



## THIS LITTLE GETAWAY

### Take flight.

Today I realize that, without intending to, I've run away. I wander without the usual responsibilities. There's no injustice to flee from or a brutal reality to avoid, but nonetheless I feel free. On the way to the exhibit, I treat myself to a lavender cream donut. Pass by a café window; catch a woman balancing a spoon on the tip of her nose. How we dare to escape ourselves for a little while!

### On the run.

The notion of running away is Paleolithic, a proven innate human quality. The need to document the journey is just as necessary and as ancient, carved into stone. A hankering for freedom is coupled with a contrary need to be rooted, and this conflict is at art's heart. We demand solitude, independence, even loneliness, only to return with the need to share our findings: maps, interviews, journals, drawings, poems, artifacts. A claim on new land. Making a name for oneself. We feel compelled to run, and equally obliged to leave a note behind:

I am  
runing  
away  
becas  
you think  
I farted  
when I didnt.

PS. You are  
mean.<sup>1</sup>

### Make tracks.

Hanno the Navigator. Xu Fu. Erik the Red. Marco Polo. Ferdinand Magellan. Siddhartha. Basho. Anne Bancroft. Nellie Bly. Amelia Earhart. Valeri Polyakov. Surely each of these explorers and travellers felt the urge to run, for what else would compel them to complete the arduous tasks they set out for themselves?

There is no end to how far one can run: running away is a 360-degree obsession. Investigate the depths

of the sea, sky dive from space, circumnavigate the globe on a single ticket. The race to build the world's tallest tower is ongoing. But then, how far can one really run away? And is the point the destination, or the brief thrill of escape?

### Make a break for it.

Yvonne, a 1500-pound cow, is one of the first hits when I search "famous runaways."<sup>2</sup> Infuriating officials, this crafty bovine bolted from a cattle farm and hid in a Bavarian forest for over three months, evading capture. Police tried to lure Yvonne with a handsome bull, her own calf Friesi, and her sister Waltraud, considered her best friend. The German press nicknamed her, "the cow who wants to be a deer," and "Problemkuh." Each attempt to seize Yvonne intensified her cunning and wile.

No sooner did pursuers give up the hunt that Yvonne was found gazing longingly at a fenced-in herd at another farm. Her lonely spirit gave way to an easy wrangling, and Yvonne now lives out her life on a sanctuary, having truly escaped her former life's imminent slaughter.

Loneliness makes its little loop and tugs back.

### Head in the clouds.

I'd have to be really quick  
to describe clouds -  
a split second's enough  
for them to start being something else.  
- Wislawa Szymborska<sup>3</sup>

The gallery is empty. This is how I prefer to experience art; a reprieve from other's impressions. Each of the seven works exhibits itself privately inside this public space, while the eighth piece—a take-away poster—is folded up hush hush and tucked away in my bag like a pastel secret message...It whispers, "Are you wild?" "Are you free?" from its hiding spot.

Here, the adult mind adopts the child-like fascination of running away. Wandering is made material:

### Sheryda Warrenner on *As Far As I Can See*

pompom, chandelier, cave, Polaroid, incantation, dreamscape. As with every ritual, repetition is inherent: meticulous tissues layer for infinity; pompoms stitched together make a lurking creature; lanterns strung up in the window glow despite their heft; a rectangle of Polaroids of clouds make up a sky; an incantation of "the sky, the ground" stamped onto found books, their colours resembling sky and earth; the repurposing of matter to create a kind of haunted, unsettling land.

"Repetition makes us feel secure and variation makes us feel free. What these experiences must touch in us is the rhythm of our own individuation."  
- Robert Hass<sup>4</sup>

### As far as the eye can see.

The more intricate repetition happens as the art is made: the stitch and stringing together of objects, the transposing of ink and watercolour onto tissue paper, the making of a photograph and the details in handwriting on the Polaroid in pencil: "Patti Smith rules. O.K." "Crows raising a fuss," or the haiku-like "some rain, some sun, such heaviness." The manipulation of material to create new material. In the ceremony of art-making, the distinct expression of each artist's journey is tangible.

The work's relationship to the imposed curatorial theme is tangential. But the energy of one piece suddenly heightens the energy of another; the darkness of one work casts shadows on the lightness of another. Vital connections are made.

### Lost in thought.

"Research on the human brain continues to be a 'last frontier' of exploration; it is that and outer space – the two together representing the outer reaches of human seeking at this time."  
- Mary Ruefle<sup>5</sup>

In our subconscious or even unconscious choices, juxtapositions surface. A pompom is a festive little secret—a celebration—but this assemblage of black woolen pompoms is a creature drawing back into

### Andrea Heller, *Untitled*, 2007. Photo: Blaine Campbell

its shadow-self. Light's soft ephemeral qualities are contained by glass and metal. The rigid lines of a cave are cut meticulously from delicate tissue. The words "the sky" and "the ground" are in themselves a paradox, playing off one another. The romantic qualities of being lost in thought or left to dream opposes the darker images of escape.

It seems the act of running away resolves this push-pull within us, the go-stay dichotomy. But is retreating into oneself the only way we can truly run away?

### Out in the cold.

"We travel because we need to, because distance and difference are the secret tonic of creativity. When we get home, home is still the same. But something in our mind has been changed, and that changes everything."  
- Jonah Lehrer<sup>6</sup>

I loop around town and end up at the window to the exhibit a second time; different insights begin to form. If nothing else, art is the ultimate temporary escape. I'm ready to head home and make something of this little getaway.

### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.buzzfeed.com/burnred/little-girls-running-away-note-281t>.

<sup>2</sup> <http://thelede.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/09/02/german-farmer-captures-a-famous-runaway/>.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/harriet/2012/02/a-sad-day-wislawa-szymborska-1923-2012/>.

<sup>4</sup> Hass, Robert. "Listening and Making," *Twentieth Century Pleasures* (Harper Collins, 2000): 115.

<sup>5</sup> Ruefle, Mary. "Short Lecture on the Brain: Twenty-two Short Lectures," *Madness, Rack & Honey* (Wave Books, 2012): 269.

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.guardian.co.uk/travel/2010/mar/14/why-travel-makes-you-smarter>.

Sheryda Warrenner's first poetry collection is *Hard Feelings* (Snare 2010). She lives in Vancouver.