

Maud Cotter
a consequence of – a breather of air
at
The Dock
Carrick on Shannon, Co. Leitrim, Ireland

Maud Cotter's exhibition, 'a consequence of – a breather of air', exemplifies the artist's intimate, enduring, almost metaphysical relationship with her materials. In Gallery One, a large tubular structure, titled *matter of fact*, 2016, is fabricated in mild steel and card. With a diagrammatic quality, it suggests an exercise in drawing in space; however, its preoccupations are deeply engrained in the practicalities and politics of everyday life, not least in terms of the materiality, including the properties of imported steel, necessitated by the collapse of the steel industry. Cotter is responsive to micro details, including points of tension or suspension and other intangible qualities of 'matter' – such as the memory of molecules, or the harnessing of energy and air. Throughout the exhibition, artwork titles are rendered in cursive writing in pencil on the gallery walls, anchoring and reiterating their sentiments, like snippets of overheard conversations.

On the mezzanine, a series of sculptures, are mounted high on the wall and spot lit to dramatic effect, casting shadows that seem as integral to the forms as the structures themselves. Titled *falling into many pieces (one to three)*, 2016-2018, they have a sense of flotsam, while also echoing the buoyant and bioluminescent properties of marine life. This nautical narrative continues through the use of netting, as well as plaster relief elements resembling limpets clinging to a rock. A new site-specific artwork, *the crow's nest*, 2019, installed on the spindles of the upper stairwell, creates a point of surveillance, while interrupting and softening the tense architectural and institutional legacy of the building as a former courthouse.

Playing with the high-reaching proportions of Gallery Two, are two sculptural arrangements achieved through the inscription of dual vertical lines in space, dropped from above, as if testing the formality of their own device. In *a breather of air*, 2019, polythene sheeting is anchored by a stainless-steel support and draped over two rock-like structures. In the same space, a gathering of site-responsive artworks is so new, that the artist hasn't decided whether they will persist beyond the exhibition. Listed individually in the gallery text, this grouping of ten 'bubbles', comprises glass domes of different sizes, containing an assortment of made and found objects. Fabricated in a range of colourful materials – ranging from plastic and silicone, to polystyrene and fluorescent acrylic – these objects are in a perpetual state of spilling beyond the inscribed boundaries of the plastic sheeting, which in this instances cascades from a height before trailing along the floor. Some objects appear to have an agency of their own, including a shiny pink bouncy ball, which the artist describes as feeling "almost disgustingly naked", given its wet, raw, even intestinal texture. In contrast, the repeated use of glass allows a natural fusion and sense of cohabitation, based on how its cohesion, magnetism and how it so readily absorbs and reacts with other material boundaries. As a museological format, the glass vitrine has been long associated with the display and protection of cherished objects, including botanical and geological artefacts. Furthermore, Cotter's 'bubbles' call to mind self-contained botanical terrariums, popularised during the Victorian age, which provides a

useful metaphor for human attempts to organise thought and knowledge into autonomous systems or robust disciplinary fields. However, based on the way the assembled matter bleeds and congeals into one body, we only ever achieve small pockets of order; beyond these ordered realms is an extremely rogue exterior world, in which things churn into disassembly.

In Gallery Three, a group of slightly forlorn objects, titled *Unique forms of continuity in space, one – twelve*, 2019, rests on a bed-like shelf. Multiple variations of used hot water bottles have been chopped, split and casted – a process the artist likens to “gutting a fish and retaining the heads”. In different states of warping and degradation, these rubbery amputees unfurl and fold in on themselves. Having once radiated with heat, they disclose memories of the human body; however, such dreamtime comfort has since been ruptured, and the noticeably body displaced. Across much of Cotter’s work, the body is referred to or implied, not least in her use of rubber and latex, which seems increasingly skin-like. To this end, it seems to emphasise the human condition of interiority that psychologically entombs us.

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