

Claire Morgan – *O, I Do Like To Be Beside the Seaside*

“A Warning From The Sun” - Darren Ambrose

These two new sculptures by Claire Morgan explore both the mystery in the depths of sensuous nature and the disastrous oblivion at the heart of human culture. Her art challenges our continued attitude of absolute sovereignty over nature, where an astonishing dissociation has occurred, a monumental forgetting of our human inherence in the non-human world. It is increasingly evident that we have renounced our sensuous bearings in nature, isolating ourselves from other animals and the animate earth that sustains us. Our cultures deny, or repress, our total interdependence with other animals, plants and the living earth around us. Morgan's art recalibrates these bearings through a melancholic beauty that has immediacy and a logic that is easy to understand but very difficult to explain. It is poetic, affective and unforgettable. Overlooked presences and hidden intelligences stand forth at the peripheral borderlines between various elements. These presences are the sensory omens of disaster that speak to us of our merciless and toxic exploitation of nature. At the affective periphery of their lunar and solar offerings we are irretrievably altered.

Upon entering the lyrical zone of the gallery we are immediately confronted by a tremulous column of air, described by immobile fragments of white polythene, hovering silently in the middle of the room: a column of lifeless plastic moon's milk. This motionless man-made detritus is caught in a frozen moment of time, spiraling earthwards, spilling across the floor. Looking more closely we notice a falling bird caught within this static vortex. *Terminal*. A struggle has ensued. This bird, a sea bird, has crossed a threshold into a terrain that is no longer its own. Having lost its power of flight, it is brought crashing towards the earth. Perhaps a lunar frenzy has altered the force of gravity itself. Feel the moon's pull. Inverted vertigo. The instant of nature's terminal decline. A lunar declension.

Beyond, in the second room, we glimpse a strange black sun. A solar catastrophe. *You Are My Sunshine* – My only sunshine. You make me happy when skies are grey. You'll never know how much I love you. You make me happy when times are bad. Please don't take my sunshine away. As we move closer, drawn towards the enigma of this dark sun, we realize that it is an inert sphere of flies floating still and weightless amidst the sacred echoes of this space. Flies have gathered together in homage to the birth of a fossilized black sun. With each room we shift from the melancholy of lunar drift to the loneliness of dystopian despair. A dark solar ascension.

Both of these sculptures offer weird manifestations of the lunar and solar forces that affect the tides and natural life at the periphery of the seashore. Between solar ascension and lunar declension the natural rhythms and forces of the earth slip into visibility - the rising of the tides, winds, gravity. The two pieces resonate together in the immediate environment of the gallery, but they also resonate with us spectators and with the environment outside. These are works of embodied sensitivity, delicately calibrated to the hidden processes and patterns in nature. They are commentaries upon our natural environment and the forgotten implications of human action - points of chiasmatic exchange between human culture and the wilderness. In this space, the idea

of the periphery permeates Claire Morgan's work. The borderlines between sea, land, air, and space are continually made sensible. To make some sense of these different ephemeral thresholds is to enliven our senses. An artwork that makes sense is one that stirs our senses from their dormant and complacent slumbers; that re-opens our eyes and ears to the natural world around us. It keeps our perceptual membrane fluid and porous, ensuring the greatest possible attunement between our human community and the animate earth, between the familiar and the enigmatic realm of the outside. Art should always try to release us from the constraints of our outmoded ways of perceiving, thinking and acting. It should always try to poetically renew, rejuvenate and intensify our felt awareness of the outside world.

To spend time with these particular works is to begin to affectively discern signals of nature in distress. The disastrous outpouring of technological and industrial pollutants can continue only so long before it begins to permanently alter the finite structure of the world around us. Heed the warning from the black sun. Our own organic attunement to the rhythms and forces of the earth is continually thwarted by a relentlessly calculative and instrumental logic oblivious to all natural life. By both interrupting the ceaseless movement of nature and silencing our own cultural discourse, the sculptures allow our bodies to come back into visceral proximity with the earth, to begin again a silent conversation with the non-human things of this world. They allow us to become reacquainted with the most familiar of things. *I do like to be beside the seaside*, but why? Why am I continually drawn back to this most familiar natural periphery between the sea and the land? To contemplate the lunar tides? By arresting our perception at the threshold of such things the sculptures poetically render them strange again. Our narcissistic monologues are silenced and we are brought back to a point where we are able to enact a dialogue with the enigmatic otherness of nature. The staged encounters at the borderlines between animality, humanity and the earth serve as points of relay where reciprocal flows between the outside and inside can occur. By bringing nature back into our orbit, back into proximity with our own human world, the sculptures rejuvenate our carnal, sensorial empathy with the living earth. The types of poetic acts of attunement between the animate wilderness and ourselves that are beautifully embodied in these sculptural works are absolutely vital for all of us.