

Shifting Home, Ambiguous Boundaries: The Work of Dottie Lo Bue

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by Yunfei Hua



Dottie Lo Bue (MFA Fine Arts 2024)

Photo courtesy of the artist

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Multidisciplinary artist Dottie Lo Bue (MFA Fine Arts 2024) is currently working on the last semester of her MFA degree at CCA. She previously received her BFA in Pictorial Art at San Jose State University in 2016. Lo Bue describes her own works as “weird but gentle,” which mirrors her own way of interacting with the world.

During her time studying at CCA, Lo Bue has turned her attention from depicting figurative portraits, to portraying spaces and objects related to the concept of home, choosing the fence as an essential element in her work. According to her interpretation, the fence is “the boundary of the home, the first thing people encounter when they approach a house.” There is an ambiguity in the fence as a symbol because of its duality—it is up to the viewer to decide whether it is keeping things in or keeping things out. Other symbols related to the idea of home and boundaries are gardens and windows. She says, “I am looking at the places around the home to get an idea of the home.” Her reflection on the concepts of space and boundary also leads to the subject of containers, such as a nightstand, which can both be an object in a space, and a boundary concealing a smaller space.



From left to right: Dottie Lo Bue, *Nightstand*, *Circle*, and *Ghost* (all works 2023). Photo courtesy of the artist.

As a continuation of these concepts, Lo Bue compresses interior and exterior spaces to emphasize ambiguity. She chooses familiar elements such as furniture, and takes them out of their typical context. In order to mystify the space she depicts, Lo Bue presents unusual scenes, letting the objects “float or fall or be suspended in space”—for example, having flowers blooming in a dark indoor space. Floating dots are one of the signature symbols in her work. These dots can be recognized as petals, raindrops, or merely fingerprints on paper, yet she prefers to leave them open to different possibilities of interpretation.



Dottie Lo Bue, *What Light Weighs* (2023).
Photo courtesy of the artist.

Lo Bue considers the concept of home as “unmoored and always shifting,” which explains the ambiguity and unsettling scenes in her work. She began to explore this ambiguity by using vine charcoal in her drawings. Vine charcoal is a soft, buildable material that is good at depicting mystery and can be easily altered or erased. In her most recent work, Lo Bue extends the mystery to her paintings. She chooses to work with a bright pink named Quinacridone Magenta for underpainting her initial image. The pink glows through the overall darkness, which emphasizes the uncanny feature, as compared to realistic landscapes, while at the same time offering an impression of gentleness.

A hidden theme found in her artworks is the unpredictability of life. She doesn't avoid the topic of death, but rather, accepts it as a part of the life cycle. Instead, she wants to show the chaos of life and tries to find a way to treat her subjects gently, regardless of whether it is plants, animals, or her own anxiety. Through the uncertainty shown in her work, Lo Bue presents her thoughts about other types of uncertainties and hopes to resonate with viewers.

Most of the objects in Lo Bue's paintings come from the neighborhood she is familiar with, such as a window on a house she always passes by. As part of her thesis work, Lo Bue has extended the subjects of her work to architecture, a more direct reference to home and the boundaries of indoor space. These works will be exhibited at the Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts from April 4th to April 18th, 2024 as part of the 2024 Graduate Fine Arts Thesis Exhibition.



Dottie Lo Bue, *Dream Record* (2023).
Photo courtesy of the artist.

