

MEDIA RELEASE



THE MATTER OF AIR

EXHIBITION DATES: 26 AUGUST – 24 SEPTEMBER 2011
OPENING: FRIDAY 26 AUGUST, 6-8PM

ARTISTS: MICHAELA GLEAVE, JOÃO MARIA GUSMÃO + PEDRO PAIVA, ZILVINAS KEMPINAS, SANNÈ MESTROM
DANE MITCHELL

CURATED BY JACQUELINE DOUGHTY

Gertrude Contemporary is pleased to present *Octopus 11: The Matter of Air*. Running for over a decade, the annual Octopus exhibition series offers a curator the opportunity to explore key ideas in current curatorial practice, experimenting with their methodology and opening up new possibilities for the discipline.

The Matter of Air takes air as a starting point for broader examinations of matter in its many physical, perceptual and symbolic guises. Featuring five artists from across the globe, the exhibition considers transformation through artworks that traverse the threshold between the material and the immaterial.

Taking poetic licence with the language of science, the artists draw upon properties of matter such as volume, weight, density and temperature to manipulate and redefine form. Whilst many of their works give shape and substance to matter that is amorphous or invisible, others dissolve traditional notions of solidity in favour of forms that are indistinct and indefinable, ultimately revealing the mutability of all things.

In Michaela Gleave's (Aus) "Cloud House" (2011), viewers climb into a raised room that is carpeted by a floor-bound field of mist. As the viewer moves around, the cloud-like form responds to the shifting air currents, swirling, dividing and regrouping like a mobile, airy composition. This work hinges on a transformation from liquid to gas, employing inaudible high frequency sound waves to break up water into a vaporous mist.

Dane Mitchell (NZ) continues his investigation of substances that hover on the edge of perception and materiality in "Various Solid States" (2011), a work that draws attention to the physical properties of empty space by giving form to the humidity present in the gallery's air. Water is collected from a dehumidifier, mixed with plaster and then poured a-top bubble wrap, with each air pocket creating a metaphorical imprint of the surrounding gallery space.

In the kinetic sculpture "Double O" (2008), Zilvinas Kempinas (Lithuania) sets the air in motion and employs invisible air currents to define visible form. Loops of unspooled videotape dance in the turbulent currents formed between two industrial fans, spinning and twisting to sketch a constantly shifting line in thin air – a gravity-defying drawing in space.

Melbourne-based Sannè Mestrom also gives form to the void, through her major new installation "Compression Chamber" (2011). The work is premised on the weight of air – in this case, the 6.5 kilograms of air contained by the 5 cubic metres of space in which the installation sits. Varying in shape, scale and substance, the sculptures act as visual equivalences that compact and solidify the expansive, ethereal matter of air.

Exploring transformation through the lens of perception are the collaborative duo João Maria Gusmão and Pedro Paiva (Portugal). For *The Matter of Air* they will present five of their dream-like 16mm filmic enquiries into the ambiguity of vision and matter. These films draw upon the possibilities of 'pataphysics,' or 'the science of imaginary solutions,' to present a speculative philosophy that challenges our perceptions of the world and makes the ordinary wonderfully strange.

The Octopus series of exhibitions are made possible through generous support from Proclaim Management Solutions who have sponsored this exhibition since 2004. *The Matter of Air* has received support from Aalto Colour, New Zealand and Instituto Camoes, Portugal and the Embassy of Portugal, Canberra.

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