

Andrea Carvalho, *Made to Measure: and more ideas on space*

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Margaret Rodgers

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Andrea Carvalho exhibited a series of unusual constructions, which embodied many of the qualities that mystify and to some extent alienate viewers unfamiliar with the eccentricities of some current practices. The pieces, roughly constructed, were made from materials unfamiliar to the practice of making art. The colour was minimal. Paradoxically, the work was also engaging in its tantalizing obscurities.

As the daughter of a builder, Carvalho has found inspiration in her surroundings, using available scrap material such as carpet underlay, pink insulation, foil tape, fluorescent fixtures, and roughly cut and painted pieces of wood. The subtitle "Ideas on Space" articulated much of the installation, where individual constructions were given room to breathe in the smallish gallery. *Chair* was a one-person portable workstation with Tyvek seat cushion and side cupboards for supplies, made to

measure by and for the artist herself. The inherent irony in this uncomfortable looking piece reminded me of works such as Krzysztof Wodiczko's *Homeless Vehicle Project* or his *Poliscar* a "command center" for communication and community.

Painted white with interior accents of pink, Carvalho's chair connected efficiently with the pink Styrofoam insulation in *Engineering* where that ubiquitous construction material was layered with circles and off cut shapes of various woods and

topped with a teepee of turned railing sections. The piece was made during a residency at Broken City Lab in Windsor, referencing both the new university engineering building and the neighbouring Sandwich Town, where abandoned and derelict buildings offered scavenged material.

In *An open road where I can breathe*, a fluorescent light illuminated a Plexiglas box with a metal arch—its emitting glare rejecting and inviting close examination in equal measure. The title calls up a road trip in a denatured landscape: the golden-arch pit stop reveals its unwelcome aspect, the road a heaving strata of carpet underlay.

The crude materials of construction and demolition the artist used for the floor pieces contrasted dramatically with several finely executed paper cut-outs exhibited on the gallery walls. These would be familiar to art students in their quotation of key works in modern architecture. Mies van der Rohe's *Farnsworth House*, Moshe Safdie's *Habitat*, and Le Corbusier's *Villa Savoye* provide an academic backdrop while reminding one that even these iconic creations are made from the most humble of materials. While finely rendered, each piece drooped tentatively from its position, perhaps affected by dampness but more likely challenging the canon.

Carvalho's visual essay offered space for questioning the nature of beauty, of construction, indeed of sculpture itself. ←

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Andrea CARVALHO, *Chair*, 2010. Wood, aluminium, foam, wheels, paint. 45,7 x 91,4 cm (closed) ; 106,6 x 91,4 cm (open). Photo: Chai DUNCAN. Courtesy of The Latcham Gallery.



Andrea CARVALHO, *Installation view*,
2012. The Latham Gallery.
Photo: Chai DUNCAN. Courtesy of
The Latham Gallery.

Andrea CARVALHO, *Engineering*,
2010. Plaster, wood, styrofoam.
71 x 50,8 cm. Photo: Chai DUNCAN.
Courtesy of The Latham Gallery.

