



LAUREN GAULT

Lipstick-NASA 2015

Working across a sculptural, written and performance based practice, Lauren Gault's installation at Jupiter Artland calls upon her exploration into the intangible or resonant qualities of materials. In particular, Lauren is interested in how matter can move beyond basic 'material' properties or capabilities and induce a 'felt' time or experience as a form of language.

Bringing together a collection of constructed and found objects, installed in a specifically selected site, Lauren invites us to reposition our relationship to particular materials, allowing for new significance to permeate. Elevating known or 'everyday' materials, she repositions these objects as vessels, that in their own way have an uncanniness and a chronology in relation to time and experience.

Within this work, Lauren references the image of a 'stranding' (beached whale) as a way to further interrogate extreme 'material' experiences. This is described by the term 'qualia' - an attempt to define the non-chemical essence or experience of objects/materials; for example, we are able to define the chemical components of water without being able to describe what 'wetness' is. Lauren uses this as an entry point to understand how form and matter might communicate narratives, times and experiences.

Developing this enquiry further, Lauren also references 'spermaceti' the sought after material harvested from the head of a Sperm Whale. Spermaceti has been used in the production of cosmetics, machine lubricant within the aerospace industry (currently in the Hubble space telescope) due to its stable composition and ability to deal with extreme conditions. The material also has a direct history to the Scottish East coast where many were employed in the industry.

Spermaceti, is a material that has been carried across countless iterations and uses - lipstick to space telescopes, the bodily to time travel. This motif or idea of a widespread material 'DNA' poses questions around a materials ability to be felt / encountered- what this type of knowledge or transference might entail, how it may be transmitted and in turn received. As a substance it appears unremarkable, however, through range in use it becomes something extraordinary.

With great focus given to the exact placement of Lauren's sculpture within the grounds, her 'boundary site' allows for a very particular sense of 'place' to unfold. Framed by the organic, walled exterior, then giving way to a vaster expanse, there is a distinct sense of the 'in-between', a 'here' and a 'there', which makes the site so rich as an encounter.

Materials: Water, welded PVC, acrylic, volcanic geodes, cast whales tooth (resin), sand (taken from beach Latitude:56.21483612, Longitude: -2.719076872 where 16 pilot whales stranded in 2014), translucent rubber, towels, sandblasted stone from original Bonnington Estate wall, lipstick.

A Conversation Between Lauren Gault and John Heffernan, July 3 2015

JH: The most prominent terms that stands out from our discussions are, 'terroir' and 'qualia'. How do these words or the idea of these concepts fit the materials and site you've chosen at Jupiter Artland?

LG: When I first discovered these terms, I found them incredibly useful as a way to frame an approach to finding materials or processes which aren't 'blank', those I can 'write' into, and in some way are more resonant/ have a metaphysical quality. The ambition is to try to use materials that can inform or help me develop more of a language within sculpture that feels rich, that feels 'vocal'.

I began to think of Jupiter Artland as 'site' with all its specific history as 'site', magnetic leylines, Knights Templar, homeopathic connections, east coast connections to whaling / mass strandings – all these for me talk about a language of 'feltness' as opposed to 'known-ness' - things to be sensed as opposite to explicitly or linearly communicated, again relating to this idea of a *universal qualitative language*. This is particularly pertinent in the context of Jupiter Artland as a unique geographic site and as a non-gallery space and also links politically to our current contemporary situation - an age of 'connectivity' without necessarily a 'connectedness'.

The ambition was to make a work that was experiential (like happening upon a 'scene'), whilst trying to acknowledge the experience of the image, and provide new ways of encountering a qualitative language within the poetics of the motif. Also, that the work be invitational without being 'directive'. In this regard, a boundary site was particularly important as a way to very definitively physically and politically feels 'between' sites, like sea / beach, defined or undefined space- a sense of a 'here' and a 'there'.

Discovering that site where the wall was coming down, the terrain was different - it feels like you are on the edge. It has a weird sense of danger about it, a strange energy, where you feel you are going 'between'.

JH: You chose to use a combination of materials, however the materials themselves individually are familiar or commonplace- towel, clay, steel or sand

LG: I'm really interested in the idea of being able to reposition yourself in relation to certain materials. Something that is very known, and very domestic and very 'blank', actually has the ability to be the carrier of these complex narratives. So, it's about trying to shift your perception of these very 'known knowns', or what you understand as 'known knowns'.

I also wanted to find a way to exploit the more abstract qualities of the materials, a more tactile way to experience the quality of water or wetness that could be shared / experienced - like the qualities of this matter is somehow being 'performed'. The same goes for thinking about the selected sand suspended behind a transparent element (taken from beaches where mass

strandings have taken place) – a blank but historically rich material when positioned in this context.

