



Large
Print

Phyllida Barlow RA
cul-de-sac

The Gabrielle
Jungels-Winkler
Galleries

Do not remove from gallery

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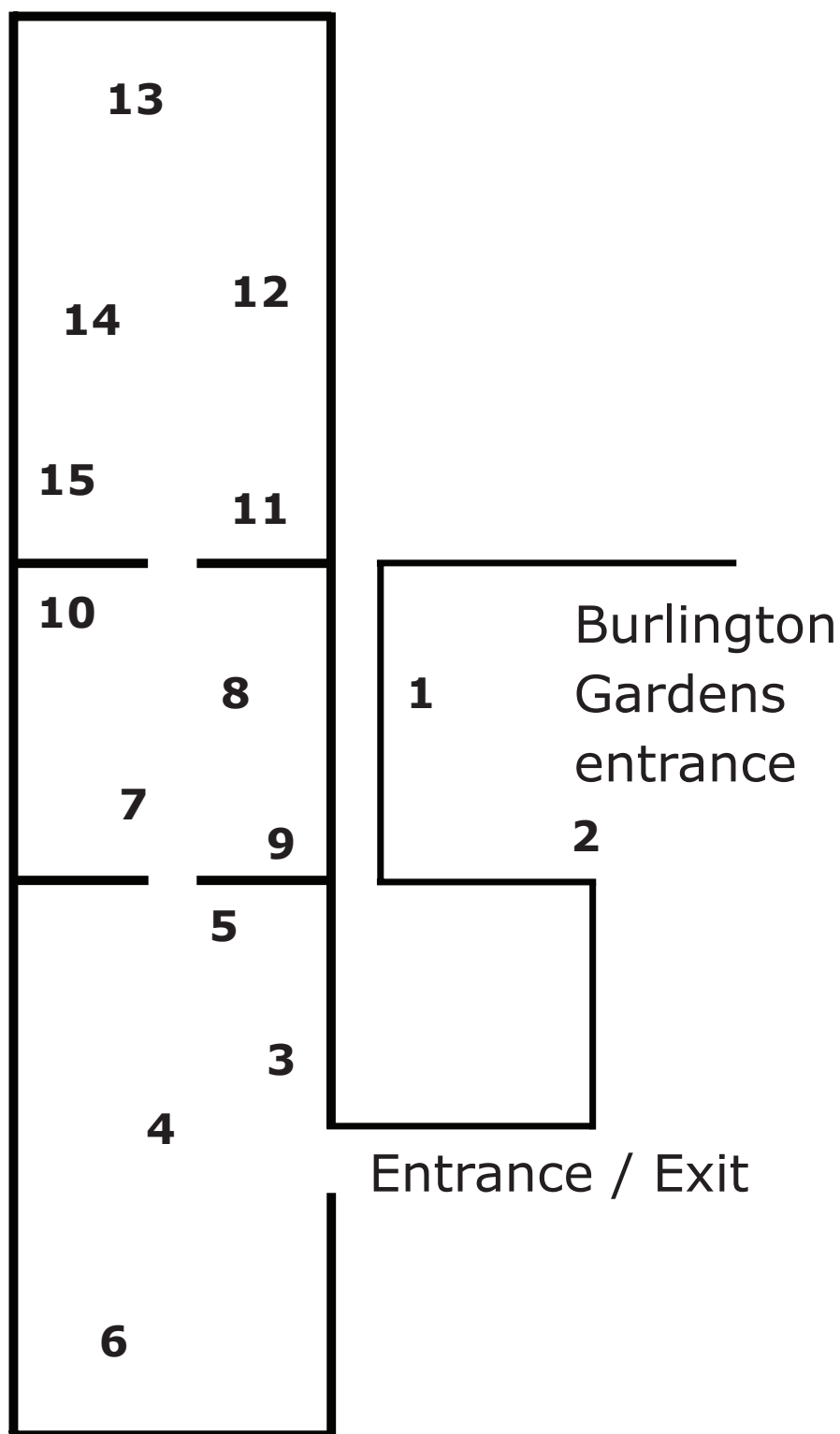
Phyllida Barlow RA

cul-de-sac

Royal Academy of Arts

The Gabrielle Jungels-Winkler Galleries

23rd February - 23rd June 2019



Phyllida Barlow RA

cul-de-sac

Sequentially installed across all three galleries, this exhibition presents an entirely new body of work by Royal Academician Phyllida Barlow.

