

Fuzzy
Objects:
Amitié

AMITIÉ

I am asked to write something about an Exhibition.

FUZZY OBJECTS is an exhibition of work by three women. Two of them are already friends of mine, and all are more or less my age. The show has been curtailed twice. Once by a personal tragedy, and now by a more public and dispersed one.

I am a poacher turned gamekeeper in this. I have commissioned texts about my own work and liked them more and less. I have hoped for magic in them that could never have been there and, in retrospect, been embarrassed by the magic that was there that I failed to notice at the time.

“As informal requirements are usually imprecise, extending object-oriented modelling to fuzzy logic for capturing and analyzing the informal requirements was proposed in the past years. In this article, we will introduce the related work in this area and give a brief introduction to the approach of Fuzzy Object Oriented Model (FOOM). FOOM is an approach based on fuzzy logic to formulate imprecise requirements along four dimensions: (1) to extend a class by grouping objects with similar properties into a fuzzy class, (2) to encapsulate fuzzy rules in a fuzzy class to describe the relationship between attributes, (3) to evaluate the membership function of a fuzzy class by considering both static and dynamic properties, and (4) to model uncertain fuzzy associations between classes.”¹



I google Fuzzy object and get an image of a sheep.



A sheep, then a cat on a sheepskin pouffe (not a Hot Tin Roof).



A furry flip-flop; fluffy dice.



I google *Fuzzy Objects* again and get Wittgenstein, fuzzy logic, computing...*Fuzzy Object Wittgenstein* and get Family Resemblance.

Then sideways:

I come to an image of goatsbeard in Kentish Town.² A flower covering its face: tidily wringing its grass-like leaves, tipping together its toes, its blades. If Emily Dickinson was a flower – no longer a bud, yet not quite out. Family Resemblance. Seeing the hunch of your father's sister as your own sister walks away.



So much for the pre-amble, Bramble.

Room 1

There's a tawny grand piano in the middle of the room and a squish of slippery candy-floss pink keeping the lid from closing. The tiles in the cast iron fireplace have frowzy pink poppies coming out of deep blue vases. A canvas – dark water maybe – is propped on the mantelpiece, darker again than the blue of the vases. The fuzzy object from the poster, Verdigris and blue against the graphite grey, is sitting on the mantelpiece beside it.

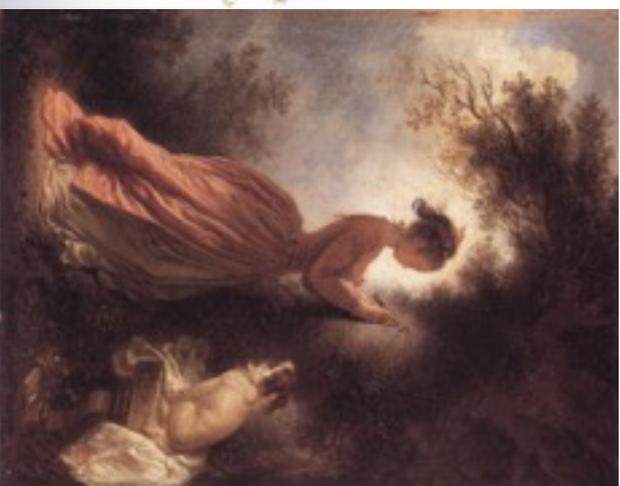
The pink is everywhere, and plump.

Coming into the show it's the resemblances I see first. As with the biological version the easy hit of family sets: pointy knees, or beaky heads cocked parallel. But here it's not noses, but dusty pink roses. The blue bloom of mould. Off-nursery taints. Spilt milk and crusty soothers. Bare canvases, marked. Orifice and protrusion, trace and extrusion. Birthed and stitched, suckable and fuckable. Things that have come from out of (our) bodies or, ancient and new-born out of the ocean. Salt-licked. Encrusted. Urchins and crustaceans.



The world is my lobster.

