

The Little House on the Hill, 2017

Hand embroidery on collaged, found photographs, 25 x 20cm

Audio Description © Eleanor Margolies

This artwork is made up of two photographs, both landscape in format. A snapshot-sized photo has been placed on top of a larger, 10x8 photograph, with lines of embroidery linking the two. Both photographs are black and white images depicting outdoor scenes. They share a horizon line. The position of the photographer looking upwards, gives us the impression that they depict the same place at different times of year, and perhaps several decades apart.

The 'background' photograph is of a dirt road sloping up and away from us, with fields on either side. The cloudless sky has an even, pale grey tone. This matt print has a narrow border framing the image. The lighter areas have a slightly yellow tinge – suggesting it's from the early years of the 20th century. The tonal range of this photograph is muted. Different areas in the image – grass, road, sky – create blocks of different textures of grey.

The smaller, glossy finish photo, about 10 cm across and 7 cm tall, sits on top of the background photo, centred just above the middle. It shows a single-storey house clad in horizontal, wooden boards painted white. The smaller photograph has more contrast than the large one: the light areas are much whiter, and there are crisp, dark shadows. The photo feels more recent, perhaps from the mid-20th century. Linking the two photos are lines of green, red and pink thread. They *stand out* from the black

and white surface of the prints, both through their vivid colour and quite literally, having a raised, embroidered texture that almost invites us to touch.

At the lower edge of the larger background image, a dirt road inhabits a large central triangle at the bottom of the frame. It leads up and away from us, narrowing to the centre of the image. It's a well-made road of rock and gravel, with loose chippings off to the sides. To the right is a field of rough, tussocky grass, rising to the horizon line, about halfway up. Above the horizon, there is just sky, as if we've come to the top of a hill.

To the left, a grassy bank rises steeply away from the road, to a height of about a metre. It's strewn with fibrous stalks, perhaps corn husks blown from a harvested field that's out of view, or weeds that have been recently scythed. The bank slopes up, then over the crest of a hill, the line accentuated by a wooden fence on top. It's a traditional construction with three rows of roughly shaped planks slotted into vertical posts. The planks are slightly wavy, hewn from trees that weren't straight enough to sell for timber, the bark left on. Six vertical posts are visible, getting smaller as they go into the distance. Behind the most distant posts, there is a telegraph pole, and the trunk of a large tree with bare branches. The right-hand half of the tree is cut off by the edge of the smaller photo, of the house.

The house in the inset photo is photographed at an angle, its corner pointing towards us. To the left, a low verandah is enclosed by neat wooden rails, three steps leading up from the ground. A glazed door is protected by a screen door against insects, and there are rectangular sash windows to either side, with curtains just visible, and a

smaller window to the far left. The right-hand face of the house has three further windows. The roof is pitched. Everything about the house seems neat and well-maintained, but with no signs of any inhabitants.

Behind the house there are three mature trees in full leaf, cut off at about two-thirds of their height by the top edge of the photo. The tree on the far left merges with the leafless tree from the larger background photo, perhaps the same tree at a different time of year.

Similarly, the horizon line of the ground behind the house joins with the horizon of the background photo. The embroidery reinforces the impression that the two photos show the same spot at different times. Thick lines of silky peach-coloured thread – about half a centimetre wide – wriggle along the edge of the road on both sides, drawing us up towards the house. The lines cross the border between the older photo of the hill and the newer one of the house. The short satin stitches, with an occasional kink in the line, give the impression of a thick rope laid alongside the road. Pale green lines of the same thickness outline the horizon and the crest of the bank, both also leading in towards the house. The canopies of the three trees behind the house are outlined by wavy embroidered lines in three shades of green - leaf green, sap green, forest green. They suggest a shape for the foliage that continues within and beyond the small photo of the house, and into the larger image of the road, field and sky.

And finally, thin scarlet and green embroidered in stem stitch outline the rails on the verandah, the windows, the ridgeline and gutter of the house. Much thinner than the

rope-like embroidery, they suggest the precise ruled lines of an architect's drawing. Like the embroidered outline of the trees, these lines make us wonder if this image stitches together two periods in time, or even two places, if it shows what *was* here, or what *could* be here.