

WALTEX

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*Or, Tiny Kingdoms: On the particularity,
inscape and is-ness of microcosms*



A Safe Little World Monograph
by Andrew Killick

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Also in this He shewed a littil thing
the quantitye of an hesil nutt
lyeng in the palme of my hand, as it semed,
and it was as round as a balle.
I lokid there upon with eye of my understandyng
and thowte, What may this be?
And it was generally answered thus:

It is all that is made.

- Julian of Norwich, *The Shewings*

Prologue

I awake on a mid-winter Saturday morning in July, low on energy and foggy again, tentatively probing my capabilities for the day. Looking out the lounge windows and down the lawn of our property on the outskirts of Dargaville, a vague inspiration emerges, an inkling of a sense of motivation to try out an old idea that's been biding its time.

Perhaps it's the particular light – inviting somehow – a gold tint, cold overnight temperatures condensing water out of air to wash things and make them clearer. Perhaps I want to be close to that, involved and participating in that. To be a part of it.

I fossick out my old Waltex print magnifier and, along with my camera, take it outside to an area of small stones and moss. I kneel down, place the little device on the ground, then stiffly bow forward, awkwardly poised, eye first, to look through its plastic lens. I quieten.

Straightening, I flick on my camera, adjust settings then place the camera's lens against the lens of the magnifier. I look through the viewfinder. Lens upon lens in contact, downward. A world, a habitat, a tiny kingdom opens up. Time shifts, space is altered and things are not what they were.

I am welcomed into this strangeness, this microcosm, this is-ness, this particularity, travel down this tunnel, this portal, my view pulled to centre, encircled, contained, the camera seeking focus, thrown out of focus, seeking, then held, focus held, drawn in, downward, into this new world, like a kind of underwater diorama, shifted in scale, becoming smaller, glimpsing into this place where my child imagination wants to be.

I wonder what it is about those experiences of viewing that have so long fascinated me? Looking through the lenses of my goggles, my dive mask, the telescope, the binoculars (either end), the View-Master, a little circle made with my forefinger and thumb if necessary, camera viewfinders of all sorts (my student SLR, my father's old rangefinder, an old box brownie, a Lomo LC-A, my digital camera), the Waltex – at anything at all.

And now, in this moment, on our property on the outskirts of Dargaville, leaning over this miniature landscape, all my perceptions are drawn into this circle of view for a moment, where the slightest change in position brings about a new composition, a new landscape, microtopographies, worlds revealed at ground level and the astonishing depths of mere millimetres. I become a micronaut, exploring new worlds.

As we zoom in, depth of field becomes more pronounced, focus more precise, and things fall in and out of clarity in step with smaller increments.

There is a generosity of view and detail here, emerging, giving and inviting, deep intimations of inscape and form, infinitely expansive; but contained within that little circle, it seems manageable, quietens me, not too much data; and I can't describe how it holds a kind of longing, how much I desire it.

A mauve petal lying on a bed of green. Shutter flicks open, closes, recorded. I am captured.

—

About the work

The photos in this book and the wider series to date were recorded in three locations in Northland and the Bay of Plenty on five occasions in 2019, using a Waltex print magnifier (from which the project and series take their name) as a macro lens for viewing and photographing natural objects in an outdoor setting.

The Waltex measures 45mm tall × 40mm square and has a plastic body and lens system, providing 8× magnification in a circle-framed field of view.

The images were captured using a Panasonic Lumix DMC-LX100 digital camera with Leica optics (its first appearance in the Safe Little World Monograph series). The camera was set to macro mode, its lens held to the lens of the Waltex (using my hand as a not very precise coupling system!) then zoomed in so that the Waltex's viewing circle more or less filled the centre of the camera's rectangular frame, resulting in a (quasi-)scientific observation. (Some tidying of the frame occurred in post-production, but the circle itself is native to the process and provided by the magnifier.)

With the Waltex stacked as an additional simple two-lens array in front of the camera's complex lens system (cheap plastic in partnership with precision glass optics), multiple framing and focusing factors are in play: the position of the magnifier, a very reduced field of view and alignment between the two lens arrays, the magnifier's plane of focus, the plane of focus of the camera lens, the depth of field in relation to the distance between the camera's lens and sensor, auto-adjustments of exposure, shutter speed and ISO, and the attempts of the camera's software to lock onto a point of focus.

The precise moment of pressing the button to release the shutter (at a speed of, say, 1/125th of a second or less) takes place in this highly variable context, making the images extremely particular in multiple ways. Meanwhile, the photographs that appear in the book are just some of the hundreds that made their way onto the camera's memory card. (A larger, though still reduced, selection can be viewed at safelittleworld.com.)

The Waltex magnifier is conventionally used in such applications as print production and for the detailed viewing of photographic prints or film – both of which are inherent in the mode and mechanics of this book. But here the device collaborates with text and photography at a deeper level. It has been taken outside the production room and used to view the organic world of nature, to reveal worlds, to notice something about the cosmos – much as writing and image-making seek to do – collaboratively working along side, rather than subservient to, those mediums.

The Waltex is the lens through which this project is seen. A portal for revelation, imagination and daydreams. What gives, what emerges under the lens? Let each image tell its own story.

We are dreamers, beholders, explorers. We are micronauts, in love with small things.

—

Instructions for looking: In the presence of an image that dreams, it must be taken as invitation to continue the daydream that created it.

- Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*

Part One:
Microcosms



fig. 8



fig. 13



fig. 16

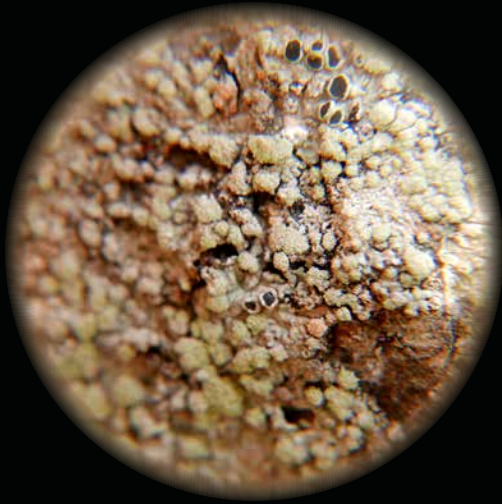


fig. 18



fig. 19



fig. 29

Safe Little World is the umbrella/background concept, moniker or creative handle for the (visual, conceptual, textual) creative output of Andrew Killick. To support, visit www.patreon.com/safelittleworld.

Shadow Press was established in 2005 with the vision of publishing innovative (theo)artistic/poetic books (poetry, visual art, experimental, philosophical, theological). Having published a collection of poetry called *Epilogue*, it languished until 2019 and the publishing of *Islands*, the first of the Safe Little World Monograph series. This is the sixth in that series.

If you would like to purchase a print of any of the images in this book, please get in contact.

For more, visit www.safelittleworld.com and www.shadowpress.co.nz