ALMINE RECH

Olga Balema, John McCracken, Stella Zhong

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The Power Station is pleased to present a three-person exhibition featuring work by Olga Balema (b.1984), John McCracken (1934–2011) and Stella Zhong (b.1993). The exhibition pulls together the varied strains of connective tissue between each artist by focusing on their deployment of sculptural form and distinct use of material and space—specifically where their work pushes into thresholds of inversion, transparency and nonmaterial. There are pathways to be drawn here that contend powerfully with the architectural volume, density and lightness of the exhibition site and with notions of sculpture itself.

Olga Balema's work has been characterized as procedural and intuitive. Her use of materials, process and intervention often yield valent associations about the artwork and its local environment. A volume made from a sheet of clear polycarbonate can reduce, like a drawing or boundary, to a discrete contour, pushing sculpture into something almost two-dimensional. Her chameleon-like objects are ghostly, prosaic and acute. Forms that touch on minimalist trajectories without participating in their ideological import. Instead, Balema's work holds material in moments of active suspension and revelation to remind us of its state, impermanence and transgression as it flips to its opposite. Volume as threshold or gesture. Material as room or information.

In John McCracken's sculptures, this translates to his use of color and surface. McCracken viewed color as a tangible material meant to permeate the surface of his sculptures so that one could "feel…color through and through." He applied liquid resin—conceptualizing color as a fluid—onto precisely cut plywood volumes, which would then cure into solid form. "From liquid to solid and then back to liquid again, in the visual sense," he said. He meticulously sanded and buffed the layers, resulting in a highly reflective surface that edges into dematerialization–a pivot at odds with the stark gestalt of its sharply defined shape.

Stella Zhong's idiosyncratic forms follow a similar thread in production. They are hand built structures that are obscure and non-referential. Their cool smoothness has been described as "natant" or timeless, where the natural confronts the unnatural, where "forms curl out [from] water." The open face interior of CHIP2023 - Splits, 2023 requires the viewer to position flat on their back to access the underside of a sculptural "chip" carrying an embedded video element. The silent metaphysical imagery destabilizes perception while implying an abstract transformation. As with Balema's work, there is a gesture to minimalism—but not as a utopian project. Instead Zhong's sculptures point entropically outward to another time or a space without things, like a starless sky or a dark room. No outlines, but fully real.

Collectively, the work on site doesn't comment on the idioms of sculpture as much as it participates in its calculus. The fact we can't fully know the thing animating these objects is because their reality is itself incomplete and open, pointing to an underlying process, a form of becoming or reality's own self-unveiling. There are pathways to be drawn here. They lead us elsewhere.