

# Observer



A series of observations  
Just prior to final demolition, the small images have been pasted onto  
the wall by me over a month's time. They depict the surrounding  
environment including a makeshift dwelling.  
Hobson Street, Auckland CBD

Abby Storey自称是一个Observer，关注着周围的环境和城市的文化变迁，她以自己独有的方式和摄影语言，与陈旧的痕迹如影随形。

## 在废墟中感受真实

Text: Crystal photo: Abby Storey

重建，似乎是城市建设与规划中一个永远不会停止的环节。

而在摧毁老建筑和重建新建筑之间，是一段荒废期，一个杂草丛生的自然成长期，一个充满另类生活气息的时期，一个会迅速聚集愁在家里烦闷的人，无家可归的人和涂鸦爱好者，艺术家们的短暂的艺术地——这成为现代城市发展过程中一个不可思议的新现象。

在新西兰，同样的事情也在上演。

Abby Storey住在奥克兰（新西兰一港市）一个不大的公寓中，自童年时起就一直在新西兰北部的农场度过的她，对城市的生活充满着新鲜感。她喜欢在城里四处走走，到一个酒吧坐坐，或听场音乐会，这个城市的角角落落逐渐与她熟悉起来。

照片里的这些地方全是Abby Storey四处行走时遇到的，一些即将被摧毁或被改造的地方，Abby Storey说，随着城市的发展，奥克兰城里的一些地区突然人气聚集，地皮变得值钱，开发商开始推倒一些古老的、破旧的建筑，兴建起一些新的公寓楼或购物中心；此外，一些人来到一个新的地区，会对这里原有的不合他们胃口的建筑，进行推翻重建。在推倒与重建的过程中，这些旧址就成为无家可归的人或一些破坏者的游乐场，他们在这里肆意妄为，享受无人光顾的空间与自由。每一块表皮和墙面都被乱涂乱画，像一个发挥自由想像的涂鸦乐园，人们成群地在那里把酒言欢，点起篝火，待第二天太阳升起，留下的是现代文明人的残迹和践踏的脚印。直到这里破土动工，推土机、搅拌机的轰鸣连续数日响彻天空，白色的墙和写着“注意安全，外人勿入”标语的临时门，把这里结结实实地围起来，一切似乎就要结束，而一切似乎也刚刚开始。

Abby Storey用镜头记录下这些地方，来表达她对周围生活环境的感受，她希望通过自己的这一系列名为“Observer”的摄影作品，告诫人们——看看你的周围和你周围的世界，并关注你周围的环境吧！

这些照片都是在阴天或雨天拍摄的，因为Abby Storey觉得，阴天或雨天的光线更能真实表现环境的状态。“Observer”的每张照片中，都有一个女孩的侧面轮廓，像一个黑色的影子，一个如影随形的幽灵，出现在Abby Storey的镜头投影的地方，这几乎成了Abby Storey照片的一个标签。Abby Storey说，那个侧面剪影是她拿Rolleiflex相机拍下来的，这款Rolleiflex是她最常用的相机，颇为得心应手，6x6的正方形格式正合她的心意，而且，负片的规格比较大，拍照的时候，Abby

Storey可以与拍摄对象直接用眼睛进行交流，而不是通过相机的镜头。在Abby Storey看来，这是一种文明的拍摄方法。

慢慢地，Abby Storey注意到，奥克兰城里的人们开始通过她的相机和她拍照的方式认识她，不断思考该用何种方式记录这些被遗弃的建筑、场地的同时，Abby Storey逐渐认识到，自己所做的这些，最重要的不是形式，而是她在关注，发现并记录一个城市的变化，和一些被人们忽略的面貌。摄影行为本身仅仅是一个中介介质，于是，Abby Storey决定把这样一个侧面轮廓带入镜头，让画面有一个匿名的人物，以一种虔诚的像蜡烛一样的姿势，让人们在废墟中感受到某种真实的存在，仿佛在说，“看看我在看什么”，从而把人们的目光引向Abby Storey真正要关注和表达的地方。这个出现在Abby Storey的observer系列中的女孩，如今已经被很多人知晓。