Looking and listening the likeness is less. Janet, Jane and Nicky talk – for each other – and for me, and I amble. I'm drawn to a chalky blue oval. Holly Hobbie I think first, then Fragonard.



In Fragonard's *Souvenir*³, a girl in a gown of dusty pink satin has both of her palms on the bare belly of a hairy tree. She is carving a serpentine S through its bark as her spaniel – Flush maybe⁴ – looks on. She's Julie, apparently⁵, from a Rousseau play, and the initials she's carving are those of her old tutor, former lover. She's wily (and smiley) with desire – there's a flower for a nipple aroused by the action of the blade in the brush. An erogenous zone.

And then the other... It's as if there's a puppet string raising the back of Holly's hem (*ahem*). She's too cute to even have a face,

but she has hair, and a hat, she brings flowers. *Love is...* Not girl-ish. And nor is this oval. The sentiment is in the shape – brackets around a small and inevitable explosion. Something or someone exploded in here – they may still be inside. Not quite in-tact, in fact – maybe adolescent.

*Love is... Work*⁶

In the 90s I worked with a man whose beady blue eyes had petrified. He looked owlishly at young girls and did not like me. He knitted letters in barbed wire telling me how – and why – and I did not agree. One day a mature student – a full-grown woman – described a sculpture she'd made. With equal parts sincerity and mischief she described how it was all about how the walls of her cervix would deliquesce as she rode horseback across the fields. He turned tallowy-green. Choked on his own distaste.

Room 2 / Tableau

Yellow sails flapping between grey gestures, yellow triangles blown this way and that. On the floor – a small, round cushion – crushed velvet – ochre, with a single covered button. A flock of punctuations.

Room 3 / Tableau

A small clay plaque – the souvenir. A kitchen chair. An unremarkable radiator. Two paintings, one pink and fat with fear. (The kitchen chair has lost its seat, and in its place is pudgy pink felt, indented like a strawberry and bulging in every direction. The opposite of a commode. Unsettling – stripped of its kitchen varnish)

Room 4 / Tableau

A painting like spilt milk. Flat tits. Bare. It's so exposed it makes me want to cry.

And a smooth clay thing, busy with curved lappets and mottled like a house sparrow's egg. Labile and labial. And a small round cushion: metallic satin patterned with tiny raised weals. Taffeta the colour of putrefied flesh.

Mis en Scene-ry (not seen in misery).

Drawn forth and Drawn together.

Says Nicky – 'Things have been drawn into the work without intention'.

*"You have seen objects and fruits that look as alive as people, and people's faces, their skin, its fine down or unusual colour, that have the look of fruit. Chardin goes further still, bringing together objects and people in these rooms that are more than an object, and even than a person perhaps, being the sense of their existence, the law of their affinities or contrasts, the restrained, wafted fragrance of their charm, their souls' silent yet indiscreet confidante, the sanctuary of their past. As happens when beings and objects have lived together a long time in simplicity, in mutual need and the vague pleasure of each other's company, everything here is amity."*⁷

Of the three it is Janet's whose work is most descriptive. Taking pleasure in taming the flow of watercolour off the end of the brush, or the seam from out of the machine, the description of things is repeated – nipples – cells – trolley wheels – birthed objects: decorative and figurative in equal measure and sometimes these two almost in opposition to each other. The cells above the trolley legs like a daydream of a nightmare, a tanning of cells that have a life of their own. A figurative segue, joy and horror domesticated. Turned.

Jane. On the wall – rubber teats and beaks, fledgling heads and slightly dicky dicks. Sea urchins and empty casings, crusty and abandoned. Lives or processes, water and fire, salt and sulphur. These blue-green things' exquisite surfaces – from abrasion, impurity, and knowledge. Knowing how by having risked it before. Controlled explosions. (Bow Street, Lisburn, late 70s, the area is cordoned off. Police and army busy and calm. A robot approaches a suspect package, to sniff it? explode it? – what was in there – a pan loaf – *mother's pride*, a dozen eggs – or nails, fertilizer – we stand at the plastic tape – purple corduroy, anoraks – wondering how it will sound).

