

Basic Detail Report



Unusual Gestures

Date

2020

Primary Maker

Tuck, Lorraine

Medium

Hahnemuhle Art Giclée paper

Description

Unusual Gestures are new work that is very subjective and close to my heart. It is my family. Unusual Gestures depicts my family life for a Mother of two boys who have Autism and two daughters living on a farm in the west of Ireland. The 'gestures' in the titles refers to my youngest son Manus's inscrutable signalling with his hands but might also describe the efforts of everyone in the family to cope with the differing needs of the children and the working life of the farm, something that would be hard to put into language but is clearly visible in the pictures. Lorraine Tuck depicts family life as a mother of two daughters and two boys that have Autism, living on a farm in the west of Ireland. This appears to be a matter of striving to attain a balance between tending to the differing needs and demands of sons and daughters, the demands of the working life of a farm, and a need for a self-reflective space to step back and take stock of it all. The work can also be understood as an intimate perspective on lives with Autism. I find these images capture a deep yearning for calm. Life revolves around the lure of this ideal. I see an image of Manus on a nightwalk drawn towards cows in the barn which might be familiar yet unknowable to him; a source of wonder and calm. I see a self-portrait of Lorraine swamped in medical paperwork gazing beyond to escape an overwhelming bureaucracy. I see two daughters sitting by the riverbank on a walk which was to be their (and their mother's) respite, its promise dissolving into a boredom and frustration shared between them. Nature, or our idea of nature, is a constant presence. It emerges as a rich resource for play and exploration. Tuck foregrounds its therapeutic properties. Nature is also a source of livelihood. It is a Fate shaping lives through chance and circumstance. It has a rhythm and cadence we must be attuned to in order to live the good life. These photographs are an heir to traditions stretching from Hesiod to Virgil, Farid Attar to Yoshida Kenko, Thomas Hardy to John McGahern. All have worked these themes into being. Kamran Nazeer talks of an autistic person's need for 'local coherence'. In one photograph Manus beckons me into his world. He is obsessed with opening and closing the door of the washing machine. Action puts his world in focus. I take this as local coherence. I look around the space and see it as a carefully ordered one - the rake to gather hay, the basket to store the riding equipment, the swing of the washing machine door. But I also see it as a realm of utter confusion. Each and every object has a specific purpose I am, for the most part, none the wiser of. A horse's head emerges from the right-hand side in a manner I expect it to speak. Manus is dressed in a multi-coloured jump suit, a step up from NASA grey. He will be blasted into orbit once the door is closed with him inside. Good luck, Manus. The image destabilises

my world and I compensate in a bid for coherence. I am aware of how I try to order things while the subject of autism is framed. I recognise how this can differ from Tuck who pictures her world by trusting her informed lived experience. This, to me, is an important part of empathy: to understand other lives and other worlds is to recognise the shimmy between sameness and difference, between familiarity and distance. In other words, there is an irreconcilability in empathy worth attending to. It is not that the children escape into a dreamlike realm beyond the adult world. Compelling as this vision is, it is not adequate to picturing the challenges autism brings. It is that the scene pictures a realm of otherness through sheer artifice. Its theatrical-ity is so obvious, so knowingly constructed. Artifice is constructing a world which is always and never out of reach, a world I can only ever try to understand. The worth of a story rests on the negotiation between listener and teller. The thrill of a story is to be taken somewhere you might never have thought. I look at these photographs and I am returned to a question of what it is to live a fulfilling life. I see a struggle and a resolve bound by a sense of place. It is a simple answer. I am warmed by that. Is this the way it was meant to be? — Gavin Murphy

Dimensions

Framed: 41.5 × 56.5 cm