



A  
STEADY  
GAZE

## A Steady Gaze June 9 – July 8 2023

My first memory of gaze, was being bundled outside to stare at the night sky and view Halley's Comet passing by earth. 1984.

In 2023 Halley's will reach its furthest point from the sun, then loop around and be back our way to view from earth in 2061. The only 'naked eye comet' ever observed, which can be viewed twice in a human lifetime.

Much like Halley's, the artists works in 'A Steady Gaze' all give me the sense of simultaneously being present now, an echo of a past or possibly shooting straight from the future.

When musing about a grouping of artists for this show, I considered work which not only held my gaze, steady. But (figurative or not) objects & paintings that you can physically sense gazing back, even when not directly viewing.

In the same way you can sense when someone or something is gazing at you a moment before you notice they are - an exchange of energy...asking for further investigation.

Vanessa Arthur, 2023

### ***"Chimeras come singly and leave accompanied"***

"Voices", A Porchia

***"A picture is never anything  
but its own plural description"***

"Is painting a language?", R Barthes

*"Poetry is Knowledge, salvation and power, abandonment. An operation capable of changing the world, poetic activity is revolutionary by nature; a spiritual exercise. Poetry reveals this world; it creates another."*

"The bow and the lyre", O Paz

Poetry is transmission, poetry creates a look transformed. The thought image in poetry comes unhindered, arrives curious, sensual. Its a this way and a that way, it will come towards us, as much as it leaves us. the Poetic gaze involves us, we search for equivalences, on how best to Look. Art nourishes it. We become it. The steady gaze oversees the poetic gaze. The steady gaze establishes a premise, for the poetic encounter.

***"Since it would not sing, its shadow sings.  
Once its eyes bewitched my childhood;  
now the red silence rolls away like a sun."***

"Dirges", A Pizernak

This look makes my view a gaze folded in reciprocity and empathy. Art enters like a ghost in an abandoned field, persistent unusual, something to say. I trace that line, follow this cut see that scrap, notice my links are smoothed by the tyranny of movement. Gatherings, open-ended. Movement is a condition of these art works. The encounter with the art object traced in a moving/moment, we will turn away and on to another encounter. It's this accumulation of movement/moments that is perceived as a flow, a duration.

***"She looks the bus over, grand, otherworldly.  
Why, why do we feel (we all feel) this sweet  
sensation of joy?"***

"The Moose", E Bishop

And our gaze meets the art work, like a grace, inquisitive self assured in a desire to meet the work it's qualities and deceptions. The Gaze transitions in an abstract moment, at the end of our voyeurism. A shock. Even the most abstract of these works will figure us with its enticement, cause us to slip between a now and a then. Seeing, places us towards a complexity as the poetic gaze finds its object and this object (here its art) finds us. We move our head, in closer as if disbelieving the textures before us. This is a world? this is the sea? A butterfly thinking? is all visible matter only 4% of what is there? The works slip on a sign and refer to immensities alongside the uncontainable, all there but for a sleight of hand, driven clear and subtle. A small sublime is transmitted across these distances, an alt reading on distance, one that already knows it is managed by time. These intimate spaces and surfaces accumulate and compress time creating enigmatic readings from behind the line of now.

*'To see a World in a Grain of Sand  
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower  
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand  
And Eternity in an hour"*

"Auguries of innocence", W Blake

*" As we look at the most certain art work, whose beginning dazzles us with its brilliance and decisiveness, we find that we are also faced with something which is fading away, a work that has suddenly become invisible again, is no longer there and has never been there. this sudden eclipse is the distant memory of orpheus' gaze, it is a nostalgic return to uncertainty...."*

"The gaze of orpheus", M Blanchot

We notice how the artists touch enters and becomes a texture of the poetic gaze, this touch is the bodies premonition of the Haptic\* in viewing art. The touch here is the bodies gaze. The touch has a traceable, a barely perceptible distance of mere millimetres. Here the touch is the other side of these objects, clearly. Just like how my need for interaction sets a phantom phone to vibrate in my pocket. The artist has shown these surfaces an intimacy. Reached into the materiality of the objects architecture and performed an operation (poetic in nature). We move towards, the aura of these objects and semi objects, the viewer steps into the space where there once was the artist (working/imparting). Not consciously but almost like a sigh you feel the touch "the bodies gaze", one texture among the many here (or there) that is carried by the poetic gaze. The gaze of touch runs along lines of poetic enquiry, from object to object, delighting in the allusion sliding into illusions. Each of these art works moulds a new territory (for us) in the field of poetic enquiry. The "seeing us" is able to perceive "little stars in the night" the rush of difference amongst the same, as the art gazes into us. For a brief moment the tyranny of distance shortens. These are not ordinary objects, we tell ourselves.

***"For the listener, who listens in the snow,  
And, nothing himself, beholds  
Nothing that is not there and the nothing that is."***

"Snowman", W Stevens

In this setting, we can rest our cheek on the wall as we appreciate the hyper real of the art works edge, ponder its behind, flatter than flat (the gaze brings us closer), we bend in on the assemblage before us. A small heterogeneous amalgam. An absurd delight entertains us when viewing a love object this way. Movement and speed are traded in this poetic space for laughter and forgetting. Art in this encounter effervesces into an assemblage of leavings along the line of looking. We encounter a flight of images in each successive art work, we back fill the art works absence with curiosity, wonder and hard world encounters. The inverse of a flower closing is our returned gaze, nuanced and riddled with poetic complexity.

***"It made the slovenly wilderness  
Surround that hill.***

***The wilderness rose up to it,  
And sprawled around, no longer wild."***

"Anecdote of a jar", W Stevens

### **Peter Madden, 2023**

\*A (haptic) hapteme is received through a body channel, within this framework the whole body is capable of transmitting touch information. Haptemes of movements are recognised as the direction of movements, change of directions on the body, directions between people, pressure, speed, frequency, size, length, duration, pause, change of rhythm and shape. "Visual art experiences through touch using haptics" Riitta Lahtinen,\* 2014

Reece King

You're distracting me from the montage in The Devil Wears Prada, 2023  
Oil, acrylic and ink on card 1000x700mm