Barlow's early work responded to the Modernist sculpture that had emerged in Britain and Europe in the 1950s and early 1960s. As her practice evolved, she took against its weighty formalism and monumentalism, sensing an imposed morality, and gravitated towards Arte Povera in Europe and concurrent sculptural developments in the United States.

Barlow continues to explore much of the spirit of these more fragile, but nonetheless confident, formal sculptural statements in her own work. This is evident in the material she employs, the visual

language and form of her work and also the environment she creates through her installations. By producing large-scale works and installations from everyday, industrial materials and expedient fabrication processes, Barlow challenges the ideas of monumentality and authority associated with traditional sculptural materials and methods.

Space is one of the starting points for Barlow; she refers to it as a 'protagonist' of the work she creates to inhabit it. Not site-specific as such, the installation's development is however dependent in some part on her response to its particular setting, and to the volumes and limitations it presents.

Barlow's work is unweighted from the past and its reliance on heavy media. Utilising inexpensive materials, including timber, plywood, plaster and polystyrene, she adapts, paints, connects and disconnects components.

She reveals the process of forming the works and the application of gestural colour – joins, seams, manual moulding and brushwork are all clearly visible.

This hand-made quality, combined with a sometimes deliberately precarious appearance, conveys a sense of transience and impermanence, and on occasion, humour. In departing from the norms of serenity and beauty in her work, she generates a distinct energy charged with instability, and at times incongruity.

The installation of the works and their relationship both to each other, and to the space they occupy, is crucial to Barlow, who views the placement of the work, and the way in which the visitor will first physically encounter it, as integral to the creative process.

For Barlow, this confrontation with individual pieces, and the manner in which the visitor might circumnavigate them –

how they will view and perceive them when walking through the spaces, and again, when retracing their steps – is of critical importance to their arrangement.

She is most engaged by the potential of this sensory response and the notion that the residual memory of the encounter could include an impression of the experience in addition to that of the object.

