

LITTLE

WHITE

LIES

TERESA SCIBERRAS

PAINTINGS

WITH TEXTS BY

RAPHAEL VELLA
GORDON CALLEJA
KONRAD BUHAGIAR
PIERRE J. MEJLAK

&

an introduction by
Jens Bruenslow

Introduction

by jens bruenslow

The ambiguity and contradiction which can be found in related terms like protection and confinement, security and threat, escape and exile as well as the fascination with the possibilities of modification, immersed in perspective, dimension and scale, have been a constant thread within and throughout the works of Teresa Sciberras over the last few years.

The motifs of the walled city, the secret garden, the labyrinth, the island and the box, together with the undeniable interest for text and context reoccur in fascinatingly various but yet consistent ways of expression.

The works presented here are based on impressions and observations collected on daily walks between the artist's residence and the studio. However, it is not bare representation of these which we find in the works; it is the questioning, the exploration and the play with them. Alberto Perez-Gomez states that "Artistic meaning rests upon an intricate interplay of showing and concealing.¹ The worlds which are created in *Little White Lies* question and challenge general perceptions of concepts like big/small, inside/outside, private/public or permanent/temporary and in that way views and possibilities emerge from their hiding places which only artistic imagination can bring to the foreground. Leon Battista Alberti attributes divine power to the art of painting as it makes the absent present.² It is the absent or the hidden permutations of objects which are revealed in play.

The play with the scale and relationship of objects,³ together with the materiality and the meticulous detail of these paintings, allow the viewer to relate to early Renaissance paintings, which the artist names as one of her influences. Other references are architectural visions of the 1960^s and 70^s, the graphics of early computer games and, reoccurring through her oeuvre, Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cities*. This complexity in interest and interpretation and the way it materializes gave ground to accompany the works in this book with the responses of authors who are related in their own ways to each of these themes.

For us, looking at the paintings of *Little White Lies*, what Calvino says at the beginning of *Invisible Cities* about the stories of Marco Polo, may well apply:

"Kublai Khan does not necessarily believe everything Marco Polo says ... , but the emperor ... does continue listening ... with greater attention and curiosity than he shows any other ... " ⁴

¹ Alberto Perez-Gomez, *The Space of Architecture: Meaning as Presence and Representation in Questions of Perception*, a+u Publishing Co..Ltd., Tokyo, 1994/98, p.22.

² Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting (Book II, 26.)*, transl. Cecil Grayson, Penguin Classics, London, 2004, p.60.

³ With his Capella Rucellai in Florence, Alberti created the perfect and valid representation of the Holy Grave in Jerusalem, in spite of its much smaller size, by changing the unit of the measure and so altering the scale but retaining number and proportion of the original. See: Paul von Naredi Rainer, *Architektur und Harmonie*, Dumont, Köln, 1999, p.60.

⁴ Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*, transl. William Weaver, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers, New York, 1978, p.5.

Unnameable Truths

by raphael vella

The bizarre and meticulously painted objects in Teresa Sciberras' paintings are deliberately improbable. You look at them a first time, and then again, and you find yourself in an unsettling interval located somewhere between objecthood, architecture, sculpture, painting and sheer fantasy. Each object floats in the unidentifiable and subtly textured background of an unpainted panel, generally below eye level, making the viewer feel that he or she is hovering over or falling into the painter's mock constructions. Your gaze drifts over each playful yet pedantically described detail, trying to make sense of what you see, and you inevitably meet the resistance of a flawed perspective or the contradictory co-existence of adjoining objects that simply do not match up. The eyes can see what the mind cannot comprehend: visibility is not synonymous with knowledge and understanding. Where do these objects come from, and where do they belong?

"They're asking you why you want a nameable truth", the artist mused philosophically when I requested more information about the sources for these paintings. To depict the untruth of visibility so painstakingly highlights one of the central paradoxes of painting, particularly the sort of painting that follows routes already trodden extensively by Surrealism, reconciling reality and artifice. Sciberras blends mimesis with falsehood, the keen ability to detect the undetectable with an imaginative power that permits her to envision new realities. When we study these paintings, we can identify contours, shadows, planes, cables, barriers and various other elements, but we still cannot recognise what each complete object represents. It's almost like we are experiencing the coming into existence of vaguely theatrical and hybrid objects crafted from various decorative and other architectural components that the creative and somewhat mischievous mind of the artist stumbles upon in the street. Even though each object is depicted so clinically, it does not yet belong in the world. What we experience is only a beginning without a clear focus or finality: an unfinished thing that, like Pirandello's six characters, still searches for an author who will provide some meaning to its existence. Scale doesn't help much, either. The rather diminutive size of most of the paintings almost invariably turns it into a virtual three-dimensional model for buildings or objects or places, but it is impossible to make your mind up about the "correct" scale. Not a single human figure inhabits these little fantasy worlds; if there were any, we'd be able to guess the size of the "original" structure. But the point is in fact that there is no original. Are these painted boxes or cabinets large enough to step into or small enough to hold in the palm of your hand? Is that marbled structure part of an ecclesiastical building or merely a manipulated toy building brick? Does that grey, ominous structure illustrate an office block, an architectural model or is it just a plaything?

