

fugue states

Lauren Gault and Allison Gibbs

25 July – 6 September 2015

Lauren Gault and **Allison Gibbs** come together for the first time in a two-person exhibition, with a shared inquiry into the margins of sight, sense and connectedness. Positioning their research around the reception and transmission of information, the artists explore metaphysical or unverifiable qualities of materials, objects and processes to survey how the sensory may function and how it may have evolved.

The exhibition is the result of a communal, cross-continental discourse, sharing research and writing into the alchemical, expressive and biographical properties of materials and objects, as well as imagery and forms suggestive of physical and psychological states - wet, dry, geographical, psychogenic. Working separately yet remaining in close dialogue to inform and critique one another's choices, the artists varying approaches in film and sculpture create a layered response to themes of time and 'the extra sensory'.

The term 'fugue', as in music, hints at the multi-timbral, cooperative process of building the show, but also suggests a context of altered thought or consciousness in which to think about each practice. Pulling apart these collective ideas, the artists have created new, individual works, investigating how time and future can be re-expressed and understood.

Allison Gibbs' work is often the result of research, writing and workshops in the form of scripted film installations, development circles and more recently, performances. Her current research is informed by the psychic qualities of minerals and the writing of Jane Roberts (1929-1984), an American author and medium who channeled an "energy personality essence" called Seth. Roberts (and Seth's) interviews are important resources for thinking about the idea of 'becoming' someone else - how this happens, who is in control, who does the subject become or who the subject is exactly, and the expectations of allowing another energy to share the body and mind. Seth also talks about 'the spacious present' and the effect of thinking about time in a non-linear way - allowing oneself to think about time as what is happening now, in the past and in the future as simultaneously existing. Both Gibbs and Gault are interested in how this idea might allow for a less subjective approach to thinking about their work.

Gibbs' project *Our Extra-Sensory Selves* attempts to consider and invoke the possibilities of becoming extra-sensory, enacting and re-voicing experiences shared by extra-sensory practitioners and the participants of *A Development Circle for Radical Subjectivity*. Whilst on residency at Triangle France, Marseille in 2014, Gibbs initiated a series of these development circles to explore ideas surrounding psychic ability. The workshops included collective reading, discussion and practical exercises in psychometry, telepathy, psychic mediumship, meditation, visualisation, mimesis and automatic writing, and also explored areas such as the politics and power relationships within the history of psychic and extra-sensory practice. Redeveloped for this exhibition, the *Our Extra-Sensory Selves* film combines footage of the sci-fi-like scenery Marseillaise landscape, discussion from the workshops and reenacted

moments, shot in 16mm negative. Rather than dwelling on truth or belief within extra-sensory practice, the film explores what it might mean in a social context, its association with feminist practice, its propensity for romanticism, as well as exploring the language and psychology at the heart of these practices. It asks what else can be realised when attempting to connect to a thought or energy.

Gibbs' installation objects and second film *We eat portions of the universe*, expand these ideas further, as she explores other forms of 'connecting'. Gibbs has an interest in the practice of 'earthing' and the use of earthing mats – flat synthetic mats that create an electromagnetic sensation mimicking the energy transfer between the skin and the earth – allowing the viewer to use one in her installation. Returning to Dubbo, Australia early in 2015, Gibbs continued her research into the psychic qualities of minerals, turning to local red ochre clay, which contains hematite (which creates its red colour), and sourcing malachite and faden, variously used as psychic aids. Exposing these materials directly on to the film negative, Gibbs has created a chance, narrative-less moving image work, removing any reference to time and inviting sentience. A text piece depicting each mineral's qualities and a transcription of *Our Extra-Sensory Selves* also accompanies the works.

Lauren Gault's sculptural, written and performance-based practice looks at the resonant quality of materials; how objects can evoke more intangible experiences, such as a period of time, a place or a presence. States and thresholds are hugely significant within her practice, often using materials or making sculptures which highlight or control state-change in an attempt to expose, suspend and understand these moments of flux. Her materials include silica, straw, rubber, volcanic geodes, clay and resin - materials that in their own ways have an uncanniness, and a chronology in relation to state and time

Using language as a way to understand how we might think differently about objects, Gault is interested in the French word *terroir*, the German semiotics expression *umwelt* and the philosophical term *qualia*. These words attempt to define the non-physical essence or experience of objects; Gault uses them as an entry point to understand how form and matter might communicate actions, places, histories or futures. Gault is interested in the power of this idea - if an object can transfer knowledge of a place or time through its 'essence' it could be said to be future-telling. The notion of *terroir* expands on this idea, whereby the taste or feel of something can create a reminiscence of another time, land or date. References to *umwelt*, the theory that everything subjectively owns its environment and *qualia*, the intrinsic qualitative properties of experience, invite a more open, extra sensory approach to perceiving objects, and so the artist is interested in sculpture not as historical or anthropological tool, but in what else objects can tell us.

Gault often uses recurring motifs or images in her work, discovering materials or ideas which spark an exploration into the 'unknowable' qualities of objects. The motif of a whale is important within this exhibition; Gault speaks about encountering an image of a whale beached on the Scottish coastline and the rescuers' efforts to keep it wet with a damp towel. It is present in several places in the show, cast whales' teeth, teeth markings and etchings on ceramic, whale oil lamps, water, grey rubber and large sculptural masses. The image of the whale lying in between wetness and dryness prompted a process of research into the perception of being 'in-between', or becoming, or transferring - and what this could mean in relation to sculpture. Gault often uses the shape of the wedge to this effect, and in this show there are written references to 'almost touching', as well the use of 'membranes', thresholds and trapped water.

A negotiation with matter is at the heart of Gault's practice - sculptural form, space and the 'address' of her objects guide her final compositions aiming to reanimate materials as the viewer encounters them in the space. She aims to present the voice of objects, exploring how knowledge or energy can be channelled through them, surveying how we can experience the past or future through their forms.