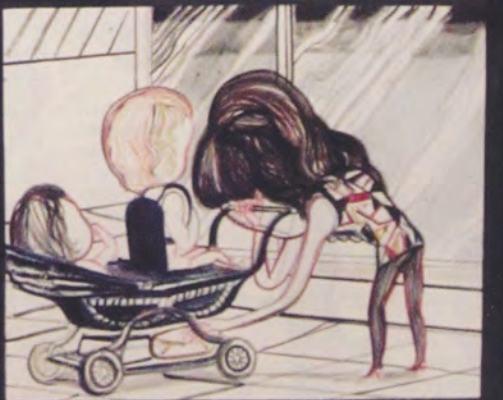
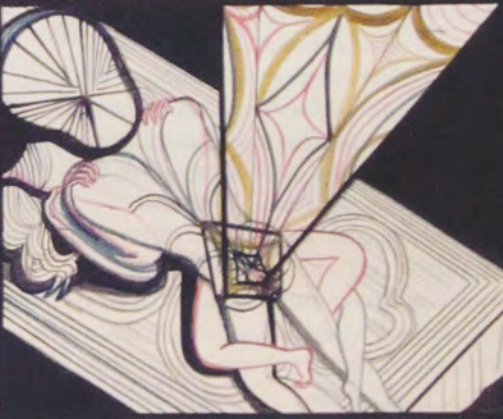




A DIAMOND RING

and Post War Problems

Back to Back



HOME

HEART

his one is BROKEN

LOVE IS LIKE A STOVE BURNS YOU WHEN ITS HOT

LOVE IS LIKE A CLOUD HOLDS A LOT OF RAIN

LOVE WOUNDS AND MARRS MY HEART NOT TOUGH NOR STRONG ENOUGH

LOVE IS JUST A LIE MADE TO MAKE YOU BLUE

Interview EMMA TALBOT

Cover artist Emma Talbot's paintings collage *The Smiths, John Dowland and Pablo Neruda* poetry with charged figures and scenes. She talks to Rachel Potts about love and memory.

Your cover features many of your drawings. How do they relate to your paintings?

I make lots of drawings, without thinking about what they're going to be. Over time, groups of things seem to belong together and that prompts a painting. The structure of a painting develops as I'm making it. It has to feel natural – like a gut reaction – not predetermined.

What are you working on now?

A painting about my visualisations of anecdotes told by my mum and my grandparents, that give me a developed sense of people and places that I haven't experienced. I make use of that interior knowledge, which actually tells you who you are. It's about how a mind works.

Did a change occur in your art after the death of your husband?

My work changed a lot. It used to be about things outside of me, found images to which you might attach a narrative. I felt those images weren't truthful anymore. It was a step into odd territory. What I'm thinking about now isn't subject matter that is always comfortably used in art. One of these new paintings was about my life with Paul, with a subplot about his illness, death and telling our sons that he'd died. When somebody you know really well dies, you remember the tiniest things about them, not great big scenes. Personal, honest things that I realised were universal. It felt freeing to make work about things that mattered to me and just do what I wanted to.

It can be hard for artists to do that.

It was a matter of allowing myself to be weak and vulnerable artistically. I got some watercolours and paper, really weedy materials, and I just made what was in my head, even the worst things. From that I built a personal language.

Annette Messenger said, 'We have films about love, we have novels about love, we should have paintings of love.' Do you think there's been a change in art that makes emotion more acceptable?

Louise Bourgeois and Messenger are great models of artists who represent an honest relationship between making art and being a person. They show that it is perfectly creditable to use personal subject matter, for art to be dependent on feelings.

Combining sexual with non-sexual scenes is interesting – it's not one or the other.

I don't make divisions or think 'I'm painting sex, that's really different from painting something else'. It's about telling everyday life and the psychology of relationships between different people.

Where does your doll's house motif come from, which can also be like a comic strip?

I use devices for putting many images together. The house is like a head – adjacent thoughts like inhabited rooms. It's direct and playful, not part of the lexicon of 'proper' or traditional modes for picture making. I take more from old-fashioned adverts than comics, with multiple images and straplines.

I use European 1930s and 1940s-looking fonts, from a period when much graphic work was handmade.

When writing about Rosa Loy you praised narrative painting's provision of a space away from mass-media imagery. How does your use of advertorial fonts fit in with this?

I use the graphic devices of advertising, but the message is interior thought, from songs and poems that are meaningful, and my own little bits of thought, things that entertain me. The painting *A Diamond Ring* tells my parents' story. They had to get married when my mum got pregnant in the early 1960s. It's also about the housing shortage at the time, and says 'A Diamond Ring and Post-War Problems Back to Back'. The Everly Brothers are in there, 'Love is like a stove, it burns you when it's hot...' Sometimes I listen to music and think 'God, that's really about this', so things get collaged in.

Do you think your work has links to folk art, for example Mexican votive paintings?

I don't think my work is naïve. There's childishness to its look, but I'm not trying for either of those things. I'm trying to do it really well. I want to capture details or mannerisms, rather than anatomical correctness. The power for a drawing to carry an idea, that votive thing, making drawings of something you really want, or are frightened of, or about what you're experiencing is a really brilliant comparison. I want to get that 'thing' down exactly, be accurate to a thought, what something feels rather than looks like.

Emma Talbot's work appears in *The Life of the Mind: Love, Sorrow and Obsession* at The New Art Gallery Walsall, 21 Jan – 20 March 2011 and *Told*, Hales Gallery, London, 25 Feb – 2 Apr 2011