



Carolyn Menzies. *Immaterial.*
Dimensions variable. Mixed media. 2019

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CAROLYN MENZIES IMMATERIAL

OCTOBER 15 - NOVEMBER 7

Opening
October 27 5PM - 7PM

Floor Talk
Wednesday October 16 12.30 PM

Situated between a rock and a hard place Carolyn Menzies' sculptures offer a glimpse into the delicacy of mass and volume articulated through a menacing and unpredictable use of materials. Derived from an uneasy alignment between the industrial and domestic milieu, Menzies explores the uncanniness of weight and weightlessness in the same breath as sculptural forms engage in conversation across the gallery space. On the one hand floating, suspended from the roof and the other grounded, located on the floor plane as if to reaffirm the gravitational forces from the earth. These boulder like forms echo the gravitas of stone with the softness and sensitivity of wool. Menzies explains that morphogenesis references the biological process that causes an organism to develop its shape – a process where form is emergent rather than given in advance.

*"Although my materials are diverse and at times unusual the constant that runs through my work is a fascination with the processes of transformation."*¹

She suggests that in witnessing the embryonic development of the fourth industrial revolution we are seeing automation change our future in a way we can't fully understand from our current vantage point. If steel stands as a signifier in this relentless industrialization Menzies' use undermines this legacy evoking a structural order that is haptic and organic. Tenderly crafting the abrasive steel wool and mesh into sculpture Menzies creates a more mutable handmade world.² The interrelationship between the maker, the making and the material is fundamental and is a concern central to contemporary art discourse surrounding materiality.

*"I would therefore like to propose a methodology of material complicity. What does it mean to give agency to the material, to follow the material and to act with the material?"*³

Responsiveness in the making both forms and informs the work and is again reconsidered upon viewing the finished pieces. The desire to touch and stroke these forms are offset by the manipulation of the steel wool, recalling bandaging and swaddling – it is protecting, softening yet abrasive and uneasy. Wrapped, looped, knitted and knotted the material is manipulated in ways that invite the viewer to reimagine familiar processes aligned with the handmade, crafted and the industrial. Shifts in scale demand a reconsideration of constructed and embedded meaning.

The sullenness of grey enables the viewer to generate content and narratives that may emerge from memory or personal experiences – is Menzies alluding to home as an interior, with the scrubbing of pots and pans or an exterior

sense of home with the gravel beaches of New Zealand's west coast, the expansive meandering riverbeds of the South Island or perhaps the industrial landscape that inhabit urbanized locales? Floating hoops referencing the lightness of form, delicacy of geometry and perhaps the playfulness of a child's hula hoop. Beaded and looped these circular forms operate as iterations of static movements – the magic of the circus with its spatial acrobatics are at play. Form is emergent rather than dictated. Transformation of form and material remain central, yet Menzies' work retains the precision and aesthetics of industry within the home and outside of it.

*'There has always been the secret history of modern art that includes the domestic sphere – wallpaper, textiles. ... I'm really interested in where things overlap, in moving back and forth between the domestic to the industrial.'*⁴

A series of photographic A4 images are exhibited in a separate room. Veiled in grey tones layered marks have a fibrous quality that may suggest a microscopic view of the materials used in the creation of the aforementioned sculptures, however upon closer inspection a different narrative emerges. Derived from the surfaces of used chopping boards – the marks on the page refer to the processes used in the making of the work.

*"My marks are a type of drawing – a capturing of invisible labour... Counter to the usual view of the domestic sphere as gentle... these are marks etched by knives welded with force."*⁵

Carolyn Menzies suggests these works may have emerged from the kitchen but now occupy a realm beyond the domestic space. While reminiscent of the hacking and cutting of the material – animal, vegetable and mineral, they also retain a scientific quality through the shift in scale and mediation of the lens. The transformative is revisited and upon viewing, reexamined. The scratch that remains exudes a delicateness that belies the forceful act of its creation and in doing so, generates a referential itch that does not irritate, but rather reiterates the uncertain tactility of steel wool and the memory of touch.

Gina Ferguson.
Senior Lecturer, Curator Gallery One, Unitec.

¹ Carolyn Menzies. In conversation with Gina Ferguson, 2019

² ibid

³ Petra Lange-Berndt, How to be Complicit with Materials, Materiality, Ed. Petra Lange-Berndt, Whitechapel Gallery, London, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2015, p 13

⁴ Carolyn Menzies. In conversation with Gina Ferguson, 2019

⁵ ibid

Born in New Zealand, Carolyn Menzies studied sculpture at the University of Canterbury School of Fine Arts (NZ) and completed her MA at Central Saint Martins, London (UK). She has exhibited in solo and group exhibitions in New Zealand, Australia and the UK.

FRONT ROOM

Accord

Steel rings, foam and steel wool, 840 x 840 x 800 MM - 840 x 840 x 700 MM.

Swaddling

Steel wool & steel mesh, dimensions variable.

Osculatory

Steel rings, wire & neodymium magnets, 900 x 1800 x 20 MM.

Future Tense (in vitrine)

Steel mesh, glass, lead weights and wire, dimensions variable.

BACK ROOM

Morphogenesis 1-9

Digital print on archival paper, 210 x 297 MM

Static

USB, copper wire & dowel, 1500 x 20 MM

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9.30 - 4.00pm, Mon - Fri
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