

## PROCESS

Everyday chores, common experiences and familiar processes are revisited in the work of Bill Wroath. The stuff of 'ordinariness', of 'normal' life is scrutinised, re-presented and revalued.

Here, the making of a work of art is not a process of alchemy or mystification: conjuror's tricks with materials hold no worth in this practice. Wroath prefers to study, even to analyse his materials and processes in order to respect their distinctive characteristics. In achieving an understanding of the nature of physical matter, a very honest dialogue is set up between artist, process and meaning.

Fundamental questions orbit the work: the nature of our world and of our own existence. These meanings are mobilised by skilful procedures using time, space and change.

## CLAY

Wroath was once a ceramicist, and clay is still important to him. The rudimentary properties of the material holds great appeal: its gravity and gravitas. In Flux (1996), a body was cast in clay, wrapped in copper wire and semi-immersed so that the clay slowly dissolved, leaving an open wire human form sat in a muddy pool. The casting clay was used over and over again in many different pieces to enact nature's renewal through recycling. This artist is intrigued by the relationship between our own conceit of self as individual, versus the concept that bodies are made up of endlessly recycled matter. We come from, and return to the muddy pool.

Wroath speaks of the 'optimum moment' of clay being when it is wet and malleable; when the particles are held in watery suspension, clay is held in a state of temporary resuscitation.

This matter-of-fact way of thinking leads him away from questions of spirituality or reincarnation, more towards a material philosophy of being. This is not banal, since the materials are expressed with an awareness that all matter is in a state of change, hovering at the threshold of becoming and unbecoming. This is the balance he seeks in his art.

## ROCK

rock(1) rok, n. a large outstanding natural mass of stone: a natural mass of one or more minerals consolidated or loose (geol.): any variety or species of such an aggregate.....a sure foundation or support, anything immovable...

Rock (3) rok, v.t and v.i to sway to and fro, tilt from side to side: to startle, stagger...

Chambers 20th Century Dictionary, 1983 edition

Clay-cast rocks are made as a hollow forms to draw to the surface of the observer's consciousness an awareness of the vast amount of 'empty' space found in all matter at a molecular level. So rock is no longer solid, reliable, immovable. Difference between materials is diminished as we close in on the object under scrutiny. Our own 'empty' spaces move towards the 'empty' spaces in the rock: the shared common denominator being interior space.

## CHOICE

How are rocks selected? A longstanding interest in quantum mechanics determines Wroath's approach to decision-making and choice. In a certain sense, the rocks have chosen the artist. This quantum relationship between the observer and observed form the logical basis of 'choice'. Observation is action, selection is interrogation.

Space or volume, the inside or outside of things: according to Wroath, these can normally only be seen one at a time. This dilemma informs and inspires his approach to sculpture that uses processes and ideas to surpass binary readings. Striving to create work that addresses this paradox by dissolving boundaries, the artist places the observer at the heart of his work.

Empty space is not empty at all, in this so-called vacuum particles of matter are constantly and spontaneously created and annihilated. This hints at a very different understanding of what constitutes solidity. Where is the boundary between the quantum world and our visible world; the world and us? I have dealt primarily, though not exclusively, with these concerns in relation to the body. I have questioned skin being the surface at which we end and the rest of the world begins, and by mirroring concerns raised by quantum mechanics, I have deliberated about the materiality of the body and our experience of living in a body.

Bill Wroath, Artist's Statement 2002

## STORIES

Wroath makes art that always speaks about universal matters. Yet it can also be borne out of very particular issues. Physics is often taken to be a 'cold' subject, but there is warmth in the way Wroath fuses his awareness of scientific theory with a concern for real lives and circumstances. Lead 'rain' poured through the

roof of an installation in Lead (Heavy Showers) (2002), addressing issues of homelessness and unoccupied housing, at the same time as considering the broader idea of 'inside' and 'outside'. In other work, (Fall 2004) plastic toy soldiers form a collective mass that speaks again of unification of the physical body beyond individuality whilst also being triggered by the stories specific to our war-battered times.

Bill Wroath takes us on an inward journey, from which we return with an altered self-awareness. Things are the same as before. Things will never be the same again.

No matter.

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