

## *Hard Copy*

Here is a series of gift boxes. Almost, but not quite, perfectly ordinary exchanges between selves and worlds, where the risks of relation are constantly apparent but from which safety is found in the assurance of the well-trodden path of a pre-packaged box to evidence care, to evidence attention: here, I thought of you. No matter the I, no matter the you.

Valerie often works in series. In this room are five near-perfect approximations of a form from ordinary life to which the usual response is inattention. As such, you could easily not notice that the gift boxes are hand-painted. Green and white and red: seasonal. You don't have to live in a temperate zone to know, in December, that it is Christmas. There's no one type of weather. You just need to go into a shop or ride the bus or watch TV. The colour-cues for how to act towards your intimates and semi-intimates as the year progresses are registered more by the motions of packaging than the slow death and disappearance of leaves. What would it mean to notice, non-cynically, despite everything, a kind of comfort that is often found and often taken in that tight little cluster of neocolonial globalised blowback - to find something assuring and comforting and warm and *intimate* in the sameness with which mass culture seduced its way in the first place into all the places where winter doesn't break the leaves down and tartan has nothing to do with anybody's highland home?

Handmade replicas of everyday and usually, ultimately, disposable objects, the mimesis of the gift boxes is pretty much total except that they're denuded of realism by the fact that there's no stamp, no label, and no tape or ribbon to seal the deal. The works' intelligibility presumes a sender and receiver whose identity remains in the air; they need only an address and a signature to make the conventional objects into heartfelt transmissions from one singular, complex being to another. But that exchange of singularity is withheld here. Instead, Valerie's boxes remain suspended in potentiality, a portrait of what each could and couldn't be. They foreground, mutely, the promise of a conventional care that can find a general you wherever a general you is, and can presume a desire that is already there, and, as such, will know what to give. Conventions are more than mere placeholders for what could be better said otherwise. These giftless gift boxes lurk beneath the radar where all the weight of what the passing of a gift from hand to hand is hoped to induce and express goes without saying not because it has been emptied or foreclosed, but because, as the infinite 'me's circulate among the infinite 'you's, for all the love in the world, sometimes it is not clear what to say.

George Lynch