

Toys in the Attic

John Paul Evans

'*Toys in the attic*' is a series of photographs in which my husband Peter and I perform ideas about home, memory, alienation, belonging and otherness.

The loft space is used as a metaphor for the unconscious and the early socialisation process we encounter in a patriarchal culture.

Baudelaire suggested that the child's capacity to indulge its imagination is evidence of an artistic sensibility "the toy is the child's earliest initiation into art, or rather its first concrete example of art; and when maturity intervenes, the most rarefied example will not satisfy his mind with the same enthusiasm, nor the same fervent conviction".¹

The confines of one's mind and memory seemed all the more pertinent in times of self-isolation and lock down, evoking an interior landscape and referencing childhood memories and influences.

The desire to withdraw from an adult world of responsibility, and all the rules and regulations imposed on us, is perhaps a common feeling. If one feels in their formative years that they don't belong, that they are 'other than' the social group they are thrown into, then there are few options for survival. One either pretends, as much as one can, to be like everyone else, or one tries to explore alternatives.

The infant Oscar decides he will not take part in an adult world and throws himself down the stairs in order to stunt his growth and remain a child indefinitely. Oscar is an unreliable narrator, but his story is one of defiance, of a desire to withdraw from an adult world, in a time and a place of horror and political change. With the beat of his drum and the pitch of his voice he creates his own brand of mischief and mayhem wherever he goes.

"Oscar, never stand in front of a grandstand, the likes of us belong on the grandstand".²

¹ Charles Baudelaire *The Philosophy of Toys*

² Gunther Grass *Tin Drum*

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This text is part of **What is lost... what has been**

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