Nicky's sister was too ill. She died.
Plans for the show were postponed.

'The death was a relief in some ways when it happened, so now is when it is more truly awful.' A younger sister. Unspeakable.

'Then we couldn't do the show – well. That's life' (NO IT WAS DEATH).

Can I even say this in a text? Nicky: 'There are so many themes in the work, and for me to say that as someone who is so resolutely abstract... Absence and presence... In hindsight... Hindsight's 2020'. These gestures are unfinishable. Rhetoric has crumbled. Only – showing something of what cannot be told.

Body. Viscera. Joy. Horror.

The things your body produces, over-produces...

The cancer, the innermost fear.

And family resemblance – the many families of which we are a part.

The way you look. The way you look out. The way you look at me.

And AMITY. Proust uses the word about the relationship between objects, and here it is the relationship between the people too, the conversations before the work. Amitié at the centre of the show – the acknowledgement that we may be each other's true audience (but how is that extended?) That we need to know how to signal in time because things are, indeed, extremely hard to say, even to ourselves.

Like

'I could have died' or

'things are sometimes beyond endurance'.

"Only a petty mind, an artist who at most speaks and dresses as such, looks solely for people" (read also ideas *"in whom he recognises the harmonious proportions of allegorical figures. For the true artist, as for the natural scientist, every type is interesting, and even the smallest muscle has its importance."*⁸

Even the smallest mussel.

Roxy Walsh, June 2020

¹ https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-642-35641-4_53 accessed 2/6/20

² Photo and facebook page, Ian Hunt, accessed 2/6/20

³ Souvenir, Jean Honoré Fragonard, Wallace Collection, London

⁴ Flush, Virginia Woolf (on Elizabeth Barrett Browning's dog...)

⁵ <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2019/sep/15/lovestruck-woman-in-painting-inspired-film-cinema-hit> accessed 9th June 2020

⁶ Alison Kershaw, St. Luke's Art Project, Manchester: The words of a tireless worker.

