

Putting it on

Ruth Proctor

Preview Thursday 21 May 6.30 - 8.30 pm

Exhibition 22 May- 27 June

Hollybush Gardens is pleased to present a new body of work by Ruth Proctor, capturing moments of instability in found objects, spontaneous performances and snapshots.

In a space near the stairs, a jacket hangs that reads 'Putting it On'. This jacket can be understood as a souvenir of the exhibition, or a costume to be worn as part of a game or social situation. The jacket holds a transformative promise, one that is perhaps caught up in the 'uniform' of youth and popular culture that this type of garment suggests. More widely, it can be seen as a reflection of all the roles that we 'put' on in our daily life - the role of an artist, partner, friend and so on. Or reflecting back onto us, the role of an object in the process of becoming an art work, both by hanging there and what it evokes.

An arcade claw crane machine sits on a plinth in the main space. The machine contains cuddly toys, the allusion of happiness for some of us. If you start the machine with a coin, it springs into action; fairground music will come on and the attempts to randomly catch a toy begin - the player forced to wait, expectantly. The claw attempts to grab, but doesn't quite make it, like time slipping past without us being able to hold on. Most machines at fairgrounds are set to catch rarely if ever, yet the mere promise of winning captivates us. The machine was collected by Proctor from Blackpool, one of the UK's most known seaside resorts. The transition of the object from the fairground to gallery gives the object an aura of the preloved, a reminder of elsewhere, serving as an index, telling us not only of the shiny new, and limitless possibilities inherent in consumption, but the busted dreams of yesteryear and the disappointments of childhood.

The wall paper piece *Public Hat Fountain* provides another hopeless play against a set structure. Here Proctor set out with a drawing of multiple water fountains with several hats balancing simultaneously. What we see on the wall is a series of her failed attempts at achieving this balancing act, interspersed with short moments of success.

On Proctor's Blackpool outing, she came across a fake mountain landscape and go cart track that she used to visit with her family as a child. The manufactured rocky outcrops appear slightly at odds with the real rocks interspersed. The gestures of land art are also evoked, but here, rather than intervening in nature the artist has found a ready made - a constructed landscape. When photographed these images destabilise our perception of authenticity and simulacra, both of nature but also of our experience of it.

A photo diptych captures the latest eclipse in London. One taken outdoors is completely monochromatic showing no trace of the actual eclipse. The other is a photograph taken from the TV screen that was showing a live version of the eclipse, captured from above the clouds.

Elsewhere a cloth on the floor shows several playing cards and stones on display. The cards have all been found in various places by Proctor over a period of time, insignificant moments - toing and froing, its what we all do all of the time. Playing cards can be thought to have symbolic meaning that can be interpreted to predict your future or read your life. The stones have also been collected over several years in varied locations. Stones with holes supposedly bring luck to the person finding them. Chance and superstition interweave to position the work as something that is in flux, and placed as if it could be bundled up at a moments notice to be unrolled someplace else.

What all these works have in common is a positioning of the subject and also of the art object that is always in motion, it is here, but it is also there. Time is used as material, both the unseen and visible, as are stories and anecdote - both the mundane and the spectacular. There is a dialogue between the personal and the structural that contains a questioning of where meaning and agency is held. Things are at stake, but in this game failing is a new beginning.

Recent exhibitions, performances and commissions include: performance as part of *On Dynamics and Monuments* at Kunstverein Nürnberg, May, 2015, a residency at John Jones projects space culminating in the exhibition *Still Not Fixed*, January, 2015, permanent commission for North West Cambridge Development Primary School, 2014 - 2015, Sainsbury Centre for Visual Art, Norwich (solo), 2013, Whitechapel Open, Whitechapel Gallery, 2013, Bold Tendencies, 2013, *Garden of Reason*, Ham House and Gardens, Richmond, 2012. Upcoming performance at IMMA, Museum of Modern Art, Dublin, 2015.

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