

Audrey Hurd – Gathered Mass

Exhibition: April 24-June 6, 2015

Artist Talk and Opening: April 24, 2015 7:00pm

Essay by Christie Kirchner, March 2015

Rooted in printmaking, multidisciplinary artist Audrey Hurd's practice explores the notion of the trace, and the meaning that is inherent in the gestures of making. As we move through the world, following cycles of growth, movement, sorrow and joy, marks are left upon us and we leave our own traces on the other people, places and objects we encounter. Documenting the marks and gestures invoked in the careful creation, archiving, and ultimate disassembly of three amorphous sculptures, Hurd's work in the exhibition *Gathered Mass* is centered on the physicality, intimacy, and tangibility of the traces that are around us and within us, and how they act as a material echo of human experience.

Created from the slow, meticulous layering of ephemeral domestic materials such as paint, stucco and wallpaper, the sculptures in *Gathered Mass* were gradually grown from tiny cores into dense, weighty objects that belie the lightness and delicacy of their constituents. With the intimate, time consuming ritual of growing the masses daily in her studio, the addition of each new layer of material became a trace of a gesture, of a moment, and of a thought for Hurd, all held within the object and sealed between each carefully applied coating. As each new strata of material was applied, what is underneath was concealed, and yet that material history is held within the sculpture and is inherent in its form – as each layer shapes that which came after it. The physical formation of the masses and the traces of the thoughts and gestures retained within them give a heavy, tangible physicality to the intangible weight of the reflections and emotions carried by the artist throughout their creation.

Hurd further emphasizes the importance of the act of making and physical transformation of these objects by chronicling their progressive development through a set of three photo-based lithographs that accompany the sculptures in this exhibition. The three prints document the sequential growth of the sculptures by layering images of the masses in various stages of completion, providing a visible archive of the now invisible gestures of creation. Resembling three giant, haunting irises, the layered prints accentuate Hurd's interest in the act of making by looking backwards in time to recount the history of each sculpture's creation.

Once fully formed and documented through the accompanying prints, the dense, visceral sculptures were then slowly deconstructed until all that remained was a small, cross-sectioned piece of each mass that can easily fit in the palm of one's hand. This cathartic act of carving, chipping and tearing the masses apart reduced them to piles of their material elements, which Hurd once again photographed and printed as four-colour separation lithographs. Conjuring images of piles of ashes or other lifeless remains, the residual traces of the heavy, burdensome objects and the prints that depict them again give a physical tangibility to the incorporeal, emotional process of letting go. Shown together, the prints and sculptures in *Gathered Mass*

offer a material and gestural narrative that speaks to the cyclical nature of life, death, and transformation, and the deep impressions such experiences leave upon us.

Christie Kirchner is a Canadian multidisciplinary artist who is also interested in the meaning inherent in process and materiality. Working primarily in drawing and printmaking, Christie recently completed a Master of Fine Arts degree in Visual Art at York University in Toronto, where she currently lives and works.

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