SOFT TOPOLOGIES KATE SCARDIFIELD

27 FEBRUARY - 20 APRIL 2018

THE WORKING FLOOR / THE WORKING WALL:

POLYESTER

STORM SAIL CLOTH SKIFF CLOTH **RIP STOP NYLON** SILK LINEN BRASS **POWDER COATED STEEL** BRONZE STAINLESS STEEL ROPE PAPER THREAD WAX COATED POLYESTER TWINE **MASKING TAPE** GRAPHITE **ACRYLIC PAINT**

COMPOSITIONS AND DIMENSIONS ALL VARIABLE.

IN SESSION WITH:

BROOKE STAMP LAURENCE PIKE **EMMA RANKIN** TIM SCHORK **ALISTAIR TRUNG** PENNY SCARDIFIELD

KEEPING TIME: HD VIDEO, 1080P, SILENT, **ENDLESS LOOP FORM AUTHORED BY:** ERIKA SCHNEIDER VIDEOGRAPHY: **ROBIN HEARFIELD**

VITRINE:

H9889-4/1

Weight for sidereal-time regulator clock, brass, made by William Hardy, London, England, 1808-1810, used at the Parramatta and Sydney Observatories, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia, 1821-1980.

H10307-9

Telescope instrument, brass, maker and place unknown, used at Parramatta Observatory, Parramatta, New South Wales, Australia, 1827-1830.

H10307-16

Telescope instrument, brass, maker and place unknown, used at Parramatta Observatory, Parramatta, New South Wales, Australia,

1827-1830.

H10307-28/1

Telescope instrument, brass, maker and place unknown, used at Parramatta Observatory, Parramatta, New South Wales, Australia, 1827-1830.

H10307-28/2

Telescope instrument, brass, maker and place unknown, used at Parramatta Observatory, Parramatta, New South Wales, Australia, 1827-1830.

Lent by the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, Sydney

Like the pleats in Scardifield's As a **sculptural forms.**

apparent wind.

turn of phrase, 'apparent wind' made me smile. Inadvertent and offhand poetry – itself a collision of two (terminological) forces.

The word 'apparent' is about feeling and cognition.

'the solution to the problem was all too apparent...'

THE WIND,

I heard the phrase 'apparent wind' for the

first time when Kate Scardifield dropped

it into a discussion of her recent body

of work. By that point the conversation

talking about her fabric sculptures or

the constellation of objects within the

[Kate knows about sailing. I'm quite

apprehensive about open water]

gallery anymore, we were talking about

I didn't know what 'apparent wind'

was, though I'd felt its force many times.

Yet I suppose that's relatively fitting, for

apparent wind is something that must be

felt. Not necessarily a directional wind

unto itself, it is contingent on a subject;

Apparent wind is the wind we feel when

we are in motion. It is a combination of

the actual wind that buffets and belts us

and the wind that is created by forward

We feel apparent wind as a single gust

at an angle to the actual breeze, not a

partitioned current. It is a wind that is

purely experiential. To feel apparent

wind is to be an active agent, not

simply a passive observer. To

feel the wind one must be

in motion. One must move alongside

and against it.

Two winds colliding; two forces

pushing against one another.

on a receptive (a feeling) body.

propulsion.

had digressed dramatically. We weren't

APPARENTLY

sailing.

Things are apparent when we understand and register them. But the word is also about vision. Or rather, a coming into visibility.

'it gradually became apparent that...'

Odd, then, that the wind should be entangled in this syntactical web.

Because you can't really see

You can see the effect of the wind – the signs of its caress – but the wind itself is In Soft Topologies many of these pleated fabric sculptures are made from the material used for sails. The sails of a boat; the sails that feel the pull and tug of

Within the space of the gallery, these sails are beholden to a different kind of force. Not the force of the North Easterly, but the force of a gesture. Scardifield's pleated textiles have been draped and folded, fanned and collapsed so that their arcs and their contours become

And what is it that these sails have become? Studies of form? Well, naturally. But they are also traces.

something else altogether.

They point to movement even in its absence. In the crescent of each folded form we witness an invisible choreography. The twist and the turn of the arm that gently coaxed the fabric into its present formation. The arm of the artist but also the arms of those invited to interact with the works and change the spatial dynamic of the gallery at intervals. To enact their own force. A choreographer, a percussionist, a designer, a sail maker, an architect, a mother – all of whom intimately understand vibrational frequencies and pulsation in different contexts. All of It is Ariadne, the daughter of Minos, who whom reconfigure and recondition the sculptures so as to direct our attention to fallen in love with Theseus at first sight, gesture as an animating and enfolding she gives him a spool of thread so that he

Looking at Scardifield's objects is like / Left as trail and a trace, the thread allows looking for the wind. They are material forms but they are also vessels that betray the signs of a past caress.

Vessels - another maritime metaphor

But we should pause here for a

moment. While we unravel this

allegorical narrative – dancing

around the image (ha!) of

'apparent wind' – we may have

forgotten that 'wind' can be

To wind: to twist,

to turn, to coil,

to fold.

To render the wind visible – to make it 'apparent' - one must be sensitive to the way it alters and amends form. The wind is legible in a photograph of a soaring balloon or a bowed tree. It is legible in the drapery that swathes a statue.

invisible.