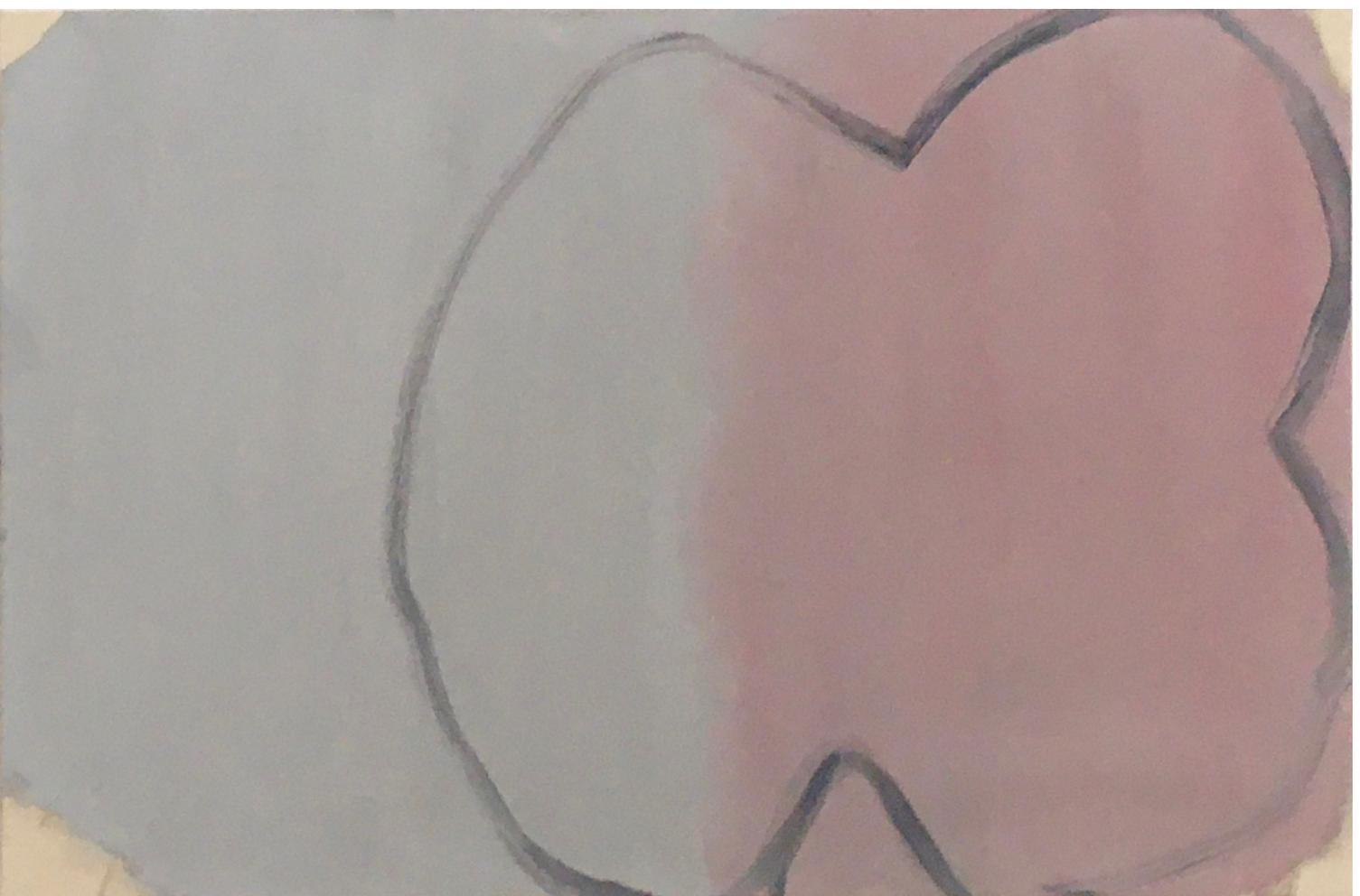
⁷ Chardin and Rembrandt, Marcel Proust, Ekphrasis, David Zwirner books

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Above:
Janet Currier, *Chimera 1*, 2020,
found kitchen chair, boiled wool, recycled fibrefill, coconut coir,

