

ELIZABETH MCALPINE *Tip Toe*

6th Sept 2014 – 5th Oct 2014

Laura Bartlett Gallery is pleased to present *Tip Toe*, a solo exhibition by Elizabeth McAlpine.

Somehow I too must find a way of making things;

Not plastic, written things, but realities that arise from the craft itself

Rainer Maria Rilke *Letters on Cezanne*

The German word "Zwischenraum" translates as the space between things. The poetic potential of this interstitial space was crucial for Rilke and it is similarly central to the work of Elizabeth McAlpine. The British filmmaker, sculptor and performance artist has explored photographic processes in the last few years in order to find vehicles for a poetic reading of the everyday. In the exhibition *Tip Toe* McAlpine's interest in neglected spaces and the flexibility of form have given her the tools to excavate unregistered apertures and to expose the surface of the space between things.

The photographic objects that make up the exhibition are not only drawings but also acts of painting, snapshots and at the same time sculptures. After a graphite rubbing of a paving stone is made photographic emulsion is applied to both sides of a piece of paper and the rubbing is used as a negative to make a photographic (contact) print. The silver gelatin of the photographic emulsion echoes the graphite used to describe the original impression of the pavement and provides an elegant reflection on photography's dependence on silver's alchemic properties. The paper is then exposed to varying degrees of light, corresponding to the degree of fragility it has acquired from its abrasion with the pavement. The black and white photographs are then folded in order to affirm their three dimensional origins and complete a traversal from the 3D to the 2D and back again.

What is inscribed on the surface of the paper is the impression of the shape between paper and pavement, of the skin between two surfaces. This skin is a repository of touch, the remembrance of tactile experience written across it; it is this memory that McAlpine recuperates by exposing the paper to light. She creates an epidermal image, a liminal membrane that registers the reverberations made when we perceive the world through touch. This is a reciprocal, two way experience made by employing a haptic mode of vision. The echo of the pavement is the echo of our experience of the ground (falling down, scraping it with our hands as children, or summer days spent without shoes). This vestigial memory is threaded through reverberations between the three and two dimensional in *Tip Toe* that are tethered to the real by McAlpine's preservation of a 1:1 scale. Similarly, McAlpine's fidelity to "origin" is palpable in the way she retains the grainy aggregate of the paving surfaces through an exploration into the fibrous qualities of the photographic image. It is this facsimilal grain of visuality which punctuates the surface of these works.

This delicate excavation of forgotten surfaces reminds us of the precarity of experience and how expansive lacunas can spread in our consciousness and sink the everyday poetry that we rarely stop to notice. Poetry derives from the Greek verb *poieisis*, which meant to both continue and transform the world. McAlpine's work drips with *poieisis*, dredging the gaps between our daily remembrances and returning their shapes to our image world.

Appropriately, McAlpine restores these spectral images from the "Zwischenraum" of the everyday to us in artworks that fall through the gaps between mediums. They are at once paintings, sculptures, drawings, prints and photographs, and at the same time none of these things. McAlpine literally folds these mediums into one another with several deferential nods to the masters of modernism whose work dissolved the space between image and object. But if the folds first resemblance might be to Malevich, Frank Stella or Kenneth Noland, they could also relate to a more contemporary discourse on the digital.

McAlpine reminds us that, for all its transformative effects, the digital has not yet found a poetics of memory, a way of touching the forgotten.

McAlpine (b. 1973, London) lives and works in London. She has had solo exhibitions at the Reg Vardy Gallery at the University of Sunderland, UK; Laurel Gitlen, New York; and SPACEX in Exeter. Her work has been included in group exhibitions at numerous institutions including The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Perth Institute of Contemporary Art, Australia and Gertrude Contemporary, Melbourne; Spike Island, London; The Barbican, London; Kadist Foundation, Paris, deCordova Museum and Sculpture Park, Lincoln, MA.