In other words, to look at the wind is to look at the trail it leaves behind. It is both a noun (a breeze; to follow the path that the wind takes, a current of air) and tracing its movement by observing the remnants of its gesture. It is to uncover the wind's navigational footprint.

To observe something in this way – by paying attention to its effect rather than its material substance - is to look at it askew. It is to approach a subject obliquely and at an angle. Rather like the way you sail a boat: always moving at an angle to the wind, never directly into it.

To sail a boat is to approach the wind from the side. When you sail you must follow laylines. You move forward by tracing a kind of zigzag trail. Like a pleat.

Scardifield anticipates both possible definitions of the word wind. Her fabrics are woven and wound, folded and fanned. But they are also gestures. Or rather, an attestation of gesture. They make gesture and motion legible.

And as they do so they become cartographic devices.

Tracing and tracking an invisible (and now past) gesticulation, they map movement. Little wonder, then, that fragments from a broken telescope feel so at home in the cluster of works assembled here. These borrowed artefacts, while defunct and inoperative, are tiny tributes to travel in the past tense.

The cross pollination of 'wind' and 'wind' that we witness in Scardifield's work (by way of allegorical association)

has a mythological precedent. [in a roundabout way – hear me out]

In the Greek myth of Theseus and the Minotaur, the hero defeats the beast that lies in wait at the centre of the labyrinth built by King Minos of Crete.

Theseus enters the labyrinth to rescue the Athenian youths who were sacrificed to the half-man, half-bull to avenge the death of Minos' son.

But he is not the only hero.

really authors this escapade. Having may find his way out of the labyrinth.

Theseus to fold (to wind) back over his path and navigate the labyrinth.

Thread as a compass; thread as cartography.

Scardifield also enlists thread as a means and mode of navigation.

In the way they demarcate and plot movement (in the way they record and diarise a gesture), her fabric forms force us to read the exhibition as if we were reading a map.

[no wonder the painted grid on the wall looks familiar: Cartesian coordinates as a compositional scheme]

In order to Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, navigate using a map along with the telescope parts, is we must invert our perspective of the a component of a clock from the terrain. The view tilts. We don't look at the world, we look down on it. We double back - like a concertina fold.

I had a pop-up book of Greek myths as celestial objects. From a fixed point, a child. The only part I remember was the page that recreated Minos' labyrinth from a bird's eye view with Ariadne's red string woven through its corridors. I couldn't even tell you what other stories were narrated in the book – their micro worlds erupting from the centre fold as soon as you turned the page – but I could tell you about the particular hue and texture of that piece of string. (I never did think Ariadne got the accolades she deserved).

Looking down on the labyrinth in the book was like looking down on a map. My perspective was inverted: I looked down on the walls, not at them.

In Soft Topologies you are given this same perspectival position. Not because you are elevated but because a wall has been turned on its side and placed on the floor.

Over the course of the exhibition, objects move from the floor/wall plinth to the remaining upright walls in the space and back again. They move from a state of rest to a state of activation. When each invited participant reconfigures the arrangement of the sculptural forms they what is at play? change the spatial dynamic of the gallery, for the show is a sequence of staged

We must re-read the room accordingly.

Does this complicate that earlier assumption? The intimation that we are meant to read the exhibition as if it were a map? Because aren't maps fixed? Aren't they authoritative inventories of space?

Though perhaps this debate is unnecessary. Redundant before it begins. Perhaps there is no dispute, for even though we put our faith in a map as a sovereign source, of course it is fallible and subject to change. Haven't you ever gotten lost using google maps? Haven't you seen the speculative contours and imagined coastlines on an antiquarian chart?

The fixity of a map is nothing but a fallacy. **Geography changes** over (and all the) time. Parramatta observatory used to measure sidereal time.

The sidereal time scale is based on the **[like a pleat]** Earth's rate of rotation relative to distant stars, not the sun. It is a timekeeping system that astronomers use to locate a star will appear in exactly the same location when observed at the same time on the sidereal scale. A sundial for the stars, a sidereal timepiece is both a

One

of the objects

Scardifield borrowed from the

Within the context of Soft Topologies these two terms overlap allegorically but also quite literally.

For Scardifield's exhibition is a map but it is also a durational exercise. It is an account of change over time. Yet this change – the intervening gestures that rearrange the objects in the room – occurs at regular, measurable intervals. This is an exhibition that is structured like a timepiece; like a clock.

Though maybe we should have anticipated this from the outset. Isn't it implicit in the analytical framework we have already laid bare? In the oscillation between different definitions of the word 'wind' as a means of decoding and deciphering

> Because vou can feel the wind on your face as you're propelled forward, and you can wind a piece of thread through a labyrinth,

But you can also 'wind' a clock.

Isobel Parker Philip

ENDNOTES 1 I'm writing this on a balcony overlooking a river. Maybe why that's why I keep returning to

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The silk and linen textiles have been dyed with Australian native flora from Parramatta Park, Western Sydney (33°48'31.368"S 150°59'41.766"E).

The artist acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of these lands and pays respect to Elders past, present and future.

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