

Return

Prema Arts Centre, Uley
Mar 29 – May 10

A blaze of yellow welcomed both visitors and spring to the garden of the converted Cotswold chapel that is Prema Arts Centre. I had spent the previous day with my father visiting the graves in a remote village churchyard set in the Mendip hills, south of Bristol. We had passed some time enjoying the small clumps of daffodils which marked out the rectangular spaces of graves. At Prema, 750 daffodils, planted in a giant's bed by the artist and her friends the previous autumn, blossomed impressively at nose height to the children that played amongst them. But for all that, Annie Lovejoy's work, entitled *Beyond Control*, makes for an uneasy spring idyll; there is something uncanny about the enormous scale of the piece.

Indoors and upstairs, in a large hall, the flowers are remembered by an installation entitled *...and how you loved the daffodils*. From one end, a laser video player projects a film of daffodils gently swaying green and

yellow in the breeze, through a flimsy white rectangular screen suspended in the centre of the semi-darkened room. However the screen is unable to contain the moving image, and colour spills past it and forms a circular frame around the room's only window which, in turn, draws attention to the daffodils in the garden below. Standing next to this window, one becomes aware of the artifice of the installation. The continually repeating insistence of the digitally preserved imagery echoes the fragile, (literally, soon to be) disappearing flowers beneath. The video installation will remain long after the daffodils have died; a forever returning sublimated trace that is testament to their death.

Downstairs, in Prema's red room is a blue sofa partially covered in piles of dirt on which some surreal-type hot water bottles formed from the intertwined roots of wheatgrass are placed. Any comfort afforded by the sofa is spoilt by the displaced dirt which perversely furnishes a habitat for the roots-bottles (roots that belie the flowers outside). Bending down in order to peer a little closer at these 'hot water' bottles, you become aware that set in the middle of each one is a magnifying glass. And through this glass, out of reach amongst the insides of the sofa, an arrangement of words and images is made unexpectedly visible with the aid of a light box. Beyond one lens, some text is partially obscured from view by rippling water, as if seen through tears. Through another is a photograph of two small children who,

unaware to the camera, face out across a green field. And in the act of looking I lose myself too in a recapitulation of their private snapshot oblivion, cut off momentarily from the world behind.

Demonstrating an effortless mix of the organic and the technological, Annie Lovejoy's 'Return' invites personal contemplation and a celebration of the natural, transitory beauty of life alongside the ever attendant horrors of death.

• **Julian Warren is a freelance writer based in Bristol.**



Annie Lovejoy, *Beyond Control*

● artreview

Art

'Spade' by Annie Lovejoy, at Prema until 10 May.



RETURN

PREMA ARTS CENTRE, ULEY

● 'Return', Annie Lovejoy's new work, is a set of related installations placed in various areas of the Prema building: the garden, the schoolroom, the entrance and so on. The work is about the death of Lovejoy's young son, Davin, 16 years ago, and in the notes to the exhibition she describes it as a "celebration of continuum".

Quotes from the exhibition text may indicate the nature of the work but can hardly convey the sophistication with which Lovejoy has deployed its various visual elements: 'spade' (spade, soil, video monitor), 'sofa' (hot water bottles, soil, water, lightboxes, images, text and teddy bear), 'the planting of the daffodils', 'grass and glass' (wheatgrass and sandblasted glass barcode). Lovejoy uses a combination of natural raw materials which have been sited and then left to get on with it. The grass, the daffodils and the earth are natural materials that have been crafted - wrought into concrete metaphorical objects.

Consequently, the hot water bottles consists of earth held together by roots in the shape of that comforting object, each with a different size lens embedded in its centre through which we are invited to peer at an array of images. Different techniques, objects and technologies are integrated in this work so seamlessly that the innovative use of video may not be immediately obvious. Meaning and feeling are conveyed to the spectator with absolute virtuosity whichever medium is in play.

As well as being a thank you for her son's life, the exhibition also celebrates the coming together of friends, the moment of communal action and the common cycles of nature. But because the subject of this show is the death of a child, and the imagery is unavoidably domestic and familiar - the daffodils, the teddy bear - it creates a sense of almost unbearable poignancy. This work is beautiful, delicate, thorough and stylish; and it has an emotional kick that has left me rattled for the past two weeks.
(Folake Shoga)

In memory of a lost son

A MOTHER who lost her son in a road accident is set to open an art exhibition in Uley 'cataloguing and celebrating' her journey through grief following his death.

On April 6 it will be 15 years since Davin Lovejoy died in a road accident near Wotton under Edge, aged three-and-a-half.

After his death, his mother, Annie, moved to Bristol from her home in Waterley Bottom.

She now returns to the area to showcase the result of a year's work created for Prema Arts Centre.

The exhibition, entitled *Return*, uses video technology and natural materials to remember her son's life.

"It's in memory of Davin, and also celebrates the cyclical nature of life," she explained.

"It began when I videoed a field of daffodils. Davin loved daffodils, and just before he died he asked if he could pick some."

Annie and about 60 friends - some of whom she had not seen since the

By ALISON
WATT

time of the accident - planted 750 daffodils outside the arts centre in Davin's memory.

Another work, *Comfort*, is a series of hot water bottles formed by the roots of wheat grass, containing magnifying lenses through which images are viewed.

Annie is determined that the show will be an uplifting experience.

"This isn't meant to be depressing. *Return* is a completion - I've come full circle," she said.

It is also in part a thank you to the community which supported her at the time of her bereavement.

"When Davin died, I felt so looked after," explained Annie.

Return, opens on March 29 and runs until May 10.



● Artist Annie Lovejoy

Wotton-under-Edge: Exhibition

■ Annie Lovejoy (left) and the friend who comforted her view the daffodils display.

Photo: Simon Pizzey

Memories of Davin inspire mum's art

12/3/98

A MOTHER whose three-year-old son was killed in a road accident near Wotton-under-Edge 15 years ago is planning a unique exhibition.

A patch of 750 daffodils now flowering outside Uley's Prema Arts form the central part of Annie Lovejoy's exhibition "Return".

Annie, who now lives in Bristol, is returning to the area where she used to live to display her work between March 29 and May 10.

The event is her way of celebrating the memory of her son Davin and pays tribute to the community which supported her family at such a devastating time.

Support

Davin, who died on the B4058 on April 6, 1982, is the inspiration behind the exhibition, said Annie.

One of her pieces is based around accident statistics while another, entitled "Comfort", is created from grass grown in a hot water bottle. "We planted the daffodils as one of the things I remember about Davin is him and his little friend May. They would be

by Sue Painter

wondering around hand in hand asking to pick some daffodils," she said.

"When Davin died there was enormous support from people from Stroud and Wotton.

"A lot of people came to his memorial service in Nailsworth which was celebrated in the Quaker Meeting House with music, song and shared memories.

"Basically we were given the space to grieve through the support of a lot of people. Now looking back I really realise how wonderful people were."

After the accident, Annie had to give up her sewing business because it brought back memories of the accident.

In Bristol she met a group of creative people and went on to become a professional artist.

"This exhibition will both celebrate the memory of Davin and also honour the importance of grief and the way life moves on," she said.

"I have been trying to contact people who were around at the time of the accident. I hope anyone who remembers Davin or has a memory to share will come and celebrate the opening of the exhibition."