

## **Cathryn Monro: *Cloudfold***

### ***Courtenay Place Park Light Box Project***

*June – December 2010*

Cathryn Monro's *Cloudfold* lightbox works consist of images of cloudscapes glimpsed through close folds of material. Rather than representational or abstract; these images sit in the territory of the metaphoric. They evoke an experience of something intimate up close, a screen or veil, with a sense of something larger and expansive beyond.

Fundamentally, these are soaring images of light and energy. Lyricism abounds in these slices of warm sky where funnelling translucent folds appear to literally portray the emotional uplift the images exude.

The *Cloudfold* series evolved naturally within Cathryn's studio practice when she began constructing small lightboxes with re-photographed historic portraits projected onto curtaining. During her explorations of these ideas, the ancestral portrait elements softened and diffused while cloudscapes glimpsed through the curtaining became more pronounced.

As she pushed to effectively relate portraits and iconic ancestral emblems to the structure of the fabric Cathryn realized the figuratively unencumbered folds of curtaining were actually enough. While placing curtaining in front of a window to be photographed Cathryn said she *"literally saw the sky beyond and it made more sense; more overarching and aligned with spaciousness."*

Eventually, the portraits disappeared entirely, superseded by unadulterated folds of layered permeable domestic curtaining on front of an overarching and omnipresent sky.

Cathryn insisted that these images had to be photographed in real time; there is no post-production doctoring, double exposure or Photoshop manipulation; *"these are curtains - that is the sky beyond"*. The apparent abstraction, therefore, is simply a truth of perception, abstracted only by the positioning of the curtaining directly in front of the camera while it attempts to focus on the infinite depth behind.

In her studio note book Cathryn records her impressions of her *Cloudfold* images as they develop;

*These images are ephemeral and shifting, hard to pin down as they dissolve in and out of the foreground and background of near and distant, real and ambiguous, fold and layer... The lightbox itself is an illumination of the idea, literally, and a subversion of advertising. It is "subvertising" if you will, situated amongst the billboards and signage of downtown Wellington and contends that this awareness of the Beyond is what we really want, and is the drive beneath all wanting."*

*Cloudfold* incorporates a number of themes Cathryn has explored in many previous works throughout the last twenty years; intimate domestic detail in relation to a bigger picture, notions of identity, the Self and the ancestral stain, folds of pillows and curtaining, moiré, aspirations of the Sublime and examinations of the Real.

When asked to encapsulate the essence of what she is trying to convey in *Cloudfold*, Cathryn referred to the following quote by Rudolf Christoph Eucken:

*It seems as if man could never escape from himself, and yet, when shut in to the monotony of his own sphere, he is overwhelmed with a sense of emptiness. The only remedy here is radically to alter the conception of man himself, to distinguish within him the narrower and the larger life, the life that is straitened and finite and can never transcend itself, and an infinite life through which he enjoys communion with the immensity and the truth of the universe. Can man rise to this spiritual level? On the possibility of his doing so rests all our hope of supplying any meaning or value to life*

(R. C. Eucken, *Der Sinn und Wert des Lebens*, p. 81).