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## Notes

1. Emma Dexter, "Introduction" in *Vitamin D*, (London: Phaidon Press Ltd., 2005), 6
2. A solo exhibition of Hur's work, hosted by O'Born Contemporary in Toronto, January 25-February 23, 2013

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**RACHEL ANNE FARQUHARSON** is Associate Director of O'Born Contemporary, maintaining her practice as essayist and curator alongside this pursuit. The Tate Britain has published her critical writings on the Gallery's new acquisitions and a monograph essay relating Brian Adam Douglas's cut paper images to choreographic revolutionary Pina Bausch was produced by DRAGO in 2011. Farquharson is a regular feature contributor to *C Magazine*, *Carousel Magazine* and *The Huffington Post*, concentrating on local and international artists.

**HANNA HUR** is a mutli-disciplinary artist working in drawing, painting, and sculpture. She received a BFA from Concordia University in 2008. Hur has recently exhibited at Daniel Faria Gallery (Toronto, 2013), O'Born Contemporary (Toronto, 2013), Galerie B-312 (Montréal, 2012), and Xpace (Toronto, 2012). Her work is included in an upcoming group exhibition curated by Micah Lexier at The Power Plant (Toronto, 2013). Hur lives and works in Toronto and is represented by O'Born Contemporary.

VEILS CAN BE LENSES,  
COCOONS HOMES

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BY RACHEL ANNE FARQUHARSON

Veils can be lenses, delivering a particular sort of vision onto the world as immediately as they are wont to obscure it. Appreciated as a metaphor, then, experiences of time, activity, and people that are obfuscated by psychological or physical impediment can actually propel an individual toward a sort of heady mental clarity. The reversal of perspective suggested here might be the key to reclaiming agency over the trials that make up this life's existence—taking necessary distance to gain revealing proximity. A corporeal coordinate to this bifocal viewpoint is the cocoon—by turns enclosing and forbidding the movement of their hosted creature and providing an incubator that promotes and allows growth and change. What constrains biology ultimately enables autonomy, the cocoon at once a hindrance and a home.

Hanna Hur's latest body of work is informed—or compelled, rather—by the constraints illness has visited upon her. Durations of solitude and muscular atrophy, paired with intermittent losses of lucidity, act as a veil through which the artist squints at her new life. This shroud has become an unlikely conducting agent comprised of imperceptible corporeal debris. Despite tightly wrapped physical and mental bondage, what has been precipitated by Hur's waking hours is visually and sensorially versatile. Shadowy forms migrate from their imprisonment on the artist's retina, down through the compromised corridors of her veins, to emerge from her fingers as reified shapes on vacant pages. These mental elongations of leaves, the curvatures of vases, the furious crosshatch of entrapping nets, occupy the vacuum of anti-space that is Hur's unconsciousness—they are neither flat nor volumetric and most certainly weightless.

A series of drawings arranged in an organized grid occupy one wall within *An Armchair At A Dimming Window*. Created as a method of indexing time, each small sheet represents the weight of a single day's passing. "Calendar," as the sequence is collectively named, champions the line, first and foremost through repetition of several forms. Bulbous black spheres typify the representation of a

cluster of grapes as still-life while wisps of coloured pencil imply a chain of links in motion. A gridded canopy seems to be the more permeable sibling of a smoky black rectangle whose spectrum of shading invokes itchiness. The slowness of each grape's gradient feels like lethargy and the animated links impose the arc of a pendulum on viewers, encouraging their consideration of time passage and circadian cadence. The net, re-iterated in sculptural form elsewhere in the exhibit, here seems like a substrate upon which to hang one's battles out to dry. At first glance, the shapes and markings that populate Hur's vocabulary seem inappreciable but quickly turn out to be palpable. Each rehearsed element indicates linear gesture's adaptability and can be taken as a regard on the artist's own necessary metamorphosis.

Giving closure to this temporal étude is a second, smaller series of drawings which invite figural form, text, and colour into Hur's investigation. Double profiles murmur the negative space of vases as arabesques of vibrant hues dance alongside. The phrase "NIGHT FALL" hovers in the top corner of a same-named drawing, the threat and inertia of day's end creeping up slowly. Furry noise is emitted from leafy slopes in the drawing "Moves" as the artist's simple linear suggestion of a snail advances up one of the curved planes. ((((((He ambles onward)))))) Traditional elements of still-life pictures remain prominent in these conservative works as Hur uses her own limitations to question what image making really is.