There is at least another incongruity that accentuates the fictionality of the images in this collection of paintings, and it is possibly the most crucial feature in these works. It is highlighted by the artist's method of painting (which brings to mind early Renaissance altarpieces) in relation to the modern urbanity of the portrayed objects. Delicate tonalities and angular forms that seem to reference Piero della Francesca clash with electrical cables and other strange devices. Yet, if the pictorial realism of the Renaissance was intended to bear witness to the "reality" of a transcendental existence, each gadget here wants us to know that it doesn't really exist. Nothing, in fact, is more convincing than the painter's reluctance to deceive us. In these paintings, nothing is more truthful than their own untruthfulness.

The Clarity of Lies

by gordon calleja

The Ambiguity of Size

When approaching a visual representation we assign scale by comparison to known objects or locations. Tom Thumb's diminutive size is communicated by placing the character alongside the measure of a palm:

He was no larger than the green top of the twayblade blossom, and though perfect in all his limbs, it was not possible to feel that a thing so light and soft rested on the hand; and his mother, as she laid him gently on the thistle-down with which she had filled an accord cup, knew not whether she were glad or grieved that she had the wish fulfilled which she had spoken.¹

King-Kong's² gigantic stature is conveyed most iconically by the image of the giant ape hanging off the empire state building. Teresa Sciberras is careful to present no reference of size in the series of works that make up *'Little White Lies'*. The balcony-intercom combination featured in one of the panels could be a hand-held device or a habitable part of a building. The ambiguity of size allows the viewers to determine for themselves the nature of the object, creating a richer field of interpretation than if the objects' sizes were more clearly determined. In a similar perceptive process to figure-ground illusion images, a relentless gaze upon the works tends to create a switch between conceiving the object as a miniature that can be held in the hand or viewing it as a larger structure, of possibly gigantic proportions, which can contain the viewer rather than be contained by them.

The Ambiguity of Play

One can draw a parallel between the phenomenological qualities of the gigantic and the miniature and those of play and games, or to put it more precisely, borrowing Roger Caillois' terms³: the paidic and the ludic. The paidic represents free-play and is associated with spontaneity of autotelic action, that is, pleasurable in and of itself. Pure paidia, in Caillois' formulation, is unfettered by the strictures of rules and order. The paidic, or playful, attitude rides upon the affordances of action provided by natural forces that dwarf us, that are beyond our control, such as gravity or the ebb and flow of a vast ocean. The moment we start to order our playful activities with rules, we introduce elements of ludus to the equation. The more rules we lay on to the activity the further we move towards the opposite end of the continuum from paidia: ludus. Purely ludic activities are those that are constructed wholly through shared rules. The object that acts as a vehicle for the conveyance of the ludic, such as the round pieces and chequered board that make up a draughts set, has little utility without the rules that govern their interaction. Purely ludic activities are dominated by a set of rules that the player needs to know in order to engage with the game. The purely ludic domesticates the external world into a perfectly ordered world based on social construction and convention.

The artists procession of hybrid entities are born out of a desire for a playful re-discovery

of the ordinary. Sciberras employs the tactics of bricolage to create entities that yearn to belong to the paidic end of the spectrum. But upon closer inspection, the critical eye is met with a structural layer that belies the frailty of this playful illusion. The ambiguity of size gives way to the concreteness of structure. However much the artist sought to disassemble and reassemble her surroundings, and in so doing turn the rigidity of the miniaturized ludic (i.e. the rules that impose themselves upon our urban everyday life) into the gigantically playful, the resultant structure is just as rigidly codified as that from which it sought to escape. Even without visual references to size, the rigidly ordered structure of these works proclaim them as domesticated miniatures, safely resting within the artists' palm – not the larger than life frolics of free-roaming fantasy their bricoleur-god wished them to be.

The Ambiguity of Control

Every man-made object and system expresses a facet of mankind's drive to control our surroundings; to transform the environment we find ourselves in into one subservient to our needs, comforts and fears. Miniatures are the epitome of this drive. They are not only designed realities, but designed realities shrunk to a size we can possess and control. We make miniatures to establish an order in a world that is otherwise beyond our control.

Similarly we make games that reflect the outside world in a more palatable manner. *The Sims*,⁴ for example, is a dollhouse brought to life. Like the dollhouse *The Sims* portrays an ordered world of ideal objects, which we can afford to possess through simulation and miniaturization. *The Sims* is considered to be a great example of open-ended game-play. You're provided with an open world without discreet goals or pre-set narrative. But this freedom of action hides the fact that the possibilities for exerting agency are constrained by the designers' codified world-view written into the game's rules and code. Just as Baudrillard claimed Disneyland exists to distract us from the simulacral nature of its surrounding culture,⁵ so *The Sims* exists to distract us from the fact that the everyday reality it simulates is equally game-like. The only difference is there is no safe-word in this virtual reality, unlike Allegra Geller's situation in the movie *Existenz*,⁶ there is no symbol on the palm to press to exit THIS game. That is the artistry of games and miniaturization: to present themselves as games standing in stark opposition to the real, the serious, the earnest. Play theorists from Huizinga⁷ to Caillois all the way through, contemporary game researchers have defined games as ordered and bounded spaces standing aside from ordinary life. What none of these theorists explain is what actually lies out of that "magic circle" (as this boundary is often referred to).⁸ The answer is that there is no magic circle. There is no outside and inside of games. More significantly, there is no entrance or exit to the game that is contemporary social life. At every level of socially-structured existence, from the flimsy virtuality of our economic systems, to the laws of traffic, to educational systems right down to the most intimate friendship and flirtation, humanity has woven itself an intricate web of games spun into games without reprise or exit.

