

**FILE  
NOTE II:  
EIGHT  
PARTS OF  
SPEECH**

**Syntax is complex, but the complexity is there for a reason. For our thoughts are surely even more complex, and we are limited by a mouth that can pronounce a single word at a time.**

**In the speech sound wave, one word runs into the next seamlessly; there are no little silences between spoken words the way there are white spaces between written words. We simply hallucinate word boundaries when we reach the end of a stretch of sound that matches some entry in our mental dictionary.**

— Steven Pinker, *The Language Instinct: How the Mind Creates Language*  
(William Morrow, 1994)

How is the work of artists, emerging or established, developed in the context of designated time and space? What were the experiences of the 2018 recipients of the annual Sculpture and Digital Media Awards at Fire Station and Artists' Studios (FSAS)?

Over several weeks in Dublin during Autumn 2018 I held a series of conversations with the most recent awardees. The questions I posed were primarily around impact, experience and outcomes. Yet as a poet by trade few things are more alluring to me than the pursuit of source. What—like a thing buried deep in the earth—lies beyond the sound our mouths can make? What is it that a tongue can never fully uncover or retell? In studios and cafes, across tables and desks, and at in-between hours, I posed questions knowing that of course source cannot always (or perhaps ever) fully be known, but one can—through the act of listening—hope instead to encounter a sense of essence. This text is ultimately a translation, which is to say that it is an attempt to reimagine some part/s of essence out of the language of materiality & making, via speech, into the form of written word.

## I NOUN

**a part of speech inflected for case, signifying a concrete or abstract entity**  
*i.e. sausage, boulder, feather*

'I don't see always the necessity for the artist statement or even for titles. I tend towards text that is simple, sometimes playful... mostly I try to call things what they are.'

Marcel Vidal is a 2009 graduate of the National College of Art and Design. He opens his laptop and we begin to flick through images of his April 2018 solo *SILVERFISH* at The Dock Arts Centre in Leitrim. Glue, flags, taxidermy, expanding foam, feathers, a pile of water-coloured sausages... The show was, he says, 'quite organic but also very manufactured'. I find it terrifying 'like a sort of half-burned down future or past'. A flameless hearth framed by black-splayed walls evokes rupture—what has happened and what has still to occur. The end is in the beginning Beckett said, 'and yet you go on.'

Vidal's sculpture and a chaotic, often combative mode of assembly, is strongly contrasted by refined oil and water-colour paintings embedded into what he defines as a 'traditional approach' i.e. under-painted, glazed, on linen. A still-life rose faces away from the viewer, an extended hand is depicted from an obscure angle, a sharp white dress flaunts a nuanced crease. This skewing of the expected or assumed narrative appears in Vidal's verbal speak too. When, for example, he talks of spikes and chains, his choice of word is, interestingly, 'protective'. This suggestion of a distortionist sensibility rooted in obsession is one that I typically associate with poets and poems that seek to explode. Vidal's boulder *Nightcrawler* occupies a central space in an exhibit the same way that a dark-minded question sets itself apart in a Dave Lordan poem:

**"Who is the god of this ring?/The god of the ring is unknown./Jack O the Lantern maybe/or the scarecrow with the two axes or a wailing midnight wind/r a sack of smashed glass."**

— Dave Lordan, *The Boy in The Ring* (Salmon Poetry 2007)

How did audiences respond to *SILVERFISH*? Some inclined toward the terror and violence of it—to the sense of the work as apocalyptic. Others experienced it as a dream sensation. Vidal himself thinks of it as a nightscape. 'But the work often doesn't speak to me until it's installed, which is why openings are so weird for artists, why you wallow after. The thing in your head no longer exists'.

Vidal's words are often staccato-like, delivered in sentences that burst and bound. It is both a conversation that we are having and a crashing around. Always, he talks through the images as if the image itself on screen tells me everything I need to know.

Commuting daily from Wicklow, Vidal was at FSAS up to 8 hours each day, sometimes 7 days per week. He describes the focus of his engagement with FSAS as specific and goal-orientated. In the run-up to *SILVERFISH* there was, he says, 'no trial and error. It all happened the way it was meant to. Though it's all an experiment in the sense that of course that approach can fail. I suppose my process is built on risk anyway. If I make the mould and it turns out incorrect, then that too becomes part of the work.'

