

Warrington, R. THE EMERGENCE OF SOMETHING INTO BEING: PAUL EMMANUEL AT THE OPEN WINDOW, in ArtThrob, Issue No. 33, May 2000

"The ancient Greeks believed that if you touched or rubbed or held onto an object or person you transfer an energy to that object or person" Paul Emmanuel

'Pages from Cathexis' is printmaker Paul Emmanuel's first solo exhibition. The pages on exhibition contain intricately woven drawings brought to the foreground by different lithographic and etching techniques. Most of these will become part of an artist's book to be entitled Cathexis. No completion date has been set by the artist for this artwork: Emmanuel, seen as one of the best in his field, does not limit himself by the constraints of time.

It is an arduous task to capture the essence or soul of the works. No words that I can string together seem to do justice to the artist. Even long time friend, Wits lecturer and renowned artist, Jo Ractliffe, thought it wiser to refrain from going into detail. "I just want to leave it there for all of you."

While opening the proceedings, Ms Ractliffe had the following tale to tell. When she joined the Wits staff, Paul was in his third year and having some difficulty finding his way. In her "anxious zeal" to be a good teacher she advised Emmanuel, who had been and still is making matchbox size images, to "go huge". "Loosen up". "Make big gestures". At the time Jo was renovating her house and found the minute skeleton of a mouse in an electrical socket. She handed Emmanuel the small model, along with the biggest litho stone she could find and said, "Right, put that mouse onto that stone!" Emmanuel drew the mouse the size of a matchbox in the middle of the massive stone.

Due to the time and labour involved in printmaking, it is generally seen as a quiet, serene art form. Paul's choice of (small) scale and title words such as Sleep and Breath accentuates this generalization. And yet as one stands in front of these artworks one feels tense. As if something is going to change or happen or emerge. Everyday, somewhat banal objects such as a telephone, apple or flute undergo a transference of energy. The apple being eaten. The telephone representing a conversation. Everyday objects depicting a transference that is not of this world. Everyday objects becoming a part of this transference. The silence then becomes unbearable, for one anxiously awaits the emergence of something into being.

Ends May 27

- Roney Warrington is a freelance writer living in Johannesburg