

# **Rachel Adams**

*Interview by David McLeavy*

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*Rachel Adams works with a variety of materials which reference classicalism, modernism and domestic design. Her work deals heavily with concerns around materiality and function and often employs recognisable design symbols in order to reference specific times in history.*

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*I am interested to know how you approach or decide what materials to use. Your work often seems to have fragility or perhaps even the illusion of fragility to it, which is determined by your use of paper and fabric, and I want to know if the fragility is intentional.*

*I was always interested in the hierarchy of materials. For example why sculpture with a capital 'S' was predominantly made with plaster, bronze and stone. I don't think that the materials are used for their fragility, more for not being sculptural - connected with either furniture production, drawing or even fashion. Art is forever trying to remove itself from these "lower" media. I don't think of them as fragile - the paper become heavy like stone mimicking a biomorphic sculpture or ruin, fabric becomes stiff stretched over wooden frames. Putting these materials, which are normally in the background of art like paper or canvas at the front, seems to be why they could be viewed as fragile - but I don't see them that way.*



*Posturing, 2012*

*Do you think if you were to use materials such as bronze or stone it may negate your intentions somewhat?*

*No. In fact I am just learning to weld and enjoying making some very basic metal sculptures. I ended up making them because of my interest in furniture legs in particular the wire frames of Charles and Ray Eames. I don't think there is really a hierarchy of materials. Just because a sculpture is traditionally metal doesn't mean you can't do something new with it - I believe that you can use any material it's all stuff.*

*You mentioned ideas of traditional hierarchies and I want to know how you feel an audience whose art historical knowledge may be fairly limited may approach your work. Is it beneficial to know of traditional sculptural approaches or do you think this knowledge is embedded into all of us through basic art education?*

*I always try to put a mix of references in so there's a hook in for everyone. Plinths become chairs and sculptural, I think the language of figurative sculpture is pretty universal, a thing on a box goes from Classicism to biomorphic abstraction in the mid-twentieth century. So I think they are open references that use the language of the museum.*

*I do try to make other points mixing textures and techniques to not limit the potential of the references. So perhaps there is another way into the work - where the audience thinks about what techniques are being used or how an effect is achieved.*

*Moving on to a slightly different point, I am interested to know how important the physical making is to you. In a time where fabrication is normal and the artist works more and more like a director or production manager it interests me when you say your learning how to weld. Is this out of necessity, financial decisions or just out of interest? Is the act of making integral to you?*

*I really like making things. I think you come to your own conclusions when you make something yourself - Like the welding, for example I would never have been able to draw those sculptures and sent them to a fabricator. They are really intuitive and kind of stupid, which is interesting to me. I think when a work is clever I get it fabricated. For example at the minute I'm getting a rug made because I don't want to learn to make a rug - I want the final work to be a rug - not a shonky hand made version of a rug.*

*The rug is based on a Heath Robinson design from a book called 'How to Live in a Flat' from the 1930s. I always wanted to see it in real life so I thought I'd get it made. I think being an artist as opposed to an architect or crafts person is not limiting yourself to one mode of production - I get things fabricated or I make everything myself - It's about deciding when to do what.*



*Long Reach, domobaal, London, 2014*

***Your work has a distinctively vibrant visual appeal and I am interested to know if you ever feel a pressure to create work that runs with a continual aesthetic theme or is that something that forms naturally?***

***I think its pretty natural. I can't really do anything else. I don't feel pressure to do so but I can tell if it doesn't feel like its mine - it usually looks like someone else made it and I find that a bit distracting, probably because I'm a bit of a control freak. I love modernist design, from interiors to movie posters, pottery to cartoon adverts, and I am obsessed with 1960s and 1970s science fiction design. I think all of these things seep in. Nothing ever comes out exactly the way I expect though - or acts in the world as I thought it would.***

***Do you think art making or being an artist is a selfish or selfless pursuit? Or maybe a bit of both?***

***Selfish.***

***Do you ever feel guilty for that in anyway?***

***Sometimes. But I'm only speaking about my own practice. Perhaps some people view their work differently or a duty perhaps. I don't. I think it's more about looking at me - here's my idea - check it out. But I don't think art is more selfish than anything else. In any job your saying you know more about something than somebody else.***

***Your based in Glasgow and I want to know whether you feel that Glasgow specifically has had an impact on your development.***

***I studied in Edinburgh so I think it definitely has. Most of the art you'll see is by contemporary Scottish artists so I'm sure (subconsciously) I modelled my work around what I saw. I often think about if I'd gone somewhere else if I'd have made video work or performance (not saying that I won't make that type of work in the future). I think it's really hard to work out where you begin and the social constructs end. I was obviously really influenced by Eva Rothschild, Claire Barclay, and Cathy Wilkes. I didn't realise they were all women until I wrote it down.***

***Do you think you make particularly feminine work?***

***I don't know. I make the stuff I make and I don't think about whether I made it because I'm a woman or a man. I don't think male artists think about that so why should I? Eva Rothschild said "If I consider myself a feminist, does that then mean I make feminist art?" I think Simone de Beauvoir's *écriture féminine* (feminine writing) is something that I want to think more about and I am not sure if it does exist or not - but I always hated how feigh and fragile it is. I don't know feigh and fragile women - I think men make fragile work too –Man Ray's 'Dust Breeding', or the work of Jason Dodge.***

