

## **Artist in residence Dokhuis Guest Studio/ Kanaal 10**

### **Lina McGinn**

Amsterdam, March 2017

A partition screen pasted with ochre wood filler and white flowers, a purple bra cast in plaster and a pair of blue plaster feet emerging from the corner of the room. Through these and other objects, Lina McGinn's end of residency presentation explored questions of shame, censorship, erasure and concealment. The experimentation with different materials and textures, the oscillation between the literal and the figurative and the contrast between often delicate contents and rigid forms created an interesting dynamic.

Lina also carefully thought about installation and spatial composition further conveyed a sense of exploration and agency. The pair of feet added to the poetics of the whole experience and together with the screens, the underwear, the peeping holes and the self-punishing sentences as if written on a school blackboard made one think of the absent body. Who has been here and who could inhabit such as a place? More critically, who is the agent and where can agency be located? Perhaps it is the spectator who comes to fill in this absence. Because the latter is given freedom of movement and multiple points of view, critical attention can be drawn to the viewing subject as opposed to the objectified and voiceless body.

Wondering through the studio, I started thinking about how different narrative structures as these are generated by the objects interact with each other and converge towards an overarching concept. Certain things fitted better together than others and some were too straightforward or crude in comparison, but perhaps they served as a testimonial of a work in progress rather than presented as carefully selected and concise exhibits. The presentation also raised the question regarding the relation between the story that the objects and their setting tell us, and the unifying theme as articulated by the artist. Art education progressively moves away from medium-specific studio studies and towards experimentation and versatility. This also cultivates, and heavily relies upon, a culture of self-promotion. Art graduates are trained in how to brand themselves and encase their work in rhetorical structures. It is all about the story, then. A second consequence of the art market is the shift of attention from specific works to an artist's oeuvre and range of activities in the exploration of specific themes. This creates an instrumental difficulty in differentiating intention and explanation from execution, which now become different aspects of the same project.

It would be interesting to see an artist of McGinn's calibre explore how the story can be materially supported by the work rather than on its behalf by the artist or the art critic. To this end, it would help conceptualize the presentation as a mixed media installation rather than as an exhibition, and carefully consider the setting up of the experience itself. There is a strong element of

theatricality worth developing further by considering the balance between poetics and form, and further reflecting on how different materials work together but also contrast and cancel each other. This would create some tension, which seems missing.

Tension makes artworks less easily consumed and, in this case, it would accentuate the critical potential of the work. Tension can also be used as a means of indicating how agency can be restored and one's body and voice reclaimed. The relation of artworks to discourse, which is the condition of post-conceptual art, could form a second layer of critical engagement. This is particularly important when dealing with issues such as gender and identity and how these are embedded in power structures. McGinn in my opinion has explored linguistic ambiguity and together with material ambiguity, attention to discourse would strengthen the aesthetic and ethical dimensions of her work.

Review by: Eve Kalyva.