

Stephen Friedman Gallery

Corridor8
Holly Hendry – Hollow Bodies, Gallery North
Rachel McDermott
10 October 2014

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Challenging relationships between industrial and domestic, Holly Hendry's touch marries Le Witt type modules with Hesse like materials. Her sculptural interventions deal with ideas of interior and exterior, positive and negative, as well as human domestication of space through architecture. Collapsed forms are forever suspended in plaster atop modernist aluminium structures, and inflated latex is restrained or deflates within timber frames in Hendry's first solo exhibition, *Hollow Bodies*.

Hendry presents a body of works made during her Woon Fellowship at Baltic 39, a funded residency awarded when she won the Woon Foundation in Painting and Sculpture Art Prize (2013). The exhibition and accompanying catalogue marks the end of this residency as Hendry begins her Masters degree at the Royal College of Art this autumn.

In 'Veins' a modernist aluminium structure is offset by a perspex box containing scoured sheep's wool. Industrial metal ducting winds around the form and baby lotion covers its footprint. Hendry seems to work with contradictions, her materials are played against each other, wool against aluminium, ducting against baby lotion. There is not so much a tension at play but rather a very precise balancing of material dialogues. Whilst many materials exhibit their raw state (such as untreated plywood and non-dyed plaster) when she does apply colour her palette is limited to soft and chalky pastel tones that seem to soften the blunt geometric structures further.

In her 'The Hoarders and Wasters' series, Hendry presents plaster casts of familiar pillow like forms, hung upon aluminium frames. The plaster casts appear soft, sagging over the frames, hanging on as if about to slip off and shatter on the gallery floor. Hendry toys with our senses, making what is solid appear soft, and shifts our understanding of forms, removing a familiar form and siting it within a new context.

There is an understanding of classical architecture apparent in some works, such as 'Somewhere Near Domus Aurea', in which she presents a partial colonnade (made of timber) painted in black and white stripes. Somewhat reminiscent of Buren's 'Les Deux Plateaux' (1985-86) in the French Palais Royal, similarly, Hendry reframes classical architecture with a contemporary rendering. Colourful sandbags pin this structure to the ground, making it evocative of a stage set or prop, an architectural motif not quite true to its origin, and one that can inhabit multiple spaces. Opposite, 'Take Good Care of My Baby' sees a pile of white and pink cog-like casts, piled atop each other. The resulting effect is that of a ruined classical column that has been broken and reassembled, but shifted from classical to contemporary somewhere along the way.

'Breathing Space' is an inflated sickly pink latex form encased within a timber frame. Simultaneously satisfying and repulsive, the partially deflated latex sags, floppy. The work, which one assumes must change throughout the duration of the exhibition, must have initially been taut against the frame, and as a viewer we observe it slowly degrade. The title, which nods to the human lungs and physiological respiration, is crude and yet powerful, transforming this giant form into a bodily space.

Hollow Bodies is an authoritative exploration of different types of space. Domestic spaces are present in pillow like casts, architectural spaces in the use of classical motifs, and industrial spaces in aluminium scaffolding.

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Not only does Hendry examine, deconstruct and reconstruct these spaces, she also compares them, their interiors and exteriors, their materials and qualities. More importantly though, what bonds these works together is their relationships to the human condition, they respond to the way in which we are physically curious, tactile beings, signifying that all spatial encounters are inherently bodily. In the very attractive accompanying catalogue, a piece of text titled 'Desire, From Without' by Edward Wainwright (2014) seems to describe this inducement perfectly...

'What is it like to be in there? Inside that thing that looks at once full and empty? What does it feel like? What's the smell, the taste, the touch, the temperature? What would I do in there? If I could be squeezed, squished, squashed inside it's spaces, what would I come out like? Would I be changed?' (Wainwright, E, 2014).

Hollow Bodies continues at Gallery North, Northumbria University, Newcastle upon Tyne until 15 October 2014.

Rachel McDermott is a visual artist and writer based in Newcastle upon Tyne.

Reference

Hendry, H. 2014. Hollow Bodies. [exhibition catalogue]. 24 September – 15 October 2014. Gallery North, Northumbria University, Newcastle upon Tyne.

Images courtesy of the artist.