

PISSPOTS AND PAINTINGS

Throughout various periods in history it was a common daily practice to collect the household urine. Urine had lots of uses including as a medicinal ingredient, fertilizer, making gunpowder, shrinking and dyeing cloth and softening leather. It was a very useful commodity and as such it was very common for the not so wealthy households to collect their urine and sell it to local industries for a little extra cash. The term *not having a pot to piss in* is thought to refer to this common practice and if you didn't have a pot to piss in, you were extremely poor.

When reading a historical materials and techniques of painting manual I found that urine was a very useful additive in the production of paint. Apparently to make a very fine indigo all I have to do is take flower of woad and flour of grain and make a dough of it with urine and vinegar. Then make a cake of it by drying it in the sun. If it is too light then add more flower of woad until I get the colour I like.

Urine pots were hand fashioned from clay and glazed most often in a cheap green glaze and many funnily enough were designed to hold exactly one-pint, 568mL. These chamber pot devices were sometimes referred to as Jordan bottles due to their similarity to the little bottles in which medieval pilgrims and crusaders brought back sacred water from the River Jordan. Larger public pisspots used to be found on street corners as far back as Roman times, where tanneries and washerwomen could collect the urine and harness its ammonia bleaching qualities.

I wouldn't consider myself an antisocial being but I must say, at times I like my own space. In various studios over the years I have found myself in the somewhat childish predicament of trying to avoid fellow studio building tenants. I would much rather piss in a container than have to meet awkwardly in a studio corridor and be forced to make small talk and waste half an hour of precious studio time. Also the piss pot is a much-needed implement so as not to break concentration, having to leave the studio when a painting is going well. Right at an important juncture the need to piss and leave the studio can really break the rhythm. There is an urgency and immediacy to art making. It has not been uncommon for a studio shelf to collect several to many of these cut-off water bottle containers of wee. My commitment to working often leaves me forgetful and I fail to empty the containers and after a few days the smell of ammonia permeates the room, just as I imagine the smell of a Victorian tannery would have filled the neighbourhood. I was reading about Amazon warehouse workers peeing in bottles to save time and not lose productivity and an Afghanistan war veteran with post traumatic

stress disorder amassing piss bottles in his home because of a fear of leaving the room and getting shot. Apparently Dwayne Johnson 'The Rock' saves time by peeing in a plastic water bottle if he needs to go when working out in his home gym.

I had moved away from sculpture for a few years and was solely painting surfaces and I was trying to find my way back to objects. These pisspots filling my shelf pointed me to new considerations of space, form and volume. They started as a way to continue sculpting in between painting. An abstract time filling gesture. Collecting the daily train papers, cutting up my water bottles and building layer upon layer for weeks on end. Paper skins, rough and raw coated with watery washes and stains. They don't do much. They are another simple recording and consideration of time and things existing in space. Some kind of anxious evidence of repetitive action and thinking through making. Invisible forces acting on visible forms. The paintings aren't any different, grappling with time and space, floating in between image and object. Imagination and reality. Nothingness and solidity. Just more things in the world.

I found a piece of paper in the street while making this series of things. A child writing repeated lines of repentance. The page shows line 183 to 206 not including 202, which I'm sure is easily overlooked after 201 'I am very sorrys'. I always feel a little guilty that my work does very little and doesn't really offer a lot to the world. It doesn't contribute to highlighting varying plights of humanity or offer any new suggestions of sustainable futures. I'm certainly guilty of over producing at times, filling the world with dozens of un-needed scribbles, daubs and assemblages. Art. For me there is always a sense of feeling overwhelmingly apologetic.

I think my Catholic altar boy upbringing makes me feel guilty about most actions in my daily life and making art is just another one on the list.

I am truly very sorry.

David Turley, 2018