



An artery **On Anne-Marie Copestake's *A love* (2019)**

The main artery between Glasgow's city centre and the Southside, Eglinton Street, courses through the Gorbals, where Irish and Italian immigrants were settled in the late 19th century. A programme of postwar urban renewal razed their crowded tenements, replacing them with thick concrete globs, 20-storeys high. In 1993, three short decades later, the Hutchesontown C flats were amongst those demolished in a display of entropic theatre, using twice as much gelnite necessary. Further down Eglinton Street, you pass under the heavy sky-blue sweep of the M74 flyover. A plaque boasts that the structure won the Saltire Award for Civil Engineering in 2012 but its decorative purple lighting was smashed long ago. A couple of years back, two artists proposed an urban sports park for this void, but this wedge-shaped plot remains vacant, overgrown, an expired for-auction sign begging redevelopment.

There's a bus stop here where drivers switch shifts and on the next block along, *The Roll Inn*, who serve them teas and coffees. Beside it, an Afro hair salon, further along, a tool shop and a Caribbean food store. Across the street, a ghost of the same store—*we've moved across the road*—and *Sunshine Koffee*. Pasted on one door, in English and eight other languages, a poster from the No Evictions Network reads,

ARE YOU AFFECTED BY SERCO EVICTIONS?
DO YOU KNOW PEOPLE AFFECTED?
DO YOU WANT TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT?

Sercos Group plc, a government contractor, provided accommodation on behalf of the UK Home Office for asylum seekers until 2019. During their tenure they implemented a policy of lock-change evictions, stripping those in their care of a right to housing. Promising to leave over 300 people destitute, a Scottish Refugee Council report explains, Sercos attempt at leveraging homelessness to enforce immigration policy was

successfully prevented by a coalition of social justice groups. But most of this block is shuttered now, the residences above boarded up, their entranceways blocked by slabs of metal. Half the building is condemned, a perimeter fence forces pedestrians onto the road, kept at a distance from what has been lost.

Perhaps you'd miss all this, such is the affection and closeness felt through her lens, but these and places like them are amongst the sites recorded in Anne-Marie Copestake's *A love* (2019). An archive of busy hands on Super 8: a postiche brush runs carefully over a blonde weave, sectioning; a soft morning roll is slathered in red sauce; pens take note; onions are chopped; laundry is folded.

Copestake's practice is one of memorialisation. In the video series *Trigger Tonic* (1999–2004) she paired visiting with local artists for unrehearsed one-on-one interviews that ossified a community, revealing the sociality behind cultural production. In her Margaret Tait Award film *And Under That* (2012), with similar attention to hands and their intricate work, two older women interweave and unsettle their personal histories. In *A love*, the same ethic is extended; film offers a means to grasp at communities before they move or are moved, transform, augment, and are forgotten. A snow day forges solidarity between intrepid pedestrians and excited children; a table offers a place to pause, work, write, meet. There are no voices in the work, however, no one need explain.

In one lingering shot, Copestake follows a garland of silk roses, baby's breath and a wooden Afro comb, suspended from the ornate Victorian cornicing and ceiling rose of the Sunshine Koffee café. In another, a mobile, decorated with beads and cowrie shells is backlit by a handmade lightbox bearing a half-mandala in sunset shades. These improvisations in an architecture born of British imperial wealth soften the hard edges—not shown, up high on that tenement's fascia, an anthemion motif of palm fronds, Ancient Egyptian in reference, tells of a longer history of appropriation inscribed into sandstone. A social enterprise, now homeless, Sunshine Koffee offered a meeting place for the Somalian diaspora in Glasgow. An observer of these temporary social infrastructures, absent from official accounts, Copestake's document forms a quiet protest against the vicissitudes of managed decline in the area.

In May 2021, on Eid al-Fitr, the No Evictions Network and other anti-deportation demonstrators prevented a Home Office immigration dawn raid on Kenmure Street in the Pollokshields area of Glasgow. Surrounding a van in which two men were detained, a leaderless group banded under the cry that *these are our neighbours* whilst local businesses distributed their resources, succeeding, after eight hours, in resisting carceral British state policy. In degrees, this refrain is what underwrites *A love* too, in the simplest way, as an ode to collectivity in the face of ongoing political harm. In warmth and solidarity, it asks us to remember whose hands are outstretched.

To support refugees through the UK's hostile asylum system in Scotland, please donate to the Scottish Refugee Council (Registered Charity: SC008639):

www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk

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