Today Vidal is in another intense rush. He's prepping for a children's art workshop at Temple Bar Gallery and Studios. We chat for a bit about the challenges of working with children (I know the perils only too well, having found myself during a recent reading trying to explain the history of the Irish mother and baby homes to a group of ten-year-olds). Ultimately however, I imagine that what Vidal has to offer, young people are going to want. In fact some shy weird kid is going to have an absolute eureka moment when he realises what art is *not*. Vidal himself is unsure but up for the challenge.

So, what about the FSAS award did Vidal find most useful? 'The space to use dirty materials—cast plaster, concrete, aero-board. Very few spaces of that type exist in Dublin'. How would he describe his time at FSAS? 'It was good. It was cold'. Is it his style to always *hurtle* towards deadlines? 'Yes.'

## II PRONOUN

**a part of speech substitutable for a noun and marked for a person**  
*i.e. she, we, they*

In an upstairs FSAS room with Myrid Carten I notice a long-bodied dark cat slink down a stairwell and out of view. A 2014 Fine Art graduate of Goldsmiths University London, Carten is from the same remote part of Donegal as I, a place where random encounters with wildness are everyday and inescapable. In the preamble to our chat about her recent short film *Wishbone*, and her plans at FSAS to create an art response to the film, we reflect upon the type of silence that often exists in rural communities, how that silence manifests, and the ways in which it can sometimes obstruct healthy conflict resolution.

Selected by Northern Ireland Screen (NIS) for the 2018 New Shorts Focus Scheme, *Wishbone* is a film based upon real-life events. Carten describes it as a film that 'explores the complicated relationship dynamic between three young women' (on the NIS site the same film is blurbed more specifically as a film that 'subverts the cultural fascination with the emaciated female body'). On screen an actress plays Carten, a real-life friend plays herself and a second real-life friend has prepared an actress to stand into her role. This tricky constellation, and the mirroring within, sets a surreal and foreboding tone.

'The most difficult thing for me was depicting female relationships that are hard and strained—these are people that I love, and yet this narrative drama is conflict driven'.

In the *Wishbone* trailer the lead actress is wrapped in a pink fur coat, suggesting a tinged or unnatural hide. In one of the film scenes, she is erased completely from a witchy tableau of the three women sleeping side by side. I watch this scene several times, unsettled not simply because I am being invited to bear witness to an eerie sleep but because I'm being invited to stand by whilst she—who cannot in her unawake state help herself—is disappeared.

Is it a particularly sensitive time in Ireland to be making this work? Carten does not respond directly to the question—in much the same way that the characters on screen protest and defy, refracting clear or linear resolution. 'The film is about how strained the simplest things can be in very good relationships, maybe because you're forcing solutions you wish to find in yourself. I'm interested in those moments of truth and merging personality'.

Nearby Carten has constructed for this project a number of latex screens. As standalone objects, I find them deeply peculiar and not for the first time during these conversations I marvel at how the blank screen does not function in ways that perhaps, most of the time, the blank page does. 'Shooting on latex creates this strange effect whereby the image becomes transparent, and two people can become overlaid. I wanted a screen that you can basically run into. I wanted it to be skin-like... I went down this weird road, going into Radical Rubber explaining that I wasn't making a sex film. The latex produces an embryonic blur. Images become tactile. People merge... as in an image bath'.

Carten, who also received a 2018 Next Generation Artists Award from the Arts Council, plans over the next few months to bring *Wishbone* and the art response to a conclusion. 'I always felt odd about this film because I had to go through conventional film-making avenues to get it made. I did manage to finally make the film I wanted, but this response gives me more authorship over it'.

Having only commenced at FSAS two weeks ago, what so far are her thoughts on the award? 'The thing you miss when you leave an educational institution is having everything in-house. I have that here, with all the equipment I need. Plus, someone like John [Beattie] really understands my process—how practical work and ideas happen in tandem'.

### III VERB

**a part of speech without case inflection, but inflected for tense, person and number, signifying an activity or process performed or undergone**

*i.e. shred, soak, drain, sieve*

Jane Fogarty is often looking at ‘the various ways in which we interpret and understand the passing of time and how this in turn can be translated into a visual language’.

