

TRACES AND PRESENCES
'ILONA KALNOKY'

Any serious consideration of the current developmental sculptural forms of Ilona Kalnoky is to immediately engage with questions as to the poetics of space and the frangibility of materials. Over the last decade or so Kalnoky has shaped her own expressive language that brings together both organic and synthetic materials into a new and highly personal relationship. The materials include everything from mirrors, to silicon, plaster, wooden lath, elastic bands, plastic balloons, through to aluminium and bronze. Kalnoky's integrated and hybrid use of materials, something that frequently undermines the clichéd conventions of high and low, the substantial and the entropic, in many respects has created a continuous personal summation of the sculptural innovations of the twentieth century sculpture. Whether synthetic or organically derived, her use of materials always presents a sensory awareness as to their original natural or manufactured state. It is a unique quality of her work that she rarely applies a skin such as paint, or subsidiary secondary applications, in terms of colour or masking to the original material contents of her sculptures. In this sense alone they might be considered and experienced as immediate phenomenological objects with their own initial internal sense of meditative and inward presence. On the face of it there is nothing charged or 'noisy' about the art of Kalnoky, yet strangely at quite another level they incorporate the viewer into experiencing a hidden inner tension at work. Hence we find that balloons are in state of constriction and inhibition, elastic bands that are stretched, and the space around the installations of the sculptures present an ever changing optical tension as you up take up different viewing positions to assimilate the works. The feeling for equilibrium that becomes disequilibrium reflects that her work derives (at least in part) from the aesthetic tradition of post-minimalism (Bruce Nauman, Richard Serra, Felix Gonzales Torres, Eva Hesse and the like), which is to say what might appear at first as structurally stable shares in the natural and inevitable instabilities of life, where perceptual experiences remain in a phenomenological state of continuous flux and sensory variation. But at the same time there is also a conceptual and semiotic 'onomatopoeic' aspect, something often seen in the titles of her works *space invasion* (2010) and *creep* (2009-11).

In intellectual terms we might also think of Ilona Kalnoky's sculptures and installations in psychological and elemental terms, that is say their use of matter and materiality as a form of symbolic extension. That there is a Bachelard-tone in her work is very evident, namely the poetics of space and the ephemeral emotional issues of earth, air and water (matter and mirrors), through reflection and opacity, and the sensate (perceiving) divergent polarities of inertness (gypsum) and the dynamism (elasticity) expressed by the inner tensions and viewer experiences of the installations. Therefore to speak of the primary elements is to speak of a marked psychological disposition and suggests states of inner consciousness. Though it is not my suggestion that Kalnoky intentionally evokes these opaque psychological references, but they exist in a residual nature as she responds to the use and application of materials that are utilised in her work. They are prominent within the material aspects of the sculpture and as a result must derive from the inner consciousness of their maker. Whether appropriating industrial materials such as building supplies, or conversely developing a sculpture to be later realised in bronze, Kalnoky's sources always have the effect of exposing the traces of the materials former existence and their projected of imagined use. The outcome is that of creating heightened sensory awareness, placing the viewer in a strong relational material presence to the artist works.