

HERE [...] THERE: A GAME OF CHILDHOOD

Carson + Miller

In this visual essay, artists Carson + Miller investigate spaces of childhood; spaces that are created and occupied by children, as well as those imposed upon them. Using the principle of the game - a fundamental aspect of their practice - Carson + Miller draw on personal experience to play a kind of 'show-and-tell' that is informed by the Surrealist game of Exquisite Corpse. In playing this game, they explore the otherness of children and childhood. Their game maps a terrain that moves the reader through opposing states - and, significantly, the spaces in between these states - in order to consider space as point and counterpoint to childhood experience and the notion of transgression: at home/not at home, in school/out of school, under supervision/roaming free. These spaces are evocative of particular childhood environments and represent spaces where conformity and transgression might occur, one as easily as the other - in the playground, the classroom, the shared bed room, the field behind the house.

Carson + Miller's essay draws on Barthes' identification of the punctum, "...this element that rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces me." (Barthes, 2000, p.26). The artists posit that, like Barthes' arrow that "pierces", "pricks", "wounds" the viewer of a photograph, childhood experience marks us. These marks leave an imprint that carries through to adulthood and informs an adult view of what childhood can be. The force of these marks leaves a trace of the uncanny that both pierces us now (that is, as adults) and pierces us as children (where articulating this strangeness is impossible or, perhaps unnecessary). In this game, Carson + Miller play in the terrain of childhood to draw a route, a line, between the child and the adult, and back again.

References

Barthes, R. (2000), *Camera Lucida*, London: Vintage

The Rules

THIS IS A GAME FOR 2 PLAYERS.

PLAYER 1 BEGINS BY DRAWING A SCENE FROM THEIR CHILDHOOD WITHOUT LETTING PLAYER 2 SEE.

ONCE THE DRAWING IS COMPLETE, PLAYER 1 COVERS THE DRAWING LEAVING ONLY A SMALL SECTION VISIBLE AND PASSES IT TO PLAYER 2.

PLAYER 2 MUST USE THE VISIBLE SECTION AS A STARTING POINT FOR A DRAWING OF A SCENE FROM THEIR CHILDHOOD, WITHOUT LETTING PLAYER 1 SEE.

ONCE THE DRAWING IS COMPLETE, PLAYER 2 COVERS THE DRAWING LEAVING ONLY A SMALL SECTION VISIBLE AND PASSES IT TO PLAYER 1.

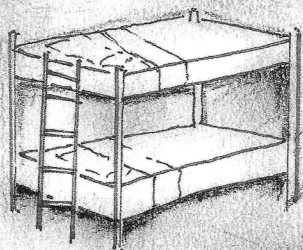
PLAYER 1 MUST NOW USE THE VISIBLE SECTION AS A STARTING POINT FOR ANOTHER DRAWING OF A SCENE FROM THEIR CHILDHOOD.

REPEAT.

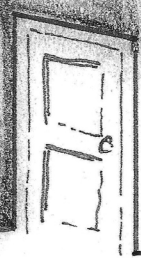
PLAYER 1 AND PLAYER 2 SHOULD DECIDE TOGETHER WHEN THE GAME HAS ENDED.

UPON COMPLETION, THE DRAWINGS SHOULD BE SWAPED AND PLAYER 1 AND PLAYER 2 SHOULD TELL ONE ANOTHER WHY THEY HAVE MADE THESE DRAWINGS.

