



Beyond Appearance II

What would it mean for touch to be the root of thinking and for thinking, in turn, to be in its most elevated form a kind of touch?... Like touch, thought has no proper object, no clear organ of operation, and no medium to call its own... (2)

The gallery is busy with objects. They press on you. They converse but you can't quite catch what they're saying. Nicola comes in and takes up Green and puts it over her head. 'I went to Catholic Junior School,' she says. Her face is wonkily veiled, but her voice is clear. 'It was full of Irish people so we all learned Irish dancing. I felt so uncomfortable. I was tall and lumpen and I'm not graceful....' Her body is calm and still. One toe is pushed forward in the start of an Irish jig. The memory is carried with grace and humour. The object tries to over-ride her with its personality of humiliation but her voice dispels it. She is bigger than it.

'What does being an object feel like?' Nicola asks. 'Or what is it to be a sculpture?' She swings Orange onto her shoulders, her face caught taut between its spool frames. 'I feel like a giant,' she says, 'because I can't see down. But this one is not conducive to talk. I don't know why. It's a serious orange. An intellectual, not an emotional colour. It's a rational shape and satisfied in its containment. Now, your turn.'





'Suddenly there is permission. Touch is allowed, encouraged. Magenta calls to me first. I remove her from the wall – because she is the colour of cerise lipstick, she is a she. I swing her horizontal and she becomes a vulva. I laugh and hold her up like a trophy. I take Slate Grey from the corner. I angle my head into one of the five hoops. Its possibility for collectivity repels me. My hands find the wide ends of this shape. I balance it and it balances me. I walk as though I am carrying a pot of precious water on my head. I step gingerly and I turn. At once, I am on a catwalk and I'm wearing Slate Grey and my walk becomes elegant, poised. There is a crowd. I hear clapping. I try Blue next. He is a lobster pot and looks easy to enter, arms first. But he is deceptive, the wrong size, or I am the wrong size. I put him down and am safe. I don't want to pick up Mr. Navy. Navy is formidable and awkward. Its halves shouldn't meet. I place his ungainly shape over my head. I'm in a business suit and this thing sticks out of me that I can't control. It stops others getting close. I set him back on the wall at a different angle. For some reason he now looks less threatening. I don't know why but it's fascinating to notice the thought after touch.

Being part of the sculptures sculpts me. I am more aware of their volume than their void. I feel the bond more than the barrier. They are empty till we fill them. We tell them how it feels to have a body.

Cherry Smyth



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