

Room One
Clockwise from window

Landscaping or, love languages, 2019-2020
Oil on canvas
177 × 155 cm
\$6,200

Expressive actors, 2019
Oil on canvas
177 × 155 cm
\$6,200

Room Two
Clockwise from wooden wall

By/from C.H.L x, 2019-2020
Oil on canvas
177 × 155 cm
\$6,200

In which the subject artfully arranges her flowers, 2019-2020
Oil on canvas
177 × 155 cm
\$6,200

Clare Longley (b. 1994) is an artist currently living and working in Narrm/Melbourne.

Clare's practice is largely occupied by an interest in how clichéd and sentimental images and symbols can be shaped through an experimental painting practice. By playing with different modes of mark making, compositional relationships, and narrative configurations, she aims to revitalise expressively exhausted subjects. Clare's work encourages viewers to both feel, and recognise the devices inspiring (or manipulating) their feeling.

She is currently a Master of Fine Arts candidate at Monash University, where she also completed a First Class Honours in 2018, after graduating from the Victorian College of the Arts in 2014 with a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Painting).

Recent solo exhibitions include *Watch and thee, absent another*, Bus Projects (2019); *Adult Lullabies*, Daine Singer (2017); and *Thanks for Having Me*, Blindside Gallery (2017).

Curatorial projects include *Smoke Screens*, LON Gallery (2018); *Massage Therapy*, KINGS Artist-Run (2017); and *We Make Memories*, Seventh Gallery (2017).

Selected group exhibitions include *Potential Space*, Kennard's Self Storage Facility (2019); *MADA Now*, Monash Art, Design & Architecture Gallery (2018); and *The Wizard of Oz: An Updated Classic*, Secret Project Robot, USA (2017).

Clare and ReadingRoom acknowledge that we are living and working on unceded sovereign land of the Wurundjeri and Boon Wurrung people of the Kulin Nation. We pay respect to elders past, present, and future, and recognise the rich history of creative practices of Indigenous peoples across the country.

With thanks to Amy Stuart, Beth Maslen, David Egan, Eliza Dyball, Jacob Gerrard Brown, Jan Bryant, Julia McInerney, Katherine Botten, Melissa Deerson, Patrick Miller.

Clare Longley

Garden series with boundaries

14 February to 7 March, 2020

ReadingRoom
37 Swanston Street, Room 4,
Level 6, The Nicholas Building,
Melbourne, 3000, Australia.

www.areadingroom.com

—
Once upon a time, X was walking along a garden path, carrying a bouquet of flowers.¹

“Hey!” The garden keeper boomed. Gesturing towards a sign that read the same words the keeper spoke: “It is forbidden to pick the flowers from the garden.”

“I had them when I came in,” X retorted.

The keeper said nothing.

I have been trying to understand the boundary between tiredness and exhaustion. When one is tired one feels to be at their own limit. One can be so physically tired that one’s leg feels too heavy to take a step, or so mentally tired that a fog suffocates one’s mind and temporarily refuses access.

To be exhausted is to be rendered flightless, but rather than just feeling the heaviness of one’s leg, one opens up new possibilities by collapsing and crawling around on the ground. One falls over. Here one sees the grass from a different perspective. Look at this blade flirt with this dewy wet droplet

.
. .
.

What could one find crawling on the ground?

Sometime after this incident a sign appeared at the entrance to the garden:

*IT IS FORBIDDEN TO ENTER THE GARDEN
CARRYING FLOWERS*

When thinking about the difference between tiredness and exhaustion it would be a misunderstanding to think of one as a lesser or more-er version of the other. In fact, tired and exhausted are different in texture. It’s a feeling thing, there are multiple paths.

To follow a path is to become familiar with its behaviour. To lean into and push one’s tongue against the edges of a word or thing is to trace its capabilities and its limits. Often these edges are not sharp or clear. Maybe they are humid, dense, and cumulus in some areas, and closer to a wispy cirrus cloud during strong winds in others.

For a symbol, such as the flower, to be tired could mean a requirement to deviate from the path in order to see (feel) less familiar (emotional) landscapes. It’s possible that this deviation happens while crawling. To crawl is to be exhausted, to crawl is to possibilitate.

The keeper noticed a dramatic decline in the health of the flowerbed. The flowers were being picked more frequently and aggressively and, although if someone was carrying flowers the keeper always knew where they had come from, the flowerbed was suffering.

Change and metamorphosis are the very materials of the garden. The sun and the moon slowly switch positions, the temperature sways, an uneven gradient forms between the seasons, and the apocalypse leans in for a kiss. One grows habits and one makes changes. I recently learnt that the shape of a tree’s foliage is called its habit. A hedge maze requires an intimately attended habit. To form a habit is to create a new path.

Pleaching is a technique where the branches of trees or hedges are interwoven to create a continuous wall of verdure. Branches in close contact may grow together, due to a natural phenomenon called inosculation. A thick, impenetrable boundary is formed.

So the keeper replaced the sign at the entrance to the garden with a new sign that read:

*IT IS FORBIDDEN TO ENTER THE GARDEN
WITHOUT CARRYING FLOWERS*

This was an ingenious measure as the visitors, hands already busy with their own elaborate bouquets, were hardly likely to think of picking any others.

—
Through the gate at the entrance to the garden, one notices disembodied hands planting, beholding, and picking flowers. The sky is thick with a repeated floral motif and determines the mood of the landscape. Somewhere else, X holds a barely decipherable bouquet behind her back as she looms over O. Flowers are built up, rubbed back, reflected. Curlicues are dizzying dead ends and flowers chase their tails, pruned into the hedge of a maze to create spaces of both shelter and entrapment. One notices their boundaries, one inhabits their boundaries.

X begins to transplant her flowers into the ground, she crawls around, thoughtfully rearranging the existing flowerbed and observing what new compositions emerge.

¹ Jean Paulhan and Michael Syrotinski, *The Flowers or Tarbes or, Terror in Literature* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 81. Text in italics is an interpretation of a story that occurs in Paulhan’s book.