Fogarty, who is originally from Dublin, finished her FSAS residency in May 2018 and remains based in the city centre. The stairwell I climb up into her new loft studio space feels both fixed and insecure. Inside I find her at a desk surrounded by a series of piled-up structures that, for the purpose of this text, I will call ‘mounds’. Positioned on plinths, or directly on the floor, each mound is constructed through a layering process of tongue-like shapes made of dried-out paper-mache pulps. The pulps vary in colour from those of a pastel nursery shade to those of the more excretory ilk. It feels true to say that the more I look at these mounds, the more sinister they become. On a back wall hang the paintings Fogarty makes as the sculptural pieces dry.

‘Shred, soak, drain and sieve’: this is how Fogarty describes the step-by-step process of making wet crumbs out of paper for the individual pulps (although she will use any paper, and is currently using lined fax paper, blank white is her preference.) ‘Each pulp is twisted into shape with a wringing action’ she says, making two fists and churning them in opposite directions to explain. I think immediately of so-called ‘women’s work’, of heavy water-sodden cloths, of residue. Yet, these easy domestic labour associations imply a two-part hand action: a twist and untwist of a thing i.e. a tightening and untightening. In actuality the pulps are formed with a *singular* hand action: a once-off wring. One twist and the individual shape is in itself complete (and placed delicately, like a broken-necked bird, onto the growing tower of the mound). The cumulative effect is, I think, one of memorialisation.

‘The space in my previous studio had been very small, so the FSAS award allowed me to start making larger pieces, to create something of human proportions, more relatable in a body sense... But if you’re not using wire or some kind of internal skeleton, it’s difficult. So I did a lot of problem-solving, using heaters and trying to suck the moisture out of the material’.

At FSAS Fogarty also reconsidered the use in her practice of plinths. In exploring the idea of spillage (via paint on floor and wall surfaces), the plinth as an insertion began to feel like an interference in the work’s narrative. ‘I’ve since decided to try and manipulate the form of these structures a bit more, to create something that might respond to the architecture of the room and/or address the space that they sit in. I’d like the structures to be a little less autonomous’.

Fogarty, who has been making this work since 2015 says that her time at FSAS was ‘all about making’ and also the ‘space to experiment with resins and materials, to explore collaborative relationships and to host studio visits (and display work in the context of these visits). I had a lot of material discussions at FSAS. It was a great space for stop and chats. But crucially, maybe most important of all, was the opportunity to sit and really look at the work I was making’.

### IV ADJECTIVE

**a part of speech that modifies or describes a noun or pronoun**

*i.e. wild, rigid, loose*

‘I’ve been thinking a lot about gardens and the organisation of wilderness into islands’. Laura Kelly cites an article from The Guardian ‘*Crisis in our national parks: how tourists are loving nature to death*’ and briefly we discuss the tourist spectacle that has become deer feeding in The Phoenix Park, Dublin. Where once a person could from a distance observe the magnificence of creatures in a natural habitat, one sees now mostly tourists holding camera-phones high with one hand as they offer pieces of food with the other. According to the article, people no longer visit parks for solitude and among the concerns being raised is that of what happens when nature goes viral?

Kelly’s practice is drawing-based, evolving out of considerations of the space between material presence and suggested illusion. Referencing natural and cultural landscapes—and using materials which include paper, thread, wire, graphite, wood and tape—she constructs work that moves between the two and three-dimensional, varying in scale from installation size to smaller wall-based pieces.

‘I don’t think of myself as a sculptor (I studied painting originally) and my work has always been more concerned with surface and fragmentation. I spent a lot of the FSAS residency trialling ways to make sculptural surfaces’.

