





The Temporary Nature of Change

Mikey Cuddihy and Deborah Duffin



MOCA London
24 October - 28 November 2021

The Temporary Nature of Change.

Mikey Cuddihy and Deborah Duffin use very different materials and while Cuddihy's painterly imagery leans more towards figuration than Duffin's sculptural abstractions, conceptually both are working on the idea of small, daily, one might imagine hourly changes and the temporary nature of stability and of change.

Both artists are presenting a combination of new and previously exhibited works in an all new installation jointly conceived. Many of the works have been made in the artistic isolation all artists have been through over the recent Covid period, and those works reach out for an audience. The exhibition will be the first one for MOCA London since the total lockdown.

In an era where great change for women seemed solid, we have seen how temporary change can be, in Afghanistan as well as in America. Women and their hard fought rights are under attack again, and change we thought was foundational, is now seen for what it sadly is, temporary. Jefferson's words ring out with more urgency than ever that "Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty".

Cuddihy's work is at once formal and also narrative. Her historic works were mainly large scale paintings on canvas featuring a personal calligraphy of forms. She has now transferred them onto newspaper, the pink paper of the Financial Times to be exact. That rosey glow, both masculine (alluding to finance - still a real realm of men), yet pink and feminine as a visual reference to women or at least girls, also has printed on top of it, the events of the day. Cuddihy uses her calligraphic forms to highlight daily narratives by drawing on, blacking out and carving into sensuous shapes the pages of many yesterdays. She makes larger paper pieces from stronger papers that are then cut out and mounted on sticks like artistic protest signs. Some of the newsprint objects look like inflated pillows, and she mixes and matches them into collections of unique objects in continually changing installations of the work.

Cuddihy says "My work sits at an intersection between the political and the decorative." In the 1970s the slogan The personal is political (popularised by Carol Hanisch) became widely used to describe how women, often forced into the domestic sphere could bring about first personal, then societal change. Cuddihy's objects are from that domestic realm, be they skirts, or fans or said pillows but the information she edits into view shows their political bite. Her work reminds us the struggle for equality is not one that ends in victory, but more struggle. That bitter pill is made palatable by the forms and colours she chooses but it is undeniable that much work (including housework) remains to be done.



Duffin also shows us the domestic side of work, but seemingly gone wrong. Her sculptures are made of wire and plastic and things that get thrown away, and have found themselves collected in her studio awaiting her touch. For the young, there used to be loads of wires connecting all sorts of electric things including the land line phone (something wall mounted, or placed on a low table). Duffin may have cornered the market on all the wire that is left, and uses it to make hundreds of discrete objects often rough spheres that pile one on top of the other like plastic dust balls in a rainbow of colours (she does not alter the colours of the materials). Other works in black wire look like cobwebs made by spiders on narcotics. Both seem to await a woman to sweep them away or at the very least tidy them up. They speak of the domestic work women have traditionally had to do, and like a cobweb appear to be temporary structures. And they are.

Duffin says that 'drawing is the essence of my work; I see drawing as an approach to the world - an attitude of mind rather than a specific activity'. She uses wire to draw in three dimensional space as much as Cuddihy uses paint and paper. Duffin often reworks pieces into new sculptures and installations as at MOCA. Change happens to these objects all the time, and they exist in temporary combinations speaking an abstract language that draws the viewer in, and hints at meanings just beyond our grasp. The viewer can attempt to connect the wires in their mind but as with the private language of twins, it disappears when interrogated. These works remind the viewer of Eva Hesse, who also made work from temporary materials which now are sadly decomposing on gallery walls.

Women in the 1960s and 70s often rebuffed those materials linked to the masculine (bronze, marble, steel) and turned to materials found in the home, often for practical reasons as their incomes were and still are lower than their male counterparts. They subverted the way women were often viewed by patriarchal curators who thought 'little women' were not up to the job of 'real' sculpture or painting. So they made the world a new in their own likeness and both Cuddihy and Duffin, whose practice started

in the late 70s and early 80s have benefited from that new freedom. They also helped make that change and press it forward as they were a part of the emergence of the East End art scene in the 1980s, where women played an important if not essential role. They have made it easier for those who are following on, by continuing to make amazing work. Institutional memory is often fleeting and slippery, and we must remember that change is only ever in the now. Good can be overthrown by bad as quickly as a broom sweeps clean.

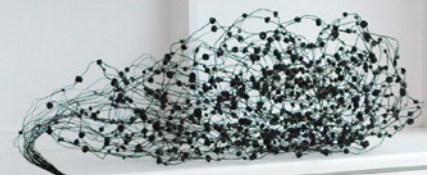
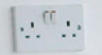
Dr. Michael Petry













The Temporary Nature of Change

Mikey Cuddihy and Deborah Duffin

24 October - 28 November 2021

The artists would like to thank: Deedee Cuddihy, Dominic Duffin, Helen Van Eyck and Catherine Johnson.

Page 3: Mikey Cuddihy, *Mantle Shelf*, 2021, ready-made & found objects with works on paper. Left-right: *We will not be silent*, newsprint, paper, staples, wooden take-away spoon, *Nina (Summer of Soul)*, newsprint, painted paper, staples, wooden spoon, *Dog-Love*, newsprint, paper, staples, wooden spoon, *House Fire, California*, newsprint, paper, staples, wooden fork, *Woman*, gouache, lokta paper, thread.

Page 5: Deborah Duffin, *Overflow*, 2021, wire, cable & recycled packaging, detail.

Page 6: Mikey Cuddihy, *Pink Triptych*, 2021, Graphite & acrylic on paper mounted onto wooden slats.

Page 7: Wall, Deborah Duffin, *Freefall*, 2021, collected wire & cable. On bookcase left to right: *Wave*, 2021, collected wire & cable and *Twists and Turns*, 2021, wire & cable.

Page 8-9: left to right, Mikey Cuddihy, *Sweep*, 2021, wooden broom, metal hand-shovel, *Curtain*, 2021, spirit-based ink on cotton, with paper fans (gouache on paper), *Pink Triptych*, *Mantle Shelf*, *Marion*, 2021, newsprint & paper, wooden spoon, staples, *Speak Melancholy*, 2021, newsprint, watercolour, khadi paper, wooden spoon and *Kabul Surrounded*, 2021, attached to mop handle with metal stool prop. From top: *Afghan mother and children*, FT Pages, pleated, padded & stapled, *Afghan women protest*, newsprint & paper, wooden take away spoon, *Orange Fan*, pleated FT page, staples.

Page 10: Deborah Duffin, *Overflow*.

Page 11: Mikey Cuddihy, *Curtain*, detail.

Page 12-13: floor front to back, Deborah Duffin, *Overflow* and *Tie-up*, 2021, black annealed wire. On bookcase: *Over the Edge*, 2021, black annealed wire and cable.

Page 14: left to right, Mikey Cuddihy, *Marion* and *Speak Melancholy*.

Page 15: Deborah Duffin, *Over the Edge*, detail.

Outside front and back cover top to bottom: Deborah Duffin, *Over the Edge*, detail and Mikey Cuddihy, *Curtain*, paper fan, detail.

Inside front and back cover top to bottom: Mikey Cuddihy, *Curtain*, detail and Deborah Duffin, *Overflow*, detail.

All images by MOCA London

www.deborahduffin.co.uk

www.mikeycuddihy.co.uk

@deborahcduffin

@mikeycuddihy

Book Design: EKCO Projects

ISBN: 978-1-912800-05-6

Published 2021

MOCA London

113 Bellenden Road

SE15 4QY

www.moca.london

@moca_london

@mocalondon_we



