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this is tomorrow

Contemporary Art Magazine

Nina Canell, Near Here
Camden Arts Centre, London
17 January – 30 March 2014
Review by Maru Rojas



Artist : Nina Canell
Title : Installation view at Camden Arts Centre, London 2014
Website : <http://www.camdenartscentre.org/>
Credit : Marcus J Leith

The Swedish artist Nina Canell's show 'Near Here' presents a small but carefully produced body of work that responds to the environment of the Camden Arts Centre. The exhibition space has become a testing ground, where Canell's sculptures function like half-finished experiments investigating the physical properties of objects and materials. Exploring the transference of energy and forces, her absurd combinations of objects and materials seem to challenge Wittgenstein's postulations in his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, rearticulating the possibilities of the physical world and how we conceive the probability of interaction between certain bodies and substances.

By using different voltages and energy discharges the artist renders the intangible visible. Canell's sculptures are an exploration of physical conditions: electrical currents, changes in the atmosphere, forces of attraction, the properties of air and water or the pressure applied



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to chewing gum are all valid materials for her sculptures. *Mender* (2012), in which an assemblage of used steel nails hangs from the wall like a delicate chain in perfect equilibrium, is – like most of Canell’s sculptures – concerned with associations not freely found in the world, creating unique connections with their own particular points of interrupted communication.

The absence of the body or human presence makes her low-key sculptures even more intriguing and poetic. The combination of photocopying toner and 1,000,000 volts results in a beautiful drawing of a lightning bolt on paper; coagulated air on a glass sits on top of a piece of carpet; while a heavy-looking piece of cable reminds us of the physicality of the internet and communication.

It is possible to think that Canell has encapsulated what Arte Povera would look like in a post-internet world, however one key point about her work is that it redefines the event as an occurrence exclusively between objects. The chemical and the chimerical become one, and when the boundaries between the object and the event are blurred, the beauty of everyday materials is sublimed.

The introductory text explains her work in terms of ‘giving lightness to the physical’ and having a sense of ‘distancelessness’. Ultimately though, there’s no need to over-complicate the reading of what is a very accessible and enjoyable exhibition. Canell’s sculptures, like the air we breathe, are best when they are interiorised and experienced first hand.