

A garden is a site, a real place, of cultivated nature
as well as an imaginative field
of pleasure, intimacy, eroticism, spirituality and meditation.
Standing, sitting, laying in the garden
morning after morning, afternoon after noon
Memories of previous times
mix together with the atmosphere and thoughts of the new moment
I am adding to the assemblage —
to the fragmented sense of place and self and time
I look around
for the familiar, and in anticipation of surprise or discovery.
There was a time that human survival depended on landscapes which cultivated perception
particularly of sight and sound
From then we inherit a preference for environments which involve us
Those with complexity; to engage our attention and reward our curiosity
and coherency; so we can gather information and form knowledge
Spaces that we feel we understand
yet contain a sense of mystery and potential [1]

I am immersed
from my toes, in the sun scorched grass
to the sound of birds and construction in my ears
The scent of ganja and eucalyptus in my nostrils
to the branches and palm fronds reaching high over the city sky line, up into the clouds
And all that I can't see, feel, smell or hear
but that is filled in by my mind
extending forms and space and thoughts, between and beyond
In the empty plastic chairs, left out beneath the custard fruit tree
with a cigarette packet on the table between
I picture Faisal and three human-rights-defender friends sitting together late last night
I sit in their place
As I look about, my eye feels as though it is constantly moving back and forward
working hard as it finds and separates forms from the whole
Defining one distance from another by their tingling edges

The whole scenario shifts as my attention slips and snaps
close-up, far-away
observing [out]
then, sub-consciously, moving [in] to other thoughts.

A painting is a site
which navigates the internal and the external
Like a garden, it is an arrangement with an excess of form
reconstructed and remodelled
It is a site of inscribed and potential encounters
between the artist and the viewer, and the experienced world
between us and the artwork
and between the marks, forms and colours within the painting itself.

Its surface is a mingling plane
of collisions, reactions and relationships
boundaries, edges and meeting places.

In these paintings there is a sense of straining to see
things that are through, beyond, within
that weave amongst, and complicate, each other

Forms emerge and re-submerge

Depths sharpen in some areas, making sense of the abstracted
and dissolve in others, throwing forms into confusion

Tensions

between urgency and stillness, opacity and transparency, vivacity and chalkiness

intimate detail and broad hazy areas

reflect the way that some sensations are intense and absorbing,
insisting on our focus

and others blur together, remaining in the background.

These perceptive shifts in the paintings make us look and think harder.

Like in my room at night

The flash of the road-CCTV-camera throws a momentary ghostly claw of palm spikes across my
wall.

A thud on the pane makes me freeze as another frond thumps against the window
bulging its shape through the net curtain.

What is inside, what is out

What is physical and what is projection, on the wall or in my mind

Anthropomorphic figures

from paint to plant to body or bones

inhabit the paintings

Peeking through openings, silhouetted behind bars, squeezed around each other or spreading their limbs wide

The marks, like plants, like us

grow, entangle, relate and adapt.

Back outside, there are tiny cactus-gardens in pots

Retrieved from the roadside

their dented bodies and withered skin, plumpens day by day

as they negotiate their new site and each other

Sending out thin, wiry roots like drawn lines

they cling to rocks, and map the space around them.

In a garden far away, at the top of an exposed field

there is a beech tree which, battered by a lifetime of winds from the right

has grown lopsided

Its trunk divided and branched, at only a few feet tall

so that even when there is no blow, the tree lurches to left

as if in a frozen moment of movement.

Within the paintings and the gardens

are microcosms of processes and interactions

between elements and bodies

whose irregularities and curious forms

speak of concerns I can relate to.

Trying to discover and push their abilities,

to exist in a state of openness

where shape and meaning are not fixed

but hold the potential to respond and transform.