Kelly, who is concerned with developing a language of line, colour and surface, lost all of her work in a 2018 studio fire prior to her commencement with FSAS. She seems remarkably reconciled to the impact of this relatively recent disaster. Unpacking pieces made at FSAS, she describes them each as ‘semi-loose’ or ‘semi-rigid’ and tells me that she moved around a lot as a child. Today she does not experience landscape in a ‘rooted’ or ‘fixed’ way. How prospect is viewed is of particular interest and she mentions prospect-refuge theory:

**“...humans seek out to satisfy an innate desire when reviewing a space—to have opportunity [prospect] whilst being safe [refuge]. This stems from evolutionary survival, where the predator must be able to see their prey without being seen.”**

— Jay Appleton, *Experience of Landscape* (John Wiley and Sons 1975)

Obscured horizons, wind patterns in desert sands and landscapes disappeared under swathes of snow: we spend an easy hour talking about the changing physicality of various environments. Kelly asks me about the nature of my relationship with the earth and I tell her that I grew up in northwest Donegal, hemmed in on one side by the Atlantic Ocean and on the other by a border with Northern Ireland. I recall a recent journey through Yorkshire, the sheer panic that surged through my body as I drove down from a height into the vast unfolding and seemingly edgeless terrain of the moors.

‘I didn’t want to work with flat surfaces. And I wanted to make distressed pieces’. The works Kelly hands me are each partially crumpled, noisy to the touch, intact despite some implied notion of disregard. I am moved to think about how work survives and how in one moment it is scrapped and in another, sometimes as an afterthought, rescued. I have in the centre of my mind a picture of the studio fire now, flames in intense disarray. In several slate-grey earth-coloured pieces, the drawing is criss-crossed with the neon hi-vis orange line of emergency.

‘I was interested at FSAS to see how different materials performed in combination with on another. For example, I didn’t want to work with stuff that was toxic, so I began using Jesminite — a composite material consisting of a gypsum-based material in an acrylic resin. FSAS provided a great opportunity to have a raw work area, one in which I could be messy and experiment with plaster, foam and wood. I was also able to advance my woodwork skills there. A sculptural approach involves a lot of tacit knowledge—you need someone to show you how it’s done and that that was available which was great. The results of this experimentation have given me much wider scope for planning future work’.

### V ADVERB

**a part of speech that modifies or describes a verb, an adjective, or another adverb**

*i.e. gently, extremely, carefully*

**“We are much better at admitting that humans infect nature than we are at admitting that non-humanity infects culture, for the latter entails the blasphemous idea that nonhumans—trash, bacteria, stem cells, food, metal, technologies, weather—are actants more than objects”.**

— Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Duke University Press, 2010)

‘Everyone has had that experience of picking up a rock and feeling a response to it’. Emma McKeagney is keen to talk about New Materialism.

McKeagney, a 2017 IADT graduate, is primarily interested in the relationship between artist and material, how this relationship develops through process and how this development can be brought into exhibited work. In a busy city centre restaurant, amid the din of cutlery, plates and trays, she explains that ‘as humans we are not separate from environment’. We’re part of an interconnected system in which every thing possesses energy. ‘For me, rocks are at the centre of that idea’.

In February 2018 McKeagney began work at FSAS and ‘straight away my hands started making’. As an art college graduate the space felt familiar ‘...high ceilings, concrete floors, noise in the background’. She smiles when she recalls the clanging of copper made by an artist next door. ‘I loved that sound. It stops you overthinking’. We banter back and forth about different types of noise, the interference of conscious thought during the act of creating, and the hypnotic effects of radio. She remembers one particular day spent attuned to a West Cork podcast on the murder of Sophie Toscan du Plantier and how the hours that day at FSAS seemed to pass as if in a disorientating dream. Arriving from her part-time job each afternoon, McKeagney was at FSAS from lunchtime, often staying until 9pm. Winter was cold and she was sometimes exhausted. ‘Of course there were times when I asked myself does it matter? Is it relevant? Who cares? But it’s on days like those that the material drives you’.

‘Slipcasting, trimming, drying, heating up and cooling down, cleaning... If you act too quickly the pieces may melt or burst’. There is a strong sense of rhythm and ritual to the intensely physical nature of firing that McKeagney outlines. She describes with excitement the process of glazing, of waiting weeks, of opening the kiln to finally remove the fired thing. ‘With makers, it’s like you’re an addict. It’s like your obsessed’. Revelation and the slow intuitive unfold of ideas is central to her practice. It was a ‘relief’ to discover that concept was not something she had, by design, to consciously engineer into the work. Most recently the material has thrown up questions around ‘the divide we make between naturally formed and human-made objects’.

