

# MAUD COTTER : LINKED

The summer before last I attended a funeral in County Kerry, so naturally, it rained. Afterwards, when we spilled out of the church, the rain abated and we experienced what is described as a light shower between the rain.

In what seemed like an eternity, but must have been a few seconds, the landscape of rolling hills tilted into something quite abstract floating before me. Droplets of water suspended in the air bent the great world into a dispersed vista. Thankfully, these mini orbs of liquid suitably unsettled the dry reality from which I had come, and I felt overcome by an enriching happiness: a moment approaching some form of ultimate connection.

My mind craves these opportunities to spill out of its boundaries. I find it harder to work in dry weather. The mists that come in from the sea, filling headlands with every tone of grey (some soft and almost mushroom warm), help me to draw. Not to mention the rain that makes it impossible to make out what is going on outdoors. All the better for me to wash all into the forms I want to see.

Glass transcends its own materiality. That is what I like about it, and that is what I expect to find in matter. It takes a bit of persuasion to prompt traditionally respected materials such as stone or timber to absent their positions of formal assurance, and go with the flow, in which

everything becomes everything else. Delightfully unwrapped and abandoned matter knows its business: has begun this process of change. Detritus is equally undressed and ready to be reinterpreted, combined with other things. One's efforts become mixed with an agency already begun: a rewarding partner with which to engage.

Located in my mind, at a molecular level, this evolutionary movement forward shifts the appearance of form. I am reminded that the flash of being itself is something to achieve. Seems to me that this abstracted essence stands as companion to one's efforts: an intangible presence induced by making, as though making itself is just an invitation to 'something from somewhere else'. If we do not continue to make with our hands, we may forget this intrinsic collaborator within. When these relational values emerge in making, they become the real content: an enduring navigation into the future, if such a future exists. I suspect we are in an evolving present: a consequential embroilment of our actions in desperate need of unravelling. Now is an apt time to ask myself if my work as an artist contributes to humanity. Can I justify my use of materials? Is sculpture necessary?

I do think that conceptual models of enquiry can be explored through sculpture, making with the matter at hand, seeing through it to new depths of possibility. Keeping this avenue of exploration open is necessary to maintaining resilient and adaptive minds capable of embracing and generating change, and recognising new sustainable ways forward.

So I will keep going.

Of late, I have been attracted to the low glow of aluminium leaf. Illusively, it is described as a silver-grey. It mimics a



**the moon is falling**  
Installation view  
Limerick City Gallery of Art  
2018  
Plastic sheeting, prestia, aeroboard,  
and stainless steel  
Dimensions variable

*Courtesy of the artist and domobaal  
Photo by Roland Paschhoff*



metal and a colour. I purchased several books of leaf, and am experimenting. Aluminium leaf does not behave like gold leaf, which is skittish and flashy. Controlling air movement in the room in which one works with gold leaf is foundational. No coming or going allowed. Swift walking and waving of hands in exasperation are not allowed either. A molecular stillness is necessary. However, aluminium leaf takes it easy. I have not experienced any antics. It responds to skilful handling and rational states of mind only.

How quiet I become when I work with it.

As a result of this flirtation, I have taken a course in tig welding, and have advanced to welding aluminium. The tungsten tip, with which one welds, does not touch the parent metals to be welded, nor does the rod of aluminium used (something like a solder). All three elements: the parent metals; the aluminium rod, and the tip,

remain aloof from one another. They take their place as though performing a minimalist piece of contemporary dance. Their relational positions and the movement of the hand weave the weld forward, which flows of its own accord into place, performing the task in hand. This performance takes place in a canopy of gas, a dome. I feel like a watercolourist applying *le petit lac* to a page.

Aluminium perfectly underplays its special attributes. Being a nonferrous metal it does not rust. I have heard it is prone to white oxidation in time and was thrilled to hear this, though I have not yet seen such a wonder. It is alarmingly light (having spent a large proportion of my time lugging bags of plaster and sheets of timber around the studio, not to mention bunches of mild steel rod, I interpret this as a special act of kindness to the carrier). It is so easy to cut. It cuts like cake, though a bit chewy if one does not wax the blade.

**without stalling**  
2017 – 2018  
Finnish birch ply, and weights  
350 x 350 x 350 cm

**Opposite:  
perch**  
2020  
Aluminium, plaster, and card  
110 x 27 x 38 cm

Dublin City Gallery (The Hugh Lane)  
Courtesy of the artist and domobaal  
Photos by Denis Mortell





**matter of fact**  
2016  
Mild steel, card, and primer  
240 x 240 x 300 cm

*Dublin City Gallery (The Hugh Lane)*  
*Courtesy of the artist and domobaal*  
*Photo by Roland Paschhoff*

This most-abundant metal does not present itself in the form of actual metal, but rather, its compound elements are found in almost all rocks, plants, and animals. Working with it is simply a form of working with oneself.

*Flights* is just that – a flighty book that was written by Olga Tokarczuk, the Polish author dispersed in form and full of intrigue. At its heart, is a radically-particular behaviour of space and time that ties events together in a way that one may easily fail to notice. Meanings remain aloof and do not gel until one penetrates its embedded spatial form. The relational network of events in the book's narrative moves forward into a deepening reality that may not be apparent on first reading; at least that was my experience.

K-A-I-R-O-S: an ancient Greek word.

Operating at the conceptual heart of the book, intangible spaces and connections inspired by Kairos pull the disparate elements together. The movement of a weaver's shuttle, passing through the path of threads that opens before it, is a metaphor often used to describe Kairos. The projection of this shuttle is a moment of opportunity, a critical commencement and sequence of action that propels its way forward. Making sculpture feels a lot like this: the actions inherent in the making; the shifting of conceptual ground in process, and the hopeful evolution of a new physical reality. I understand the propagative potential within the object as being operative within this frame of behaviour also. I imagine that Umberto Boccioni felt like this when he made *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space*. The title certainly suggests so.

Actions in time and space flex forward in this new corridor which bypasses conventional strictures of time. Moments of opportune action can accelerate

consequence, but this is not the only part of this concept that interests me. The radically particular moment of commencement of this process is equally intriguing. I like to think of this as a generative point. In drawing, one often weaves forward from one generative point to another. Drawing in space with line, be it string or steel, one loosens out and gathers space, pulling it together and ultimately capturing a new intensity – or even a particle of void – which naturally is not captured, but allows itself to be detained.

To show that intangible values are the relational glue that hold things together is worth doing, and making it happen with the very stuff of matter is worth a life's effort. Opening new space is a real ambition in making; a contribution of conceptual heavy lifting on the part of sculpture. Space is held open to allow something else to happen – something not yet imagined – a space of readiness to change.