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VIVIENNE GRIFFIN

Bureau, New York

Intimacy (2015) is a circle made of alabaster placed atop a limestone base. The materials contrast – the alabaster shines in pink and blue hues against the off-white stone – but they also complement each other. An implied narrative – Are they connected? Can the circular form roll off the square? What sound will it make as it spins through the space? – enhances the sense, conveyed by the romantic title of the piece, that together they make something meaningful. Vivienne Griffin's exhibition examines sculpture and the attributes of matter, while constantly pointing away from it to more theoretical terrains. Regrettably, the artist never addresses these head on.

The gallery is mostly taken up by a collection of small sculptures on plinths made of steel and marble. There are six alabaster pieces, the mineral finely worked to create geometric shapes – circles, squares – then conflated with distinctly different materials. *The Nostalgia of an Object* (2014–15) is a polished rectangle resting on a piece of memory foam, the shapes in continual battle of mass and contact. In *The Bastardization of Dawn* (2014–15) Griffin morphs the material by painting the alabaster with acrylic, then enhancing the tints by placing a light bulb beside it. The light bulb makes another appearance in *Intimacy (again)* (2015), where the same circular painted alabaster is placed on a plinth with a light bulb behind it. Two other sculptures, *The Glamour of Ornament*

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and *The Glamour of Ornament 2* (both 2015) bring together Polyphant stones with golden hoops and chains pierced through them. The holes that puncture the decorative English stones (named after the village next to which they are quarried) also run through the idea of the ornamentation inherent to the material (casting further meaning on the alabaster pieces, too). The inclusion of the gold jewellery in them furthers the *fin-de-siècle* associations, beyond the use of the word 'ornament', which echoes Adolf Loos's 1908 lecture 'Ornament and Crime'. A series of ink-on-paper drawings deal with mundane subjects – a trash bin, a faucet – drawn with careful attention to detail. One untitled drawing of a gold bracelet (2014) brings to mind the gold hoops in the sculptures, and this relation between the drawings and the sculptures gives the exhibition a sense of being a very coherent body of work.

The value of Griffin's smaller inquiries is in the fact that this is not a show about process, nor is it about perfection, though the pieces are all exquisitely finished. Griffin's examination of modernism, from the design of the steel and marble plinths to the assessment of decoration and ornament, puts this focus on materiality in a historical perspective, one that could have benefited from a somewhat more direct discussion that goes beyond just the artworks' titles.

Though the space is filled with the sculptures and drawings, it is a sound piece, *The Only Way is Out* (2015) that sets the tone for the show. Playing from a broken iPhone on the floor, the two-channel audio track echoes through the room, with a woman singing a cappella ('I've been thinking about sitting in a chair in a room'), a drum hum and some soft electric guitar. In her previous exhibition at the gallery in 2013, Griffin also included a sound work, in that case a computerized voice reading playwright Sarah Kane's last script, *4:48 Psychosis*, written before her death in 1999. *The Only Way is Out* is not as haunting as listening to that digitized account of clinical depression, but it resonates just as strongly throughout the space. It's harmonic and wistful ('How could I be such a fool?') and draws the viewer in. This sonic presence highlights Griffin's complex, layered way of thinking about work and its presentation.

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Vivienne Griffin
Intimacy (again), 2015, alabaster,
watercolour, limestone, tempered steel,
87 × 41 × 30 cm