The Clarity of Lies

The works in this series of paintings are particularly powerful because they exemplify the frustration of the clash between the spontaneity of play, of instinctive action – of the purely paidic way of life that makes us feel alive, with the security that we seek from the safety of rule-bound structures, both physical and social. This tension is both deeply personal to the artist and powerfully universal. Whether we admit it or not, we all want to feel the excitement and now-ness of the spontaneous paidia, yet the more pure and wild that spontaneity is, the harder its expression will clash with the strictures of rule-based life. To those that have not resolved this tension, if such a tension can ever be resolved in earnest, its haunting spectre grows with every passing day in adulthood. The more rule-bound we become, the more we pine for the playful purity of impulsive consummation. But as Sciberras reminds us, we cannot break out of a structured life by appealing to a new structure. The only way out of the interwoven layers of games upon games is a radical shift in perspective and expression. Whether painting, or any other media object can ever convey, or even provide, such a break, is another matter altogether.

¹ Charlotte Mary Yonge, *The History of Sir Thomas Thumb*, Thomas Constable, Edinburgh, 1856, p.21.

² Peter Jackson, *King Kong* [Film], Universal Pictures, USA, 2005

³ Roger Caillois, *Man, play and games*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1962.

⁴ Maxis Software, *The Sims*, PC, Electronic Arts, 2000.

⁵ Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, Semiotext(e), New York, 1983.

⁶ David Cronenberg, *Existenz* [videorecording], Alliance Atlantis, Montreal (Quebec), 1999

⁷ Johan Huizinga, *Homo ludens; a study of the play-element in culture*, Beacon Press (1st paperback ed.), Boston, 1955.

⁸ Katie Salen & Eric Zimmerman, *Rules of play : game design fundamentals*, MIT Press, Cambridge (Mass.), 2003

plate I (oil on panel • 1200x1600mm)



plate II (oil on panel • 900x1200mm)



plate III (oil on panel • 600x800mm)



City of Lies

by konrad buhagiar

There is a magical moment in the life of men when meaning is condensed into all manner of material things.

As memories and former manias fade and become exhausted in time, they leave no trace on earth other than a myriad of hard-edged objects, receptacles of past imaginings, obsessions and achievements. They are fossils waiting to be prized out of the soft sandstone by the unrelenting geologist or forgotten fragments hoping to be uncovered by the indefatigable archaeologist, both in search of veracious and accurate fact.

But is this the stuff that truth is made of? Are these findings the substance of the Holy Grail?

What mind has conceived these ossified memorabilia? Which hands have fashioned their form in such craftsman like manner? And why have they been abandoned and forsaken, thrown into the river of time to resurface like flotsam on alien shores?

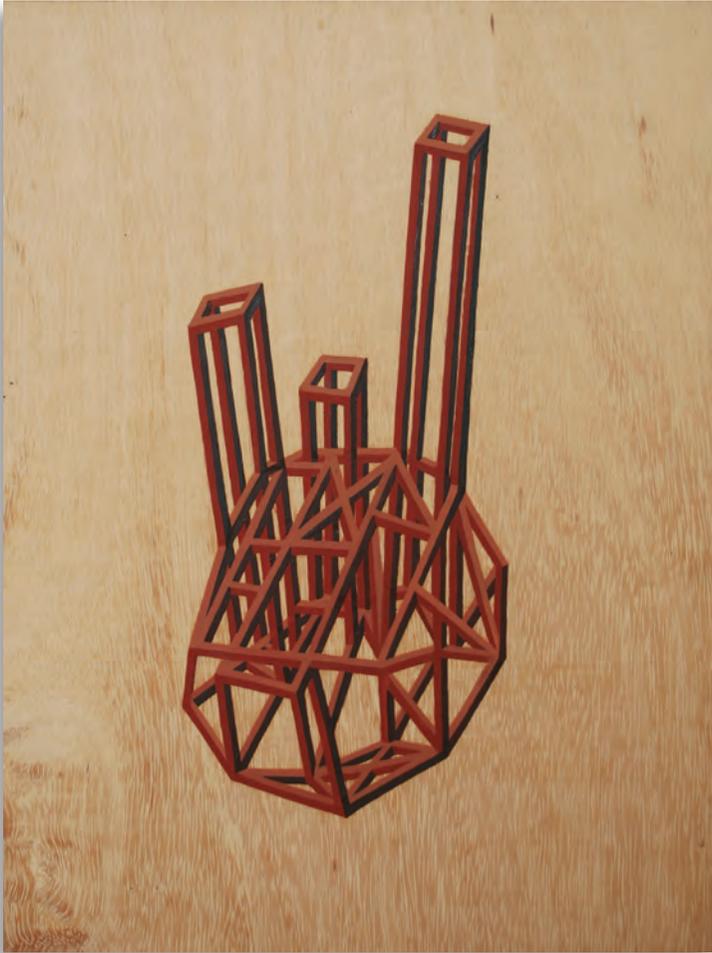
Of course, of course these are no more than petrified lies, escaping definition and eluding comprehension, lies nonetheless. Here lies the truth: that these artefacts are the lies that truth is made of, the masks that hide the beast.

I crave to unmask the beast, to unpeel each successive layer of untruth. To get close as I can to the heart of the matter, that is my desire.

All those creators and collectors who struggled to breach the walls of time are my heroes. In the effort they let fall from their humbled hands the debris that is my physical world.

Like Atalanta falling prey to Aphrodite's ruse, I, the artist, follow in their footsteps and stoop to pick up more lies.

