

Suspension has long been a major thread through Ken Unsworth's work. From the suspended river stones, geometries of wood and metal, and in performance, his own body held up, all contrary-wise rising against corporeal gravities. Angels or at least the angelic suspensefully cohabited with the earthbound, inviting escape, or promising paradise of several, not always heavenly, kinds; some wings flighted demons. As almost always with Unsworth there was humour, black, surely, underpinned by profound skating (another suspension) over the tragic, tilting at the sublime.

In 2008, more suspensions. Angelic forms, and more. Very new is the medium, as well new subjects, innovations. All are watercolours, a new medium, compacter, for an artist most known for his installations, with their certain monumentality. The new work beautifully produced small sheets, everywhere a meticulous hand - brush to paper; Nothing loose - every line, stroke, wash to purpose. Watercolour is about the intimate variance between nuances of vibrant or delicate colour and translucence. Unsworth's superb examples, manage fine balances between his monumental ideas and sinuous lines, informing/informed by brilliant hue.

Angelic forms prevail as one kind of recurrent theme. But also somethings quite new. Let's call them 'annunciative' angels, more or less Gabriel, sometimes Gibreel to mix sources, sometimes closer to fallen light-bearers (here Unsworth 'dips his lid' to Bibles, authorised and less certain, to Milton, among others to Rushdie). 'Annunciative' because action is arrested mid-pronouncement. From the Middle Ages through Renaissance times Annunciations were key subjects for art - who more beautifully than Piero or Fra Angelico - favourites of Unsworth. Often Gabriel inform Mary that she is the human vessel for the Son of God. Inside her room, Gabriel gives a lily - symbolic virginity - to the virgin - she interrupts her reading. Usually Gabriel kneels, more rarely he hovers; making the gesture of pudicity - hands across her body - she both accepts while wanting to virtuously decline. But it is accomplished. Done.

Unsworth's angels carry flowers too, but are outdoors and flying. His notional 'Maries', are less reticent - often beckoning, contrarily more resistant, occasionally fleeing - often naked. What of pudicity? These are curious annunciations indeed. Set more often suggestively in Australian landscapes - we have spindly gums and unapologetically phallic termite mounds, nothing is so simple as a transference to outback desert. Suspension elucidates. There is an image of a man 'falling' from the white horse. St Paul in the midst of his damascene conversion? Easy enough, but the white horse admixes apocalyptic images; more important is that he falls; in the midst. Paul or whomever is not yet converted, is mystically almost eyes-shut mid-fall **becoming** a new man, **not yet become**. So too the annunciative mid-flight Gabriel is yet to finish the story, for Unsworth's Maries are yet to accept, to apprehend, to be, God's mother. Rather becoming. Elsewhere we have deity-becoming crucifixions - the second and ultimate suspension *pace* annunciation, while another shows a kind of St Stephen 'flowered' to death by roses, not stones, nor arrows, but becoming corporeally dead in process of being a roseate beatification. Most of Unsworth's images trace this process of metamorphosis into the sublime realm of becoming art. I marvel at them.

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