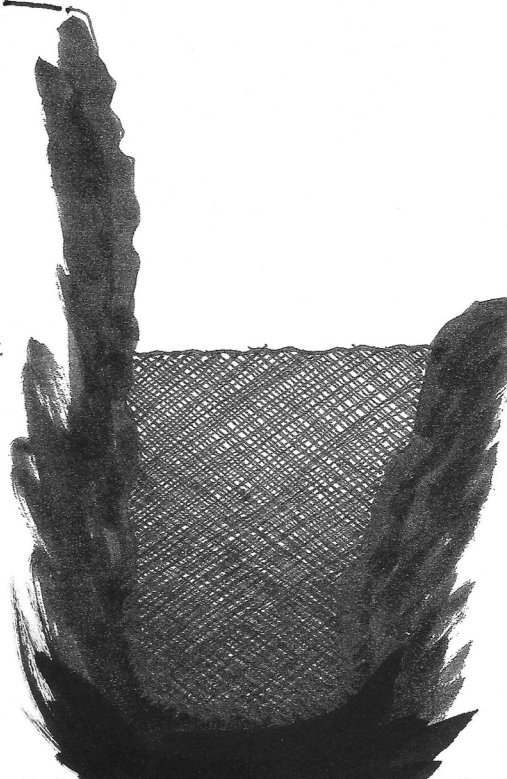
(YOU CAN ADAPT THIS GAME TO INCLUDE MORE THAN 2 PLAYERS IF YOU WISH.)



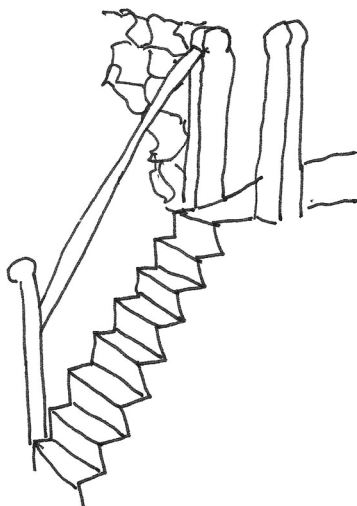
THE BOTTOM BUNK
WAS THE SECOND BEST
PLACE TO SLEEP.



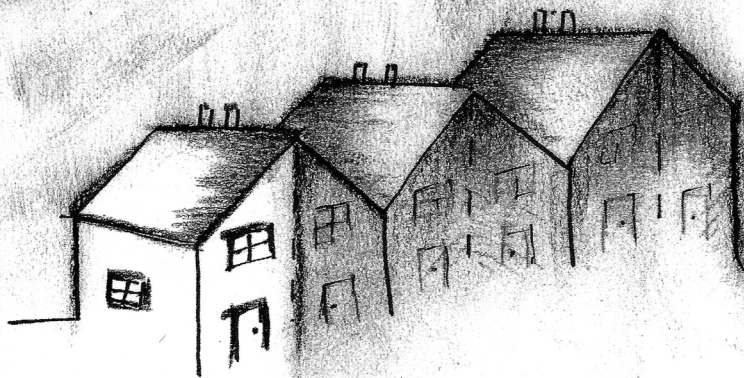
I was too scared to go
near the water but
couldn't resist gazing at it.



I FELT
FEARLESS
ON TOP OF THE
CLIMBING FRAME.



The last step provided safety.



IT WAS
THE HOUSE I KNEW
BEST, AND FOR
THE LONGEST, BUT
I DIDN'T LIVE THERE.

The grass swayed all day long.