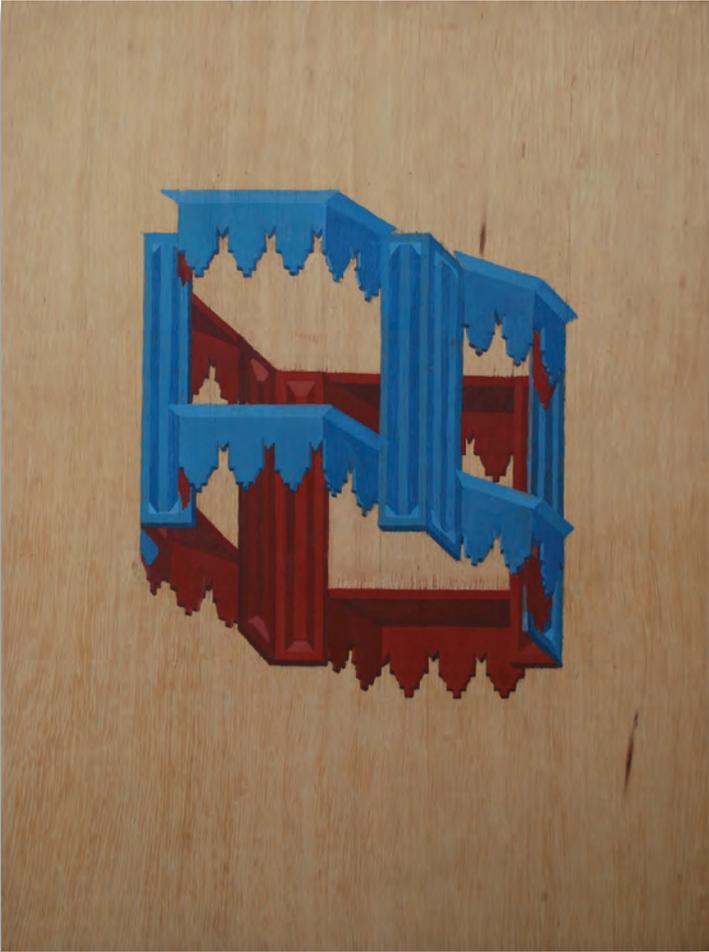
LWL 01 (oil on panel • 300x400mm)



LWL 02 (oil on panel • 300x400mm)



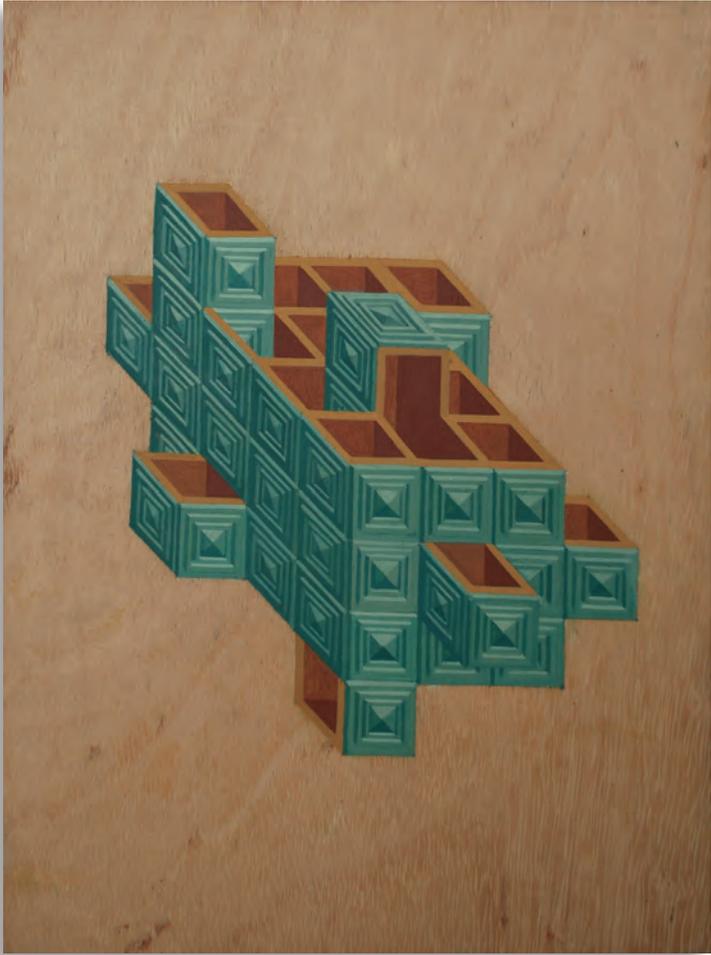
LWL 03 (oil on panel • 300x400mm)



LWL 04 (oil on panel • 300x400mm)



LWL 05 (oil on panel • 300x400mm)



LWL 06 (oil on panel • 300x400mm)



LWL 07 (oil on panel • 300x400mm)



LWL 08 (oil on panel • 300x400mm)



