

Opening Lines

By Emily Cormack

Elemental, molecular and physiological, thresholds are integral to the physics of existence. In *Opening Lines*, these rims and membranes are breeched, momentarily extended or punctured, activating an exchange between spheres and an imbrication of planes.

Concrete, rubber, air, chalk, energy

Concrete

Dull grey to black, concrete is indistinguishable from much of our urban environment. Buildings, roads, foundations, cornices, steps. Concrete connects and blends and protects. The coming together of two powders and a liquid, the resulting mixture is hard and durable. A material metamorphosis; the coming into being of form.

Capable of being infinitely cast and molded into multiple shapes and forms, concrete then sets and is stronger than most other materials. However it is pliable for only a short time, making it a material of certainty and its form and intention is not easily repealed. Unforgiving and implying permanence, concrete denies the relevance of its substratum, its structure, its beneath. Spread and poured upon the earth it folds and moulds with the idiosyncrasies of the land. Easily smoothed – it hardens to a constructed, manageable, workable crust.

With a crow bar, and a chisel Susan Jacobs' strained with each floorboard, forcing it loose. Holding fast with a century of footsteps, the boards did not relinquish their grip easily. Once loosened though, great breaths of air escaped, frozen moments from the crypt. And with each board lifted, the certainty of this surface was questioned. With each new glimpse of the beneath, with its rubble and dust and lead wires, and lost shopping lists - the surety of our urban parameters lessened. Each lifted floorboard enlivened Jacobs' drawing process. Now revealed as a constructed stratification, the floorboards became like a solid thread of granite through sand stone, the floor is our opportunity to mark. It is our place to stain, and scratch and to resist. Through its presence ours is rendered permanent, through the wear and tear, scratches and dents of our daily life, we are recorded.

Tessellated tiles mark the entrance to another time, an arcade, and a bay window shop front revealed by Jacob's wrenching of floorboards. Illuminated with the light and air of the present, the past rises forward and the two are enmeshed. Somehow existing simultaneously, the grander more optimistic threshold, with its decorative almost ceremonial entrance, renders the stained orange floorboards of today a flimsy denial. A lie half told, but none the less, one that has obscured any other options for nearly a century. What lies beneath, is a story.

Air

Dry air is primarily made up of nitrogen (78.09%) and oxygen (20.95%). The remaining 1% is made up of argon (0.93%), carbon dioxide (0.03%) and other trace gases (0.003%). Despite an appearance to the contrary air is dense with atoms. Adhering to its own codes and systems air separates itself into spheres – the troposphere and the atmosphere among others.

Air is also a vehicle for sound. Sound is created by the transfer of energy into waves. The waves then travel through the air bumping air molecules together, agitating them into activity. As the molecules collide together the friction encourages the sound waves to move outward.

The front window of Gertrude Contemporary is a certain perimeter. Solid and known, it is a boundary marker that literally and figuratively divides the air inside from that outside. As such it also both reflects sound waves and absorbs them. Phil Samartzis' work investigates these dual qualities by creating a close recording of the window and playing it back to itself.

Through placing an accelerometer recording device on the window, Samartzis allows us to listen from the perspective of a perimeter. This is the sound of both inside and out. Recorded and represented, this malleable sound threshold becomes a sonic stutter. As the sound reflects from speaker to window and back, not only is there a confusion between sounds from reality and those from the recording, but there is also a degradation of the sound thresholds certainty. The window stripped of glass and material structure becomes an abstraction of the window. Non-diegetic and dislocated, Samartzis' recorded wall degenerates as it reflects in its imperfect mirror. An ever-diminishing feedback loop that acts to deconstruct the lineal certainty of the window threshold, opening it up to the air.

Rubber

Collected from the trunks of trees and subjected to chemical synthesis, rubber's uses are multiplinous. Boots, erasers, keyboards, piping, bed mattresses, tyres, waterproofing, soundproofing and window sealing. It encloses and proofs and cushions. Insulates and integrates. As a boundary marker it is elastic. It resists as it gives, offering a physical metaphor for the possibility of expansion. Unlike a button or a zip, its hold is malleable, almost infinite, but safely, reliably containing. It's slack is inbuilt. And yet it is still firm and stable.

Katie Lee's work is suspended looping from the ceiling and the rubber appears weary with weight. Loose limbed and apparently lax. It seems heavy with the air that it cradles. The strength of its black line creates a boundary in the ceiling space. As if drawing Lee has moved through the gallery space shading corners, measuring and marking apexes with thick cords and flat bands of rubber. Propping wood in a corner she shades lightly, opening a discussion about props, wedges and angles. Lee's precarious propping offers opinions about other ways of building. The leaning plank of wood, hammered intermittently with ladder-like struts implies function or instruction. Lee's props are accompanied by a video work where Lee stands teetering on one foot confined within a painted rectangle. Combined with Lee's props, which are reminiscent of civic tools and guiding devices, this work becomes an exercise or demonstration video for a gymnastic confidence course where the objective is a complete testing and disorienting of our parameters.

Chalk

Chalk is a soft, white sedimentary rock formed under the ocean by an accumulation of minute plates shed by millions of micro-organisms. Chalk, despite its dry and crumbly appearance can actually hold a large volume of ground water, and can be a natural reservoir releasing water during the dry season.

Chalk in Alex Martinis Roe's work dwells on a similar bind. Employed as a tool to expunge the participant's thoughts, it also acts as a plunge. Five people are invited to write with chalk on the white boards for durations of twenty minutes. A quiet conciliation between participants settles, as they transfer thoughts from one perceptual threshold to another. The white boards accumulate a sedimentary build up on their surface, and with each new layer the last is obscured, building a dense chalky substrate alive with a past made from words.

Lying head-to-head on the ground in a grassy field two players converse. Martinis Roe records their gestures, the slight flexes and gesture of talk, but the video is silent. Available only as a surface, the viewer's access is obscured. Both of these works sit at the rim where public and private meet. The works edge friction-filled interstices where despite the accumulation of material, the content remains ambiguous, and the viewer is suspended.

Energy

Deriving from the Greek – *energía* an "activity or operation", energy is a quantity that can be assigned to every particle, object, and system of objects. Energy is created as a consequence of the state of these particles or systems, and despite the seeming certainty of their categorical definitions any form of energy can be transformed into another form. As a universally occurring transformative process this possibility for movement on a particle level highlights the mutability of all things, regardless of scale.

An electric hum pervades the gallery - a low static vibration - like inputs incorrectly plugged. It is the sound of unanchored energy amplified, open to the potential for articulation. Like an open channel it sounds available for use, as if existing at the brink of articulation. Joyce Hinterding opens this potential, reaching into these Very Low Frequencies of the sonic spectrum.

These frequencies ordinarily sit outside of human audibility, but Hinterding captures, translates and amplifies them. With this series of drawings constructed from graphite and gold and arranged into intricately constructed algorithmic patterns, Hinterding is able to collect the electromagnetic energy that is alive in the air. Using the body as a conductor, these drawings are activated into a circuit by the viewers touch, and the electromagnetic energy is then transferred into sound waves. The body is integral to this work, where the participant becomes part of the transformative process. The participant effectively allows for energy to be lifted from one threshold into another, proving the possibilities for free movement and guided slippage across thresholds.