

SUE PEDLEY

SOUNDING

6 April – 1 May 2011

Sounding is a traditional method of determining the depth of water with a weighted rope as it traces the shape of subterranean terrains. In her current exhibition, Sue Pedley metaphorically uses this as a way of determining what is tangible and what remains hidden. Her abstract works utilise yet subtly disguise a complex orchestration of materials, motifs and symbols that range from simple domestic objects to precious silks, industrial and shipping plans. These seemingly contradictory items are connected as the flotsam of life, discovered by Pedley in an abandoned house in the fishing village of Kou on the Japanese island of Teshima. Archiving the history of sites and locating linkages between cultures, environments and ideas, defines her installations and art practice. It can be described as an aesthetic of connectivity.

In 2010 Sue Pedley held a residency at the Setouchi International Art Festival in Teshima on the Seto Inland Sea, where she brought together the old and new worlds of Japan. There she reclaimed a derelict house and created her 'Harmonica' project, so called because of the discovery of a small harmonica installed behind a drawer that once contained a family's valuables, another sounding device. Immersing herself within the local community and the interior of the building, she sifted, sorted and uncovered discarded remnants, mementoes of other people's lives and cultures. Re-ordering the interior, salvaging and wrapping in *furoshiki-style* some nine hundred domestic objects in traditional kimono silk, cottons and crepes, she also covered the house externally in a specially woven fishing net, which acted as a conduit between the sea and the community. The house became reinvigorated, a new shrine to memories and the presence of past lives.

From this residency Pedley has created a body of weavings and collages, seductive in its linkages. The relationship of varying shades of red silks, traditional Japanese patterns and dressmaking designs, grass sedges and antique bamboo blinds, photographs of modern fabrics, textiles and clothing, children's drawings, blue-prints of maps and depth soundings, drafting film and her cyanotypes, all are positioned into patterns based on or around the everyday or industrial world. But further layers are to be found, the deeper, underlying patterns based on the fishing net design, the persimmon, shoji or the Japanese sliding door, traditional woven baskets, or in her most recent works the molecular structure of copper, these are formatted and act like visual DNA. This new work links with her serene, blue cyanotypes through the recurring motif of filtered light through bamboo blinds, hessian, fishing nets, or vegetation. Her use of the cyanotype, a photographic process developed in the nineteenth century that uses ultra violet rays of the sun on exposed light sensitive paper, captures the fleeting shadows or the materiality of the objects as if they are floating, ethereal spirits in an intense blue sea. Placed together, the serenity of these cyanotype prints confront the vibrant collages, yet they connect like the echoes of depth soundings, touching on objects and memories as fleeting as the light source itself.

There is a duality of the natural and man-made in Sue Pedley's art, the past and present, the lost and found. This is reflected in her use of the diptych, the polarities of life, of two languages and the cultures of east and west. She has used some of her cyanotypes by interleaving them into the collages and weavings where they become aesthetic amalgams of recycled strips of papers, precious silks, maps and traditional and contemporary fabrics and materials. Her interest in cultural transformation and dislocation, the rescuing or recycling of objects and symbols and their transfiguration into new forms and new art chimes with a sense of renewal. These works map, wrap and weave concepts of identity, societies and their cultures, foreign threads strategically collected and selected for their beauty and testimonies, all are part of the visual webbing of stories, sites, memories and layered histories.

Sheridan Palmer