

In Heat Wind Wounds Holes

Tolia Astakhishvili, Stefanie Heinze, Keto Logua, Nancy Lupo

17.04.2022 - 03.07.2022



Heat Wind Wounds Holes
Heat Wounds Wind Holes
Holes Wounds Wind Heat
In Cold
In Wind
In Heatwaves Unsheltered
In Heat Unsealed
In Heat Waves Unsealed
The endless House
Unsealed words and images
Temperance Wind

The doorway leading into the main exhibition space of the gallery is divided in two by a wall of sheetrock, cutting across the space and jutting out into the foyer. The wall intersects with the molding along the top of the door frame, seeming to slice through and encircle it at the same time, accommodating and disregarding the existing structure. This new partition creates options; one can go to the left into a small room, or one can go to the right, following the wall that looks out onto Giorgi Mazniashvili Street, tree-lined, and busy with cars and passers-by. The path to the left leads to a dimly lit space, through which one can see another doorway, then a hallway, and then another doorway. The path to the right is long and narrow, sunlight streaming in through the windows along the exterior wall. Standing in front of the divided entrance, a series of hallways, windows, doorways, openings and foreclosures crowd and lead into one another, creating a cascade of spaces.

The typically bright and spacious view of the gallery is obscured by this new installation by Tolia Astakhishvili. The work is comprised of the tear down of existing walls, new construction, a series of drawings and painting spread throughout the space, piles of debris from install and the display of work from three other artists; Stefanie Heinze, Keto Logua and Nancy Lupo. At one point in the first room, Tolia removes the back of a large cupboard, creating a new entrance into a string of rooms with windows looking out onto the inner courtyard of the building complex. More than simply dividing or reorganizing the gallery's existing spaces, the installation overflows through this newly defined threshold into three rooms previously not open to visitors. Tolia's work takes over, expands and incorporates the gallery space into itself. The visitor is also subsumed, becoming yet another element framed by the proliferating, unreasonable architecture.

In a chapter titled "Architecture Dismembered" from Anthony Vidler's classic text, *The Architectural Uncanny*, Vidler describes a historical shift in the relationship between buildings and the body along the axis of unity and fragmentation. There is an interplay of reflection and projection that takes place between a subject and the space they inhabit that can substantiate the body as a unified whole or make space for the return of a pre-

narcissistic “morselated body,” a body experienced in disparate fragments, plastic and disjointed.¹ “We are contorted, racked, cut, wounded, dissected, intestinally revealed, impaled, immolated,” Vidler writes of the latter type of building. “It is as if the object actively participated in the subject’s self-dismembering, reflecting its internal disarray or even precipitating its disaggregation.”² When speaking to Tolia about this new installation, she said; “The body is fragile and part of it. The whole installation is the body itself. It’s damaged and it doesn’t exist anymore.” This identification between the body and architectural space isn’t static in Tolia’s work, but instead, as one moves through the sequence of rooms, through thresholds, and into hallways, the body collects itself, only to spread out into space again, finding itself in pieces continually rearranged.

The pathway to the left moves between small rooms and hallways, where new photographic, painting and sculptural works from Keto Logua are installed. These works build on the artist’s ongoing engagement with interfaces of human-plant interaction. The source material for the photographs is taken from the archives of the German Aerospace Center’s “Eden ISS greenhouse” project, which is developing portable, soilless, controlled greenhouse environments that can nurture productive fruit and vegetable gardens, with the ultimate goal of being able to grow food in space. Each photograph shows a sharply focused, foregrounded hand holding material from the plants, set against a blurry background of the lab environment. These precision-controlled environmental technologies disrupt the ‘interface’ of terrestrial relationships, establishing new relational circuits between humans and plants. Painted directly on the wall, adjacent to the photographs are seemingly abstract lines weaving together. The lines look like an unknown icon, recalling cave paintings from early humans. The image is in fact of *Proterocladus antiquus*, a one-billion-year-old fossil of green seaweed found in February of 2020 that gave material evidence to one of the oldest photosynthetic organisms. Alongside the images, and the painting, Logua shows two new sculptures of painted, metallic blue branches. Isolated without context, their surface mysterious, the branches, like the plants, seem “out of place.”