Given the eco-sensibility of McKeagney’s approach, how to limit wastage and the use of toxic materials is

often on her mind. ‘It’s a challenge. Some artists can plan meticulously for no mistakes, but I don’t work that way’. At FSAS she began using Polymorph – a material comprising beads that when combined with hot water produces a hard, stiff playdo-ish material, which can later be melted and reformed. Another important consideration for her is that of object display. ‘When, for example, I make small ceramic things I don’t want to just put them on a plinth. Really, my work is always an attempt to equate materials, artist and the exhibition’.

McKeagney created over sixty rocks at FSAS. Truly, it’s odd talking about rocks in this way. It’s a bit like talking about air. I’m suddenly aware of—and frustrated by—my empty palm. What was the biggest outcome of the FSAS award? ‘The biggest outcome for me was being able to work towards my first solo show *Unstable Categories* which ran at Pallas Studios in June 2018. I was also selected by FSAS to participate in a partnership with MART Rathmines. But really, the physical things I made on site are the embodiment of my time there’.

## VI PREPOSITION

**a preposition is a word placed before a noun or pronoun to form a phrase modifying another word in the sentence**

*i.e. by, with, until*

‘Part of the attraction of remote landscapes at night is the heightened sense of awareness. I’ve worked in totally dense forests with a full moon and had to find my way around by touch. Sound seems to travel differently at night. Foxes, for example, make a sound not unlike that of a child’s cry. With long exposure in particular or video, you have to stand very still and wait. You have to work harder for the visual’.

Drawing on Arnold Berleant’s theory of a participatory approach to landscape, in which the artist, environment and viewer are considered to be in continuous dialogue, Paul Gaffney’s practice seeks to communicate an experience of immersion in nature to the viewer. Gaffney meets me in a city centre coffee shop and we launch into a conversation about mystery, surprise and the process of attuning to what cannot be fully known by daylight. ‘If I enter a forest now today, I know what I’ll get on camera. But at night the camera sees things that your eye will not’. At an early career juncture Gaffney made a conscious decision to pursue photography over music. Still, he explains, many of the same skills apply. ‘With sequencing images, the composition is all about pacing, cadence, momentum. It’s not dissimilar to the structural process of writing a song’. But these days a sound recorder is ‘...an excuse to stand still, observe, be careful’.

Gaffney is the author of three photography books: *We Make the Path by Walking*, *Stray* and his latest *Perigee* made in the Ardennes in Luxembourg. He recalls the FSAS period as a time of preparation, of set-up, of experimentation. Given that much of his work depends on favourable weather conditions, his practice tends to happen in a cyclical way. ‘Usually my imagery is captured during the winter months and the residency took place in the summer. I took short journeys into the mountains to test things of course, but really my focus was one of upskilling, problem-solving and trialling software etc’. Of particular interest to him was the exploration of photogrammetry –taking measurements from photographs and creating 3D models. ‘There were lots of chats with John [Beattie] around the challenges of filming in a low light setting, and how I might approach recreating the physical sensation of being immersed in the landscape’.

Both Gaffney and I have worked with wild sites in County Kerry and I tell him that one sound, above all others, has lodged itself in my memory –that of animals at night in unlit fields. The distant nowhere sound against a moonless sky always seemed to me like a poem recited in a dark room. Is poetry or text part of Gaffney’s practice at all? ‘Not really’ he replies before going on to cite two references in quick succession. For *We Make the Path by Walking* he included a poem from which the following line provided inspiration for the title of his own work:

**“Caminante no, hay camino, /se hace el camino al andar.”**

— *Antonio Macdao, Caminante, no hay camino (Planeta 1998)*

For his most recent book *Perigee*, Gaffney repurposed a line from a song:

**“But the darkest of night, in truth, still dazzles”.**

— *Bill Callahan, Jim Cain (Sometimes I Wish We Were an Eagle 2009)*

What’s it like being out there at night? ‘It’s a pleasure. It’s magical. I’ve discovered wildlife in those settings that I’ve never seen before... And I feel safer than I do when I’m close to urban landscapes’. Regards the technical side of Gaffney’s projects ‘there’s a lot of waiting around, and it can be difficult to stay motivated. But it’s worth it when you’re out there staring up at the sky, and the clouds begin to part’