***What is your relationship like with the act of exhibiting your work? Do you feel it adds to it or changes it in any way or do you feel like exhibiting your work is often just a requirement of an artist?***

***I think I mostly (and to my annoyance) make work for exhibitions. I can't pull apart making art and exhibiting but I think if I didn't exhibit for a while I might make different work. I often think about how today artists are asked to exhibit in large spaces on little or no budget in a studio (if they have one) that is the size of a wardrobe – it's a tricky thing to do to predict it correctly. I never get it right.***





*Space-Craft, Tramway, Glasgow, 2013*

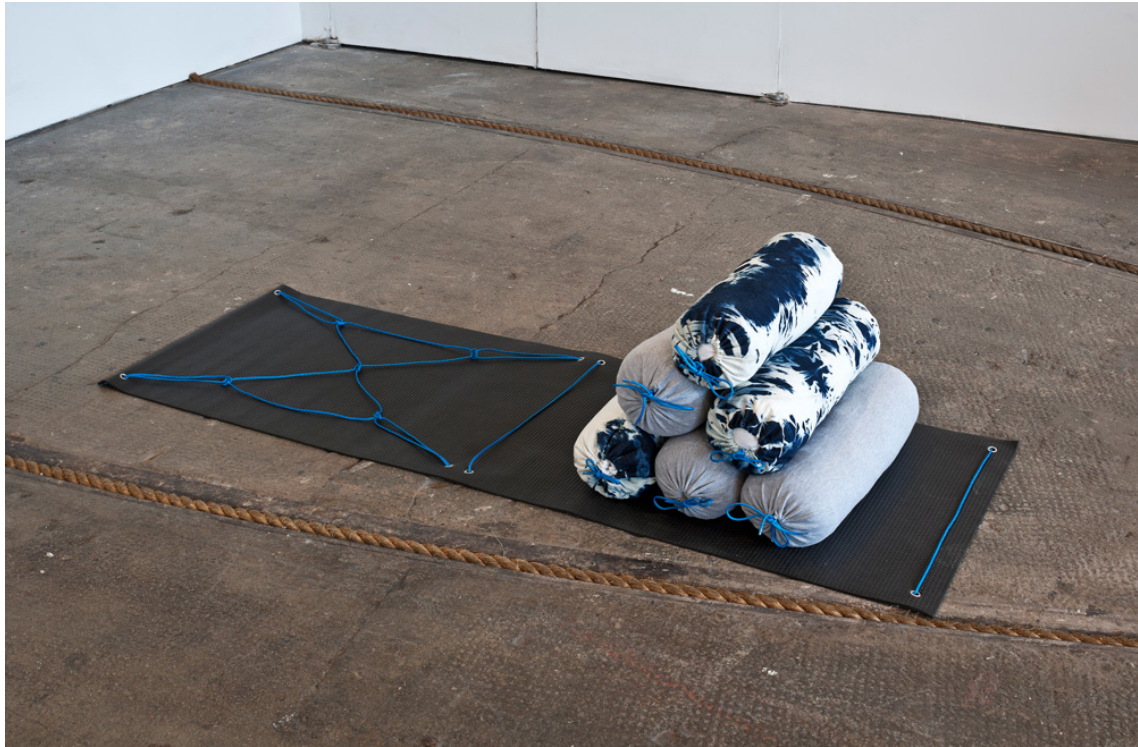
*That is an interesting point and one that provides ammunition to numerous debates recently around funding and payment for artists. Is this something that has affected your practice or do you feel like you are versatile enough to avoid it?*

*I think I've been very lucky and I have had funding and made sales. I also am lucky because some of my work is really cheap to make. Whenever I make money from art I try to reinvest it. I don't think just because you say you're an artist you deserve some money. However I think institutions should have enough money for you to make shows if they ask you to. I get annoyed at the "opportunity" line although nobody has said that for a while.*

*In what sense?*

*"Well there's no money for this project and there's no travel budget or transport and you'll have to invigilate the space but it will be a great opportunity" Written by person with a salary at the other end of the email.*

*If a space has no money and the curators aren't paid I'm totally game. It's just when institutions with staff or open call competitions are like that. I'm such a grumpy old man.*



*Self-Improvement (Space-Craft) 2, 2013*

**What's next for you?**

*I have just opened my solo exhibition at domobaal in April and a project for The Tetley in Leeds and a group exhibition for Glasgow Sculpture Studios (where I have my studio) curated by Quinn Latimer. I am really excited about the new works I have made for the show at domobaal's. I've brought a lot of digital processes into the work alongside the hand-crafted techniques I have been using before. Working like that is something I've wanted to do for a while and its great to get a chance to see it in a finished work.*

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*Rachel Adams lives and works in Glasgow. Recent solo exhibitions include **Long Reach**, domobaal, London, **Suburban Mystic**, The Lombard Method, Birmingham and **Space-Craft**, Tramway Glasgow. Recent group exhibitions include **Rock Paper Scissors werk op en van papier**, Galerie de Expeditie, Amsterdam, **Game Changer**, Meadowbank Sports Centre, Edinburgh and **Paper**, Saatchi Gallery, London*