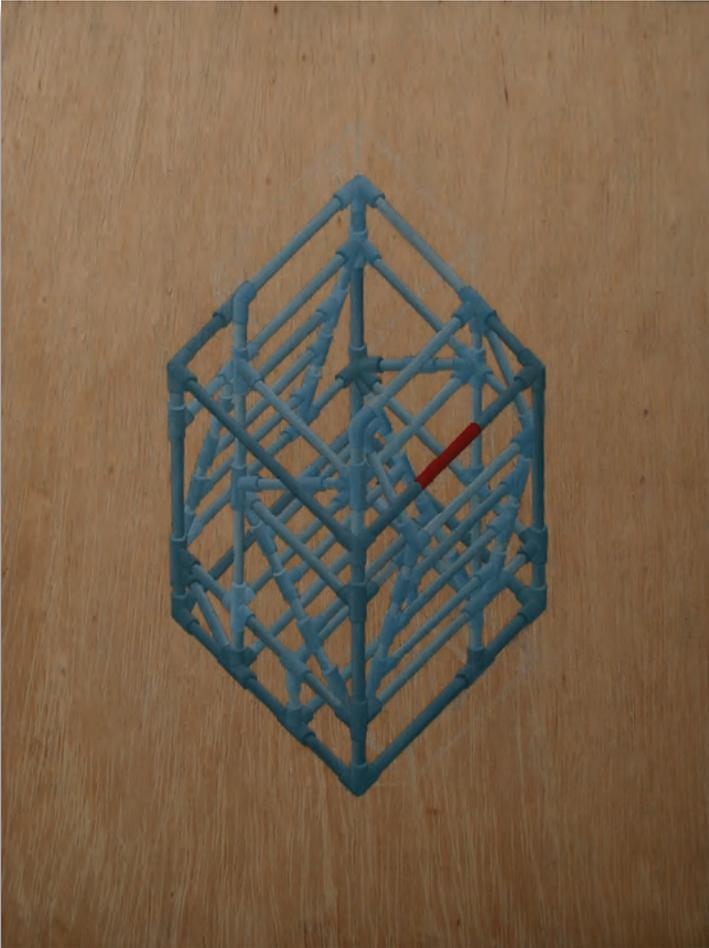
LWL 09 (oil on panel • 300x400mm)



LWL 10 (oil on panel • 300x400mm)



LWL 11 (oil on panel • 300x400mm)



LWL 12 (oil on panel • 300x400mm)



LWL 13 (oil on panel • 300x400mm)



LWL 14 (oil on panel • 300x400mm)



LWL 15 (oil on panel • 300x400mm)



The girl in the floral dress

translation by antoine cassar

pierre j. mejlak

It-tifla bil-libsa tal-fjuri

It all started when her mother was serving dinner in the china bowls, and her father burst out of the study reeking of cigar smoke, shaking his spectacles in the air with an excitement he didn't usually shake his spectacles with.

"We landed on the moon! We landed on the moon!" he exclaimed to his wife, who continued serving dinner as if nobody had landed anywhere.

He then turned to the girl.

"They've landed on the moon! And they've planted the flag of the United States!"

That evening he devoured his dinner hurriedly, and with crumbs still stuck in his moustache, he rushed back to the books in his study. His wife nodded her head about nervously, now certain that her husband, like his mother and father before him, was already beginning to lose it.

Later in the night, the girl climbed out of bed, in her floral dress, and approached the window to look up at the moon. Was it really possible that, – at that very minute –, there were people on it? What on earth were they doing on the moon? She opened the window, closed one eye – for better aim – and stretched her hand out towards the moon. She grabbed it, and rushed it into her bed. And there, under the sheets, she searched for them patiently, until she finally saw them – tiny, like two ants – running after each other from side to side. They seemed to be playing 'it', tagging one another with the US flag. "You're it!" "You're it!" And she laughed her heart out, until she felt worn-out and tried to sleep. But with the bright light of the moon, she couldn't.

First, the moon spent two nights in the darkness under the bed. Then, when her mother was getting ready to mop the floor, the girl stuffed it into her wardrobe, and later – when she had tired of it but did not feel like throwing it back into the sky –, she dropped it into the garden well. The first rain arrived, then the second and the third, and the moon began to fade out, until one day she opened the door of the well and saw nothing. And she kept the whole thing secret, as she often did.

Like that time she pulled out all the tiles in the house, decorated with flowers within flowers and circles in the corners, dragged them into the garden, and began placing one tile on top of the other until she had built a lofty tower. And a quarter of an hour later, two birds looking for a place to brood their eggs landed on the top tile, and the eggs hatched right there.

Or like that time, a few days after her mother fell off the stairs leading to the roof and died, she took all of the drawers out into the garden ... the kitchen drawers ... the bedroom drawers ... the closet drawers ... the round drawer under the mirror in the hall ... and emptied them all into the small dump in the corner of the garden. Then she arranged the empty drawers into a maze, threw the confused cat into its central corridor, and watched her try to find her way out, curious to see how long it would take her.

Or like that time she brought every house in the street into her garden, from the Karamell's home at one end to the stranger's villa at the other, and with them she built an entire village. And when she had finished, she realised that she hadn't left enough space for Toni, the weird guy who had spent all his life living alone. And so, carefully, – in order for her father not to notice –, she opened the well door with a squeak, and with her lips pressed together as if to say 'I'm truly sorry', she threw Toni's house into the pitch dark below, where she had once thrown the moon with two men on it running after each other, like madmen, with the US flag in their hands.

Kollox beda meta ommha qalbet l-ikel fil-platti fondi taċ-ċaqquf u missierha ħareġ mill-istudju kollu riĥa ta' sigarri, ixejjer in-nuċċali b'eċċitament li mhux soltu xejjer in-nuċċali bih.

"Tlajna fuq il-qamar! Tlajna fuq il-qamar!" qal lil martu, li baqgħet taqleb bħallikieku ĥadd ma kien tela' mkien.

Imbagħad dar fuq it-tifla.

"Telgħu fuq il-qamar! U waħħlu l-bandiera tal-Amerka!"