## VII CONJUNCTION

**a part of speech binding together the discourse and filling gaps in its interpretation**

*i.e. and, but, or*

**“Transhumanism is a class of philosophies of life that seek the continuation and acceleration of the evolution of intelligent life beyond its currently human form and human limitations by means of science and technology, guided by life-promoting principles and values”.**

— *Max More, ‘Transhumanism: Toward a Futurist Philosophy’*  
(*Extropy: Journal of Transhumanist Thought 1990, 1994, 1996*)

Tamsin Snow serves me a cup of tea with almond milk and we begin at the beginning. The focus of her practice is an engagement with architecture, often looking at legacies of modernist architectures and considering how new architectures might evolve according to new technologies, including those arising from the discourse around transhumanist theory.

On first impression, Snow’s work strikes me as... bodily and *unbodily*, beyond disquiet and yet also strangely *vowel*. The smooth, sleek surfaces both seduce and repel in much the same way that, by design, the personalised technology we hold so closely seems often to want to slide from the hand, to leave the physical self, to be gone. *Oh...! Ah...! No...!* It is the extreme lucidity of curves and edges, the brightly lit *exactness* of detail, that evokes for me a particular post-death and pre-grief moment, the one in which world is made too clear, too fully clarified, alien even. It is a moment full of weight and devoid of emotion.

Briefly we discuss Snow’s artist statement. In my notes I have circled a single word: ‘immersion’. Snow clarifies that the word ‘refers to the experience of seeing the work installed in exhibitions. The large scale architectural works are full scale –lighting, sound and atmosphere also play a role in the experience of viewing these works in life’. I suggest that the work evokes a strong sense of the (sur)reality of presence ‘and/or absence’ Snow adds, ‘there’s no figure in these works, the implication is that only you, or maybe nobody, is here’.

Snow’s engagement with FSAS was largely desk-based but the opportunity for making in that environment –surrounded by material, mess, physical endeavour—is one that she feels helped shape the work, in specific a new video piece titled *Spare Face*. In it the viewer is lead into a fictional medical processing plant, a space that seems charged from the inside out with a controlled yet never fully defined narrative. For this work, Snow wanted to ‘push what CGI could do to the viewer’. In an attempt to continue the logic of hyper-real surfaces and shining rooms, and using the camera to manipulate, distort and disorientate, she created an experience that feels at once masked and unmasked, outside logic, invulnerable. Returning to the post-death moment, I counter that it feels shocked, out-of-body. ‘Yes, you’re moving through and moving within... Are you being guided or are you implicated in the narrative?’

*Spare Face* features the use of text as subtitles. In a previous video, *Showroom*, Snow created a montage of text-to-speak language, copying and splicing from various locations –media articles, specialist papers, internet discussion board and platforms etc. This use of found text is especially intriguing to me and further to my meeting with Snow I disappear into a cryogenics chamber of the internet for which the entry point was this chat-room post:

**“Death is equal parts make-believe, coping mechanism, and ritual-holder. So deeply embedded within the human experience, it is a construct...”**

— *Chitchat, CR Society Forum (crsociety.org/forum, 2018)*

At FSAS Snow also continued her on-going collaboration with Irish visual artist Sarah Tynan around the production of a new sculptural work for an exhibition at the Highlanes Gallery, Drogheda. Snow and Tynan were invited to re-present a work exhibited in 2015 at the Royal Academy, London titled *Multifaith*. This work was later redeveloped for an exhibition in London where Snow used a shade of grey specific to unrendered CGI models. This emergence of technological language ‘coming back out into material objects’ is a development that began to occur during her FSAS residency.

We end our conversation by reflecting upon the mysterious currency of arts residencies, the true value of which can only become known over time. I think of all the poetry I’ve failed to persuade onto pages during residencies and how, as if by some prank of the muses, the lines have fallen deftly into place once my interface with ‘normality’ is resumed. A lot of thinking about making takes place on arts residencies –a lot of setting-up, making room, clearing space. And perhaps it’s not said often enough that much work does not actually get *made* on residency at all.

