

Trisha Donnelly

Casey Kaplan Gallery, New York, USA

During New York's inaugural 'Gallery Week' in May, Trisha Donnelly and curator Anthony Huberman sat before a crowd of eager visitors in Casey Kaplan Gallery. A projector illuminated a yellowish screen on the wall behind them, casting a similarly sterile glow as the fluorescent lights above. Huberman proposed some questions - 'Where were you born?'; 'What is your favorite colour?'; 'What scares you?' - that sounded as though they were lifted from a dating website application form. Despite trying his best to chip away at Donnelly's reticence, Huberman gleaned very little from the artist; her answers, like her work, seemed to be covered with a gauzy veil. ('Pass' was her usual response.) Despite this, Donnelly did offer the visitors a very intimate look into her practice, one that was revealed via her iPod. She answered audience questions ('Can you talk a bit about the works in this show?') by playing tracks from The Optina Pustyn Male Choir of St. Petersburg - one song, entitled 'The Little Cuckoo', evoked giggles and bopping heads around the room. And so Donnelly's magic was realized yet again; instead of lifting the veil or giving a concrete explanation, she offered an indefinable spatial and temporal plane, a place where the beholder is left with no guide other than the music and his own memory, intuition and experience.

Music and sound play a significant role in Donnelly's work. In this exhibition, her fourth with the gallery, a looped recording of tinkling bells created an aural sculptural space; like the delicate nature of the four marble sculptures that made up the rest of the show, the sound had an ethereal quality - you could hear it, but the source from which it came was impossible to define. A horizontal black portoro sculpture (all works untitled, all 2010) lay low to the ground, propped up on blocks of unfinished wood, a columnar form carved into its centre. It faced a dusty-rose-coloured vertical work in travertine; in the quiet, wavelike din of bells that seemed as if they were coming closer and then receding, the space felt almost funereal - a quiet, peaceful scene. →

Trisha Donnelly
Untitled
2010
Black portoro
17×179×60 cm

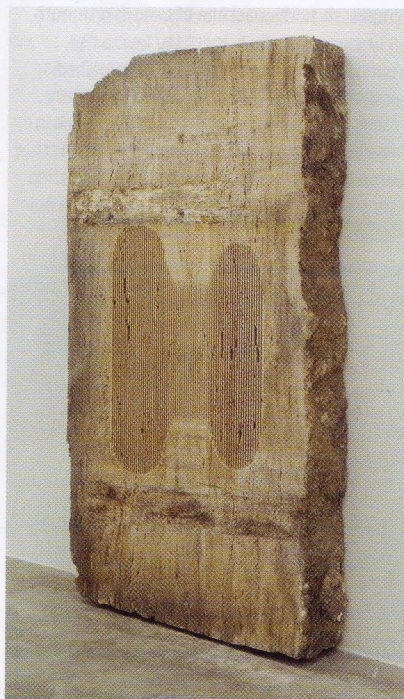


Water and other elemental forms also inform Donnelly's practice, and the four works incorporate scoured shapes like the crests and troughs of waves. In the back room, a three-metre-high quartzite work loomed over the otherwise empty space, accompanied by a black and white photograph of a wave that had not yet crested. The smooth, glasslike surface of the water spoke to the smooth surface of the quartzite, the textured bubbling of foam speaking to the eroded central section of the sculpture.

In Donnelly's world, marble takes on a quality of lightness and delicateness. Through both the material as well as particular decorative embellishments, she evokes not only architecturally classical forms, but also an almost 'generic' feeling of antiquity. At the same time, her works appear to live outside any denoted time period: they seem timeworn but they feel current, even futuristic, all the same.

The character of the secretary has long played a part in Donnelly's work (in her Q&A with Huberman, she expressed her fascination with the popular 1980s Italian television show *Pronto Raffaella?*, in which presenter Raffaella Carrà sits at a desk with an old rotary phone, answering her audience's questions). In the front room of the gallery, *The Secretary* - an appropriated 1950s wooden desk - was a deceptive opener. Upon leaving the show, you feel somewhat betrayed by the work because it seems only tangentially related to the rest of the pieces. However you come to understand its role, *The Secretary* grounded the exhibition in a real time and place, serving as the portal between real life (the street, the gallery, the reception area, the desk) and Donnelly's spiritual, perhaps mythical, interior space.

Marina Cashdan



Trisha Donnelly
Untitled
2010
Travertine
156×81×19 cm