Haiku in 3D

Artists **Linda Bolsakova** and **Brodie Sim** present the outcome of their emailed haiku exchange and long period of installation from 7 April in Generator Projects, both working with sculptural and complex ideas of nature

Interview: Adam Benmakhlouf

In the run up to their two-person exhibition, artists Brodie Sim and Linda Bolsakova have been emailing each other something like haikus since being introduced by Generator Projects in Dundee. Thinking of this Japanese poetry form, Linda Bolsakova says, "What is different is the directness, to state whatever is there. But at the same time, it's kind of impossible to avoid a depth and symbolism." Paraphrasing a book she read, "You have to become what you write about. So if you want to write about pine, become pine and learn from pine. It always has to evoke some aspect of season, transient nature, the transience of everything... We don't really talk, or say this is that, but I might show her what I'm working on and she'll weave it in, and we let each other know what's happening and what we're up to in each other's lives." Considering her own work and relationship with Sim, Bolsakova thinks of the phrase "haiku in 3D."

Looking at their work, there are moments of familiarity in the suggestive semi-abstraction, and references to natural forms often through sumptuous, rich materials. Speaking to Sim about this kind of ambiguity of forms, she considers her work to be about "subtle moments... feelings, that come across but aren't very literal. They might be to do with the material, for example, or light. I use the word 'tone' a lot, and it's the best way I've found to explain that translation between the space inside of me and the space in front of me that I'm working with."

Talking about this same strategy of not pulling out visual references so explicitly within her sculpture, Bolsakova nevertheless speaks of coming from a "personal place." She refers directly to the experience of seeing a tree planted next to the burial place of her father, and realising in a moment that he would become part of natural growths and cycles. To her, it is very important to begin close to her own life experience, "to stay truthful, but I still want it to stay open to interpretation, going from this microcosm to macrocosm and I feel that there's a strong connection that whatever happens to my life happens to these life cycles in general."

> **"It's nothing spooky or mysterious but very material"**
> **Linda Bolsakova**

Going in and out of symbolics and "the thing itself", there's a difficulty of applying a word like "metaphor" straightforwardly, as she works through the very separation that would separate visible growth or decay from something more emotional, personal or putatively "immaterial". It's apt then that Bolsakova describes working on the theme of connection in the upcoming exhibition. "The connection between the moon and the sea for example, relationships and how we build or have connections between people, things, places, and how it's nothing spooky or mysterious but very material. My work is about the interconnectedness between us and the environment... It becomes difficult to talk about these things because it always becomes dualistic. It's hard to break up boundaries."

Sim continues the thought of taking inspiration from natural forms, but sometimes not feeling like being connected to a conventional idea of nature as theme. "There's a lot of art out there that's about nature, and it's not necessarily got great connotations sometimes."

Though admitting that it'd be difficult to put both their work in a room and for it not to react interestingly, Sim nevertheless recognises her own process as distinct from Bolsakova's. "Our approach is so different, and the writing [email haiku exchange] has been a really good tool because it's quite abstract. It's just a way of communicating without having to explain what we're doing." Speaking of her own process, Sim describes, "I feel my way through the dark a bit more, to arrive at something." In particular, she thinks of her own photographic process: "I don't go out there with a view of photographing something specific. It's all pocketing moments of where I've been. It's making sense of a landscape or a tone or texture."

These will be shown alongside Sim's new work *Dreaming for Offcuts*. "I find a bit of offcut material that someone's been working with, and has just gone in the bin – I've found these little fragments of material that are so clearly not going to be used. They might be marble or different types of stone. Working at Edinburgh Sculpture Workshop, there are a lot of people carving, and the offcuts are really beautiful so I've been casting them. Obviously casting is a long process, but it's so good for catching subtle reverberations between objects and materials. I've been casting those in different metals, iron, bronze, pure silver. They're gonna be really small, but have nice connections to each other, but also this idea of giving them a purpose."

Sim also mentions slipcast porcelain materials and speaks highly of Bolsakova's philosophical basis and being able to describe different works eloquently, but also thinks of herself as "basking in an ocean of ambiguity" and modesty speaking of her ambition of "hoping that someone might feel something", and a "poetry or resonance in the space".

Making new connections in her own practice, Sim for the first time will display her photography, which previously she used as part of her studio research only. "I might even tape photographs to the wall like I do in my studio, and have a fragmented connection between the photographs and the sculpture and my approach in general."