I also wanted this element to incite a particular view or re-iterate a grounded-ness or 'bodyness' to the encounter of the work, feeling very much 'grounded' but invited to look up and through the material, essentially upwards to where the spermaceti is hurtling around us as we look. Also, each view can be 'live' ie. never be the same. It was also a very simple gestural measure to reposition our relationship or encounter with these materials – water on land as opposed to in it, being able to see through sand rather than encounter its grounded opacity.

I chose to make 'abstract' the architecture already existent in the space/site, the tree for example being reflected/suggested by the upright form without being explicitly replicated. I was interested in thinking through again this 'between state' idea, researching certain mental state such as 'depersonalisation' whereby you feel outside of or beyond yourself whilst still remaining in a 'bodily' state. Being 'beside' yourself or a 'paraself'. This of course again enters into the discussions of our mode of communications or experience, which are often very linear or non-experiential in terms of a sensory or felt language. I also think it relates nicely to the magnetic / ley line qualities of the sight, as well as the homeopathic connections. Interestingly, it is thought that a disruption in the magnetic field may be the cause of this 'stranding' behaviour. A nice resonance with the proximity to the Jencks and it's divined / magnetically sensed source.

JH: When you mentioned about the metaphysical sense of the work, it leads into one of the core references you use within the work – a 'stranding' and the material 'spermaceti', both references to whales. Spermaceti, (which is the material that comes from the bulkhead of the sperm whale), I suppose there is a sort of metaphysical sense around this because of our detached relationship to a material like this. – its complex however commonplace in appearance at the same time. Some of the works you have created partially embody that human relationship with the scale of the object, but its still made of plastic, a bi-product, an interesting construction of the 'metaphysical'?

LG: The 'stranding' was a really simple image I saw in a film, where all these whales were on this beach. It was arresting. The poignancy of this image (whale on beach), for me, is rooted in several features - the proximity of the entity to extremis - an extreme 'qualitative' moment. By this I mean an experience that can work to define the 'intangibles' of what an immersive quality can mean, for example what 'wetness' is as a definition or 'dryness' - to 'be in' these qualities. There are scientific methods to describe chemical / elemental composition of water but nothing to actually describe what 'wetness' is – modes to define the whole but not a resultant component part. These qualitative experiences could be described as a shared universal 'relational' language.

JH: The unknown being the whale?

LG: The whale. There's a lot of writing about it, being this unknown thing that can live for two hundred years, and it has its own religion, and its own language. There's so little we know about them.. There's something really uncanny about it, but also something very human about it. Reading more about stranding's, the literature surrounding why this happens is really unclear but has a lot to do with the senses, there's a number of links to that phenomena and Jupiter as a 'site' (magnetic lines ley lines for example).

Spermaceti is the most sought after substance. As a material it's really stable, so it can exist, as a material it's very resistant and almost has a heroism about it because it still exists in extremes of condition, deep pressure or space, it still remains, it doesn't change. It was used it for movements in outer space, in the Hubble telescope, looking into the past it was in car engines, it was in lipstick, it had this omnipresence. Almost like this strange DNA, sea-based

and now land-based thing almost being everywhere. It was the idea, not the act I'm interested in.

JH: For me the upright work with the Perspex is like your own image or viewfinder, can you talk about that form?

LG: I think the upright was quite difficult because it's a form, its sculpture and dictating a single form can be quite difficult for me, so there were several things I was thinking about. Whenever I visited the site I thought what is going to work that doesn't feel like it has just been 'placed', I wanted to work with the architecture of the site. Parts of the site such as the tree, taking an object that's there and recalibrating or making it slightly different so it is like a shadow or another iteration of something that could be in another place or version of the site.

JH: There's another interesting regional fact in the work being at Jupiter, there was a family who lived in Bonnington House at one point who were a large whaling family, coincidentally, the information came to the surface at the same time as you were investigating the material purposes of spermaceti and how whaling might be topically interesting for you to investigate. Again there's a natural, metaphysical occurrence there. Is that feature a certificate for you exploring this because of the coincidence?

LG: I suppose it's another layer of 'resonance' - when making a sculpture you want it to feel like it's part of a conversation with the site, a negotiation with site and materials. It's nice to think that the house may have played host to some linked conversations, ideas or intents or was witness to some of actions discussed (or maybe had the material in use). In the house / site you can't have seen the sea, you're in the middle of a field - you have to imagine it and take yourself out of what is physically available to you.

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