



Racheal Crowther
Managed Decline
September 3rd 2023 – October 7th 2023

The works in *Managed Decline*, Racheal Crowther's first exhibition with the gallery, trace the decimation of post war social housing as it collapses in the neoliberal era; they give form to the story of private property developers operating in largely unregulated markets; form to the organised erosion and disappearing of communities. These objects become the psychic imagery of bio-political dominance and subordination. Of the carnal behaviour and phallic mentality of landlords and late-capitalist urbanism.

They are remote and severe, highly material to their context. That distance, which is an evasive and abstracted violence, is an active apparatus obscuring and dislocating actors in a larger politics that places private profit over care - pig iron and cheap cold steel sealing the entranceways to families' homes after they've been forced out via compulsory purchase orders. The notion of 'revitalisation' is inseparable from the violence and hostility of displacement, that which often occurs under, what Rosalyn Deutsche calls, *the inscrutable whims of an invisible hand*.

The structure and schedule of regeneration projects is well detailed, but it is the psycho-social undercurrent that Crowther is attempting to manifest here— it is the psychopathic desire for capital, it is land value speculation, married with the lecherous fascination of cityscapes and skyscrapers, the paternalistic fantasy that views economic growth as the only way out of the manic shape it has itself forged. In her 1977 essay *Skyscraper Seduction/ Skyscraper Rape*, Dolores Hayden writes about the male power fantasies of urban architecture and how the 'capitalist city...consumes human lives, lays waste to human settlements, and ultimately overpowers the urban economic activities which provided its original justification.'

The doors are tough and antagonistic. The use of steel as a cheaper alternative to Sitex security screens doubles as callous in its frugality and also in its almost sadistic separation of tenant and home. On any *decanted* estate, there are hundreds of former homes, hundreds of steel doors,

appearing overnight to sequester both private and collective histories whilst the block awaits demolition.

The replicas of these private security doors, that Crowther has made from discarded steel flooring, dimly transmit an aura of isolation and dereliction. They are proxies for a phantom-like restructuring of the metropolitan landscape, and can be oriented in line with the urban poetics of Martin Wong's rusty brown cityscapes of the late 1980s, though devoid of human bodies. A stark and sinister materiality, perhaps more aligned with Doris Salcedo, and her *Widowed House* series, is what these sculptures are engaging. Like her contemporary, David L. Johnson, whose sculptures are often made from removed anti-homeless spikes, Crowther is deftly readdressing how civic architectural devices relate to power and subjugation.

Omission is a hallmark of Crowther's work - we are often left with fragments of information, small gestures to much denser issues. With the doors, that formal restraint, a kind of essential emptiness that recalls Barnett Newman's *Zim Zum I*, mirrors the obfuscation of communication channels between citizens and both state / private entities. Everything - housing estates, homes, sanctuaries, regeneration sites, the later hegemonic vision of the expanding city, the banality of luxury complexes and multinational office blocks, uninhabited columns of money, the developer jargon – everything is empty and diminished and derelict.

- E.L

List of works

Clockwise from left

'89', 2023

Door cover made using repurposed steel
105 x 215 cm

'302', 2023

Door cover made using repurposed steel
105 x 215 cm

'45', 2023

Door cover made using repurposed steel
105 x 215 cm

'113', 2023

Door cover made using repurposed steel
105 x 215 cm