

# Sun in an Empty Room: Josephine Cachemaille

With Nelson based artist

*Sun in an Empty Room is a series of questions set by Suter Curator Sarah McClintock that have been responded to by artists during the Covid-19 lockdown. The title comes from a 1963 Edward Hopper painting. In this time of social distancing and self-isolation Hopper's melancholic paintings of a lonely America have become synonymous with our lives in this very strange moment in history. While we may not be physically together, we live in a connected world and these interviews reflect not only the reality of this moment, but the hope.*

*First up is Nelson based artist Josephine Cachemaille.*

*First off, how are you?*

*I'm really good. I have corrected a bit after spending the past month oscillating between feeling spooked by collective fear and sadness, and seeing this as an amazing time of awakenings and opportunities. Now I'm taking things day-by-day, really relishing the slower pace I'm afforded by this lockdown.*

*As a studio-based artist who spends a lot of time alone, I'm definitely well-suited to self-isolation. And as a family we're really fortunate - my husband writes from home; we've got a good garden; we have a really harmonious relationship with our 16 year old daughter, Rosa. This is not a difficult time for us as a family unit - we're buoyant and I feel bloody lucky to be so protected from most of the harsh aspects of this scenario.*

*There is a lot of talk of the opportunities that lockdown gives us - namely time. Time to work on things that we haven't been able to, time to FINALLY take a break, time to recharge and reflect. How are you using this time?*

*My initial reaction was to throw myself into responding to this whole thing - I imagined making big, friendly, communicative banners to hang down the front of our house, connecting with people passing on the street. Since then I have realised that people have developed ways of doing this in my neighborhood by writing messages in chalk on footpaths and putting stuffed bears everywhere.*

*I also thought I might be able to offer a spontaneous outdoor dance for people walking past our house by playing them tunes out our front windows...maybe a mirror ball in a tree to encourage them, one bubble at a time of course, but I haven't got to that yet.*

*Instead I am coming and going from painting in a temporary studio I have cobbled together under our house. I'm also eating, cooking, walking, gardening, reading, talking to my fam and watching some appalling/great telly. It is seriously therapeutic. I can't remember ever having time to work on things AND recharge and reflect and I wonder how I can retain aspects of this post lockdown.*

*I am working from home during the lockdown, and I am thankful that I have my own art collection to keep me inspired during this time. I know most artists and creatives have a small collection of their own. What is your favourite artwork in your own collection? What is about it that keeps you engaged?*

*This is really hard to answer because different pieces rear-up at different times in different spaces. At the moment I get a lot of pleasure from a tinfoil chain that Judy Darragh sent me a few years ago. It comprises bracelet-sized silver loops squashed flat and is hanging in our kitchen where we are spending a lot of time at the moment. It's a spunk and the compulsion to put it on and wear it has never gone away. Sometimes I move it to hang on another favourite, a wall-mounted hook from Martino Gamper's "Hookaloti" installation - it's a finger-sized, urgent, clay erection, and manages to be very rude and endearing at the same time. They love each other.*

*I took a small selection of books home from The Suter's wonderful library of art books, as well as some art magazines that I never seem to have time to read! What are you reading at the moment?*

*This lockdown has given me respite from the massive pile of (5th hand) New Yorkers I am usually battling my way through. I have just finished Bernadine Evaristo's *Girl, Woman, Other* with mixed feelings; I'm enjoying *Vitamen T*, Phaidon's latest media survey dedicated to *Threads and Textiles* - so good for putting language around some of the things I am thinking about.*

*I'm also having a Brian Eno marathon while I paint. Seems to be a good soundtrack for the emotional strangeness of life here at the moment.*

*There is a lot of pressure on us to keep positive and be inspired during this time, but we are also human. What are you looking forward to when the lockdown is over?*

*Change. Hard times clarify what is important and I feel really motivated by this experience.*

