



ARTIST

Peter Finnemore

TITLE

Wrens House

DATE

1999

DIMENSIONS

6.75 in H x 9.75 in W

MEDIUM

Gelatin Silver Print

IMAGE NOTES

sheet 9.5 x 12"

CATALOGUE NUMBER

2000.066

CURRENT LOCATION

1114-18B

PETER FINNEMORE

BORN

1963

BIRTHPLACE

Llanelli, West Wales

GENDER

Male

CITIZENSHIP

United Kingdom

CULTURAL HERITAGE

Welsh

LIGHT WORK RELATIONSHIP

Artist-in-Residence, 1999

Main Gallery, 2008

Fine Print Program, 2008

Donation, 2007

by Robert B. Menschel Robert B. Menschel Gallery, 2016 – 2017

Place: Selections from the Light Work Collection

LIGHT WORK PUBLICATIONS

Contact Sheet 107

BIOGRAPHY

For a more recent CV or bio please visit the artist's website, www.peterfinnmore.com

Peter Finnmore graduated in 1987 in Fine Art Photography at the Glasgow School of Art, Scotland. In 1994 he received an MFA in Photography at the University of Michigan, U.S.A. He is based in Llanelli, West Wales. Finnmore locates his photographic and artistic practice within and around visual explorations on the themes of Welsh identity; it's history, culture, landscape and it's psychological and spiritual nuances. Finnmore participated in Light Work's Artist-in-Residence Program in November 1999.

circa 1999

ESSAYS

In our transient culture, the idea of living in one place for a lifetime seems oddly old-fashioned and to some even bizarre. Yet Peter Finnmore occupies a home in Wales, Gwendraeth House, where his family has lived for five generations. This ancestral homestead has been the subject of his photographs for a number of years. Photographing both inside and out, amid an assortment of relatives and pets, Finnmore not only describes the house, but evokes the memories of the generations that have passed. The Finnmore house is dense and rich with many voices, as though each departed generation has left a palpable presence in the shadows and faded wallpaper. Finnmore's models are his family, friends, and cats who willingly participate in these often absurd and poignant images. The Wales residence that he photographs and lives in is a slower, simpler place, where there is time for gardening, play, and observing the changing seasons. The cycles of life and death, the tension between absence and presence and light and dark are here as well, in the form of empty spaces, the garden in winter, and a strangely haunting vignette of darkness. Throughout this series Finnmore maintains his sense of humor and play. It is clear the artist enjoys the process of creating these photographs as he arranges the characters, objects, and symbols of each tableau. The Torch Bearer is typical of Finnmore's quirky use of performance, ritual, sculpture, and mark making as a medium to talk about death, humor, and regeneration. A suited figure painted with a primitive rendering of a human skeleton is a crude reminder of our own mortality. He stands in a surreal winter garden of organic sculptures with a preposterous bucket helmet and a sunflower sign connecting him to the cycles of the earth and the promise of the renewal of spring. Finnmore's home and garden is not carefree, however, and in many of the images there is underlying tension and fear. In the image Mad about the Cow (No. 3), Finnmore's cat endures a performance by a motley group of costumed relatives. This pastoral theater of the absurd includes a cow with a human face poking through the belly. But encroaching on the playful actors is a halo of darkness, and the masked figures exude a menacing, nightmarish quality as in the photographs of Ralph Eugene Meatyard. Over the generations Gwendraeth House has experienced grief and loss. We see it in the autumn leaves that have collected at the doorway in Threshold Image (No. 1), in the ghostlike shadow of a black cat moving through a doorway, and in a pair of abandoned shoes painted with skeletal feet, resting on a decrepit mat. In The Wren's House, Finnmore photographed a bird house through a thick sheet of glass. Seen through the hazy glass the delicate birdhouse creates a sense of longing and absence, like a distant memory or vague dream, and an empty chair sits in the background quietly hinting at the presence of those who have departed. In the image, Buddha in the Cat, Finnmore once again evokes the past as he photographs one of his ubiquitous cats padding over the dead winter grass to a primitive drawing of a house, while a disembodied shirt hovers like an apparition or spirit. The blurred gesture and semitransparent glow of the white shirt reinforces the haunting quality of the image while the cat and the childlike drawing ground us to the earth and the reality of everyday life. Author Scott Russell Sanders suggests '...places need keepers-people who know how things are changing...people who have their eyes on the place and their hearts in it. The land itself needs people who know it, care about it, keep track of it, and work on its behalf.'¹ In this fast paced world we are encouraged to move on rather than stay put. In order to keep up, we relocate, seeking that bigger, shinier, newer place, that is just out of reach. But Peter Finnmore has accepted where he is as the right place to be, having found the perfect vantage point from which to photograph the passage of time, a sense of place and belonging, and the rich cultural heritage of Wales. Mary Lee Hodgins ¹. Scott Russell Sanders, 'In a Broken World, Scott Russell Sanders on Resisting Despair,' interview by Renee Lertzman, The Sun, issue 290 (February 2000),⁶. Peter Finnmore lives in Carmarthenshire, Wales, and participated in Light Work's Artist-in-Residence program in November 1999. Peter Finnmore graduated in 1987 in Fine Art Photography at the Glasgow School of Art, Scotland. In 1994 he received an MFA in Photography at the University of Michigan, U.S.A. He is based in Llanelli, West Wales. Finnmore locates his photographic and artistic practice within and around visual explorations on the themes of Welsh identity; it's history, culture, landscape and it's psychological and spiritual nuances.