

RACHEL ADAMS: PAPERING OVER THE CRACKS

Posted by Andrew Cattanach, Mon 04 Apr 2011

*The Skinny finds **Rachel Adams**' solo show at The Duchy looks set to make a splash*

Rachel Adams makes sculptures from paper, amongst other things. "I started using paper when I was at college, and I had this realisation halfway through my final year that everything I had made was something flat made into something sculptural," she explains.

Crumpling, painting and shredding, she manipulates the paper into three dimensional forms. Her ability to give something so distinctly flat such sculptural integrity is her foremost skill. Folded tightly in on itself, the paper occupies space, derisively brandishing its rigidity.

There's also something of paper's accessibility that makes it such an obvious starting point, that it is quite fundamental to the art-making process, despite one's preferred medium. "There was that immediacy that you could just go to a shop and do something really quickly, and I think that's what drew me to it," she explains. "Of course, I never realised I was going to end up painting rolls and rolls of the stuff."

Among her various techniques, Adams often begins by painting the paper. Not solely decoration, the paint gives the paper a firmness it wouldn't normally possess, allowing the sculptures to hold in place, resting upon their own folds. Carefully selected, the colour of the paint often complements the colour of the paper, and when it shows through seems to simulate an exaggerated depth of field, as though the paper's folds were chasms on the surface of a larger object seen from afar.

In many ways her sculptures are painterly. They cavort with illusion in a way only two dimensional art normally feels it necessary. Implying a size beyond their means, they are scale drawings of distant, astronomical bodies or microscopic objects. Affecting mass and rigidity, they are flat and delicate tracings of complex organs.

On the other hand, they are the products of a crafts hobbyist. Shredding sheet upon sheet upon sheet of paper to make a huge bale, they are the self-flagellations of a puritan out of work, performing the most tedious and labour-intensive task imaginable.

To be installed in a small back room in Glasgow's The Duchy Gallery this month, the oversized paper bale will be a meeting between minimalist sculpture and traditional handicraft. It will evoke New England ennui and 1960s New York in equal measure.

Likewise, the front space will be a play of similar references. She describes how a series of paper objects, not unlike traditional marble busts, will be installed in the gallery. "It's sort of to do with the domestic environment, so there'll be a set up between things that are lying on furniture plinths - like a chaise longue - and also plinths in the more traditional sense."



Crumple 3
Image: Rachel Adams

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The interplay between gallery and living room that is central to Adams' practice is in some ways manifested in the show's title, *Marble Mouthed*. Alluding to artistic traditions – the custom of making likenesses in marble – and the old elocution exercise of putting marbles in your mouth when speaking, it conjures outmoded Edwardian quackery and bygone sculptural traditions – *My Fair Lady* meets Gian Lorenzo Bernini.

This is perhaps the destiny of everything achieved by the avant-garde, she seems to suggest, that it will always be subsumed by the living room – the stark minimalism of Ikea furniture, for instance. “I remember reading, embarrassingly, a Clement Greenberg essay, and he was saying how minimalism could just become a door, or a coffee table. And you just realise that that is kind of what happened.”

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