

13.10.10 – 17.11.10 | Private View 12.10.10 | Tue to Sat 12–5pm

**TATIANA
ECHEVERRI
FERNANDEZ
/
BARNABY
HOSKING**

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Bergson asked: do external things endure? And concluded that their moments which attest to duration, only succeed each other for a consciousness that keeps them in mind. What then is the relationship between the material world and conscious life? Both Tatiana Echeverri Fernandez and Barnaby Hosking approach this concern, with fidelity to material – their practices articulate the ungraspable phenomena of memory, emotion or time, by bringing them into contact with material form.

Hard time real/ soft time real

Clustered atop plinths in the gallery are fragments of shattered things. Apparently broken and discarded, they appear resuscitated, severed from their previous functions by some apparent act of violence, momentarily coming together in precarious arrangements, mutant forms.

Each break marks a punctuation in the passing of time, each broken object bears the rupture in temporal continuity, each join a reinsertion of something from the past into the present. The fragments are fused together with silver-coloured solder, a technique used in stained-glass windows, which in spite of its decorative function, appears scar-like, marking the place of a trauma, a wound that has healed, but cannot be forgotten.

It calls to mind 'Kintsugi' - a Japanese tradition whereby cracks in porcelain are filled with black and red lacquer and then dusted with gold leaf. This decorative restoration seems to celebrate and beautify the mark of degradation, as if to embrace the irreversibility of time and the onset of entropy.

The broken glasses have a melancholic, even gothic sadness, in the pointed arches of their ruined forms. These now redundant vessels are still

recognisable for their intended function, and perhaps symbolise the body, as a contingent and impermanent, carrier for the soul. The archeological retrieval of fragmented memories performed in psychoanalysis performs a comparable function – to reconcile, to repair, past trauma. Though these fragments may push and pull at the borders of their collisions, our human tendency for narrative smoothing fills the gaps, and a gestalt emerges – a whole subject.

*Kinds of Memory and Memory Itself
(After Richard Tuttle)*

Echeverri Fernandez's series "Kinds of Memory and Memory Itself " hovers in the gallery suspended in space and, seemingly, time. Each construction shares a simple constitution: six guitar strings remind us of the primacy of their function; their title reminds us of Tuttle, and his 1973 exhibition at the Whitney, New York. Memory is an ungraspable, abstract, idea – difficult to articulate with words, let alone material form. Tuttle succeeded with a deft economy of means and it is in his wake that Echeverri Fernandez's work deploys a strategy of gestural elegance and an attendant reverence to material.

Transmutation: a taught wire from a musical instrument, potent and capable of performing a sound, is relaxed, resulting in aural impotence; the absence of sound, is supplanted three-dimensional form: the now-silent strings trace a movement through space, their form determined by the integrity of the sprung wire, that enacts a memory of its own, a posture it is inclined to return to.

With such pared-down means, this diaphanous work encapsulates a thinking around translations, between registers of phenomenal experience. After Richard Tuttle, the faithful deference to the line traces a trajectory from

past to future, a vibration – sound, or a movement through three-dimensional space. Bergson evoked images of expansion, contraction, tension and dilation, in an attempt to articulate space and time. And in his legacy, String Theory, claims that the fabric of the universe is woven from threads of one single substance: microscopic, oscillating membranes – strings. The vibrational patterns of the most elementary units of life determine the mass and force charges of particles, their attraction and repulsion, and thus the physical properties of nature.

Untitled V (Butterfly)

'Matter and Memory', Bergson's seminal work, subtitled *Essay on the relation of body and spirit* made the case for a difference in kind between spirit and matter by recourse to memory as the paradigm through which we might understand conscious experience. In Bergson's thought, there is no perception that is not imbued with memory – the images created by our senses, mingle with a thousand details of our past experience and the past is imported into the present, lending to perception its subjective character.