Right:
Nicky Hodge, *Oysters as light*, 2020,
acrylic on unprimed canvas





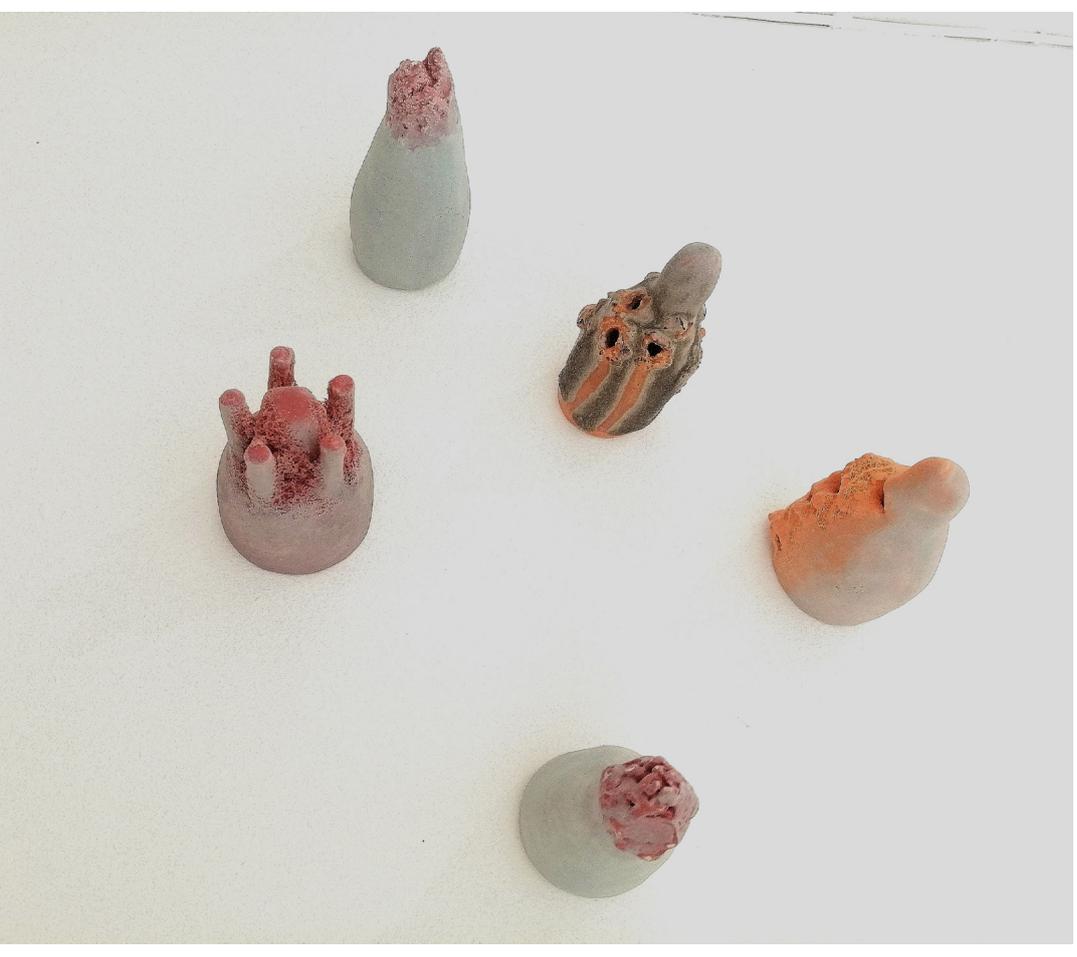
Jane Millar, *Perma 2*, 2020,
ceramic



Janet Currier, *Cubicle* (detail), 2020,
acrylic ink and paint on watercolour paper



Nicky Hodge, *Amity*, 2019,
acrylic on unprimed canvas



Jane Millar, *Test Dummies 1-5*, 2020,
ceramic

Fuzzy Objects

San Mei Gallery, London
12th March – 5th July 2020

Fuzzy Objects is a moment in an ongoing conversation between Janet Currier, Nicky Hodge and Jane Millar. An installation of paintings, ceramics and soft sculpture, Fuzzy Objects evolves from rolling studio visits with the artists bringing their latest works together, creating new assemblages; seeing what comes to the surface and disbanding to make more work; the threads of their findings then weaving back into the next round of making.

The works are arranged and selected in response to the gallery space creating new correspondences between the three artists. There is a focus on the edges: of the canvas, paper and glazed clay, and a constant re-examination of where things start and finish. Surfaces are often disrupted by leaking drips of paint, fuzzy brush marks, punctured with holes or by dissonant forms that seem to erupt out of the flatness of wall or paper. Resisting a traditional narrative structure, the installation plays with the allusive and contingent power of the objects, allowing meaning to change and transmute through the different combinations, opening up a dialogue with each other and the viewer.

Janet Currier's work hovers on the intersection between abstraction and representation, narrative and non-narrative, thought and feeling. Working across media and often with textile and stitching, she uses found or imagined pattern to explore everyday experiences and emotions.

Nicky Hodge makes abstract paintings in a process that is direct, spontaneous and improvised. Drawing on memory and experience, her allusive and unsystematic approach to making work produces paintings that sit somewhere between joyful playfulness and minimalist restraint.

Jane Millar makes wall-based ceramic sculpture and starts with the idea of energy within the unseen interior of a ceramic object, and its actions on a surface. The work explores a territory between ideas of what is natural and unnatural; between plant, material culture, body, and earth.

Roxy Walsh is an artist and writer based in London. She teaches Fine Art at Goldsmiths and is studying Creative Writing at Birkbeck.

