University of Huddersfield

University of Huddersfield Repository

Holder, Carrie

The critical spirit of an expressive adventure

Original Citation

Holder, Carrie (2010) The critical spirit of an expressive adventure. In: Sample. University of Huddersfield, Huddersfield, p. 31. ISBN 9781862180871

This version is available at http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/7805/

The University Repository is a digital collection of the research output of the University, available on Open Access. Copyright and Moral Rights for the items on this site are retained by the individual author and/or other copyright owners. Users may access full items free of charge; copies of full text items generally can be reproduced, displayed or performed and given to third parties in any format or medium for personal research or study, educational or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge, provided:

- The authors, title and full bibliographic details is credited in any copy;
- A hyperlink and/or URL is included for the original metadata page; and
- The content is not changed in any way.

For more information, including our policy and submission procedure, please contact the Repository Team at: E.mailbox@hud.ac.uk.

http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/

THE CRITICAL SPIRIT OF AN EXPRESSIVE ADVENTURE.

The sources of expression in my work are personal experiences and private memories which cannot easily be explained in the narrative of words. So for the last two years, the challenge of my practice has been to bring to life in visual, tactile ways, concepts such as space, light or shadows which otherwise would be invisible or transcendent.

The wordlessness of the visual is somehow more enhanced for me because of the hand-woven techniques I prefer. I see many connections between the woven and the private because methods of the hand involve a direct relationship with visible structures which are not words and yet, like words, are gestures of meaning.

The role of privacy in the work (which can seem at odds with public exhibition) is not so much a desire for secrecy, but is more a concern for not wanting to disclose meanings too literally. My reasons are not only that private intentions behind an artist's work can get in the way of a viewer's response; but also because private meanings of my own are not so clear to me as though they could be itemised or used to excuse or divert the vulnerability of my expression. This dilemma has been noticed by Karin Pere who says of her autobiographical work: "You always express yourself in your work and the more you express yourself the more vulnerable you are. On the one hand I want to say something in my work, and on the other hand I don't want to be too open."1

The conceptual nature of my approach to work has tended to inform material choices, and truth to both is more essential to me at present than the need to define a specific aesthetic. This view has a long pedigree, which originates in the Bauhaus but which is nearer to a definition the critic Lucy Lippard gave for conceptual art, which "...means work in which the idea is paramount and the material is secondary..."2

Whilst I agree with Lippard that the concept is of significant importance, I believe that the choice of material is equally important in conveying meanings, and therefore cannot be seen as a secondary afterthought. I place the same value on the qualities of craftsmanship.

My techniques are usually 'low-tech' and intuitive, using a combination of traditional skills such as tapestry, with my own instinctive manual approaches. This can be time-consuming and repetitive, but it allows time to think and sometimes I am rewarded in the quality of the final work. Nevertheless, it has much in common with the ethos of The Slow Movement which aims to address the problem of 'time poverty' by encouraging a reconnection with community and a slower way of life – a philosophy traditionally associated with crafts and promoted by the exhibition Taking Time: Craft and the Slow Revolution, currently touring Britain.

However, awareness of tradition is always balanced by the contemporary gains made by postmodernism. For example, attitudes behind my approach have benefited from changes in which older hierarchies that once oppressed the crafts, have been swept away by an interdisciplinary plurality in which ways of expression are less and less defined by labels, methods or pigeon holes; so that "If there is any blessing in postmodernism, it is its inclusive spirit, which promotes no moral or aesthetic orthodoxy and allows myriad creative ideas to be more objectively assessed."3

These values have allowed me to challenge boundaries and contest views which, in the past, would have constrained my creative freedom to be critical and eclectic; and so it is with this critical spirit of expressive adventure that I want my work to go forward.

Carrie Holder

References
1. Pere, K., 2007. In L. Millar, L., ed. Cloth and Culture Now. Canterbury: University College for the Creative Arts. 2007. p.23.
2. Lippard, L., 1995. In T. Godfrey, Conceptual Art. London: Phaidon. 1998. p.14.
3. Magretts, M.,1991. International Crafts. London: Thames and Hudson. p.6.