Abby Storey的正式工作是一家艺术画廊的常驻画家，这家画廊旗下有4家画廊，一个录音棚，一个广播电台，和一个平面设计机构。Abby Storey说这是个充满创意的地方，她喜欢这里的工作氛围，她的拍档，来自爱尔兰的Milo，和她分享着这个小公寓。谈到公寓，Abby Storey兴致勃勃地说，她爱自己的小公寓，公寓的墙上挂满了各种艺术作品，除了她自己的绘画作品，还有她喜欢的一些艺术家的作品，和一些饶有趣味的地图。这间不大的公寓，同时也是她的工作室，时常被她搞得一团混乱，到处堆满她的艺术作品，Abby Storey就在各种作品的包围中长时间地思索，直到突然某个瞬间她决定停下来，房子的后面有一个小花园，成了Abby Storey的菜园子，她把新西兰农场的药草和各种蔬菜种了进来，虽然不是个好园丁，但种菜可是Abby Storey的拿手戏。花园也是她拍照的场地。从公寓开车2个小时，可以到这一个美丽的农庄，那是Abby Storey工作之余时常离开市区去的地方。

Abby Storey喜欢旅行，家乡新西兰是个美丽的国家，一个神话般的居住之地，但Abby Storey喜欢住在别处，别的文化中，时常回新西兰旅行。Abby Storey去过东南亚的很多国家，泰国、缅甸和新加坡，但在欧洲四处游历的时间更长，曾在德国柏林住了一年，在意大利的罗马生活了3个月，还在爱尔兰的首都柏林呆了9个月，因为新西兰的历史很短，她更喜欢欧洲的历史，对她来说，到一个人住在那里居住了上千年的地方旅行或生活，充满了某种迷人的色彩。但Abby Storey说她还没来过中国，而中国也是她下一步计划去旅行的地方，她喜欢中国菜，这是个来中国的很好的理由。

Interview with Abby Storey

*Vision: Your "observer" series seem to have some relation with urban space or public surroundings. What about these public spaces?*

*Abby: The spaces visited, stencilled and photographed suggest their history through their disrepair. They are all sites with construction history, old buildings stood there, only to fall and become wastelands before completing the cycle by being built upon once more.*

*The restless times between tearing down the old and constructing the new are filled with life. The plants take over, as do those city people who feel at home in these kinds of in-between spaces: the homeless, the graffiti artists...*

*Vision: Is it a place you've grown up with or you are familiar with?*

*Abby: These are places that I am familiar with in my travels around the city. They are all in areas that are going from being slightly run down to being trendy. When an area becomes fashionable the developers start tearing down the old, slightly run down buildings and building new apartments or shopping precincts. It seems an odd time in the period between. You start with a building that just doesn't fit with the taste of the people moving in to the area, but on the way to creating something fancy you have this time when the space is derelict and fenced off. During this time it is often inhabited by people with no homes or vandals. Every surface gets tagged and graffitied upon. People go there to drink or light fires or just hang out. The space becomes an in-between zone. It's incongruous with the "progress" that's taking place.*

*Vision: What inspired you to shoot such a project?*

*Abby: It's about really looking. Sometimes with progress we try to cover over something that is undesirable instead of really looking at it. Some of the graffiti and poster art in the places I photographed is really beautiful.*

*I started photographing these sites for numerous reasons. The environments I was looking at were like a collaborative project with all the participants unwittingly*



*Chaos*  
A vandalised building soon to be redeveloped. This site contained some amazing graffiti art including the 'Missy' illustration you can see in the background. Beauty amongst the chaos.



*Observer*  
A stairwell in an abandoned building soon to become apartments. Kingsland, Auckland



*Petrol Pit*  
An old overgrown hole in the ground which used to contain a petrol tank. Even this truck concrete can't keep nature at bay. Kingsland, Auckland



**Ascension**  
A traffic direction marker in a rundown carpark  
Newton, Auckland



**Celebrate**  
A wall which has been painted again  
and again to cover tagging  
(graffiti). The posted on posters say  
'Celebrate Diversity'  
Newton, Auckland



