

Margrét H. Blöndal: Sieves

*Because I know that time is always time
And place is always and only place
And what is actual is actual only for one time
And only for one place¹*

•

She told me about her walks every morning along the Liffey. It was by Heuston station she was caught by the sharp cerise of a shred of plastic blowing ineffectually around the bicycle seat it was tied to as a protection against the rain. The remaining strands of the plastic bag were bound into a tight, aged knot at the seat's base, eventually coming loose and pocketed. She walked away, returning minutes later with a newly bought plastic bag, which I imagine to be a matted, dark blue, securing it over the saddle. Now the pink plastic flowers out of a cyan foam swimming board like some form of coral urchin, a patch of three clustered on top while one sprouts out of the side. The foam is bitten, torn, impressed with the bruises of a mineral erosion.

Just off Wolfe Tone Quay a rubbish skip lies half open. A liquid crystal spills out with the wind, swallowing and refracting the sunlight in endless layers and folds. Its translucent eminence trails out, a strand of hair whipping in waves. The mass of cellophane is bundled away. It reappears on Watling Street, coaxed onto the wall, its matted locks tied back with string in paces, bound with blue tack in others. Growing out in four reaching tangles, its dark absorbent recesses expand into changing silver highlights.

•

A score of objects float and dangle as if suspended in water, seeming to hold the space together with their precarious perchings and delicate stitches. A mangled red and white shape hangs down, suspended from the rafters, a knitted work glove, half matted with paint, cut, torn, turned inside out and bound back together in a new form by thick string. A lone fingertip dangles by a thread. These are sculptures, but they are abstracted, mute and reluctant to converse with normal modes of mining for meaning. The objects are made of familiar materials: broom sticks, foam board, rubber tubing, plastic bags that have been found, swapped, dismantled and remade. Each has a unique story, from its utilitarian manufacture to its current reincarnation as a 'sieve', but what we see before us holds a mysteriousness that we normally invest in the perception of another living being. The raw materials, with a distinctive palette of jade, pink, cream and purple, have morphed into an array of otherworldly sea life that is at once privately associative and confounding.

Writing about the Surrealists' method of displacing everyday objects from their usual human-use value, Merleau-Ponty stated, "In adults, ordinary reality is a human reality and when use-objects – a glove, a shoe – with their human mark are placed among

natural objects and are contemplated as things for the first time... we have the impression of acceding to another world, to a surreality, because the involvement which binds us to the human world is broken for the first time, because a nature 'in itself' (*en soi*) is allowed to show through."ⁱⁱⁱ The sieves of Margrét H. Blöndal invoke a radical simplicity, making no opposition of the human and the natural. While consciously human-made, like a child's unwritten game her acute constructions use the hyperactive colours and textures of the domestic landscape, the day-glo plastics and fabricated textures, to make a fantastical re-encounter. They grow and lurk around the gallery like transmuted living forms, inwardly involved in a form of cellular metamorphosis to natural entities.

The sieves' brilliant jades alongside earthy tones and their bizarre shapings ironically recall the sea dragon with its leaf-like appendages and phosphorescent stripes, an animal whose existence seems to straddle reality and myth. Blöndal's work carries a similar sense of evolutionary oddity, where an array of supermarket commodities that we take for granted are quietly allowed to let another nature show through. This nature does not take an outwardly animal form, but carries the same independent instinct, a majestic indifference paired with a primal sensitivity. It insists on its own organic intimacy, calling on the experiential caverns that might connect the chemically engineered polyurethane foam seen before us with the luminescent wonders of the sea.

•

A thin stick protrudes from the wall. A faint tan strip of rubber sheet hangs tense, curving the wood with its weight, running almost two metres down to sway just above the floor. Several inches below the stick, a circle of light blue foam binds the sheet, reining it in, funnelling it before it continues to cascade. It flows as liquid, as textile. In the mornings, the sheet sways gently, sweeping back and forth with the occasional pull of the stick's suppleness. By the evening, it bounces in a constant, sporadic rhythm, frenetically uneven, resounding the tremors of the river's traffickings, the tankstation's tuning fork.

The rhythm echoes in each stitch, in the small circular pieces of foam hovering like so many satellites in corners, in the careful places alongside each work in which the viewer breathes. Among the paucity of obvious footholds for meaning we instead find a direct address, an invitation, the space to recognise our own active role in this relationship. Like notes on a sheet of music for a player piano, the sieves are a series of corporeal perforations enacted by the viewer. As the gentle pace echoes with our footsteps, as we glance between each recurring colour, we are reverberating this rhythm, parsed by each sieve's poetry.

•

Blöndal's practice moulds sensation with a palpable synesthesia. Her work is impulsively transformative in its use of domestic materials shaped and rent by emotional states. Dream-like in its illogical reworking of our surroundings, the shapes created allow for the viewer's personal associations, while subtly enforcing the disruption of an explicit narrative. The immediate encounter with the object itself – its hues, forms, and

movements – overshadows anecdotal readings and turns the attention of the viewer back in on itself. Each sieve is a filter, a black hole, a concentration that calls attention to the constant flowing relationship between our own emotive perception with that which we perceive around us, offering a paradoxical, emotive materiality that is abrupt, discrete and fluid.

Chris Fite-Wassilak

Text appears courtesy of mother's tankstation

ⁱ T.S. Eliot, 'Ash Wednesday' (1930)

ⁱⁱ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception*, trans. James M. Edie (Evanston, 1964), p.167