

'This great white interior was empty even when it was full, because most of what was in it didn't belong in it and would soon be purged from it...Inside this great white interior, few things looked settled, and fewer looked at home, and those that did look settled also looked like they had been prepared: approved, trained, disciplined, marshalled'.

The Book of Spring Lambs responds to a period of research on a Scottish sheep farm helping out during the busy lambing season. A city boy gone rural, the cold reality of livestock management exposes a world far harsher than the kitsch idyll of white spring lambs and green pastures.

As sheep farm transforms to maternity ward, thoughts wander closer to home with the expectation of my baby's birth later in the year. Preparing the home, wallpaper, fabric, decorating - nest building. How much time we invest in our own, how little time to duly care for all these lambs. Do what you can: a vigil tonight, a fox has been active.

Parcel in the mail. A small box of objects belonging to my late grandmother: Kodak colour family photographs c.1950's, psychedelic dinner plate set c.1970's, resin animal figurines c.1960's, clip-on earring collection c.1960's. The plastic, the patterned and the popular redefined, repossessed, re-homed by the fond memories of domestic experience.

Scottish Sheep Festival. Prized rams, celebrity ewes, finest breeds on public display. Living animals dyed orange and yellow for the grand exhibition. Stalls selling brightly coloured ear-tags, plastic and metal alternatives, different colours, shapes and sizes. Rosettes, coiffeurs, hoof trimming: an artificial, abstract world far removed from the daily drudgery of the ordinary flock.

Colourful patterns and animal faces emblazon the disposable nappies that fill my life. The banal decoration is for my benefit alone – their design intended to mask the unpleasant task of cleaning up shit and piss. A sense of civility vaguely restored by the sweet aroma of a lilac scented nappy bag.

The Book of Spring Lambs is a celebration of structures and patterns sourced from the domestic arena, exploring how the graphic image is subverted by the application of colour, surface and pattern. The sentiments of nostalgia and kitsch challenged by the realities of livestock productivity.

Excerpt from *Chromophobia* by David Batchelor. Reaktion Books, 2000

David Blyth The Book of Spring Lambs



BIOGRAPHY

David Blyth investigates the liminal threshold between the real and the mythological, alluding to rites of passage such as birth and death subverting the factual with the fictional, the benign with the fetishistic. He studied painting and sculpture at Grays School of Art, Aberdeen graduating with a Masters degree in Fine Art in 1999 and continues to operate his creative practice from the North East of Scotland.

Blyth has exhibited both nationally and internationally and has participated in numerous residency programmes, public arts projects and commissions. He is currently a permanent lecturer in contemporary arts practice at Grays School of Art, Aberdeen and Moray School of Art, Elgin.

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Common Ground

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