

CHILDHOOD STORAGE

Anna-Nicole Ziesche

Fragments of the artist's personal journal being read in the film:

'What happened on your birthday?' – same question every year.
The parents wondered: did she forget?

Transparent ice, the metallic blue Ford 17M with four doors glid across the shimmering surface when the father drove the mother to hospital, Hamburg, early morning on the 27th of January 1972. A female doctor pushed the doors wide-open, hurried into the delivery room and shouted: 'Wait, don't suck her out'. She saved her unborn body with its umbilical cord draped tightly around her neck.

Laying on her back with her legs straight up in the air she stared at the ceiling. Unnoticed by the others her mind dictated to commence her journey and so she made one steady step after the other overcoming many hurdles, strange angles and high doorframes.

During the night she sometimes stretched her small body along a ladder leaning against her bed – head down first. But on her 22nd birthday she missed the ladder when the ringing from the telephone shot through the vast Jugendstil apartment and roused her from sleep violently. For one week she carried around a bruised body filled with pain.

'You either like pain or you are sick' she was told by her portfolio teacher who was inspecting one of her paintings made up from thousands of tiny dots. He added that her parents were too encouraging and therefore, she was too confident. 'You'll never make into Art School.' Instead she took her okka coloured record player outside, climbed together with her friend onto the garden swing and flew into the sunset while listening to Abba.

Her once bright yellow changing table, which now served her as a desk, was covered with blotches of paint, clay and glue. An eclectic mix of objects she collated every day were piling up like an altermodern still life - a curled up piece of bark, an old light bulb, a broken wooden clock, a blue hair-clip, Emily Erdbeer, a wine bottle with plants growing inside and a gherkin jar with living caterpillars.

One day she woke up stuck to the ceiling like a white cocoon with faint traces of yellow and green, black tiny marks and prickled skin. Her mother untangled a dead butterfly-body from the curtains, cut through its flesh with a thorn of her cactuses and lined it up next to a hollow dragonfly and a bumblebee on the windowsill in the lounge.

She was brought to hospital accompanied by her tortoise and increasing belly pain. In the evening she awoke in the hospital bed surrounded by 32 letters written by her classmates, a cactus and no appendix. The following years she spent retrieving her leg-muscles, retaining her walk and reviving her pierced through nerve.

She continued devoting her life to readjusting her collections of objects like her special Franz butterfly cup consciously positioned on a wooden suitcase-table or any products in kitchen and bathroom ensuring the labels are facing in one direction. Her mother, father and brother followed the same tick, except her brother needed occasionally the reassurance of a ruler.

Recording, retaining, retrieving or fixating, filing, finding. Recalling, Recognizing. How is it possible to lead a 'normal' life by possessing a memory with all existing files past and present being scattered all over the place? How is it possible to walk through life and come so far by being intellectually uniquely lazy? Recording, retaining, retrieving, fixating, filing, finding; when memory is not filed clearly it is inaccessible recalling, recognising and relearning are methods of measuring memory.

When inspecting her hands they seemed to possess their own identity changing their fate lines arbitrarily. When studying pictures of herself as a young girl – she felt she faced a nameless child possibly her daughter whom she did not know she had. Yet when looking at the knitted jumpers she had created during her childhood she remembered every excitement with every single stitch.

In her favourite dream she discovered a room under the staircase of her parents' house that she never knew existed. It was the size of her bedroom painted entirely in sky-blue and when glancing out of the window she saw a street-scene like a 'Western Cowboy' movie dyed in monochrome sepia. Still searching for the unknown room years later she decided to paint her own bedroom sky-blue ridding the yellow, brown and orange from the seventies and diving into the pastels of the eighties.

Bang, bang, her feet hit the glass of her bedroom door while she was trying to master a headstand and her friend trying to make her laugh. He compared her carefully draped Indian scarves with parachutes of people's courageous escapes. The other day she longed to be as cool as her brother's boy friends or be Winnetou or at least to practice headstand endlessly. Now she got upset about having to grow a baby or else she disappointed all other mothers and possibly herself but then it was too late.

The Lärche one of the two large trees in front of the house where her father was born 72 years ago collapsed across the street missing the neighbour's house by half a meter. The house opposite her childhood bedroom window was torn down the following week. A view imprinted in her mind, a view she had drawn and photographed many times, a view she revisited every time she returned home was altered. But her childhood bedroom remained how she had left it.

While the midwife told her the baby's unborn heart was getting weaker two young male doctors hurried into the room. She woke up 3 and half-hours later welcomed by a father holding a female human child in his arms – her daughter. She looked at the eyes of the little girl and knew they were not the composition of lines she used to draw every month.

Text is written by Anna-Nicole Ziesche