

## MID-SENTENCE

On a wall sits a nail, oddly enough the wrong way round, with its head to the white painted surface. From its point hangs a chain consisting of four more nails, barely touching each other. An impossible arrangement, were it not for the invisible magnetic force that counteracts the otherwise stable law of gravity according to which everything fall.

Nina Canell's sculptures generally consist of materials that are normally used for specific purposes. Such as nails, electricity, air, water, chewing gum and sound. Canell draws our attention to them and turns them into agents in their own right. Thereby, she also destabilises the traditionally fixed form of sculpture, in favour of processes, situations and events. Accentuations of energy and movement recur frequently in her art. The work *Three Long Milliseconds* is an accentuation of this kind. From a height, a piece of natural rubber migrates towards the floor in a motion so slow that it is barely visible to the eye. The sooty trail on a small stick in *Halfway Between Opposite Ends* could be seen as its polar opposite. This work was created by passing 4,000 volts through the wood.

Canell's titles are always carefully considered and integral to the reading of her work. Such as *Amender*, *Ode to Outer Ends* and *Brief Syllables*. But it is not only the titles that easily lead us to muse on language and literature. Nina Canell's precise approach to materials and the way they are combined resembles the way a writer uses language. However, whereas a writer arranges letters and words to describe or shape something that can sometimes be experienced physically, she uses physical

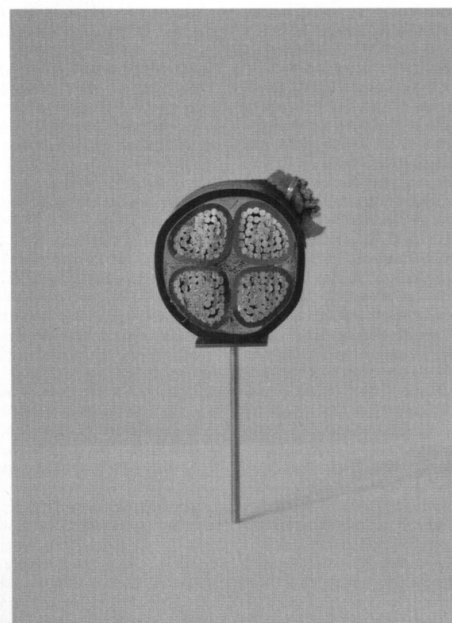
objects to create an immaterial and imaginary vocabulary.

Canell has chosen to call the exhibition *Mid-Sentence*, and says that "this can be interpreted as a point, not necessarily halfway, but as a freestanding coordinate". It can be understood as something without a known origin, where the meaning or ending is as yet indefinite. Or, to put it differently, as a situation where anything is still possible. In this respect, we can discern an echo from pre-modern science, with a window open towards alternative routes to knowledge. One example is the Russian chemist Dmitri Mendeleev (1834-1907) from whose study, Canell and her collaborator Robin Watkins captured 3,800 ml of air, which is now encapsulated in a glass container in the exhibition. Mendeleev is famous for having formulated the periodic system according to atomic weight, a sudden insight which he claims came to him after falling asleep at his desk.

*Of Air*, as the work is called, represents one strand in the exhibition, which deals with hidden channels and how they manifest themselves in objects. This can also be observed in the new sculpture group *Brief Syllables*, which consists of unearthed and dissected electricity and communication cables. Unbroken, cables form the infrastructure for the wireless, online, constantly illuminated society we live in. Isolated, as fragments without a context, they seem absurdly bulky, dysfunctional, like prehistoric relics. In concrete terms, they could be said to be physical manifestations of interruptions or disconnections.

NINA CANELL

27.9.14 – 4.1.15



MODERNA MUSEET

STOCKHOLM

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But Canell's works inspire associations that stretch far beyond the concrete. The nails in *Amender* may remind us of balance or harmony; another nail in the chain and it would fall to the ground due to the limited pull of the magnet. The electrical current in *Halfway Between Opposite Ends* reflects a near romantic moment of energy surge and communication between two points. The chewing gum in the work *Remembrance (Colourless)* might be regarded as rubbish, but can also be seen as an object where the traces in the material are the memory of a silent human imprint; a form of thinking. Altogether, thought can be regarded as being synonymous with energy in Canell's practice. How it spreads and circulates, what is lost and what remains, is revealed not least in the cross sections of *Brief Syllables*, which appear to form a void or dissolution. As the artist writes: "Cables are the opposite of sentimental. The current is only capable of carrying the current. Cable stumps are cross-sections of a vocabulary of interruptions. A cut-off form. Ending mid-sentence."

*Mid-Sentence* at Moderna Museet is Nina Canell's first solo exhibition in Sweden. As part of the exhibition, an artist book of the same title by Nina Canell and Robin Watkins, will be published.

**Fredrik Liew**

[www.modernamuseet.se](http://www.modernamuseet.se)

Nina Canell, b 1979 in Växjö, Sweden, educated in Dublin, lives and works in Berlin.

**Selected solo exhibitions:** Camden Arts Centre, London; Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, Newcastle. 2013: Midway Contemporary Art, Minneapolis. 2012: Hamburger Bahnhof - Museum für Gegenwart (with Rolf Julius). Berlin; The Douglas Hyde Gallery, Dublin; Cubitt Gallery, London. 2010: Museum für Moderne Kunst, Wien. 2011: Kunsthalle Fridericianum, Kassel. 2008: ICA (with Robin Watkins), London.

**Selected group exhibitions:** 2014: *Curiosity*: De Appel, Amsterdam och Turner Contemporary, Margate; *Köln Skulptur 7*, Köln. 2012: 18th Biennial of Sydney; *La Triennale*, Palais de Tokyo, Paris. 2010: *The Moderna Exhibition 2010*, Moderna Museet, Stockholm; *On Line*, Museum of Modern Art, New York; Liverpool Biennial, Tate Liverpool. 2008: Manifesta 7 – The European Biennial of Contemporary Art, Trentino-Alto Adige/Südtirol; 7th Gwangju Biennale, Gwangju.

**Selected publications:** 2014: *Stray Warmings*, Sternberg Press and Midway Contemporary Art; *Lautlos*, Walther König and Nationalgalerie – Staatliche Museen zu Berlin. 2013: *To Let Stay Projecting as a Bit of Branch on a Log by not Chopping it Off*, Walter König Verlag, Köln and Mumok, Vienna. 2010: *Evaporation Essays*, Distanz Verlag, NAK and Kunstverein Hamburg.

**Cover:** Nina Canell, *Brief Syllables* (detail), 2014. Photo: Robin Watkins