

# frieze

No Fear, No Shame, No Confusion

Triangle France, Marseille, France



Liz Magor, *Tweed (neck)*, 2008, gypse polymerisé, 41 x 42 x 14 cm.

In a recent talk at FIAC, Canadian artist Liz Magor pointed out that her practice is about empowering the zero. The exhibition 'No Fear, No Shame, No Confusion', her first solo show in Europe, which opened at Triangle France in Marseille in October, can be read in this key, as an infinite labour of love where making art is making space for the ordinary, shaky and uncertain. This exhibition, curated by Céline Kopp, features a selection of the artist's works from the 1970s to today, and engages Magor's practice in a compelling conversation with works by three younger artists: Jean-Marie Appriou, Andrea Büttner and Laure Prouvost.

Since the early '70s, Magor has produced photographic works and sculptures that question the unstable character of objects, ideas and human beings. Instead of opting for a representation of the frantic rhythm of precarious life through the performance of the object or the body, Magor's works confront the viewer with uncanny factuality and eerie stillness. Tables, chairs, cupboards – the contents of a one-bedroom apartment in *One Bedroom Apartment* (1996) – with their presence and volumes invite the viewer to consider the weighty sensation of living an unsettled life. Uncertainty is also a presence: a white dog rests under one of the tables. Is the dog real or a model? It seems to be at ease, though the rest of the scene provokes anxiety. Who hasn't experienced the stress of moving from one place to another, after all?

If material possessions might produce a sense of certainty and comfort, in Magor's works, materials often embody and show their fragile status. In the work *Tweed (neck)* (2008), a cast tweed jacket folded together with brown gloves has its neck stuffed with a bottle of whisky. The stiffness of this glass neck is concealed by the apparent softness of the piece of cloth. Things are never one-sided in Magor's work. In *Double Cabinet (blue)* (2001), what from one side looks like a pile of blue towels laying on the floor, if looked at from a different angle reveals a hollow interior filled with real beer cans. Though on closer observation, the towels are a cast. In fact, many of her works are casts made of plaster, resin, silicone, Platinum-Cure silicone or rubber. So a piece of wood and construction material leaning against the wall and sheltering potatoes, onions and carrots in *Stores* (2000) is not necessarily a piece of wood – just as a tweed is not necessarily as soft as it appears to be.

Magor's artistic practice is about inhabiting – to quote her – 'a space between the mould and the cast', between the potential and the already exhausted, the imagined and the factual, where the object becomes a mobile threshold between different realities. The uncertain status of matter in the works expresses the resistance of the material world to meaning or forms of representation. But matter here never merely equals the physical. As the nuns in conversation with artist Andrea Büttner in her video *Little Sisters: Lunapark Ostia* (2012) suggest, spirituality is an ordinary, material practice of living and sharing with others. And being with others can also mean being confronted by a heavy inheritance. So, in her video *Wantee* (2013) Laure Prouvost pushes the inheritance of art history over the edge and engages in a spooky conversation about art with her fictitious grandfather, an artist and close friend of Kurt Schwitters.

More than particular motifs, the works by all of the artists in the exhibition share an attitude and an understanding of art as a practice that values the domestic and unspectacular – where things and materials whisper their secrets to us: that they have no secret at all. They offer themselves in their sensuality, as bodies, as things, as human beings, without fear or shame.

**Federica Bueti**

Published on 19/11/13