The doorway opened through the large cabinet leads into three rooms looking out over the inner courtyard. The stretched fabric ceiling of the first room has been cut on three sides and hangs over one wall, revealing a ceiling beneath covered in plastic tiles, yellow with age. “For this show I like to reveal things,” Tolia says, “leave things open from inside to outside.” Sections of the walls that had separated these three rooms have been torn down. But the artist leaves pieces of the former structures; a column of small stones, held in place by wooden slats; the doorway that had previously led from one room to another; long wooden beams, connecting floor to ceiling. The separation between the three rooms isn’t erased, but what remains is porous. Placed throughout the space are neatly piled remnants from the demolition and construction.

In the first of the three rooms, a new painting by Stefanie Heinze, *Celestial Topping (packs, peas & wheels)*, hangs on the southern wall, on top of the fabric cut from the ceiling. There is a palpable ambiguity of feeling in the painting as corporeal and vegetal forms vie for space, color and shape in a manner both combative and joyful. This tension within the relation between forms seems self-reflexive, referring to an interior world in the painting, as well as to the painting process itself. There is a sense of reckoning with instability, decision-making and chance, all things central to Heinze’s practice. The forms pulse like a nervous system, reacting and responding not only to one another, but also to the painter herself. Some forms make loose reference to objects of everyday life, a high heel, a pea-pod, a butt, while others retain a familiarity without being placeable. Heinze’s practice spars with and faces the banality and difficulty of uncertainty, confronting the insecurity that lies within the instability of the painting process.

Sound from a new video work by Nancy Lupo echoes in the space. The video, titled *Changes Everything*, is projected onto a set of closed doors, installed on the far, northernmost, wall. Light coming in from a nearby window alters the quality of the image over the course of a day. The video is itself a rippling series of collages and scanned frames that Lupo recorded with her father in her hometown of Flagstaff, Arizona. Varying tones of blue skies seen from the view out of a moving car window shimmer throughout. In the audio, Lupo reenacts a conversation between her and her father, playing both roles. They discuss things changed and unchanged in Flagstaff over the course of a 30-year period. There is an elusive sense of location between the scenes from the car, and the audio. Alongside the video, sculptures of accumulated bows, aluminum lambs, door

¹ Pp. 77. Vidler, Anthony. *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1992.

² Pp. 78-79, *ibid*.

handles and hand weights, rubbed or coated in glittery gold paints and pigments, are laid on the floor. Both the video and the sculptures shimmer, signaling an excess, or fantasy that marks yet another kind of transit.

Turning to the right, a door leads back into the street facing rooms of the gallery. Running parallel to the exterior windows is a wall made from panels connected by hinges, with square sections of wood at the bottom, and long windows at the top. These glass room dividers were often used in Soviet apartments in Tbilisi. They let in light, divide a space, and can collapse if desired. Hanging in this room is another painting by Heinze titled *Baby Basin*. The butt reappears, this time alongside what might be a part of a leg, puckering orifices, flapping tongues and a stubbly scalp. Going through the door in the dividing wall, one looks to the end of a long hallway and sees the foyer where the walk through the gallery began.

Building elements in Tolia's installation become signifiers of both what they are, and what undoes them, their assembly and their dismantling. She describes the work as "some kind of unfinished building, but at the same time, ruined... It's just started to be built but it's already old." The structures are built into decay. The epigraph to Vidler's chapter is taken from Jean-Paul Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*; "My body is everywhere: the bomb which destroys my house also damages my body insofar as the house was already an indication of my body."³ Sartre, via Vidler, not only points to the spread of the body and the way it becomes dispersed in space, but also to the vulnerability that diffusion imbues into the material world. The house indicates the body because the body's impact on, movement through and interaction with its environment comes to define its presence. Sartre also points to the bomb, the violent force from outside. Displacement, destruction and a relentless reorganization of material, inform not only these artists' individual practices, but also, the context of the exhibition, which is situated in a city and a region where the history of war and presence of occupation is vivid. Tolia's installation brings decay and destruction together with a sense of unstoppable replication, and an endless reconfiguration of space.

Spread throughout the show, one finds drawings and small oil paintings by Tolia done on paper, or directly on the wall, or on canvas. The artists practice begins with drawing, and those found in the exhibition become inscriptions, moments that conflate the hand that draws, rendering space in two-dimensions, with the hand that builds, shaping the world that the body moves through and lives in.

Marina Caron

³ Pp. 69. Vidler, Anthony. *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1992.