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# Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

## Ellie Poulin: “May I Rest Here Awhile?”

Ellie Poulin · Wednesday, April 1st, 2020

Isn't it satisfying to know that once the human race dissolves back into the primordial soup, after the last of us gives up her ghost, nature will still go on?

Sure, the grisly reality is that some household pets, bred out of their ability to live on their own, will probably die. But Nature, as a concept, all the bugs and birds and bears and bushes, all the weeds in the cracks in the pavement, the rain, will still keep going. Once humans are gone, the world will recover. Altered forever, that's for sure, by our stomping, polluting, cultivating habits, but overall it would still be recognized as Nature.

There's a place in Seattle called Gas Works Park where this is already happening. On sloping Renoir grassy hills dotted with fluffy dandelions, next to the bay where tourist trap pirate ships sail by, arresting public attention for a minute, there sleeps a great beast. A huge, fenced off (but still inevitably graffitied upon), rusting piece of machinery, two stories high, that used to do...something. It doesn't matter now. The machinery has been retired, left to oxidize, waist-high grass weaving its way up to the sun through bolts and beams. It seems an uncomfortable juxtaposition—something so wild and gentle, sat upon by a crouching metal creature. It's what we've been taught—metal is not part of nature. It's man-made. Man-mined, man-melted, man-molded. It has nothing to do with wilderness, softness, life and cells and blood.

Except...hang on a minute.

Man-*mined*. Metal came from the earth herself, buried under the dirt and concrete we walk on every day. It's been pulled up and refined, then shaped into something that suits our needs or whims. Metal is very much a human work, but its origins lie in the earth herself—just like all of ours do.

Gas Works Park has a strange solitude about it. Everywhere, families walking, children playing, one guy with his dog playing guitar (to be clear, the guy is playing the guitar. The dog is photosynthesizing, eyes closed, soaking in the sun). Boats swanning on the water, mirroring the birds overhead. In the middle of it all, the giant burnt red behemoth has gone to sleep. It served its purpose, whatever that was, and has been retired and left to rest. The land knows this, and I know this. The soil piles at the base of I-beams where the wind has brushed it. The weeds and grass wind themselves around the struts and bars, like a cat winding herself around her favorite people's legs after they've been at work all day. *Welcome back*, the land says. *We missed you*.

It's the kind of place that seems like it would be scary at night. Like the gritty shadows are hiding

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something that will come at you. Sure, they might hold a graffiti artist or two, or some local teenagers who had snuck out at night to smoke some weed. But nothing truly scary. Instead, the rusting Gas Works would be like a very old, very loyal dog, sleeping at the feet of its equally old, equally loyal owner.

*I'm done, the machine says to the earth. May I rest here awhile?*

*Of course, she answers back. I'll watch over you.*

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