**The following two works are
displayed on the staircase leading
up to the exhibition entrance:**

1

untitled: stack; 2019

Cement, Hessian scrim, paint, plywood, polycotton,
spray paint, steel, timber

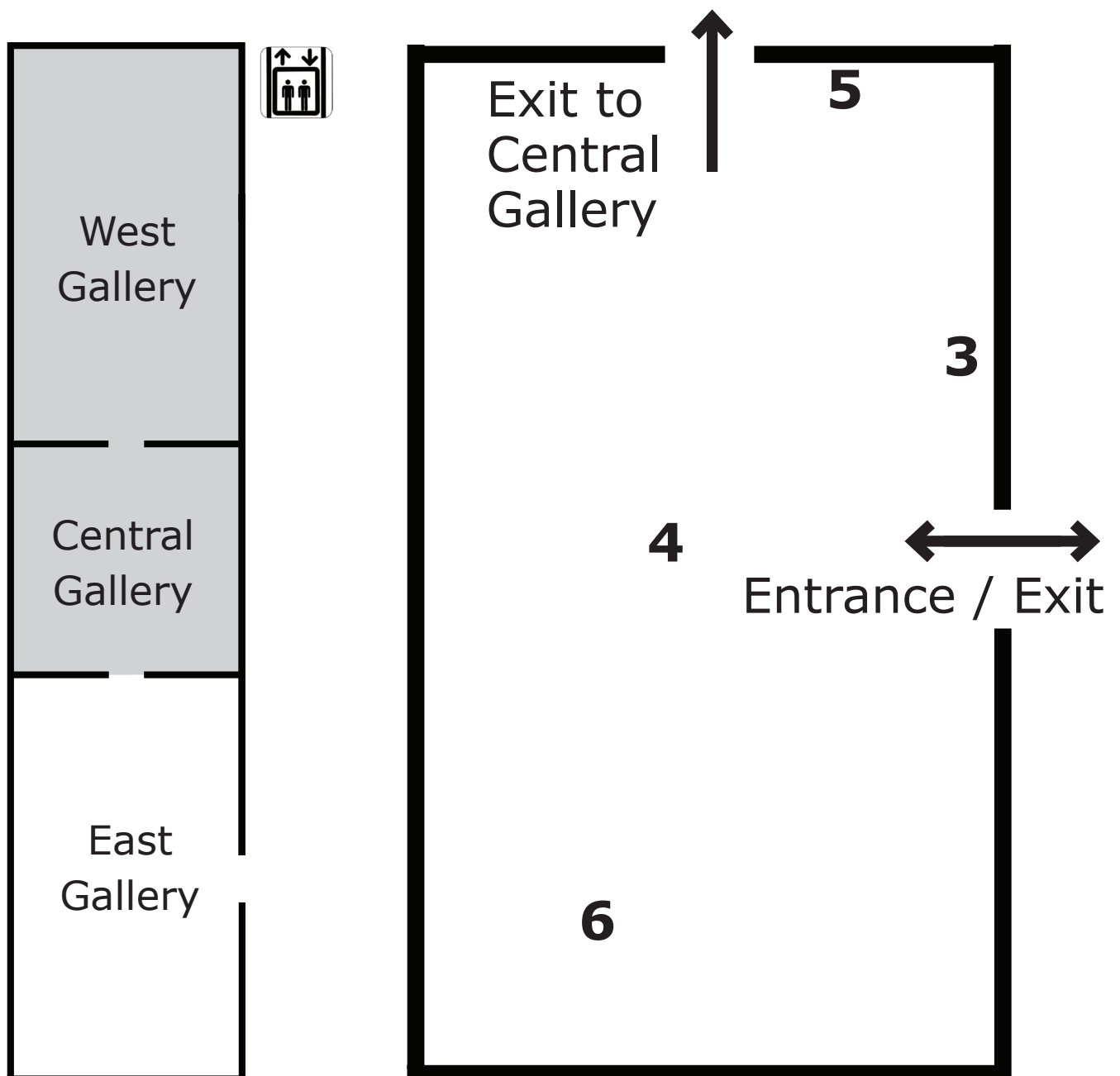
2

untitled: smallholder; 2019

Cement, Hessian scrim, PVA, plywood, polycotton,
polystyrene, sand, spray paint, steel, timber

Gabrielle Jungels-Winkler Galleries

You are in the East Gallery



East Gallery list of works

3

untitled: burrow; 2018–2019

Bonding plaster, cement, Hessian scrim, PVA, paint, paper, plaster, plywood, polystyrene, polyurethane foam, sand, spray paint, steel

4

untitled: lintelshadow; 2018–2019

Cement, Hessian scrim, PVA, paint, pigment, plywood, polyurethane board, polystyrene, polyurethane foam, spray paint, steel, timber

5

untitled: crease; 2018

Bonding plaster, cement, Hessian scrim, PVA, paint, paper, paper rope, plaster, plywood, polystyrene, polyurethane foam, spray paint, steel

