

Artspeak Postscript 64:
Room's Reading

CINDY MOCHIZUKI
on LISA RADON

*Superstitions fit
into your hands.*

(Robin Blaser from the poem *Cups: 8*)

untangle this knot.

how to give a room a reading?

A glassy eye at the back of the gallery fastened to a brass stem looks outward through the window to the streets of Carrall. Its shadow—an arm, its dark twin, casts a black trace of an opaque line down the wall. The eye is labeled as ‘heron eyeball.’ It could very well be. It doesn’t matter if it was bought at the nearby Dressew or found in the trunk of an attic, I go along with the believability of the material’s natural presence.

*Although herons played a minor role in The Iliad,¹
Athena sends Odysseus and Diomedes a heron as sign to
suggest she is watching them. Though the heron itself is
never visible, they both hear its cry loud as day through the
night sky.*

How often does the presence of a sculpture look back at its viewer? What begins to unravel in Lisa Radon’s exhibition is that the placement of these pieces echoes and collectively instigates the phenomena of *looking back*, perhaps like the aura in Walter Benjamin’s

Age of Mechanical Reproduction. The sculptures begin to take on the “ability to look back at us” to open its eyes and “lift its gaze.”²

Looking up they noticed that the dust from the four corners start to migrate over like a flock of birds. First to the centre and then to the other side of the coastline. They transition quietly to the east without our knowing.

A climbing sling hangs off a piece of selenite that floats out of the wall. If the planetary alignment is right, we can say the heron eye is the sun and the selenite is the moon. The small sturdy weave of this thin and lifeless sling. Its function is to ascend and descend mountains and rocky cliffs, but instead it lies quietly next to its counterpart, a mystic crystal used to protect homes. Selenite is made by the layering of sheets and wands and in this case is shielded by the sling attached to a piece of woven hair, an alligator clip, shrink tubing and so on. This poetic recombination of materials rests in a position of inactivity in the gallery space, waiting to shield and protect any climbers from a fall. But also requires us to understand the slow deconstruction of a geology of meaning—not the making of big histories but what Radon refers to as the experimental feminine.³

The Flat Cairn, Pierced is an anti-monument; a horizontal surface a few inches above ground, with a brass rod raised to the sky. An incense stick frozen in time. There is no smoke to watch, there are no wishes to

make. Time is at a standstill. This arrangement of chance and luck references all the frozen pools of lakes. We see a flicker of blue calcite, a stone known to send off a quiet vibration into the room. These are the relics that make a ritual, but the magicians have left the room. They say *be back in 10*.

The architecture of bridge forms slowly between each point in the space, lines and connections begin to ricochet back and forth; a cat's cradle.

When the black and dusty markings start to appear in the upper, right wall around the negative ion generator, several other shadows and walls open up. Like the positive space of a sun print, the tracings begin to mark the presence of the natural accident. These black spills allude to the future, expose the power of these sculptures as having energy, a psychic presence that without our knowledge react and respond to its location. The dusty apparition gathered on the wall is the airborne debris in the gallery, decades of dust and dirt stuck to a wall that is magnified by a generation of negative ions produced on a daily basis.

Out of all the things we can't see over time, we can read the debris left behind.

There is the faint scent of dried yarrow that wafts through the air. Not to be mistaken for the memory of a field of chrysanthemums. Yarrow is distinctly known for

its properties to stop blood from flowing out of wounds and creates second sight when placed up towards your eye. The yarrow or *achillea millefolium* is placed like a nest in *The Rose*. A white, bumpy, plaster, larvae-shell occupying the floor; a small mouth of an opening pierced. An egg-like cocoon, husk emptied out.

A ghost wanders only around the front entrance

The beacon. A hornet hive rock is stacked atop of a wooden platform. A tiny opening is a puncture, looking out to the exterior of the room rather than looking inwards. It calls to the wall adjacent to it. Nestled into a cushioned hole that I believe is marble. But I am wrong. Sedimentary. A knothole for an eye in a slab, a non-reflective mirror of Carmel. Its beauty is the pure form of peach and grey strata. Popular in the man-made construction of historic buildings, the Carmel stone is shelved in an orifice of the wall; commanding ancient mystery.

*A speck of selenite lands on the floor
Herons fly back to sleep in the trees*

A vast ocean bursts its way through the doorways that are opened from *Square Bracket*. Like a snake they press on towards *Post Sentinel*, the wooden measuring post. Three lines of stanzas are used to measure and mark white oak. The invisible waterways and tributaries under the concrete floor, earth and wormholes trip over

the bracket. Tides never make its way up and out of the floor. The salt lines never rise to touch sea level, the flood we anticipated arrives only years later. Square brackets are for inserting the words added by someone who is not the original speaker. Corbels shake when the water channels are so strong.

Beginning in the spring and ending in the fall, paper wasps build umbrellas, hornets make footballs, and yellow jackets make their nests in the underground.

*They are paper makers—transform wood into paper by way of mouth, saliva and water.*⁴

Into the far corner a small, handful of salt placed in a ceramic teacup sits, crystallizing and hardening over time. There is a purification rite of filling a vessel with salt and leaving it to be consumed by unwanted spirits, hungry ghosts. It is used to ward away what's not wanted. Marking an ending at the entrance, I notice the *Laurus nobilis* that hangs over top of the doorway of the gallery. Bay laurel 'assumes the laurel' and signs victory. Characters in Greek mythologies have turned into laurel trees upon pursuit of unwanted love.

Radon's series of sculptures present a constellation of protection—nestled into drywall, corners, stacked on pieces of wood perfectly manufactured to display an otherwise organic cluster of signs and symbols. The sculptures each bear the quality of a talisman, a protector that when placed into its inter-relationship

to the other objects, both seen and unseen, produces a passage from one space to another. Opens one door and closes another. Radon uses a syntax—a careful placement of objects and the relationship between materiality and the natural world. These pieces formulate a set of poetics on how to read the room—perhaps revealing the invisible architecture that we don't see that takes part in the active process of erosion and deposition. Radon reimagines the familiar with the mystic—plaster, oak and gold against the properties of codes and crystals.

Objects accumulate. They keep secrets. They do works.⁵

NOTES

1 Homer. *The Iliad*. Trans. Robert Fagles. NY: Penguin Books, 1990.

2 Hansen, Miriam Bratu. "Benjamin's Aura," *Critical Inquiry* 34, no. 2 (2008): 336-375. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1086/529060> (accessed September 25, 2014).

3 Radon, Lisa. Artist Statement, Artspeak, 2015.

4 *The Insects: An Outline of Entomology*, P.J. Gullan and P.S. Cranston, 2008.

5 Radon, 2015.

CINDY MOCHIZUKI is a multi-disciplinary artist who considers spaces that embody both the fictional and documentary. Often working with archival sources, memory work and interviews; her practice revisits historical and personal memory. Recent exhibitions and projects include: *Shako Club*, grunt gallery (2015), *AIR Yonago* (2014), *Fictive Communities Asia*, Koganecho Bazaar (2014), *On the Subject of Ghosts*, Hamilton Artists Inc (2013), *Yokai & Other Spirits*, Toronto Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre (2013), and *To | From BC Electric Railway 100 Years*, Vancouver International Centre for Contemporary Asian Art (2012). Mochizuki is based in Vancouver.