

Essay for 20/20 book 2017

The titles of some of Kāryn Taylor's recent solo exhibitions encourage the idea that this artist is working from a practice that is speculatively exploring the connections between art and the ideas that structure our reality, asking large questions. Such ambitions are promoted by exhibition titles that include *Abstract Philosophy*, *New Geometries* and *Time. Space. Existence*. Her two and three dimensional work falls into a non-objective territory employing space and light as part of the form and effect. Not only this but ambient light and the site are factors, influencing the changing appearance of reliefs or three dimensional constructions. In the wall based Perspex box like objects shadowy form or coloured line create a luminous exploration of the contained space. Projected geometric shapes that could be described as 'lines in space' complicate these and the more recent spatial explorations.

I mention the exhibition titles as they are significant in reflecting how Taylor's concerns intersect with the development of knowledge and language. Her practice is dedicated to finding ways to explore some of the greatest abstract ideas through ways that create perceptual and haptic experiences. This is a practice in which testing and investigation comprise a methodology for working through spatial and perceptual experiences bought about by combinations and permutations of forms and materials.

This approach, and Taylor's discussion of its connection to her interest in the branch of science quantum physics might suggest her work is part of a pursuit of evidence of how matter and light behave. However, Taylor's interest is not to mirror the investigations of science at the atomic or subatomic level. Rather than seeking a system or a precise language of matter, Taylor's work reflects our very unknowing of the operation of the physical world.

Taylor's geometries, whether set in Perspex or a composition of rods and projections seemingly delicately balanced on the floor, bring to mind the human predilection to posit theories and design systems of knowledge. And with this the fallibility of those systems in resolving questions and contradictions. The artist herself talks of her interest in the 'fuzziness' of current understanding of quantum physics. More broadly the idea of fuzziness could apply to the current status of the project of modernity. The more that we try to replace mysteries and open endedness with specificities and unified theories, the more distant answers become.

Of course Taylor knows this. She is challenging us to be cognizant of our assumptions, for example in regard to metaphysics, as her spatial installations in particular suggest. These works, such as the three structures titled *Field Notations*, combine milled wood and bent PVC rods, line drawing and projection, connecting across walls and floors like a multi textured net. Occasionally, in a work such as *Objective Hypothesis*, 2017, an additional material is added. Unifying an area of floor and wall these assemblages lightly bound and define space. Yet, the parameters of the volumes are dynamic, constantly shifting with the viewer's position. Titles such as *A Question of Gravity* or *Balanced Equation in Three Parts* convey experimentation with equilibrium. Or, in the case of *Holographic Field Event*, awareness of how light is not a unitary matter but comprised of distinct beams of different phasing and amplitude.

Connecting the rods within the recent spatial works, the projected moving shapes draw attention to the range of materials, adding an additional vocabulary to these spatial works. These distorting animations, appearing within for example *Analysis of a Complex System*, 2014 as well as current works project Euclidian forms of triangles and rhomboids, thereby adding a shifting, time based nature to each spatial construction.

Words also create structures. Its in our nature to keep trying to describe the world. Scientists and philosophers amongst others try to capture the world in a net of language. In the 17th century Gottfried Leibniz and John Wilkin's searched for a perfect language that would be as logical as mathematics or code. Their ideal language would not only reflect what we know but also shape and guide our knowledge. The Enlightenment search for universals has a long shadow. The logical positivists are amongst those in the 20th century who continued the search for methods to generate objective meaning.

Euclidian axioms also aimed to be the basis for true statements about the world. In his first writings, *Elements*, Euclid postulated five axioms for plane geometry, a type of symbolic language to describe the world. These ranged from the ability of a straight line to span any two points to the parallel postulate. The *Elements* also included five constructive notions that Taylor's spatial structures can easily create a challenge to, that: things that are equal to the same thing are equal to one another; if equals are added to equals then the wholes are equal; if equals are subtracted from equals then the remainders are equal; things that coincide with one another are equal to one another, and the whole is greater than the part.

Seeing the infinitely multiple appearances within and their combinations forms the basis for proposing that even the information we receive based on experience is relative and provisional. It is the nature of nets to capture some things and leave others open.

Taylor's works counterpoint objective hypothesis with our ways of talking and thinking about what exists based on experience and highlighting the unsaid and unsolved. Since modernity even the idea of beauty is a much debated concept. Experiencing situations which resist the unified and logical we may find new languages for looking at, talking and thinking about the world.

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