

ROADS MADE FOR WALKING

BY CELYREN PHIPPS

A PHOTO ESSAY



THE YARDS

Would you believe me if I told you this was taken a stone's throw away from Melbourne's city centre? I look at the old Sale yards and see they are chained behind the heavy lock that seems to be unsure of what it's guarding.





I read through a dilapidated information post that is featured in the centre of the yards. The yards lived for 126 years and sales yard work was a trade passed down through generations of families. It wasn't only farmers and graziers who attended the auctions. This was an event and spectacle for the entire community. On-lookers, clerks, auctioneers, battlers, bookies, punters and kids all joined the tableau. I look back at the image I just took. The barn doors are limp and sad, the troughs empty and rusted, the wood eroding and plants overrun.



Since closing in 1985 the area's been recycled into residential housing. We live in an apartment building that attaches to the back end of the historic stock route. We like walking through here, he and I. The blue stone pavers and embargo against road traffic help us to pretend we are free from the city chains. This leafy and tranquil territory wouldn't be recognisable by former residents There are no sounds of the animals, vibrations of their hooves or odour from their manure.

I wonder if the creatures knew their route was leading them to a calamitous fate. Are we disillusioned by the trail's community charm and glamour? How uncanny, these yards live so close to the Racecourse. Large numbers of Fillies and Colts rendered unfit for racing are likely to end up being sold cheaply at a sales yard like this one. But we are city dwellers now and need to keep pretending everything is fine.



I grew up with Horses. I like still being able to still see them every day, even if it is out of a window overlooking a track. The patterns the old wooden stables form, remind me of the ones I would construct with bits of plastic and cardboard for my toy horse figurines. A perfect tessellation.





When his hand touched the timber, I remembered when I was younger, I'd climb the posts to watch the show ponies hacking in the arena. Then I recalled the time I took Amber Smith to watch me ride, she also climbed the posts, this one was riddled with horsehair, it turns out Amber has some serious animal allergies.

The psychology of animals is interesting, they choose to stay within the bounds of our wooden fences even though they have the strength to knock them down or clear them in one jump. Escapism doesn't seem to faze them; I believe they stay because they are loyal, and they trust us.



As I continue to take pictures along the pathway, I spot more city birthmarks removing me from my daydream. From a distance the wooden instalments look like old ruins. If we zoom in a little closer, we can see the wood is either new or restored. Some slanted graffiti and a broken signpost look as though they are attempting to overrun the old wooden post. A great metaphor for real estate and development, I think. Slowly etch your way in, they won't notice what is happening until it's too late.





I know walking these trails gives him relief, time to breath and fantasise about home. The residue which exists from past time lives is cathartic, I don't know why. Even if the representation of this space isn't accurate, relief is what we need. Sometimes I am okay compromising my moral attitudes. Walking along these roads is one of those times.

By Celyren Phipps. Reel to Reel. Word Count: 656