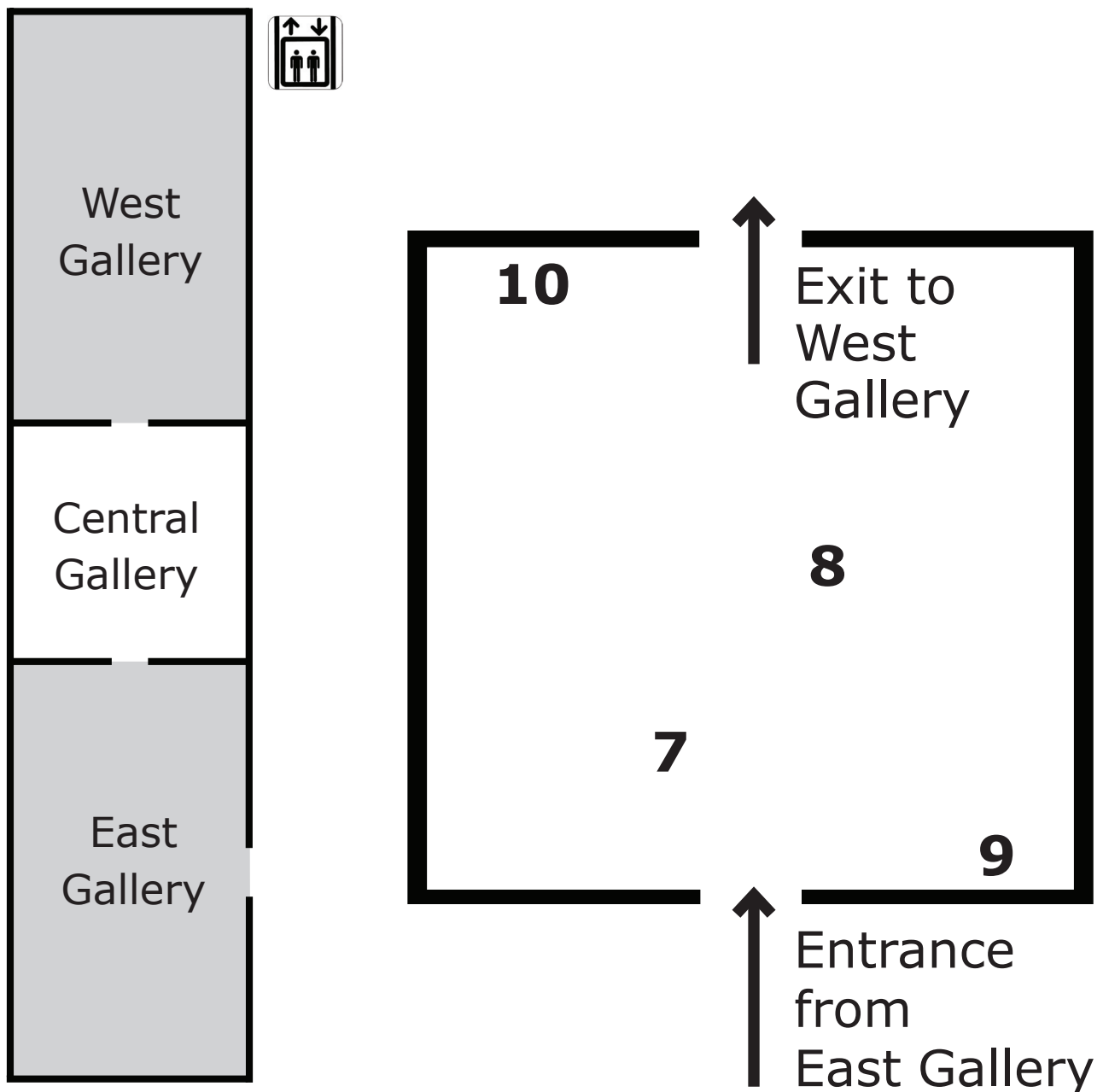
6

untitled: canvasracks; 2018–2019

Concrete, cotton-duck canvas, hardboard, paint, plastic, plywood, steel, tape, timber

Gabrielle Jungels-Winkler Galleries

You are in the Central Gallery



Central Gallery list of works

7

untitled: barrel; 2018–2019

Cement, paint, plywood, polyurethane board, polystyrene, polyurethane foam, spray paint, timber

