

Still Life, Feb 2018

<https://stilllifemag.org/Its-out-of-our-hands>

It's Out of Our Hands is a short film made by [Timber and Battery](#) (duo Rohanne Udall and Paul Hughes) in which, scene after scene, we see Rohanne dropping lots of different objects - from books to jugs to wheels.

I like how the film creates such suspense with quite ordinary, homely settings and objects. Waiting for each drop that I know has to come.

And the film always cuts away before I can see or hear them land so I never get the satisfaction of hearing them thud, clatter, plonk or smash. And so it almost feels to me like they could be falling through space forever.

I wanted to include the film in STILL LIFE as a different kind of articulation about what this zine is trying to feel out. I was in two minds about putting it into too many words because I think it does the job just by being here and you watching it alongside the other things on the site. Just by being here it might create questions and connections. And I'm not sure what all those questions and connections are but for starters there's something for me about the pairings being between a human and non-human things. Things not remotely resembling humans (but see my [interview with Cameron Hodge](#) for a different kind of human-non human pairing). Because of that it's unclear who is active and who is passive, who is moving and who is still. Both Rohanne and the object are pretty still at the start of each shot then she seems to release her grip, relax and then gravity pulls the thing downwards. Presumably downwards to rest on the ground soon after but we never see that of course.

So Rohanne stops holding on, giving into the easier, more comfortable, less energetic position of relaxing her grip. She lets go and then each object starts falling and its potential energy is converted into kinetic energy as the gravitational force of the earth acts on it. So I think about how stillness can be an active state (before the drop) and a passive state (afterwards).

Also I wonder whether the objects are being freed - left to return to the secure home of the floor which holds them securely - or are they being abandoned - left to the mercy of the floor which might dent or break them?

I should mention the title too. *It's Out of Our Hands*. The metaphorical claim of not being responsible becomes literal, although I do wonder if any breakages remain Paul and Rohanne's responsibility. I talk about Still Life being "about how we put ourselves in other people's hands. Or how we are put in other people's hands." (It could have been that this film inspired or confirmed this phrasing. I can't remember). But the film's title focuses on irresponsibility rather than responsibility. If we stop holding something up, through choice or necessity, are we responsible if gravity, time, or some other force then destroys it or even perhaps supports it?

More questions.

And finally what are all the things that are holding up Rohanne, both literally and metaphorically? When will they eventually have to let go and let her fall? And I suppose we all fall eventually. And then someone will let go of them and so on and so on until we are all some grey cosmic puddle.

There's no conclusion to be made from any of this but it's enough to feel moved and confused even in a small way about what is going on in this action of letting go that is made so clear and strong through its repetition.

Hamish MacPherson
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