

ACCA UPSTARTS

INEZ DE VEGA

BED THERAPY 11th-15th November, 2014

Essay by Catherine Deveny

Why erect a warm, cosy bed in a shipping container where a total stranger can unload their fears, hopes and troubles to another total stranger?

Why create a bubble of calm and connection, a soft warm space in the middle of a cold, hard, grey, steel city?

Get a real job. A proper job. A job that helps people. Go work in a bank.

A bed where you can exhale. Where you can talk to a total stranger who asks nothing of you other than to be given the opportunity to comfort. A space to exhale, unwind, decompress, restore to factory settings.

What a waste of money.

Is it art? Is it porn?

My five year old could have done that.

What's the point?

There is nothing colder, sadder or more lonely than a city full of people trying to act normal when you feel broken, vulnerable and raw.

Let me tell you a secret. Most of the people sitting next to you on the train, waiting at the lights, rushing to work in throngs who look as if they are keeping it together are as falling apart as you are.

A friend of mine is a psychiatrist. She says people spend the majority of their time and energy just trying to act normal. Her included.

You're jolted out of sleep by the alarm. It's cold in the world and your sore heart is hurting, your mind is jumbled and crackling. 'How the fuck can I do this? Why the fuck do I do this?'

Your first thought on waking is 'When will I be back in this bed again? When will I be able to close my eyes, check out of this world and take a break from my horror, my heartbreak, my choices, my lack of choices, my jail, my substance abuse, my gambling, my disappointment, my mess of a life, my gutlessness, my bravery, my shame? My non-specific dread.

The fleeting pause of sleep is a relief.

Fear forces you out of bed, habit throws your clothes on, worry locks your house and routine forces you to work. You hate your job. But so does everyone else which makes it okay. It's normal. That's life eh? You have a job to make money to afford the house you leave all day so you can afford to keep it.

You open the front door and the bitter hits you in the face on the way out.

Somewhere you find the reserves to brave it and not bolt back inside and hide under the covers.

You trudge to the station. You are both the master and the slave. Left, right, left, right.

You stand on the platform; the wind blows straight through you as if you are a cyclone fence.

You spend all your energy pretending you are not the husk you are.

A husk wearing a lanyard with a pass attached. Smiling in the photo. Grimacing on the platform.

The train comes. The sweet relief of going from cold and alone to warm with others. Then the frog starts to boil, as everyone else looks okay. So okay. So together and calm.

The carriage of souls.

The train fills. The relief of the warmth in the carriage is now overtaken by the desire to escape. The smells, the other passengers chat, thoughts and funk. Their certainty corrodes your façade. 'Is my sad showing?'

Just three more stops.

The carriage breaks open when it terminates in the city. Passengers spill out like baby spiders from a bloated egg. They scurry to the hellholes they call work. Glancing at all the stores and ads promising all the happiness you can buy with the money you make from being tortured for eight hours a day. Strangled by your lanyard, stifled in your meetings, the performance of performance assessments.

A parade. A man in an animal suit advertising engagement rings. The smell of coffee. People more fortunate. People less fortunate.

*Sign this card Keith's leaving.
You need to put in for Jenny's baby shower. 20 bucks each.
Does anyone have a painkiller?
Did you watch Masterchef?
I'm not supposed to tell anyone but Steve's wife has cancer.
How about those Bombers?
Anyone want to join our Powerball Syndicate? 14 million this week.
Who stole my mug from the tea room?
Don't worry about the alarm. It's just a fire drill.*

Lunchtime is the weirdest.

A strange break from the torture. Torture in itself. What time do you need to be back? What time is it now? Subway? Pie Face? Maccas? You really should have sushi. You don't want to bring food from home. Last night's leftovers make your miserable home life spill into your miserable work life. Being out amongst it makes you anxious. You wish you were that thin. You wish you were that rich. You wish you'd ordered that lunch. You wish you were that successful, that happy, that sure. You want their job, their home, their partner, their kids, their car, their body, their money, their clothes, and their life.

You just don't want yours.

At 3pm you want to go to sleep, shoot everyone, walk out or cry. Perhaps you need a new job. But that would just be the same shit, different bucket.

At 3.30pm you're craving chocolate, porn, facebook, distraction, booze.

If only there was a warm safe space in this cold hard metal city to comfort a soft, fragile heart.

It's almost home time. The clock creeps. The job of getting home. The work of being human. The labor of keeping it together. There is no escape.

Instead it's a cold hard metal carriage from the cold hard metal city.

There's no place like home.

Catherine Deveny is a widely published writer, comedian, social commentator and beloved Melbourne megastar. www.catherinedeveny.com

Inez de Vega is a Melbourne-based artist who uses performance as a way of approaching and understanding the world. Today, when the rational has usurped all other states of being, she finds herself drawn to the study of emotion, and reflection upon the affective dimension of art and life.

Inez holds the 2014/2015 Georges Mora Fellowship and was a recent finalist in the 2014 Substation Contemporary Art Prize. She has exhibited widely in Australia and overseas, including at the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts, Nellie Castan Gallery, Art Gallery of Ballarat, West Space and The Ararat Regional Art Gallery. Internationally, her work has been shown in Paris, Berlin, Milan, Chicago and China. In 2013 Inez undertook a two-month residency at the Cité Internationale des Arts in Paris. Among her list of grants and awards, she is the recipient of an ArtStart grant from the Australia Council, the Orloff Family Scholarship, the Maude Glover Fleay Award and the Lionel Gell Scholarship. She has twice been shortlisted for the \$25,000 Keith & Elisabeth Murdoch Travelling Scholarship, and was a finalist in the \$10,000 Wallara Scholarship. Inez graduated from the University of Melbourne, faculty of the Victorian College of the Arts, with a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Honours) in 2011. www.inezdevega.blogspot.com