

Interior Architecture

Psychoanalytical, Post-structuralist, Marxist and Feminist discourses have informed the way that architecture and the body have operated in our society over the last 100 years. Space is no longer an empty void, filled with inanimate objects, whilst humans traverse from one place to another. Our identities and communities are located in the spaces we inhabit and informed by how we negotiate and interact in those spaces.

However, the finite (architectural) representations of space that surround us in our everyday environment are not the full story. The body, the primary space, is where our subjectivity is occupied, requiring negotiations of territory, relationships, matter and time in an ongoing attempt to reconcile ourselves with others. These physical and psychological inflections inform the way that culture is created and reflected back to us, and in turn how we interpret this information and make decisions as to how we construct and live our lives.

Interior Architecture examines a number of ways that contemporary artists experience and represent bodies in space. Within this grouping, Architecture becomes a term that signifies both the inside and the outside of the body, the borders and states of in-between where tension, vulnerability, exposure and change reside. Globalisation and technology challenges each one of us to find our personal space, whether it is physical, psychological or cyber space. This exhibition seeks a return to the individual through the building and construction of our -selves. The works traverse the realms of materiality, psychic space, the built environment, symbolism and nature. At first quite disparate fields, but all linked by the artists' (and viewer's) phenomenological responses.

The feminist art movement of the 1970's pioneered the use of video and performance art whereby the body became a site for political contention and personal expression. Timothy Kendall Edser's ongoing *Tension* series of performance and photographic works is a challenging take on this tradition, as he explores ideas of masculinity with his own (male) body in a range of spatial negotiations.

Clare Rae also records her own body. Her performance and photographic work is characterized by an ongoing enquiry into the nature of the feminine within space, in particular in the domestic interior realm. Her *Testing* series (2010) humorously explores the physical boundaries of internal borders and surfaces, yet subtly renders the inherent anxieties of constricted physical and psychological space.

The architectural space is constricted even further in the sculptures of Mark Friedlander. His constructed miniature environment, *Hallway*, is characterized by the use of the architectural motif, the passage. It requires an effort by the viewer to enter its' internal realm, both physically and psychically. Friedlander's work explores the construction of personal identity in relationship to *the other*, by evoking a physical and metaphorical journey through time and space.

The self versus *the other* is represented by the voices in our head in the video/installation work of Inez de Vega. The states of psychological disorder, anxiety and containment are brought to the fore in her piece *The Suicide Chronicles II*. Once again the spaces of the

interior body (in this case, the mind) are exposed, as are the physical and psychological constraints of institutional confinement.

The body breaks out of its enclosure into the expansive, imaginary realm in Catherine Evans' processes of inquiry. Her photographic installation of the amorphous, elegant conduit of a deceased swan's neck, *Dead Space*, simultaneously locates the mind/body conflict and provides potential for respite, as Evans poetically expresses the possibilities for the human body and its co-habitation with nature.

The natural/biological body is also the site for investigation in the work of Julie Shiels, who explores the physical interior of the body as inscribed by keyhole surgery, in her series *Cusp*. Resin casts of high-tech surgical equipment packaging reverse the physical space of the instruments. This highlights the site of bodily invasion and exposes the liminal state of patients under anaesthetic, who traverse the threshold between conscious and unconscious states.

From keyhole surgery to oversized, metaphoric keys, Kate Just's poetic work, *Her Keys*, draws on both history and the imagination. The sculptured forms enable access to the psychological interior of the feminine, exploring sexuality, desire and empowerment through a language of symbolism. The hand-made, not quite functional objects echo myth and legend, while hinting at the possibility for transformation and change.

Spaces of the feminine are also the subject of Caroline Phillips' installation piece. Using flexible materials as a metaphor for the flux and change of identity, Phillips draws on craft processes of tying, twisting and plaiting, to create sites of reference for the female lived experience. Metaphorical architectural forms respond to both the gallery site and the lived experience of the feminine body in space.

The eight artists represented in *Interior Architecture* each affirm the corporeality of space and the built environment. Although their materials, processes and outcomes have produced an array of artworks, there is a commonality in their minimalist inspired aesthetic that was not fully revealed until the works all came together. To me, this common aesthetic denotes a paring back, a reduction of excess, to try and get at something valuable, something intrinsic.... something ultimately interior.

Caroline Phillips, May, 2011.