Dakinhar l-ikel ĥatfu u bi ftit minnu għadu mqabbad mal-mustaċċi, qam u reġa' lura għall-kotba fil-istudju, qalb ix-xengil tar-ras ta' martu, li kienet ċerta li żewġha - bħal ommu u missieru qablu - kien beda jitlef minn kmieni.

Dik il-lejla ĥarġet mis-sodda bil-libsa tal-fjuri, ressqet lejn it-tieqa u ĥarset lejn il-qamar. Possibbli fuqu – dak il-ħin – kien hemm in-nies? U x'kienu qed jagħmlu? Fetħet it-tieqa, għalqet għajnejha waħda – biex timmira aħjar – u ġebbdet idha lejn il-qamar. Qabditu u bilġri marret fis-sodda bih. U hemm, bil-lożor fuqha, qagħdet ftittixhom, sakemm fl-aħħar rathom – żgħar, daqs żewġ nemliet – jiġru wara xulxin min-naħa għal oħra. Kienu qishom qed jilagħbu you. Wieħed imiss lill-ieħor bil-bandiera tal-Amerka. U mbagħad l-ieħor jiġri warajh sakemm imissu lura b'bandiera oħra tal-Amerka. U daħket u daħket sakemm għajiet u ppruvat torqod. Izda b'dak id-dawl qawwi tal-qamar, torqod ma setgħetx.

Għall-bidu għamel jumejn għad-dlam ta' taft is-sodda. Imbagħad, meta ommha kien imissha taħsel l-art, tefgħetu fil-gwardarobba, u fl-aħħar – meta kienet xebgħet minnu izda qalb titgħu lura fis-sema ma kellhiex – xeħtitu fil-ispiera tal-ġnien. Għamlet l-ewwel xita, it-tieni u t-tielet, u l-qamar in-tefa' ftit ftit, sakemm darba minnhom fetħet il-bieba tal-ispiera u ma lemħet xejn. U zammet il-biċċa kollha sigrieta. L-istess kif zammet tant biċċiet oħrajn.

Bħal dakinhar li qalgħet bil-moħbi l-madam kollu tad-dar, kollu fjuri ġo fjuri u ċrieki fl-irkieken, u kaxkritu magħha fil-ġnien u bdiet tpoġġi maduma fuq maduma, sakemm kellha torri twil qatigħ. U wara kwarta ġew żewġ għasafar li kienu qed ifittxu post fejn ifaqqsu l-bajd u faqqsu fuq il-maduma ta' fuq nett.

Jew bħal dakinhar, ftit jiem qabel ommha waqgħet it-taraġ tal-bejt u mietet, li ĥadet fil-ġnien il-kxaxen kollha tad-dar ... il-kxaxen ta' ġol-kċina ... il-kxaxen tal-komodini ... tal-gwardarobba ... it-tond tas-sottospekkju u battliothom kollha fil-miżbla li kien hemm fil-rokna tal-ġnien u bil-kxaxen vojta għamlet labirint u tefgħet il-qattusa mifxula fl-indana tan-nofs u qagħdet tara kemm se ddum biex issib tarf minn fejn se toħroġ.

Jew meta ġabet fil-ġnien id-djar kollha tat-triq, ibda b'tal-Karamell f'tarf it-triq u kompli sal-villa tal-barranija u bihom, fil-ġnien, bniet raħal sħiħ. U xħin spiċċat intebħet li wisa' għad-dar ta' Toni – l-istramb li kien qatta' ĥajtu jgħix waħdu – ma ĥallietx. U allura fetħet b'żaqziqa u bil-moħbi ta' missierha l-bieba tal-ispiera u, b'xufftejha magħfusa flimkien qisha biex tgħidlu vera jiddispjaċini, waddbitu d-dar fid-dlam tal-qiegħ, fejn darba kienet waddbet qamar b'żewġ irġiel jiġru wara xulxin, qishom imġenen, bil-bandiera tal-Amerka.

All these were secrets she kept to herself. Later, after her mother's death and with the ailing health of her father – who had quickly grown old and could now hardly recognise his daughter –, she began to create whatever she wanted without the need to keep it secret. Like that time when, while her father slept, she took all the light bulbs in the house out into the garden, and gathered them together as if they were balloons on sale on the night of a village feast. And when she turned them all on at sunset, the strength of the light caused the bulbs to float up into the air, and as she was holding the wire at the other end, she began to float up with them. And all the people in the village froze, wherever they were, and looked up in amazement at the small ball of light slowly rising into the sky, taking the girl in the floral dress with it. And later, all the people in the country joined those in the village with same bewildered faces, as the ball of light grew brighter the higher it climbed. And when it could climb no longer, the whole world breathed a sigh of relief, for the moon that had been missing for so many years was found again. Those who owned a lot of animals sacrificed one and threw a big feast. And whoever had a bottle of wine stacked away somewhere, opened it that very night, and threw a small party just to their liking.

Later her father died, and when she returned home from the funeral – the house was now hers – she built a roof over the garden with all the clothes her parents left behind. That way, the garden became filled with their shadows and with their scent.

And from behind the kitchen window, she's there watching her, sitting like an American Indian, in her floral dress, by the mouth of the well at the centre of the garden, creating a world that only she can understand. She loved that little girl, who spent her life alone, without once tasting even a crumb of what one usually expects to have tasted some time during their lifetime. And every morning, she would climb out of bed anxious to sit by the kitchen window, looking out into the garden, to see what the girl in the floral dress would be up to next. Sometimes she would begin doing wonders as soon as she sat by the garden door. And sometimes, as she did that time she pulled the stars down from the sky and threw them to her in the kitchen, she would keep her waiting till late.

