

For her first solo exhibition in a British publicly funded gallery, Kitty Kraus will present four elements of her current work: an antennae piece, a found window 'shutter' cut to shape, gap reflecting lamps, and a series of drawings that present the fictional and often deliberately incorrect trajectories of light escaping from the inwardly reflective interiors of the artist's mirror-lamps.

Kraus has recently shown fragile glass constructions and frequently makes use of everyday material in her installations. Of her text works, the on-going 'Dekaputcapitalisation' uses a collage of passages from medical and historical tomes on the subject of decapitation. 'Caput' in Latin is the origin of the word 'head' ('kopf' in German) and also 'capital'. Her use of industrial and consumer products include concrete, ice blocks infused with ink, electric light bulbs, suit fabric, as well as the handles of shopping trolleys, which sometimes whirl erratically at eye-level, activated by a spinning motor.

One might view the minimal and destructive nature of Kraus' work in an art-historical line of artists as diverse as Gustav Metzger and Richard Serra. For example, the opposing tension in her sculpture's de-material fragility and the visceral impact on the viewer is evident in her leant glass works, which are sometimes almost invisible. One slip from these carefully poised objects may result in collapse. The writer and curator Veit Loers has said about Kraus' sculptures: 'What appears to be a delicate Minimalist object [in photographic form] has a threatening potential in its physical presence in space.' Kraus' cold glass structures, some of which are almost bent to breaking point, force us into a direct and cautious engagement with them. However, we also recognise our body's distorted and disintegrated reflection in their surfaces. If glass is a viscose liquid then it's appropriate, as the Berlin-based writer Magnus Schäfer has noted, that Kraus' work can be seen as a 'liquid masquerading as a solid'. In this respect, the glass works hold an analogy with the human form and act as mirages that mirror what is in front of them. Their raw edges also become optical devices that frame images seen through them.

For this exhibition, the artist has produced a single-level reflecting lamp for Southend-on-Sea. Previously, she has used six inwardly facing mirror panes to encase a bulb that outwardly refracts light in a kaleidoscopic manner, however this new work enforces a more solitary, horizontal and contemplative effect. Paradoxically, her formal, even mathematical stringency for creating art connects with an effective means or recipe for each work's own destruction or dissolution. If this occurs in various ways – in the gradual melting of her ice-blocks, for example, which leave traces of ink on the floor once the object has gone – then in her mirror-lamps, it takes place in the refraction and explosion of light that breaks out to project geometric patterns onto the surrounding walls, ceiling and floor of an exhibition space. In one respect, a liberating force impacts on the gallery

through a mechanical and electronic form of manipulation, while a play with scale and perception suggests a further form of optimistic fragmentation.

Importantly, if Kraus' mirror-works are self-contained entities that exclude all images of the world around them, their external projections amplify an impossible space that's enlarged to become an infinite absence, and they represent an endlessly multiplying 'nothing' that eclipses the viewer. This self-conscious act of encasing, reflecting and multiplying a void is not just a physical feat, it's a cerebral and psychological one. It exists as sublime and incomprehensible, yet also as a potentially cathartic and energising metaphor for a myriad of possibilities in the world.

A similar fragile and hazardous electronic device is represented in this exhibition through two transistor radio aerials. Situated alone in Focal Point Gallery's project space, and wired to the building's main electrical circuit, the two elements face each other, and between them, a permanently illuminated spark lights the room. Like many of Kraus' works, to touch this brittle and delicate device would be to destroy it.

This exhibition will be shown at the same time as the London 2012 Olympic Games in nearby Stratford, and from an architectural point of view, one might read the aesthetic of Kraus' work as a comment on the Olympic project's audacity in relation to the closure and enforced decay of classic regional buildings that function as key community centres. Kraus' show is housed in a Brutalist civic construction earmarked for demolition, however her work veers towards a focus on the human figure rather than an overt political cogitation on regeneration. This is most evident in the shutter work, where a section of a plastic commercial security hoarding is hung or poised in an indolent manner. This concern for the body is a recurring link in Kraus' work, and like her glass constructions, this screen takes on absurd and fragile human characteristics. In essence, Kraus forces us to think about the discrepancy between sight, materiality and our own physical presence in the world, as well as the constant threat of destruction. Here the tension occurs between the limits of an object's physicality and its collapse.

Kitty Kraus was born in Heidelberg, Germany, in 1976 and lives and works in Berlin. She studied philosophy at Humboldt University, Berlin (1997 to 1999) and received an MFA from Universität der Künste, Berlin in 2006. In the same year she had her first solo exhibition with Galerie Neu, Berlin. Solo exhibitions include Kunsthalle Zurich, 2008, 'Intervals: Kitty Kraus' at Guggenheim Museum, New York, 2009 and Heidelberger Kunstverein, 2011. Kraus received the Kunstpreis blauorange in 2008 and was nominated for the Preis der Nationalgalerie für junge Kunst 2011 (Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin).

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