

Christina Mackie  
Drift Rust

13th April - 21st May 2017

Christina Mackie's installation at Herald St embodies an affirmation of materiality in an information-saturated world. Materials resisting categorisation from her studio are assembled in momentary synthesis as the viewer encounters sculptural sequences, video projection, ceramics, watercolours and oil paintings. The elusive correspondences between these various elements, and how they gain traction with one another, are what shape Mackie's response to her materials. Resisting the traps of rational systems of classification and narrative containment, she encourages associative leaps rather than resting on, or seeking, any single objective truth. Visual and cognitive meandering on the part of the viewer is prompted and encouraged.

Mackie's work examines the uncertainty of human mastery over nature. The porcelain *Dead Heads* are two clay shells modelled from anatomy that remind us of the transitory nature of our attempts to impose order on the world. They are shaped to uncover facial features and the scaffolding of muscles and ligaments that lie within. They recall the clay sculptures that Mackie made for her series of work, *The Judges*, whose rapid working revealed figurative forms automatically. Similarly in her watercolour series the uncertain dispersion and sedimentation of pigment reveal human forms and landscapes which emerge seamlessly out of the deposits of colour. Modelled wooden houses, made using the conventions of anamorphic perspective, remind us that visual mastery is a matter of imposing order on a chaotic image field.

*Fall Force*, a stereovision computer animation, is a meditation on how our perception of materials is being altered by the intangibility of the digitised universe. The projection opens up an eerie 'fourth dimension' within the gallery's wall as we observe miscellaneous human possessions freefalling. Many of these projected objects – such as the foam woman, the hammer and the trestle tables – physically appear in the current installation. The spectral animated forms are composed of wire-form or x-ray renderings of objects which fall to the ground or collide with one another. Here Mackie purposefully breaks the illusion of 3D reality by changing the conditions of gravity and the mass of the objects which, instead of crashing to the ground, bounce back unaffected. On the outside of this unit, a circuitry wall drawing alludes to the digital life that absorbs and shrouds us, allowing such complexities as those in the film. Here however, circuit components have been replaced by organic matter such as coral and citrine.

If our sense of reality depends on a process of translation from one dimension to another, Mackie prefers to instil a heightened awareness of the surrounding world's unmediated physicality. She treats colour as matter rather than as a mere formal quality subject to our manipulation. On the one hand, she exposes the human tendency to convert colour into sign and information, epitomised by the ubiquitous Signal yellow 1003 which industrially coats the enigmatic, possibly functional metal sculpture, *Yellow Machine*. This vibrant colour is also used to hand lacquer the archaic road hazard lamps which hang from the wall.

In opposition to these sign systems, her ceramic palettes present colour in its multiple material states. These include solid chunks of glass coloured by copper, manganese and cobalt, crystalline chrysoprase and a liquid pool of black ink. Her watercolour paintings are 'particulate sculptures', mixtures of animal, vegetable and mineral traces. Her oil paintings are equally defined by their 'objecthood' as the raw properties of paint consist of natural elements such as mercury and lead, insects, roots, waxes and coal. Crucially, the paintbrushes accompanying the materials and paintings are unused. Just as they symbolise the gap between intention and action, Mackie creates a liminal space where the human will to exact judgement is suspended.