8

untitled: shadowplatform; 2018–2019

Cement, Hessian scrim, PVA, paint, plaster, plywood, sand, timber

9

untitled: cutter; 2018–2019

Hessian scrim, PVA, paint, plaster, steel

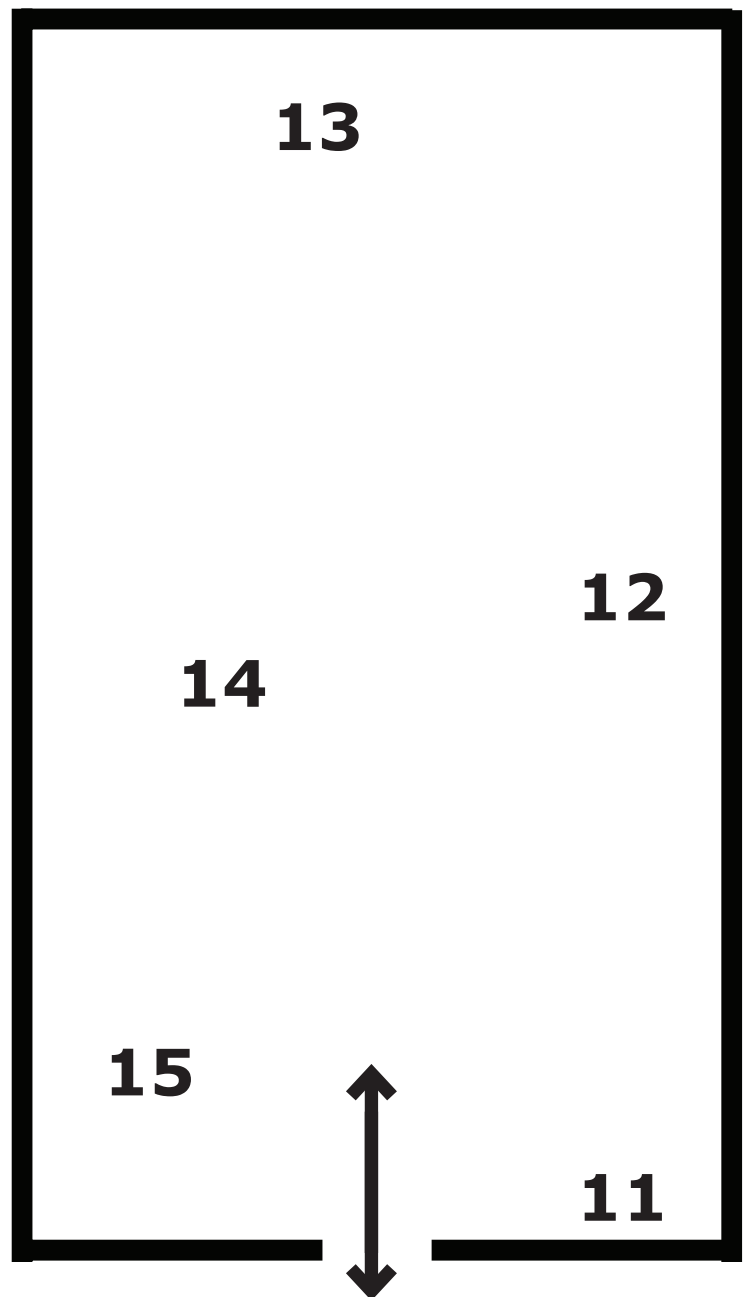
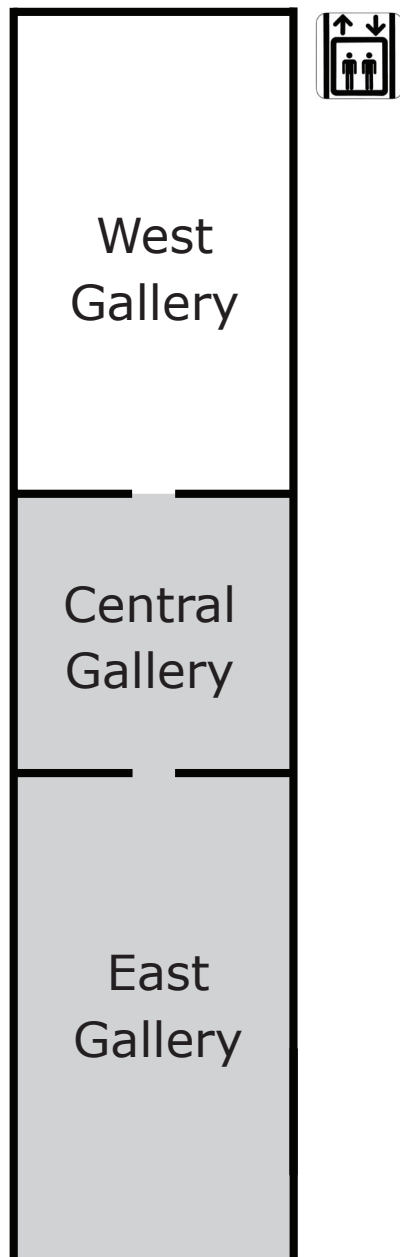
10

untitled: crush; 2018–2019

Bonding plaster, cement, PVA, paint, plaster,
plywood, polystyrene, polyurethane foam, spray
paint, steel

Gabrielle Jungels-Winkler Galleries

You are in the West Gallery



Entrance from Central
Gallery and Exit from
the exhibition

West Gallery list of works

11

untitled: cutter 2; 2018–2019

Hessian scrim, PVA, paint, plaster, steel

12

**untitled: scrimtripod; 2018–
2019**

Cement, Hessian scrim, PVA, paint, plywood, sand,
spray paint, steel, timber

13

untitled: blocksonstilts; 2018–
2019

Hessian scrim, plaster, polystyrene, spray paint,
timber, steel

14

untitled: postshadow; 2019

Concrete, cardboard, cement, Hessian scrim, plaster,
plywood, polyurethane board, polystyrene,
polyurethane foam, steel, timber, wire mesh

15

untitled: post; 2019

Cement, Hessian scrim, PVA, paint, plaster, plywood,
polyurethane board, polystyrene, polyurethane
foam, spray paint, steel, tape, timber, wire mesh

Texts from the Gallery Guide:

Inspiration

Barlow refers to the exhibition space as a 'protagonist' in the overall creation, and as being on an 'equal footing' with the work itself. The third 'player' is the audience; their encounter with the installation completes the production.

