

Georgina Berens

			
Fortress Stone lithograph, Edition of 8, 25 X 33CM.	Safehold Stone lithograph with CHINE COLLÉ, Edition OF 9, 28 X 35CM.	Roost Stone lithograph, Edition of 9, 31 X 23.5CM	Ship Stone lithograph, Edition of 13, 31 X 23CM

Hideaway

Arriving in a new place returns one to being a child again. The boundary lines between spaces of safety and exploration must be established, and a sense of potential mapped before the terrain can become meaningful. One is circled by the arena for adventure which stretches from side to side about what is to be found and fought, dissolving eventually into the shadowy unknown.

The course of this journey is established with questions: 'Where do I retreat to?' 'In which direction do I bravely advance?' And then, more significantly, 'Who will I be in this place?' 'What will this place come to mean with me in it?' Any promise of a sense of home in a strange place is defined precisely in contrast to the familiarities of home. What structures could house a sense of self in the pulling, subsuming, engulfing new? In a place which is not one's own, which will never be one's own, these structures are fated to be ephemeral, quickly assembled, easily dismantled.

Georgina Berens arrived in Jyväskylä, Finland in October 2018 for a residency at the Ratamo Printmaking and Photography Centre. Here, she worked solely in the medium of stone lithography. A stone lithograph print is made from a drawing on prepared limestone. The process relies on the principle that grease and water do not mix. A drawing made with a greasy medium on the flat limestone will repel water and accept ink. The image is rolled-up with oil-based ink on a special press and printed onto paper by hand. Berens' prints depict shelters that are held up by nature: a treehouse, a makeshift tent, stacked logs.

In any well-curated home, the labour expended in its making is not directly evident. It is experienced rather, through its invisibility. Berens' prints have this same characteristic. The physical exertion of the lithography process, the minutiae and delicacy of the detail, do not draw attention to themselves. Rather they are evident as background music to the impression of wholeness in her work. This sense of containment is at odds with the darkness that reaches in from every corner to the permeability of the structures to the great unknown outside. The care taken in execution and the harmonious compositions impart a sense of safety to a subject matter which could easily conjure up very different associations. The emotional quality is that of the thrilling yet comforting experience of a child tucked into a warm bed, sent off to sleep with tales of monsters and faraway lands before being kissed goodnight, perhaps only to continue the adventure in their dreams.