That's how she spent the final months. Sitting down, by the kitchen door, biting at what was left of her colourless lips, staring into the garden to see the girl make something new out of nothing. And the girl would amaze her with one design after the other. And now and again she would softly knock on the glass of the door, to show the girl how much she was enjoying whatever she had just fabricated. How bright you are, how bright you are, she would whisper to her, her hands pressed together, shaking. How bright you are. My goodness, how bright you are.

Then the sun would set, and the girl in the floral dress would hide away in the pitch dark that wrapped itself every evening around the well and the garden.

That's how they found her. Sitting on the chair by the kitchen door, her head resting on her chest, and with a girl's floral dress folded on her lap. She hadn't come out for several days, and neighbours were curious. When the Police knocked down the door and made their way in, they and the neighbours were taken aback: they found the walls and ceilings teeming with stars large and small, yellow, red, blue. And as much as they searched in every room and every bit of the roof, there was no sign of the moon, however tiny, anywhere to be seen.

(end)

Kollha sigrieti li żammithom għaliha. Imbagħad, wara mewt ommha u b'missierha li kien xjaħ f'daqqa u bilkemm baqa' jagħrafha, bdiet toħloq li trid bla ma żzomm b'sigriet xejn. Bħal dakinhar li, b'missierha rieqed, qalgħet il-bozoz kollha li kien hemm fid-dar, ħadithom fil-ġnien u ġabritħom flimkien, qishom b'żiežaq għall-bejgħ lejlet il-festa. U fi nżul ix-xemx xegħlithom u bil-qawwa tad-dawl bdew telgħin 'il fuq u hi, bit-tarf ta' wire minnħom f'idha, bdiet tielgħa magħħom. U r-raħal kollu stagħġeb u kulħadd waqaf – kien fejn kien – issummat lejn dik il-boċċa dawl tielgħa fis-sema, b'tifla żgħira b'libsa kollha fjuri tielgħa magħħom ftit ftit. U mar-raħal iċċassa l-pajjiż kollu hekk kif il-boċċa iżjed ma għoliet iżjed tqawwiet. U xħin togħla iżjed ma setgħetx, id-dinja kollha ħadet ir-ruħ għax il-qamar li kien ilu mitluf is-snin kien reġa' nstab. U min kellu ħafna annimali qatel wieħed u għamel festa kbira. U min kulma kellu kien flixkun inbid dik il-lejla fetħu u għamel festa ċkejnkna kif jaf hu.

Imbagħad miet missierha u x'ħin mill-funeral waslet lura d-dar – li issa kienet saret tagħha biss – saqqfet il-ġnien bil-ħwejjeġ kollha li kienu ħallew ommha u missierha. U l-ġnien, b'hekk, imtela' kollu dell u riħa tagħħom.

U minn wara t-tieqa tal-bieb tal-kċina qed tħares lejha, bilqiegħda bħall-Indjani bil-libsa tal-fjuri ħdejn il-bokka tal-ispiera f'nofs il-ġnien, u qed taraha toħloq dinja li setgħet tifhem hija biss. Kienet tħobbha lil dik it-tifla, li qattgħet ħajjitha weħidha bla ma daqet farka minn dak li s-soltu wieħed jistenna li mqar darba f'ħajtu jduq. U kull filgħodu kienet toħroġ mis-sodda ħerqana biex wara nofsinhar tintefa' ħdejn il-bieb tal-kċina, tħares fil-ġnien, biex tara dakinhar it-tifla bil-libsa tal-fjuri biex kienet se toħroġ. Ġieli kienet tibda toħloq meravilja hekk kif taraha bilqiegħda wara l-bieb. U ġieli, kif għamlet dakinhar li niżżlet l-istilel kollha waħda waħda u waddbithomlha fil-kċina, żammitha tistenna sat-tard.

Hekk qattgħethom l-aħħar xhur. Bilqiegħda, ħdejn il-bieb tal-kċina, tigdem dak li kien fadal minn xufftejha bla kulur, tħares lejn il-ġnien u taraha tivvinta l-ġdid mix-xejn. U tistagħġeb b'opra wara l-oħra u kultant ittektek fuq il-ħġieġa tal-bieb biex turiha kemm qed tieħu gost b'dak li kienet għadha kemm għamlet.

Kemm taf, kemm taf, kienet tnissel minn taħt l-ilsien, b'idha roġħda waħda flimkien. Kemm taf. Al-lajbierak kemm taf.

Imbagħad araha tinzel ix-xemx u t-tifla bil-libsa tal-fjuri tinħeba fid-dlam ċappa li bħal kull filgħaxija jgeżwer l-ispiera u magħha l-ġnien.

Hekk sabuha. Bilqiegħda fuq is-siġġu ħdejn il-bieb tal-kċina, b'rasha mistrieħa fuq sidirha u b'libsa ffjurita ta' tifla fuq hoġorha. Kienet ilha ma toħroġ jiem sħaħ u l-ġirien għorkithom għajnhom. U stagħġbu xħin il-Pulizija żgassaw il-bieb u daħlu ġewwa. Għax il-ħitan u s-soqfa sabuħom miżgħuda kollha stilel kbar u żgħar, sofor, ħomor, blu. U għalkemm fittxew f'kull kamra u flew kull saqaf, daqsxejn ta' qamar żgħir ma sabu qatt, imkien.