The position the artist's drawings occupy in contrast to her painted canvases alights viewers upon a conversation that Hur has been having with herself these past weeks, months: is there a taxonomy within the realm of two dimensional media? Taxonomy necessitates hierarchy, which would mean that the drawing submits to its dominant counterpart, the painting. But Hur's drawings don't atone. Rather, they reassert themselves *through* her paintings, as if the two media share a genetic predisposition.

In "Still Life in D Minor No. 2," a broad meniscus bisects the canvas, inviting the viewer into the cool, calm recesses of the painting's rear space. The vessels occupying this chamber are nubile the way a female body can be, the arcs of each form playing with the same swaying suggestion as the curled palms in Hur's drawing "Moves." When coddled by this white demi-veil, "Still Life in D Minor No. 2" seems to host something of a visual synecdoche, the void representing the shoulder of a much larger vase.

"Echoed" bears a similar range of tonal greys, this time funneled through a curvaceous channel resembling a rift in the earth. The shale-like shapes are an evocative allusion to relics, as if in layering white paint atop these forms, Hur has fossilized them. Stones encrusted with minerals and the compressed layers of sediment are embedded in this painting's iconography as a cathartic release for the artist. They are evidence of time passing but also assert that, like any geological record, the pains and events that occurred during this passage are forever here imprinted.

Twisted limbs seize your attention in "Endless Spring," a composition balanced between playful verdure, blocks of coloured pencil mark-making, and subtle linear gesture. Hur successfully employs the obscurity and tenuousness of line to transform the body into a site of otherness—a feeling the artist indubitably experiences on a daily basis. Awkwardly postured, the figure seems eager to find strength enough to push itself away from its surroundings and into the viewer's air space. Complimenting this struggle is the translucence achieved through pencil shading and a light oil mask, a solution for the artist's curtailed strength, which creates a flattening of the shapes that register powerfully as loss and anxiety.

A final untitled group of paintings harnesses Hur's new-found painterly techniques along with her savvy use of the drawn line. Muted peach tones support darker blue expressions: here a set of eyelashes, there a fleshy hand. Biomorph shapes with flagella-like appendages recall the awkward exo-skeletal

bodies of insects, as if the artist were channeling Kafka's famous protagonist, *The Metamorphosis'* Gregor Samsa. Emma Dexter once spoke of the importance of the line, saying that 'drawing is a part of our interrelation to our physical environment, recording in and on it, the presence of the human'<sup>1</sup> *An Armchair At A Dimming Window* answers this upright call, activating the intricacies of temporo-spatial consciousness within the context of not only drawn and painted works, but also sculptural pieces.

The volumetric enunciation of Hur's subject matter remains linear and is manifested through a hand-knotted net that hangs from a lintel between two thick wooden beams, gating the gallery in a monumental manner. The net spills down to the floor, creating yet another veil. Permeable and intricate like the trellis of an aquatic plant, the lattice work registers as both an organic body and a man-made, function-based object. Here, nature and artifice collide in the scape of Hur's mind. The tensile strength of this seemingly fragile piece resurfaces the conflicting duality between the artist's self-perceived weakness and the force her body is quietly exuding to maintain her homeostasis.

The limitations of biology are integral to all organic growth and change. These strictures, in turn, are related to the passage of time: the present is limited by the border of the future as it consistently is shunted into the past. Not unlike coral, an organism resembling inert matter, Hur's stilled images blossom and break out of their own discarded skeletons, providing a blueprint for the architecture of the artist's most current experiences. Hur's stratified layers—remembered from the works comprising *A Heavy Accent, An Interpretive Dance*,<sup>2</sup> have evidently changed in demeanour. The seizure of her strength has resolved insistent shading and eradication of form, engendering a more willing, patient participant in the artist. Take time. This latest group of drawings and paintings is part of the experience of loss and strength that simultaneously contains and surpasses Hur's body and psyche. It is unfathomable, which is why this work should be accorded the highest merit.