Snow, originally from Dublin, returned from London only two years ago. The FSAS award was a chance to continue, in a real and practical way, her re-orientation back into the Irish arts landscape. ‘The physicality of the studio... the openness to experimentation, mess, scale... the outdoors space, the studio visits and events, and the expertise of someone like Mick [O’ Hara] who offers technical explanation and support... All of that makes FSAS a very special place’.

## VIII INTERJECTION

### **a part of speech used to express emotion**

*i.e. Oh! Wow! Eek!*

'It's hard to say what an artwork is doing. It's not a spade with a nominated purpose. There are moments when you can't linguistically articulate what's going on and it's a frightening moment. You can't speak it. It doesn't happen very often but when it does it's profound'. Barbara Knezevic and I sit opposite one another in a very white studio and begin to discuss language, translation and how it becomes necessary sometimes to abandon one's own ordinary lexicon—to go beyond what is ordinary—in order to better understand or express the world. Personally, I like the idea that it takes a good lie sometimes to tell the truth. Knezevic nods in agreement. 'In a way that's what I'm doing, constructing fictive spaces to get to the heart of what's going on...'

Knezevic's sculptural work is concerned with how objects function materially, philosophically and economically in the world. 'The idea that other things have a life or agency, that they're not dumb mute objects, is really important to me'. For *Lithophone* Knezevic developed an interest in naturally resonant stones i.e. ancient stones found in wild landscapes that, when struck, produce sound. Out of marble she created a stone object—albeit one that produces no sound—and in an accompanying speculative text she posed the questions: If this object was the last piece of marble to be pulled out of the earth how would we treat it? What things would be important to do with it? How would we demonstrate human skill?

Knezevic's *Lithophone* was '...quite ugly, ungainly. It looks like a thing developed by committee'. My thoughts drift to the studio window where outside the landscape is urban, constructed, a meld of pigeon blue and gun-metal greys. 'But its ugliness is what's interesting about it' she adds.

At FSAS Knezevic brought the final iteration of *Lithophone* to conclusion by creating a video work of the stone. 'It was really intense. I ended up forming a scheme for the editing process that revolved around the audio. We used a sound recording of the object and three separate sound channels. It was weird, unsettling not comfortable'. As part of the project Knezevic also started to consider the implications of visual screens, calling attention to the physical nature of the apparatus and equipment that displays work. She is interested in the same kind of thin-edged, shiny design that Grayson Perry describes as 'sexist'.

**"Up until recently, most designers were male and tended to suffer from self-as-user syndrome; that is, in a typical masculine way they lacked empathy for an average user, especially if she was female."**

— Grayson Perry, *The Descent of Man* (Allen Lane, 2016)

On a nearby table a selection of rose-quartz pink crystals of various sizes are laid out. At FSAS Knezevic delved into Shutterstock, an online site that provides stock photography, footage and music along with editing tools. She describes it as a 'hellscape... a glut... too much'. In the same breath she also mentions Western capitalist mining of the earth's resources, the aggressive and exploitative nature of it and yet, how a whole industry around 'healing stones' continues to exist. 'These self-created things, formed under huge geological pressures and unimaginable spans of time, are so overloaded with meaning, so aesthetically full.... How do you work with things that are way too full already?'

Knezevic responded to the rose quartz crystals in a way she defines simply as 'bodily'. 'I'd been reading the feminist theorist Elizabeth A. Grosz and I'm interested in what she has to say about intensification and about the relationship between art and excess'. I browse the resulting medley of pink serpentine extrusions that bring to mind a jumble of unfitted jigsaw pieces. There is something irresistible, and also sickening, about the endless tangle of narratives that this pink suggests, and its currency in the market to drive health and beauty 'campaigns' for women. (Side note: Mamie Eisenhower was a supposed cultural champion of this pink, which—incidentally—was worn fashionably by boys and men up until the 1920's). Knezevic's work *Scapes: Rose Quartz* is currently on show at Berlin Opticians Gallery.

For Knezevic, who was during her FSAS engagement preparing for a solo exhibition at The Oonagh Young Gallery, the award was 'pivotal'. Providing essential access to technology, space and support, it was a productive and very busy time (there was 'a lot of loud cursing'). 'I'm not sure how I could have produced this work without the FSAS award. Without FSAS, a lot of art in Dublin would simply not get made'.

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