
Vlatka Horvat: By Hand, on Foot

Peer, London, 4. 2. – 2. 4. 2022

by Orit Gat

It starts on January 1, 2021. The framed photo of a view of a park taken atop a low hill. In the background is a large housing block. The light is gray. On this printed photo, the artist has drawn a single, yellow pastel line emerging from a tree and curving toward the sky. Two days later, in the photo from January 3, 2021, colorful drawn lines connect the chimneys of houses like arches. On January 9, a building becomes a boat sailing along the sea of grass in front of it. My favorite is the snowy day on January 24, which meets a collaged surface of shimmering blue, the snow creating a magical ocean in the image. These are all part of a series of 365 photos that were printed and then altered through collage, cutting, or drawing on photographs taken daily over the entirety of the year and titled *To See Stars over Mountains* (2021).

On February 14, I recognize the view from the video work shown in the gallery's back room, *Until the Last of Our Labours Is Done* (2021). Then I realize, all the images in the photo series and the video were taken in the same places, which feels like the edge of a city, a space more empty than wild. But where the photographs are largely void of people, in the video there are five performers moving alone across this terrain, tinkering with a bunch of insignificant objects like the inner tube of a bicycle wheel, a towel (folded in half and carelessly used when lying on the grass), a cloth held to the wind, a piece of string dragged behind. Each moves through this landscape alone: the twenty-four-minute video is like a slow, unplanned, accidental image of absent-mindedness (or is it loneliness?). The performers roll round objects (a tube, a wheel, a small plastic cylinder) across the earth and follow them. It's as if the ob-



Vlatka Horvat, from the 365-part series: *To See Stars over Mountains*, 2021 (24 January). Collage and drawing on inkjet print. Courtesy: the artist.

jects they are rolling, waving, and holding mediate their relationship to this nature. As if they have forgotten how to be in this place.

The front two rooms of the gallery host the series of photographs in one, and in the other is the sculptural installation *What Is on the Ground and What Is in the Sky* (2022). Made of tape, cardboard, and found objects, it stretches from floor to ceiling like a forest enclosed in the glass-walled gallery and visible from the street, like a makeshift landscape, like a proposal that nature could be found anywhere, or perhaps created. The suggestive, poetic titles of the works, full of verbs and action—seeing stars, labor, a stretch from ground to sky—are echoed in the romantic display, which shows a year over the span of eight weeks. Every Monday, the photographs—displayed framed and in a single continuous line—will be changed around, so that in the run of the show all 365 works will be on view. It's a warm antidote to the feeling that time has stretched, endless and repetitive, over the years of the coronavirus pandemic and the lockdowns designed to curtail its spread.

Horvat's daily excursions would ring familiar to many people from the past two years, when walks around the home became a daily solace. At the time, newspapers were full of advice on how to find meaning in a life so limited by circumstances, and one thing kept coming up: pay attention. Look at the flowers growing (spring!), the leaves changing color in autumn, the days stretching toward summer, contracting in the winter, and note the changes evident in the small details of the world.

The passage of time—a source of grief and twinge of nostalgia and comfort—is a traditional subject of so much art and literature. Only these days we are primed to consider it anew. Horvat's year in *To See Stars over Mountains* is not just playful, sweet, and attentive, it's also a reflection of how we now think more and more, and differently, about our day-to-day. Hers is not just a year of lockdowns and pandemic and chaos: the act of collaging, drawing, and altering, of changing the landscape, is a form of presence. It's a proposal not only to find something in what surrounds us, but also to actively engage with the world. And maybe see it differently.

Orit Gat is a writer living in London (GB) whose writing on art and technology has appeared in a variety of magazines. She is currently working on her first book, an essay about sport and a sense of belonging titled *If Anything Happens*.