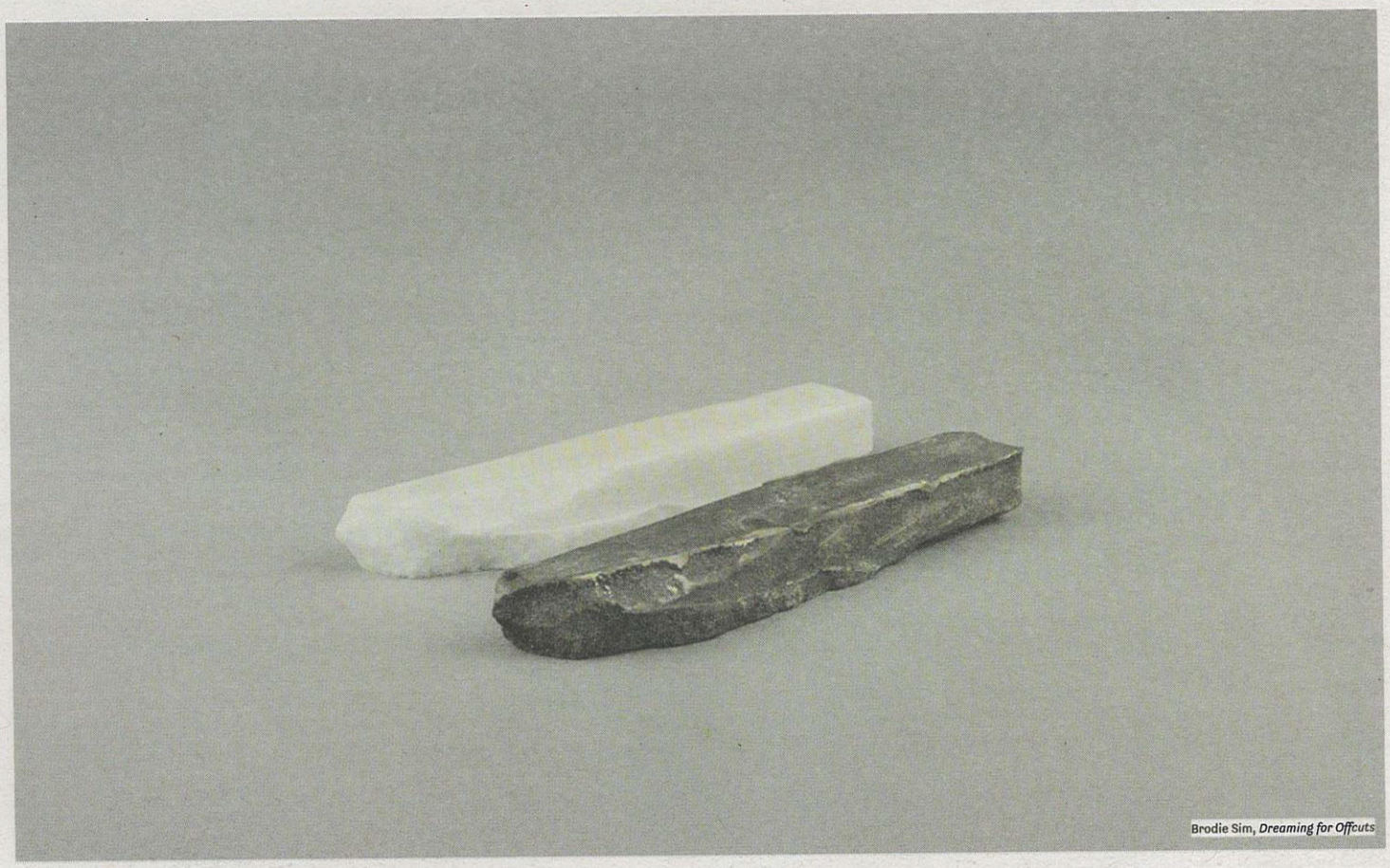
For Bolsakova, she plans on displaying a moon vase, "a porcelain vase filled with seawater, thinking of the gravitational force of that vase and how usually in vases we put some plant or flower and sustain life. But it will be impossible to sustain life in these because of the seawater. I'll build another one as an antithesis covered in copper oxide, which will make it black, like an empty moon, but also referring to Venus as a coppery planet." She's also collecting birch juice, to display in a glass jar with a birch branch charred up above, alongside a copper spoon that will be filled with milk. "I'm thinking of copper as contraceptive, that it's essential for life but at the same time it's used for hospital railings as a kind of disinfector, so bacteria can't mingle." Then "milk as reference for mother's milk, sperm or first feeding."

At the same time, though speculating how the exhibition might look, still in advance of the show, Sim describes enthusiastically not yet knowing exactly how the show will work with both of their practices together. "We're really lucky because we have a long install time, so we can make those decisions [in Generator], and just be in the space and understand how it will be read."

It was after being curated together that Sim and Bolsakova spent a weekend in the Scottish Sculpture Workshop, taking walks and having long discussions about their respective practices. This is where they came up with the title A Constellation Is Forming Here. Sim describes why it works for her: "I like it because it's how it happened, these elements all coming together, we can't quite make sense of it yet and it's still forming."

From 7 Apr in Generator Projects, Dundee

Linda Bolsakova, *Copper Pee*



Brodie Sim, *Dreaming for Offcuts*