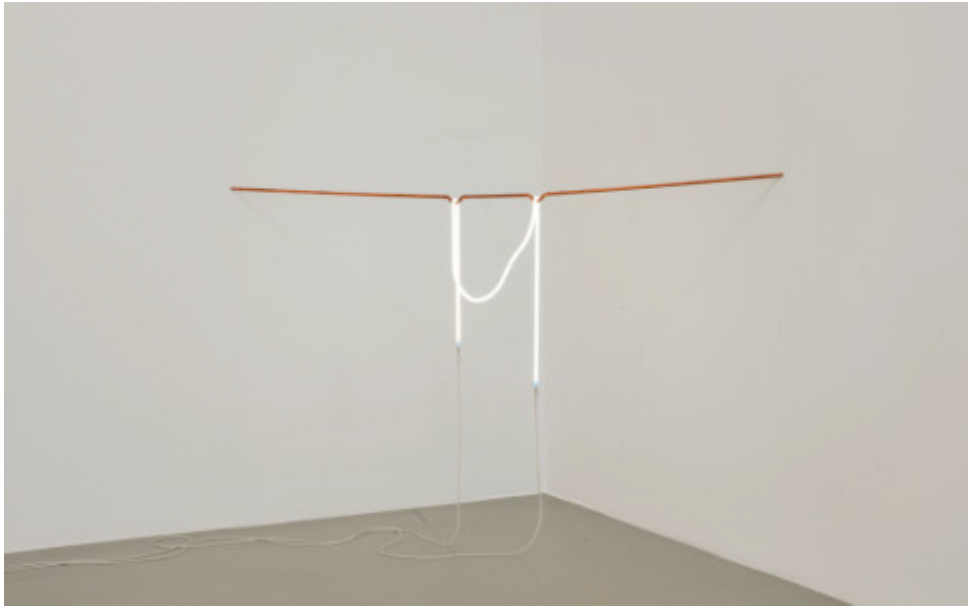


Nina Canell: Into the Eyes as Ends of Hair

Until Fri May 4 [Cubitt, 8 Angel Mews, N1 9HH](#) [Full details & map](#)



'Telepath', 2010, by Nina Canell - Photograph: Robin Watkins. Courtesy the artist, mother's tankstation, Galerie Wien Lukatsch, Konrad Fischer Galerie and Private Collection, Düsseldorf.

By Rosalie Doubal

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There is something terribly romantic about Swedish artist Nina Canell's sculptures. So light as to appear only-just there, her lo-fi installations are made from fine threads of copper wiring, little tuning forks, or puffs of coagulated air, suggesting that their real materials are invisible charges and soundwaves - the stuff of the ether. Drawing on the sort of collective imagination invested in a matter such as ether - the hypothetical substance supposed by the ancients to occupy all space - Canell's works point as much to the role of creative thought as they do empirical knowledge.

Central to this small selection of sculptures is 'Of Air' (2012), a new work made collaboratively with artist Robin Watkins. A glass desiccator filled with 3800ml of air from the study of nineteenth-century Russian chemist Dmitri Mendeleev (creator of the periodic table), this sits atop a very fine wooden stand. Bearing the neat, yet homespun feel of the other works - amongst them an old radio with its thin antenna extended to form a faint web on the ceiling - this seemingly empty vessel asks a lot of its viewers.

Are we to believe that the pair traveled to the chemist's preserved St Petersburg home in order to bottle its atmosphere? In lieu of the antiquated, slightly eccentric tone of Canell's making, one would suggest yes. Further, following writer Steven Connor's long address to dreams in the accompanying artist's pamphlet, thoughts of this work are directed towards the fabled sleepy circumstances under which Mendeleev supposedly dreamt the periodic table into existence. What fleetingly follows is the rather sweet belief that the air in the glass desiccator is indeed charged or special. And perhaps with this, Canell is hinting towards a metaphor for the ways in which we also behold artworks.