



ACS Margate, Unit 11-15 All Saints Industrial Estate, Margate CT9 5TJ

10 September – 17 September 2022

PV Sat 10th Sept

Exploring the gossamer veneer that lies between us and the world, artist Shelly Goldsmith uses the psychological theory 'Locus of Control' to understand how we locate our sense of self. In her hands, discarded textiles become elegiac memoranda. A polyester wedding gown is transformed into a poetic provocation; fragments of children's frilly dresses become sites of melancholy.

Developed in 1954 by the American psychologist Julian B. Rotter, 'Locus of Control' is the extent to which people believe that they – as opposed to external forces – have control over the outcome of events that happen in their lives. In collaboration with clinical psychologist Dr. Herminia Hernaiz-Sanders, Goldsmith interprets this as both a material and mythical tension, examining two surfaces of the dress form (inside and outside) as independent landscapes upon which hallmarks of Rotter's external and internal theory unfurl.

Goldsmith's position is both personal and parsing. Her frantic pencil drawings loaded with deep graphite, digital photography and whole garment dye-sublimation prints transform the dress form into a potent landscape of psychogeographies. Throughout, geographical imagery depicting two autoethnographic locations reflect Goldsmith's own familial riddles.

These innovative and detailed textile works visualise Rotter's hypothesis that we all exist on a spectrum between an External or Internal 'Locus of Control'. Pertinent to our capricious times, those with an 'External Locus' feel powerless to life's events. The artist suggests that we are all striving for a strong 'Internal Locus', enabling command, responsibility, and autonomy over what happens in our lives.

Goldsmith documented her parents' adopted hometown of Cincinnati, Ohio to conjure the external locus. Known as Tornado Alley it is a place fraught with uncertainty due to its extreme meteorology. Research at Ohio's community libraries and newspaper archives produced documentary photographs of its infamous 1974 Super Outbreak, the biggest incident ever recorded of 10 tornadoes simultaneously soaring across the ground. In keeping with Rotter's psychological theory, the external perspective is often associated with immature life, and so Goldsmith applies line drawings and swathes of ink to pieces of children's clothing.

To establish imagery evoking the internal position, Goldsmith walked along the Thanet coastline where she lives. Here the tides are predictable and constant, as bathers splash themselves in the water's negative ions, which are said to encourage good health and wellbeing, something which is key to the internal Locus. Photographs of the iconic 1937 Walpole Bay Tidal Pool in Margate saturate the inside of a series of dress fragments.

The final expression of this body of work and a key part of exhibition – entitled *Dresses for Giants* – amalgamates tidal pool photographs and two 1970s polyester wedding dresses purchased in Cincinnati, USA. Large in physical scale, the title refers to the personalities of the individuals who wear the dress, not their physicality as giants. Together with Goldsmith's interventions – graphite, photography and dye-sublimation – the dress form becomes a canvas and an idol, the ultimate staging for both Rotter's influential theory and the artist's quest to better understand our own fragility.

About the artist

The Ramsgate-based artist Shelly Goldsmith's practice explores the evocative force of cloth and conscience. An RCA alumnus and recipient of the prestigious Jerwood Prize in 2002, Goldsmith uses fragments of archetypal women's dress and large-scale textile installations to convey themes of identity, fragility, and psychological transition. Her work is informed by research collaborations with practitioners from the world of Psychiatry and Forensic Science. Goldsmith's work is exhibited at major galleries and museums in Britain, Europe, USA and Japan and is part of many notable public collections including the Victoria & Albert Museum and The Whitworth Gallery.

For more information and high-res images please contact the artist either by email on SGoldsmith2@uca.ac.uk or phone +44(0)7815869956

IMAGES



Walpole Bay Dress 130 x 85cm • Digital dye sublimation on reclaimed dress



Dresses for Giants (detail) 130 x 200cm • Whole dress dye sublimation on reclaimed cloth



and full installation view



Half Dress Half Story 100 x 100cm • Dye sublimation & drawing on reclaimed dress fragment with digital collage



and full installation view