This may also serve as a useful, or important metaphor here, the dialectic between obsolescence and innovation.

If utopia is a place where everything is good, and dystopia a place where everything is bad, then *heterotopia* is simply where everything is 'different'. A term coined and elaborated upon by Michel Foucault in the late 60s,ⁱ heterotopia follows the templates of both utopia and dystopia, and joins the prefix, from the greek, *heteros* ('other', 'another': *different*), with the morpheme *topos*, meaning 'place'. Katie Watchorn has, with minimal means, converted mother's tankstation | Dublin, into such a liminal site, literally a "different place". "A zone located between visibility and invisibility where the taking of form takes place."ⁱⁱ Neither gallery, factory, massage parlour, shop, waiting area, office, vestibule... Two large wall mounted machines (uncertain things – we believe formally from a supermarket), move air around. Mimicking the *natural* act of wind, they 'literally breath upon a substantial air curtain, for an equally uncertain reason, but playing-with-it, cat and mouse like, or in the manner of an Aeolian harp. The activities exist in the *in-between*, or on the heterotopian boundaries of indoor/outdoor, domestic/public, a signifier or surrogate for rurality – synthetic wind, (NATURE) is trapped within the dystopic urban (the opposite of nature: the ARTIFICIAL). At least the thermal mugs keep the drinks warm, to which we shall return.

Speaking of pastures; *bucolic*ⁱⁱⁱ nature (?), Watchorn knows a lot about pastures, coming from an Irish rural background,^{iv} her work pivots around the rural/urban divide, or rather the passage from one to the other. In her 'tangential' notes (working thoughts), she associates the present exhibition, *dry brimmings*, at mother's tankstation | Dublin, as a journey into the country from the protective and isolating experience of an ATV (I had to look it up: *all-terrain vehicle*) "where proximity to 'wildness' can be recreated in designated, cordoned-off, 'countryside' zones."^v It's really important, apparently, quintessential even, that your 'ATV' is fitted with excellent cup-holders, to provide gimple-protected, non-spill, non-tilt (they kind-of work together) protection for your comforting hot beverages, while off-roading. Further protected added from the dreaded chill, within sustainable, multi-use containers. Keep cups, *Stanley mugs* (the thermal mugs I said we would come back to, by another name - I had to look them up as well having never heard of such... there is literally dozens of them, with mostly really bad names: the "Quencher", "H2.0 Flowstate", "Trigger Action Travel Mug", "Aerolight Transit Mug", "Iceflow", "Go Quick Flip", "The Legendary Camper", and so it goes on, also really, stunningly, expensive... What happened to the humble "Thermos" flask we may ask – which is exactly where *my* head is, still use one that I purchased

some twenty-five years ago to take my coffee (made at home, not barista-purchased), to work at the art college. Isn't that 'sustainability'? How fashion moves and leaves us (me) behind. Watchorn claims an interest in these transitional moments in the 'status' of an object i.e. *Thermos to Stanley mug*; old fashioned transmuted to contemporary trend/obsession. Arguably traceable to odd moments in booming corporate economies, but ultimately refracting back our very human hubris.

I feel a fable coming on (meat and potatoes) - Watchorn in her own words: "Before I moved to the Netherlands, I decided to sell my 2011 silver Opel Astra on the online marketplace *Done Deal*, overseen by my father, a fastidious user of the site. The car sold quickly, and surprisingly for the asking price. Over the phone with dad, he asked me if I wanted to take the money now, or, let him invest it in a pair of animals he would buy at the mart. In a couple of years' time, once he had cared for them, raised them, he would sell them again at the same mart, and give me (by then) a larger sum of money: which I would presumably invest in another car, or sink it into sculpture... I agreed to this, and a couple of weeks later a message came through on my phone – two young Charolais cattle in the back of his trailer – the message read 'Opel and Astra'.

New (old) means to drive from the nature to the artificial. Okay, I snuck in the final words.

ⁱ Specifically in the Preface to *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, p. xv-xxiv, Edition Vintage Books: New York, 1994, *Les Mots et les choses*, Editions Gallimard: Paris, 1966.

ⁱⁱ Watchorn's notes, Thierry Davila, *De l'inframince, Brief history of the imperceptible from Marcel Duchamp to the present day*, p.11. Edition du Regard: Paris, 2010, trans. French, R. Pouivet, L'Éclat, 1993.

ⁱⁱⁱ I love that the etymology of bucolic poetry suggest that they were all composed by cowherds.

^{iv} 'In part influenced by my family selling their dairy herd over the course in 2021/22, my own scrolling through *Done Deal* noticing farms going out of business (including my own families as I listed items for dad on the classifieds site). What happens to industry as it becomes defunct, where do those items go, the knowledge.my own fluctuations between city and farm, once described by another artist to me as 'the difference between living on the world (city) and in the world (farm)'

^v *ibid*, ii. Watchorn further references the artist Lauren Gault.