(tmien)

Biography of the Artist

Teresa Sciberras

...was born in Ibadan, Nigeria in 1979 and grew up in Scotland and Malta. As a teenager, she took lessons with Harry Alden and the Malta-based, Norwegian artist Olaug Vethal. After obtaining a B.A. Hons. in English from the University of Malta, she moved to Italy to attend a Foundation course at the Santa Reparata International School of Art in Florence.

She went on to study Painting at Gray's School of Art in Aberdeen, Scotland. During her studies, her work was selected for the annual shows of Aberdeen Artists, and the Best Practice exhibition held at the BP Headquarters in Aberdeen. In her final year she was selected to exhibit in New Contemporaries held at the Royal Scottish Academy (RSA) in Edinburgh. She was also awarded the John Kinross Scholarship to Florence by the RSA.

Since 2008 Teresa Sciberras has been working in Malta. In 2009, she represented Malta at the Biennale de Jeunes Createurs d'Europe et de la Mediterranee, XIV edition, in Skopje, Macedonia. During that year she also exhibited in Research: RSA Awards in Focus at the Royal Scottish Academy in Edinburgh.

In 2010 she took part in the exhibition A New Generation, curated by Mark Mangion and hosted by the Malta Contemporary Arts Foundation (MCA) at the St. James Cavallier Centre for Creativity in Valletta, Malta. Afterwards she spent two months at the Printing Studios of Peacock Visual Arts in Aberdeen under the RSA Residences for Scotland Program. This was followed by the exhibition Relocation, curated by Raphael Vella, at the BOV Headquarters in Santa Venera, Malta.

Alongside her artistic career, Sciberras has taught English as a foreign language for over ten years. She has recently started teaching Fine Arts as an Assistant Lecturer at the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST).

Sciberras has been published in several articles, reviews and publications.

Her work forms part of the permanent collections of The Royal Scottish Academy in Edinburgh, The European Parliament in Brussels, The American Embassy in Malta and The Grampian Hospitals Arts Trust in Aberdeen, and is also held in private collections in the United Kingdom, Malta and Germany.

Biographies of Contributors

Pierre J. Mejlak

...was born in Malta. He is a novelist and short story writer, winner of four National Book Awards as well as the Sea of Words European Short Story Award. His works include "Dak li l-Lejl Ihalik Tghid" (what the night lets you say) and "Qed Nistenniek Niezla max-Xita" (I'm waiting for you to fall with the rain). He is published by Merlin. More information can be found on pierrejmejlak.com

Konrad Buhagiar

...was born in Malta and studied Architecture at the University of Malta, followed by post-graduation studies at the Università di Roma La Sapienza where he specialised in Restoration. He is Founding Partner of Architecture Project (AP) and Founding Member of FAAMM. He has been lecturing in several institutions, including the Centre for Sustainable Heritage at University College, London and is currently Senior Visiting Lecturer at the University of Malta. In recent years he has been the Chairman of the Heritage Advisory Committee and Chairman of the Valletta Rehabilitation Committee. He has published numerous articles in journals and books.

Gordon Calleja

...was born in Malta and studied English at the University of Malta. He received a PhD from the Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. He is Associate Professor and the Head of the Center for Computer Games Research at the IT University of Copenhagen where he lectures in game criticism, analysis and design. He is also Visiting Senior Lecturer at the University of Malta. His current research focuses on digital games in the areas of ontology, narratives and player engagement in games and virtual worlds. He has published widely and the book In-Game, which addresses the topics of his research, has been recently published by MIT Press.

Raphael Vella

...was born in Malta and studied art at the Valletta School of Art, followed by studies in art and art education at the University of Malta up to Masters level. He also read successfully for a PhD in Fine Art at the Camberwell College of Arts, University of Arts, London. Currently he is lecturer and co-ordinator of the Art programmes at the Department of Arts and Languages in Education, Faculty of Education, University of Malta. He has published widely and is also a practising artist and curator. His work has been exhibited and published internationally and he has received several residencies and awards, including the Commonwealth Art and Craft Award, for his work.

Jens Bruenslow

...was born in Greifswald, Germany. He studied Architecture at the Bauhaus University in Weimar, Germany and works as an Associate at Architecture Project (AP). He has been Project Director at Malta Contemporary Art (MCA) and is Founding Member of FAAMM. He has been part in the curating, organising and editing of exhibitions, academic events and publications. He has guest-lectured and published articles. In 2009 he was selected for the Europe 40Under40 Award by the European Centre of The Chicago Athenaeum.

Colophon

On the occasion of the exhibition
“Little White Lies”, New Paintings by Teresa Sciberras
at
The National Museum of Fine Arts
Valletta, Malta
2nd december 2011 - 14th january 2012

supported by
The Malta Arts Fund
and the
Foundation for Architecture and Arts in Malta and the Mediterranean

This book is published in an edition of 333 copies.
A further 17 copies with coloured endpapers are numbered *I - XVII*
and are made exclusively for contributors and supporters.
This copy has the number:

.....
.....
.....

Printed at Offset Press Ltd.
on 170g/m² Burgo matt coated paper
Hand bound at Sunland Print
Layout and editing by Jens Bruenslow

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced,
stored in a retrieval system or transmitted, in any forms or by any means,
electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise,
without the prior permission in writing
from the artist and/or the authors.

The intellectual rights and the responsibility for the content of the texts in this publication
remain with the Authors.

© 2011 TERESA SCIBERRAS & JENS BRUENSLow

ISBN 978-99957-0-127-7



