

# DISPATCHES



But then her art has never resided in the sum of its parts; it's more about going with a vibe: an intimation of all that art can be, which would be pointless to try to contain within anything as earthbound as definition. Photographs like *The Hand That Holds the Desert Down* (2002) or *The Vibration Station* (2002) invite us to reverse our way of thinking in order for an act of creation to take place. The first is an image of a sphinx, its massive stone paw perhaps not resting on the sand but keeping every grain from flying into the ether; while the other is a church organ shown upside down, as if hanging from the ceiling.

Donnelly's most notorious piece remains her arrival at her 2002 exhibition at Casey Kaplan astride a white stallion, from which she decreed the surrender of Napoleon. Questions as to why she should address the status of a long-fallen European emperor arose only to be obscured in the hazy poetry of her pronouncement: "With this I am electric, I am electric." These are deceptive, simple gestures with which the artist is able to do nothing less than unsettle the fabric of the universe: with Donnelly, it seems, the more you look, the less you know.  
*Skye Sherwin*

TRISHA DONNELLY  
 18 JANUARY - 30 MARCH  
 ICA, PHILADELPHIA  
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## TRANSFORMER: TRISHA DONNELLY

'Polymorphous' or 'inexpressible' are the words that people usually reach for when approaching Trisha Donnelly's art, which is one reason why a survey of her work from the past decade, opening this month at Philadelphia's ICA, sounds so tantalising. Just what kind of brain-frying experience would it be to see her accumulated output? What wisdom would be gleaned, for example, from drawings realised in careful, delicate cross-hatchings representing an aura or delineating a void? Or from equally obscure choices of photographic subjects, such as a menacing black wave or a headless swordsman?

*Untitled II (Peralta)*, 2007, c-print, 159 x 112 cm, edition of 5. Courtesy the artist, Casey Kaplan, New York, and Air de Paris, Paris