

Poet, Jay Ramsay (1958-2018), introduces the work of Genie Poretzky-Lee.

Genie's own journey as an artist is a fascinating movement from conception to feeling and *Being*. Her journey is a metaphor for our time and is in every sense ecological as well as spiritual. The clue with her work is in 'feeling' it (and experiencing it): you're not going to simply get it with your mind. As she says, "it invites people to do something they're not used to doing".

Classically trained in drawing and sculpture at the Academie Julian in Paris, Genie moved to London where she continued training in textiles. As a result, she co-founded Fibre Art in 1980, a working collective which ran for 7 years. Painting then followed, as she said, "as a result of feeling caught between the warp and the weft". Her inspiration was abstraction: but never disembodied abstraction, and with the inspiration of alchemy in the early and mid 90's her paintings started to include organic materials like sand, crystals, and paper creating a textured surface.

From painting she moved to pastels, a more fragile medium inspired by geometry in relationship to the square and the movement of line, and lines in space; and the expansion of that dimension then resulted in her 3D work with installation including sound and light as well, with the music of mathematician and composer Lawrence Ball; all of which deepened the idea of exhibition as being simultaneously experiential as well as experimental space. Genie deeply sees Creation itself as "a series of experiments", which we also know to be true of evolution and the history of all species on the planet, including our own.

Her reverence and fascination for created things already within Nature deepened into sculpture with found objects, using wood, stone, shells and rope.

You can read and see more of this in her book *Sphere: a path of many windings* (2013) with its exquisite photographs and Introduction as well as resonant quotations throughout: it's a visual essay, and (with Dr Anna Walker) a very well-edited production. Genie herself says memorably at this point "The questioning has stopped because I found my home somehow in something outside fashion...and it felt completely natural". Right now, she's fascinated with spices and their history in transforming the world through its trade routes, and linguistics in the context of root and origin. We surmised together as we talked that the further, we go into cyberspace the more we also need to remember ancestral space: and fascinatingly she pointed to the etymology of 'artist' as connected to 'arosis' as well as 'aroma': where 'arosis' means 'ploughing a field'.

That sense of the first art of cultivating the land itself is deeply resonant for her: Seamus Heaney also reminded me that the word 'verse' also originates in the movement a plough makes at the end of a line, and as it turns. In etymology as well as origin we have soul; as Genie then says "that oneness that becomes all of us". We sit for a moment in silence, looking at a blossoming tree at the garden's edge. In Genie Poretzky-Lee's unique work we have the Earth itself calling to be honoured as well as seen, and perhaps because her art is also particularly (and invariably) feminine, that resonance is potent as well as relevant for us all.

Jay Ramsay is a poet and psychotherapist. His latest collections are Agistri Notebook (KFS, 2014) and Monuments (Waterloo Press, 2014). www.jayramsay.co.uk