**(Con)temporary**  
A hoarded up building site with poster  
art by 'Ilox' and 'Trustme'  
Kingsland, Auckland



**Gun**  
Stencils and posters on a building site hoarding  
Kingsland, Auckland

contributing to a greater whole. A whole which was the most contemporary and relevant form of social commentary I could imagine seeing on the streets. I mean, you can't expect the same amount of information to be conveyed in this form than on, say, the internet, but the relevance of it seemed so startling, it was right there on the street near to where the people who created it lived and worked, played their gigs and had their protests. But then I had an issue: I didn't want to be only photographing them, I wanted to be participating. So I started sticking the photos back up in poster form and rephotographing (as in (con) temporary). This created a sense of layers of time in the resulting image. It also gave the message to those observing the wall that someone was recording the details and the changes. Out of this came my stencil, a silhouette of my profile, bending over my Rolleiflex waist level camera.

**Vision:** Your pictures seem like painting, as they are so beautiful. It seems you are very sensitive to beautiful scenes?

**Abby:** For me being an artist is about really looking and thinking about the environment in which I live. I shoot my photos relatively spontaneously; they are not set up in any way (except for the insertion of the stencil), but I try to photograph how I feel about the space I am in.

**Vision:** Light is a very important element in your picture, isn't it?

**Abby:** Yes, light is very important in photography. These images are all taken in slightly overcast or rainy weather. I find that they are more true to the environments this way.

**Vision:** What's your message with observer?

**Abby:** My message with Observer is to look around you and notice your environment. To appreciate the little things while they are there; it is all very temporary.

**Vision:** There is the shadow of a girl in each picture. Who is the girl? Is

she the representative of you?

**Abby:** The silhouette is me taking a photo with my Rolleiflex camera. I always use this waist level 6x6 camera as it suits my photography very well. I like the square format and the large negative size. The camera allows me to look at people when I photograph them and this is important to me. There is nothing between my face and the subject. It is a gentle way to photograph.

By inserting an icon representing myself into the scene I (the observer) become a part of the subject. By adding the stencil and taking the image I am saying "Consider the importance of looking at this. Look at me looking at this". By doing this I am stating that what I am photographing is worth looking at.

The "girl" as she is now known, has taken on a life of her own. She now has had two permutations. The one in Observer is the original, the one in my next series is the 2nd generation. She is still very much the same but just changes a little as I do.

**Vision:** Would you like to share your ordinary life with us?

**Abby:** I work in an art gallery called The Depot Artspace We have four galleries, a recording studio, a radio station and a graphic design business. It's a really great place and I really enjoy working there.

I live with my partner Milo, he's from Ireland but has moved over here with me! My family live 2 hours drive away on a beautiful farm so I see them whenever I have time to get out of the city.

**Vision:** How about your house?

**Abby:** I live in a small apartment in the center of Auckland city. I grew up on a farm in the North of New Zealand and so living in the city is still exciting to me. I love being able to walk into the city to go to a play or a bar or to see some music. My apartment is also my studio so it is a crazy place sometimes. I surround myself with my work and

think about it a lot until all of a sudden I've thought about it too much and have to take it all down for a while. It's hard being surrounded by your artwork because it never lets you rest.

I love my apartment. The walls that do not have my current work on them have either artworks by some of my favourite artists or maps of interesting places.

There is a little garden in the back of my house and I grow herbs and vegetables as well as native NZ plants. I'm not a very good gardener but I seem to be able to grow some things. My "girl" stencil is all over my garden. I like having her there. I often photograph in my garden so it's appropriate that she's there.

**Vision:** What is your plan of next step?

**Abby:** I have a small exhibition coming up in September but am currently working on two other large bodies of photographic work. I am hoping to exhibit at least one of these bodies of work in New Zealand next year and then hopefully exhibit them overseas. Both projects that I'm working on do stem from the Observer series but are taking it in a different direction.

**Vision:** Tell us about your dream?

**Abby:** My dream is to photograph and travel. By this I mean exhibit my work around the world (not "travel photography") I would love to be able to sustain myself financially through my artwork and to continue making beautiful images that make people think and feel.

I want to live amongst different cultures and see the world from different views. I want to meet like-minded people and have stimulating conversations about art and culture and science and all other interesting things.

I never want to stop looking at things with an inquisitive mind.

This is my dream.