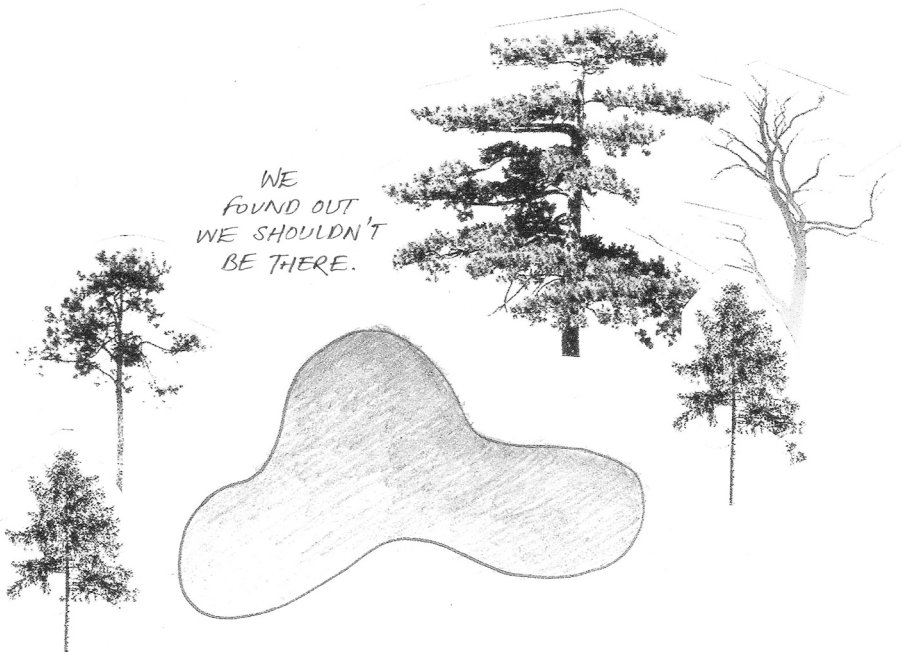
A roaming pack of dogs
seemed ever present.

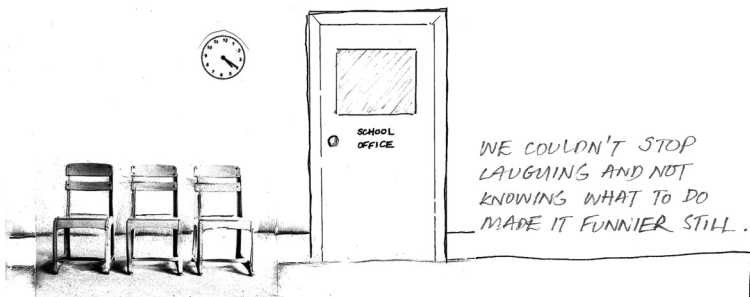
SCHOOL

dogs
dogs dogs
dogs dogs
dogs

HOME

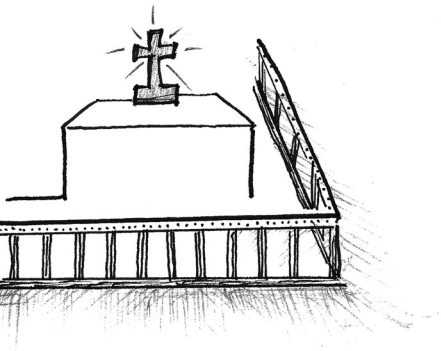
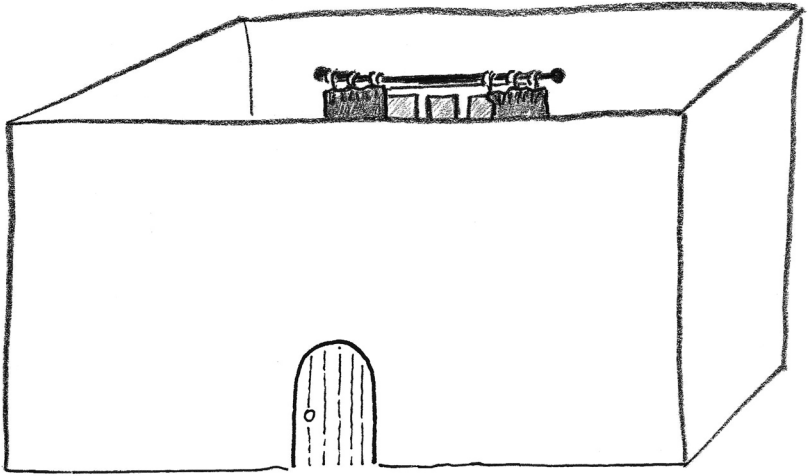
WE
FOUND OUT
WE SHOULDN'T
BE THERE.





I was haunted by
my poor sense of direction.

My childhood bedroom was liberating and suffocating.



CHURCH SEEMED LIKE
A KIND OF MAGIC
THAT EVERYBODY UNDERSTOOD BUT ME.