Thus the generation of ideas for an exhibition evolves alongside the artist's deepening understanding of the possibilities and limitations dictated by the space. This relationship and tension between the structure and its surroundings is therefore fostered from the moment of its inception, and continues to play out through its exhibition.

Representing Britain at the 2017 Venice Biennale, Barlow's occupation of the

classically designed British Pavilion was wonderfully dense and varied.

Sympathetic to the sculptural architecture of the pavilion, the installation challenged the interior perimeters of the building, thereby encouraging visitors to navigate the space in an entirely different way.

Describing 'cul-de-sac' as a reaction against Venice, Barlow has shifted her focus to the creation of a 'leaner' installation. Here, individual pieces have the opportunity to speak for themselves, and to also be viewed as part of an orchestrated whole.

This deliberate economy enables singular works to be seen with greater clarity and from numerous vantage points. It has the effect of making 'links' of the pieces, emphasising their essential role in the overall arrangement of the installation.

Barlow is an acute observer of life, particularly the contrasting spheres of domestic and street worlds, which have been a constant source of inspiration for her practice. The untidiness of urban living, with the constant industry of road and building repair, holds a fascination for Barlow; their colours and shapes often find expression in her work.

Process

Employing media such as plaster, timber, foam and hardboard, Barlow is able to manipulate and reform these materials. Their use, unlike less malleable materials associated with traditional sculpture – bronze, stone and steel – allows her to retain the freedom to make significant

changes as the piece develops, unpicking and redoing previous work. Her experience as student, of shifting her approach from the two dimensions of paint, to the three dimensions of clay, was of huge consequence for her:

“I think the way I’ve related to materials began with my working with clay – the moment when I first became fascinated by something that wasn’t paint, but actually was very closely related to paint.

It gave me this ability to change things very quickly and accumulate, add and add and add and then take away: a constant ebb and flow between adding and removing. Then I wanted to find other materials that could do the same thing, like paper and fabric and scraps of plywood, timber, offcuts – the remains of materials.

They could be accumulated and then removed, very like working with clay, so I think that's still inherent in these processes".

When scale permits, Barlow executes the smaller pieces herself. The larger forms are produced in collaboration with a close team of studio assistants, which she directs and oversees.

Barlow's propensity to continue to amend her work during the creative process, to adapt her pieces as the forms emerge, requires her to be present at every stage of their development.

Her ability to effectively translate and communicate, to her team, the abstract notions she develops as the work evolves, is of fundamental importance to the process.

Encounter

The third and final protagonist of Barlow's work is the experience through which the visitor might encounter the installation within its surrounding space; this is a significant factor in determining the inception and development of each exhibition.

This encounter, and the residual memory that the visitor is left with, has long preoccupied Barlow.

The experience of installing her work in Venice, while artists from other countries were involved in the same process, prompted her to consider how the public engages with, and are expected to engage with, work of many differing media.

(continued over)

The notion of performance-based and interactive work, where an active and immediate response is required from the viewer, raised questions for her as to how the public reacts to inanimate sculptural installations, and what encountering such work requires of them:

“Sculpture doesn’t do that, it waits for you to do something to it. That really puts sculpture in this extraordinary, vulnerable position, because we live in a world where images are in abundance and they’re not just still, they’re moving, they’re flickering, they’re doing all kinds of things, very speedily.

Whereas sculpture needs to be given time, you need to just wait with it and become the moving object that it isn’t, so this action between the still and the moving is incredibly demanding for all”.

The perception of the object within the space it occupies is extremely important to Barlow. In recognising the demands that sculpture places on the visitor, she also understands that this encounter of viewing through circumnavigating the work and comprehending its physical properties in their entirety, is ultimately rewarding.

Your feedback, please

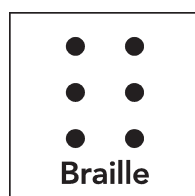
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Thank you.

Molly Bretton, Access Officer



InTouch at the RA

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