Barnaby Hosking's "Untitled V" consists of three monochrome panels, whose austerity harks back to Minimalism and, in particular, to Ad Reinhardt's reductionist aesthetics. In tone and hue, each panel of the triptych appears unified, yet differs in nature: a borderless black mirror, reflecting the gallery space; a painted canvas; a black screen upon which random images appear momentarily, before dissolving into obscurity again. Informed by Perennial philosophy, the work addresses the nature of reality, the realms of human experience including the spiritual domain: moments of empty projection evoke the spacious nature of mind – the a priori condition for subjectivity –

from which memory and thought arise; the monochrome painting demonstrates 'truth to material' in the Minimalist tradition, and thus the world of relative form; the mirror reflects ourselves woven into the fabric of a social world.

These three tenets re-emerge in disparate schools of thought – from Plato's dictum 'The good, the true and the beautiful', to Buddhism's three jewels: Buddha; Dharma; Sangha. The latter is an authorless philosophy passed down from ancient seers, and discovered through periods of self-observation – in meditation, the fundamental underpinning of Buddhism.

For the most part, the projection in 'Untitled V' is without image, its form is empty, it is if you like, the nature of mind which contains the genesis of all potential form. Close your eyes, and thought images will undoubtedly arise – they are the natural working of the mind – the waves rippling on the surface of a deep ocean. As we are swept along in the procession of time, one image dissolves into another, one thought or recollection cues the next. Likewise the projected images connect to each other by way of a tagging system – extracted from the Internet, one leads to the next by virtue of a subjectively assigned category. Cognition meanders through images, swayed by crosswinds of desire and fear. Thus we will latch onto the image of a thought, imbue it with phenomenological attributes – colour, flavour, texture, emotion, until it seems real – existent in a material sense. As Bergson was convinced, the phenomenal world is inseparable from the projections of our memory.

"All man's miseries derive from his inability to sit quietly in a room alone"

The practice of Zazen (sitting meditation) trains the mind to embrace the eternity of time and infinity of space in its various palpitations, without resorting to doctrine. It seeks access to a realm of intelligence beyond thought with recourse to our inner being by just sitting with the intensity of life, and observing the rising of thought, and the ensuing emotions, to see through them to the unadorned actuality of life and find it to be deeply sufficient.

Blaise Pascal once proposed that "All man's miseries derive from his inability to sit quietly in a room alone". Hosking appropriates this statement as the title of a performance which consists in the simple coming together of an empty room, and a person, invited to sit there for a period of time. Pascal also stated that "we are so unwise that we wander about in times that are not ours, and do not think of the only one that is". Nostalgia is necessarily sentimental and memory-recollection is a synthetic reconstruction that must be perpetually repeated, a biography whose veracity is kept alive through re-iteration. Caught up in these stories, we miss the wonder of life itself – it's when we forget ourselves in living that we are truly present.

Thoughts

The mind is a powerful instrument, and one that is unwieldy, not least because we are not always aware of how it works. Without observation, the mirages it conjures may come to us as apparitions, as unshakeable truths. A short hiatus, a moment to rest and observe its defiant nature, might bring one back to the underlying nature of it all – that such thought has no material reality. The world is made by our mind, by our projections. As Milton intuited – the mind can make a heaven of hell and a hell of heaven.

An image from Hosking's work remains with me: It is a small bronze plate, extending into the space perpendicular with the wall; with uneven edges, approximating a wing. A light shines from one side, and a warm glow reflects onto the wall. On the other spreads a shadow, and thus a form is completed, symmetrical, recognisably a butterfly. Metaphoric associations seem keyed to this motif, albeit one of dualities: Light, dark; Jungian spirit (aspiration)-shadow (regression); life-death; presence-absence; interiority-exteriority; Nirvana-Samsara; past-future; love-hate. But, in this case, somehow that doesn't feel reductive, but rather forward glancing: between these binary terms there is a Middle Way: there is life.

Gina Buenfeld

The Russian Club is a not-for-profit project space and gallery established in 2008 in Dalston, East London. Comprising two photographic studios and event space, plus the office and main gallery spaces, The Russian Club is a 6000 sq ft creative environment.

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Image overleaf: Tatiana Echeverri Fernandez, *Hard time real, soft time real* (detail) and Barnaby Hosking *Thought* (detail)