

BETWEEN A ROCK AND A PINEAPPLE  
a text by Amy Marjoram

for

THE SUNSHINE STATE  
ELLINOR FORSBERG & YVETTE KING

Yvette & Ellinor are having a show, I hear about it in trickles of information like tantalizing pineapple morsels. There will be a Swedish themed piñata, odd stairs and a seashell that makes animal noises—no, it shifts and will make the noise of popcorn in a saucepan. This is a blind date exhibition, between two artists who have known each other less than a year deciding together to build The Sunshine State.

“Swedish artist looking for fine art and good times. GSOH preferred; must be available weekdays for lively debate with a view to friendship and more. Visionary amateur psychologist, enjoys role playing, with a trained sense of grace. I enjoy long walks, grant money and pets. Seeks innocent inner city Melbourne artist with a fresh sense of contemporary thoughts on art and a good knowledge of electricity. Must be over 4 feet and preferable NS. Tracy Emin and Bruce Willis need not apply.” -Ellinor Forsberg & Yvette King

The first time I met Ellinor she insisted I stroke a plant that felt like fur, getting up close next to me to make sure I did. On my first visit to Yvette’s house many years ago, I was handed a smooth and heavy metal propeller to touch. Popcorn, streamers, confetti, fur, Yvette & Ellinor have a material sensuality that is a balancing act between restraint and excess. All these lush properties seem to track how we find ourselves in relation to places and people. We all map our interactions in to intricate constellations as a means of locating ourselves. Yvette & Ellinor through their respective practices make these mythic, self-stylized geographies visible.

Like wax candles being blown out and tasting in your mind like cake frosting, there is something mildly demented in the way these personal constellations form. Shrinking and expanding experiences from reality to myth and back again can warp their weight and density; archetypes infiltrate, rituals become softened through use and life and myth blur. Both Ellinor & Yvette have this quality within past work: popcorn forms in to crazy spherical clusters (Ellinor) or shoots out of the walls in singular arcs (Yvette). Fruit can be drunk through the insertion of a straw straight in to it (Ellinor) and a toy horse will snort disco smoke that fills the room (Yvette).

What is The Sunshine State? When the popcorn is pinging in the seashell like it’s supposed to? When the cast feet are casting shadows? When it’s there, when you’ve ‘made it’? Yet, this back exhibition space feels like a hanger-on storeroom; it has weird panels, a hole in the ceiling and hacked in spots for dead-latches as if someone who used to live here had to be locked in. The space frames and forces the ideas. The lighting is terrible, fluoro. They are lovingly painted over to become glowing rainbow batons, a rejigged version of the folksy hand painted light bulbs that used to be sold at Melbourne markets in the 90’s (I had one). The room becomes bottled in a candy coloured halo, yet this isn’t about glorification as much as it’s about getting by and fixing things. Caught between a rock and a pineapple our past desires sit like a discontinued flavour.

The Seventh back space is always awkward, sort of like The Sunshine State- that mood where things are fine and you know something will likely ruin it, but it hasn’t yet... Rainbows don’t have ends, butterflies die after only a few days and sunshine gives you cancer (but also vitamins). Yet, I am hot for this show, the hedonist in me is primed. I am craving sunshine with a reptilian longing.

To get to The Sunshine State there are stairs that start out gallery grey but merge in to glossy steps as though we have hit the shoreline. The surface pools in rivulets and theatrically shimmers, although we see these stairs are a hollow construction with an underbelly of raw ply. This is not a seamless passage between The Sunshine State and The Everything Else, it is a carefully constructed portal, it is how you get there. It is a signal shift that, like in our own geographies, things here don’t have to make sense to be understandable. We have arrived, across a seeping holograph that soaks in and throws back the fluoro sunshine.

Walking along a woodland path Ellinor's grandfather just decided to take off his clothes, bundling them beside him on the ground. Ellinor carried this picture from Europe to Melbourne, a touchstone image, it is a moment that clings. This was his sunshine. The image has a temperature. In another photograph a bather descends towards icy water, yet she is hit on the shoulder with a strand of warm light and the image gently hovers at this point of balance.

Ellinor talks of her boat-building father as though he is a prince amongst men and nearby in an image he lies facedown on a bed of small white flowers as though pretending to be dead. There is a humming of life in this stifled movement and, similar to many early photographic portraits with long time lapses, the image becomes more about what will happen the moment the shutter releases the captive. The photograph is a temporary spell encircled in folded drinking straws that, like empty candy wrappers, promise a taste they can't deliver.

Within the trophy room, the cast feet of Yvette's grandmother have an even heavier suspension. Balanced on a small slice of wood as though on a ladder, these poised feet have been worn and sculpted through ninety-four years of use in to something specifically hers. Close by is the bone-white shell with popcorn politely applauding inside. Nestled in kangaroo fur and with this second chance to harbour it is like a fantastical hybrid species. As it pings it is as though it is communicating with its maker. The things you know best can be most confounding; these trophies by Yvette & Ellinor twist the familiar to bring us closer.

The woman who wrote the Golden Circle pineapple cookbook, expanded the very concept of pineapple. Even I was stunned as Yvette showed me the book and I grew up with a mother wearing patterned pantsuits serving fruit-flavoured meat with a smile under her mullet-bob for the whole eighties. This author sizzled with relentlessly juicy monstrosities- add pineapple to that cheese toastie! But amongst the desperation of what else to do with fucking tinned pineapple, brilliance flickered.

This is a cookbook creator who realized you could pour jelly in to the tin, set it and create pineapple jelly-rolls. Consumed by pineapple, this woman was in The Sunshine State where you inhabit the screensaver and never get burnt. Ellinor & Yvette set out to recreate the masterpiece, a bubblegum and pineapple flavoured jelly-roll (although the author suggested lime). Sort of nautical themed, it was apparently hard to set, weird to cut and better as an idea— but the photo that resulted makes me go, fuck-yeah-sunshine.

Ellinor is excited by Australia and sees the optimism of the pineapple cookbook, how it might be an adventure, at the time it probably was. The cookbook is culinary fiction and this is accentuated in Ellinor & Yvette's sequel where the pineapple images are blended flesh. Just as we all construct geographies so we have a place to find ourselves in, our terrains overlap and criss-cross. The familiar and the foreign, the exotic and the same old stuff, we tend to share more than we covet and were friends before we were.

Danish & South Swedish party tradition has a toy cat (historically a live one) inside a piñata (historically a barrel). This not only gets the plague out of the village, the person who frees the cat is declared the Cat King or Queen. Ellinor's parents have posted Swedish lollies that will cascade out. Once the plague has been cleared from Gertrude Street, the Cat King or Queen is going to be crowned with a wreath. This has been made from gum leaves to which Ellinor has added a rats-tail made of popcorn. Their polaroid will be taken and placed with honour at the front of The Sunshine State. The truth emerges on Ellinor's facebook page shortly before the show opens. A grinning triumphant girl held aloft who isn't Ellinor and the caption, "My neighbour won the Cat Queen title when I was 6, I hated her." In The Sunshine State squashed hope can reform and past losses can be toppled.

Anything can transpire in The Sunshine State, in the successful aftermath of wishful thinking.