

push and pull: Bridget Moser, Michael Vickers, Nikki Woolsey,
Toronto, Mercer Union, February 7 – March 22, 2014

Britt Gallpen

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Sophie Jodoin, *untitled (to sb)*, 2014.
photo: Benny Jaberg, courtesy of the artist

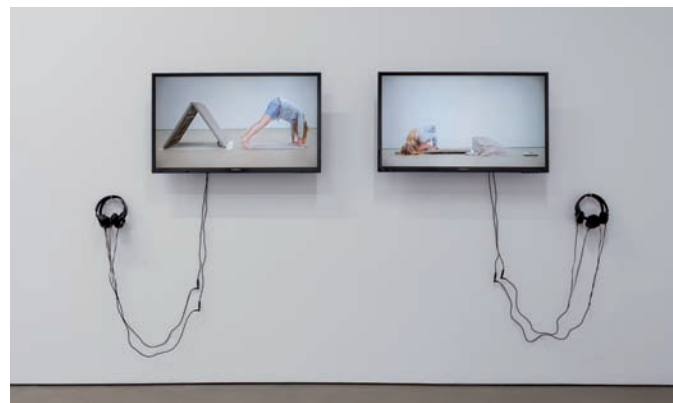
Sophie Jodoin, *how permanent is permanent*

Acme Project Space, London, 20 February–2 March 2014

Sophie Jodoin is currently on a six-month Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec residency at the Acme studios in East London alongside artists from Australia, Germany, Sweden, and Switzerland. In her exhibition *how permanent is permanent*, she presents a selection of drawings and photographic prints produced prior to her time in London. Several works in the exhibition incorporate pieces of found text, which the artist often uses as a starting point for her work. This muse will no doubt evolve as a result of her very much non-permanent new studio situation.

Often working in series, Jodoin's monochromatic conté, charcoal, black gesso, or digitally printed images cover a diverse range of subjects including processed and natural stones, draped fabric, stained film, and stars. Works are hung in pairs and groups, with the eight images in the front room spaced at regular intervals. In contrast, the larger back room holds only two works: a three-metre-long study of a rock and the words "amazingly silent" printed at about a tenth the size of the rock study—a size that belies their epic tone. The edge of the textured rock is neatly erased, creating a border outside of which there is nothing: no background, no contextual information, and most importantly, nothing to indicate scale. This white void runs into the void of the white cube, as if testing its limits. Just inside the front door we have an almost concrete-poetry style answer in the found, sensitively positioned book pages of *This Far and No More* by Andrew H. Malcolm. Read in this context, however, the work's legitimizing wooden frames entirely use up the space of the page and also hinder the relation of both text and page to the exhibition space. Similarly the artist's semiologically charged objects destine them to function only as signs—for slowness, human limitation, withdrawal, and so on.

The more complex conceptualization of these objects within the work sits in line with the pre-Socratic notion of reducing all objects to tinier physical elements: Greek philosopher Thales of Miletus's claim for instance, that everything was made up of water. When Jodoin first hung her drawings in the space, the moisture in the walls quickly invested them with a slight sag. Water appears in the rock study, titled *Untitled (to sb)*, where the drawn marks of rain and bird droppings are mimics by the artist's hand and also in the digital print *Untitled (cloud graffiti)*, which shows graffiti that has been partly composed and partly removed, existing as a hybrid of image and stain. Similarly, the grainy luminosity of the starry sky in *Galaxy* is repeated in the graphitic sheen that coats a metallic curtain and a minecart in the series *Intervals*. A non-anthropocentric equivalence begins to emerge between human, meteorological, and astronomical producers. Also, each image in *Intervals* is composed at a common photographic ratio, complicating the exhibition's intermedial composition. It is these drawn fictions that cumulatively construct Jodoin's expansive material cosmos. [Dan Munn]



Bridget Moser, *I Want to Believe*, 2014
photo: Toni Hafkenschied, courtesy of Mercer Union, Toronto

push and pull: Bridget Moser, Michael Vickers, Nikki Woolsey

Toronto, Mercer Union, February 7–March 22, 2014

An aura of youth and vitality coupled with a slight precarity is immediately apparent upon entering *push and pull*, Georgina Jackson's debut exhibition as director of exhibitions and publications at Mercer Union. This is perhaps due, in part, to the majority of the works having been made specifically for the show. And although the central premise of the exhibition has been contextualized as the interstitial, or the spaces of in-between or almost, the elements of storytelling and concern with time that similarly tie these three young artists together are perhaps more compelling.

Each work sits between at least two practices—Michael Vickers between sculpture and painting; Nikki Woolsey: collage and sculpture; and Bridget Moser: performance, stand-up comedy, and modern dance. However, beyond this oscillation of medium, each has managed to capture a world of narrative within their individual works. Vickers plays with poetry and personal narrative as in his work *Vera in the Fields* (2014), a grassy green angular steel piece perched dangerously between the floor and wall, a reference to his grandmother who laboured in prairie fields upon immigrating from Switzerland, while Woolsey allows the objects themselves to tell her their stories as in *Feel Need Need Feel* (2014) whereby the desperate request of an underwear band holds itself, and by extension the sculpture, together.

In essence, Vickers positions himself against his materials via the very physical act of bending and manipulating them, while Woolsey acts as their translator, collecting, arranging and "willingly working with little expertise," as she recently explained. Both makers also possess an ability to suggest enduring moments beyond those they've momentarily captured here. Indeed, each responds to time rather differently. While Woolsey views her arrangements as tenuous and on the verge of being constantly remade, the action of Vickers' labour, rendered in folds, drapes, or angles depending on the material, stand in testament to discrete and finite moments of work.

Finally, there is Bridget Moser, who stole the show. The main space features *I Want to Believe* (2014) a two-channel video that repeatedly plays against and in tandem with itself, referencing popular culture, the banalities of office work, and the existential "big questions" of life all to a melancholic, if slightly cheeky, soundtrack of Damien Rice. The piece is aesthetically refined, boasting a palate of khaki, tan, and grey but is nevertheless approachable—there is something instantly familiar and comforting about the objects Moser employs and the way she uses them. It's the most beautiful piece of improv theatre you've ever seen. It is highly affective and completely engaging, strong enough to bring a viewer to pensive pause if it wasn't so funny, and it's the kind of piece that anyone who's been intimidated by performance art should see. [Britt Gallpen]