

Julie Vulcan Sydney Festival – **Rescript**

Paddington Reservoir Gardens

Lucy Cash

PART 1

HAIRPIN BANKSIA
BLUE TORTOISE LIZARD
NEW HOLLAND HONEY EATER

- she is the one moving
she is tending, attending to
seven curved frames that might support the growth of plants, might decorate a way to walk
each one is hung with a gathering of slender wire and clips
clips that save tiny bundles from falling

on a table nearby, there is square-cut muslin thickly stacked – a white slab
when it comes to their turn, each piece is separated in order to be written upon
she uses a red marker pen to write the words
the muslin is becoming a handkerchief
I can't see the words from where I sit

she sits on a stool in front of the table
she sits to fill the handkerchief with a small handful of ___?
are they rocks?
the 'rocks' are gently swaddled and tied before being taken
to join others already saved from falling

WHITE WATTLE TREE
EASTERN SPINEBILL
CONESTICKS

the 'rocks' are in one black plastic bag
there are seven other bags close by, filled with what looks like soil - is it soil?
in between placing the handkerchiefs she takes a handful or
sometimes a pinch of the 'soil', and places it on one of seven tables
tables which stand beneath the hanging handkerchiefs, and inside the curved frames

for soil to be so dry it must be very old - is it soil?
three pigeons join the audience
they sit off to the side (stage right) sip water from a puddle and cast sideways looks
a small dark shadow passes close by my face – too close to see its butterfly markings
traffic roars by along a road, somewhere above us

her hands are stained grey black
her dress is red
her red dress could be a residue, a reduction of all the red words she's writing
the colours are red and black and white
she sits
she stands
she walks
she moves across and through the space weaving a quiet attention
these full quiet acts are a memorial and we have chosen to be her companions
she moves almost silently, barely disturbing the air
her shoulders and her arms let us know to include ourselves, if we want to
her body is open
her body is open to remembering and to what may come

time flows - we can feel it - strong enough to be a river
there is no pressure to be done, to finish up, to be over with here
the pigeons leave quietly, when nobody's looking and
the atrium-like space catches the sound of voices at a distance -
human voices which are part of the traffic and the traffic which is part of all of us
there is a feeling of calm, of subterranean tranquillity

PART 2

BROAD-LEAFED GEEBUNG
PAINTED LADY BUTTERFLY
POSSUM

she is in the flow of her time which is at the same time
the time of the traffic and the birds and the human voices
she is taking care, or giving it
her wrists and fingers are filled with it
her back and legs move with care

a memorial will overflow its boundaries
the work of remembering will take the time it takes
eventually given the right conditions even soil will grow old and die -
but this is not 'soil', this is ash
ash made by fires at Green Bottle Creak (Green Wattle Creek), on the land that Julie lives
with, within

KOALA
BLACK HONEYEATER
BANDED HONEYEATER

It feels just that the performance overflows its boundary of time
there is work to be done, and the work is never-ending -
later someone will use numbers to describe the animals lost to the fires
suggesting that if we paused for just ten seconds for each animal
we would be memorialising for nine hundred and fifty years

a handkerchief, a tender square of solace for tears or blood or snot
to clear a mote from the eye, a mote or a spell
to see beyond enchantment
towards what's missing or redacted
to see what the words might be
and then what they might mean
and then – what next?

the handkerchiefs hanging quietly
holding their 'rocks' which are not rocks but ice
ice which melts through the fabric
onto the piles of ash below
ash of so many plants and animals

I can see that now -

FAIRY WREN
SPOTTED QUAIL THRUSH
EASTERN YELLOW ROBIN