



'Enmeshed'

Caroline Phillips

GALLERY 3

7 March – 27 April

Q & A WITH CAROLINE PHILLIPS

- 1. Your work combines minimalism, architectural metaphor and craft based practices, to materialise subjectivity within the feminine – tell us how you have executed this in your installation at Craft.**

I have recently commenced a Phd, where my research is around issues of phenomenology, materiality and decoration, all subjects which encircle the associations of women, beauty and craft. The chance to show at Craft has given me a great opportunity to make a whole room installation exploring an immersive environment and responding specifically to the site. So the whole room is a fleshy pink colour, which may seem a bit disturbing, comforting, sexy, or all three! I have arranged a series of black rubber octopus straps in a repetitive pattern around the four walls in the space, recalling decorative wallpaper or a wire fence, except the straps seem to slump and sag, and are very embodied. The space creates different responses according to what the viewer brings into the space with them, their own subjectivity.

- 2. You are one of 20 artists in an exhibition currently showing at The Substation Gallery, tell us about your work in the exhibition.**

Regimes of Value is a great show curated by Elizabeth Gower and is showing over two venues, The Substation and Margaret Lawrence Gallery. The exhibition is exploring recycled materials and urban detritus and their uses today by a range of local artists. Far from being a 'load of rubbish', the range of recycled, found, gleaned and assembled objects used by contemporary artists in Melbourne at the moment is impressive and surprising. The works I have in the show at Margaret Lawrence Gallery are more object based than 'Enmeshed' here at Craft. I have used some of the rubber octopus straps again, except this time they are combined with plastic and synthetic off-cuts from my explorations at the Reverse Garbage outlets in Melbourne's eastern suburbs. The works are wall based pieces that hang and float in space, so are still very much related to my ongoing research mentioned in your first question.



3. Aside from being an artist you are also a curator and writer and have an exhibition touring regional Victoria coming up, who are the artists and what is the concept behind the show?

Yes, I enjoy expanding my practice through curatorial and writing projects, usually things that come up as a result of my conversations with other artists and my interest in feminist art. There are many artists in Melbourne at the moment who are very interested in revisiting and reinterpreting the social, political and personal issues surrounding feminism which were thought by many as dormant since the seventies. They are passionate about finding new ways to talk about bodies and spaces through their art. So I am currently developing a large touring exhibition called 'The F Word', which will involve a publishing project, three exhibitions in regional Victoria and Melbourne, workshops and symposia. There are many artists involved in the initial events and discussions, from which the final list will be selected later in the year, so I can't give away too many details just yet! But it's not just about the destination it's about the journey too. It's exciting because we are travelling to regional areas and bringing many people together to talk about feminist art and what it means to them and how it is expressed through their art practice. The exhibitions are taking place in 2014 and 2015, so there is still a lot of dialogue and sharing to be done yet.

4. What type of studio do you have and what is your favourite thing about the space?

I have a studio at VCA alongside other graduate researchers. It is great to have an active and passionate group of people around me, with whom I can discuss ideas, watch artworks develop and be part of a supportive network. There is also plenty of space for me to do my own thing and properly play with my stash of recycled materials.

5. You have a very distinct signature aesthetic, how did you develop and refine your style?

Many years ago I studied painting, but it didn't amount to much as I had no real direction in my practice. It was not until I had taken nearly ten years off and experienced the ups and downs of domestic life and working in the wrong job that I found I *had* to go back to art, and that I was now a sculptor! My post grad studies have helped me to clarify a context for my work, but also looking at other artists and listening to feedback from others is very important. Slowly this has given me confidence to not hold back if there is something I want to explore. I hope this answers your question.

6. Who are some of the artists you admire and why?

It's the amazing artists like Louise Bourgeois, Doris Salcedo and Yayoi Kusama that I really admire as they are so passionate and focussed on their art, which shows through so clearly when you see their work. I love how they are so eccentric too, clearly not worried about following their own path or ignoring the current art trends. But there is also something about what they make that resonates strongly with me and what I am trying to do myself.