

*Morning Blues: An Essay by Melanie Cove, 2020*

When I wake, what do I want from opening my eyes?

I have here endless first glimpses of endless mornings in which my eyes never blink away a night or blink in the face of a bright dawn. In *Morning Blues* Ami gives me gentle rhythm of washes of blue hypnotic waves of pauses. I wonder at the wonder that is the infinity gaze she invites me to consider. The day that ensues and the night the blue follows are left in mystery. Each morning glimpse, if framed, becomes contained, a captured fragment of the blue yonder; now blue here, right here on the screen, on my desk, down here rather than up there. Each frame contains the moment of looking, the artist looking up, heavenward, me now looking down, into the image lit from behind.

Ami set out to capture the same moment everyday; 7.20 her daughter moves away from home towards her life at school. They have a ritual, a pause and a wave at the end of the street. Now appears a new ritual, a pause, a wave, and a moment alone wherein Ami looks up and shows us what she sees before moving back inside to attend to her younger daughter. These blue mornings hold a beat like the breath and with them Ami taps out a new rhythm, a gentle pulsating sigh from one view to the next. Unintentionally, the work now tells of a ritual and a time that no one would have imagined could be suspended, at least not suspended by the spread of a virus that has tied us all to our homes. Ami tried to continue to capture 7.20 after the UK went into Covid-19 'lockdown' but the impetus left after a number of weeks, it drifted out of meaning, as the landscape of our lives suddenly became the domestic for so many. School closure told Ami what her collection of blue mornings was really about, a collection of pregnant pauses. Social distancing and enforced isolation now redefine the work's contemplation of separation. What told of a mother's separation from her growing girl-child now speaks of a different pause; the pause of time when separation was possible.

In *Morning Blues* the vast blue yonder has been severed and squashed into a monitor to be viewed remotely, intimately; just you or I with only ourselves for company. Infinite potential is framed, held down on a screen and, like so much of our lives, is beamed in to us, on small cuboids, in our small cuboids, alone; does this foretell of a time when the sky will only be accessible remotely?

The pause with the early morning glimpse of blue is not, however, devoid of human contact: there are the lines. Lines that connect us to each other and an infrastructure of power intersect the vast blue. The lines anchor our homes to the grid and form a web of longing that liberates us from our isolation and tethers us to the ground. Within the framed blue, they straddle the space and hold us back, push us to the ground making the blue loom. They intersect the infinite sometimes wholly, sometimes just teasing the edges of vision and occasionally dusted with the gold of the new dawn.

Each morning there is the encounter with the materiality of the work; the *Morning Blues* have been captured by a smart phone, but not one so smart that it can react and respond to the low light levels of winter, so the darker morning blues are grainy, low-res, reflecting the indistinct, shadowy world that Ami's daughter is disappearing into. There is contrariness in Ami's use of technology; each image is taken portrait-wise then edited to the proportions of a PowerPoint slide in landscape. Behind the scenes the vistas of *Morning Blues* have been twice cut down to size; the phone captures the infinite, reveals its construction in pixels and then is constrained further by a program developed to aid public speaking. Unlike Derek Jarman<sup>1</sup> however, Ami gives us no poetry, no soundscape. Jarman evoked a blue that was replacing his eyesight as he lost himself to the AIDs virus that was to take his life a year later. In *Morning Blues* there are no words for what's missing, what's leaving. Ami replaces the sight of her first born leaving the shelter of domesticity with a silent field of blue, a space possibly more in keeping with the Blue Riders' spiritual sympathies and their reverence for the place of children in culture.

There is silence here because there is too much to say. Every blue morning, Ami pauses between watching her first-born daughter foray out into the world alone before turning back towards the house and her younger daughter who needs her attention and care. Caught in the ever-turning mother place between launching a daughter and sheltering a daughter, she makes a space for herself, a little room in which to breathe which needs all the room of the infinite to be found. In the short moment in which air is drawn in, eyes gaze upward, the mobile phone speaks for the artist who is not mobile, who is as tethered as the wires binding our homes and ideas of living. 'To speak up is not to speak louder, it is about feeling entitled to voice a wish. We always hesitate when we wish for something...a hesitation is not the same as a pause. It is an attempt to defeat a wish.'<sup>2</sup> Ami has no hesitation here, but invitation. What is the possibility pregnant in the pause? What does Ami ask of herself in the pregnancy of the pause? 'If maternity is the only female signifier, we know that the baby on our lap, if it is healthy and well cared for, will eventually turn away from our breast and see someone else. He will see an other. He will see the world and fall in love with it.'<sup>3</sup> The artist invites us to pause, to take an imploring, heavenward glance out to the blue yonder and wonder if her daughter will wander back in out of the blue.

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<sup>1</sup> *Blue* Derek Jarman (1993) 35mm film shown as video.

<sup>2</sup> Zofia Kalinska quoted by Deborah Levy in *Things I Don't Want to Know A Response to George Orwell's 1946 essay 'Why I write'* Penguin 2013.

<sup>3</sup> Deborah Levy *Things I Don't Want to Know A Response to George Orwell's 1946 essay 'Why I write'* Penguin 2013.