

LYDIA GIFFORD
MIDDAY



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27.01.12 – 24.03.12

Lydia Gifford is interested in the language and the possibilities of painting, of painterly thought, and their allocation and transposal by means of subtle actions, gestures and processes within a physical space. This activity, a silent choreography, underpins one's reading of the work. Gifford's works do not foreground a finished creative act, rather they underscore a continuing activity and movement, situating themselves on the boundaries of completion, suspended for the duration of the exhibition. *Midday* proposes a common-ground where the works create points of fragmentation and linger. The works are activated and meaning is reinvented by the presence of the viewer.

For D.R.A.F., Gifford creates new in-situ installations in the gallery that, prior to the opening reception, becomes both testing ground and mental space. In that, the works mark a clear transition and displacement from the more reclusive studio space to a public environment. For Gifford, the works are never detached from their context, they, on the contrary, originate from their context as much as they create their own conditions of perception and sometimes production. Gifford investigates painting's potential to manifest the unstable moment of surfacing. These moments are interrupted by deliberate suspense: questioning the potential for response, the conviction to act, or to follow. This phenomenological investigation is a return to an original state where thoughts and images are indistinct, and thus a space where binary oppositions are annihilated, bestowing equal importance to indetermination and choice - a lack of hierarchy.

On the Probable Importance of Interruptions

In the process of conceiving the exhibition *Midday*, Lydia Gifford has been considering the notions of repetition, rhythm and nature. Music, choreography, literature and poetry inform the works in varying degrees in light of their potential for activation within the extended field of language. In that, the works of Henri David Thoreau, Giorgio Morandi, Henri Michaux and Agnes Martin have been considered as key resources.

In their realisation, the works take on literary-poetic or prosaic dimensions as form, as a gestural proxy, which may be read to proffer a 'poetics of transportation', as opposed to considering the common denominator of

discussing her practice solely in terms of painting. Gifford has often been addressed as a painter, in part because she uses pigments (found, natural or manufactured), which are then applied to surfaces. Arguably, her work also tends to center around the idea of volume, in its many meanings, together with painting. Perhaps in the same way as poetry has been and still is attached to volume in the works of, for instance, Stéphane Mallarmé, James Joyce and Georges Perec: exploring the relationship between content and form, between the text and the arrangement of words and spaces on the page: sculpting words, their spatial syntaxes.


What is at the center of attention here is what is being evoked from ‘the blank’, perhaps as a palimpsest, a receiver, a space of possibility: be it a mental space, or more physically, the space of a page, a room, a cardboard box: a support structure. A physical space that provides or allows for a shift into the bodiless space of thought.

To give an angle to the exhibitions’ and the works’ hinterland, the following pages have been devoted to resonate a part of the work process, and more specifically the inherent mental activity and stage-setup in conceiving *Midday*. The following quotes were taken from *Miserable Miracle* by Henri Michaux, originally published in France in 1956, and relocated into the context of the exhibition. Initially, these quotes were proposed to Lydia Gifford as questions. The outcome, as left unanswered, could instead be regarded as an echo of the dialogues established with the various resources and the different people involved in the exhibition. Hence, this exercise constitutes a testing ground, intended to explore the idea of mental resonance within the space: a dimensional shifting between the sensible and the sensory. Arguably, in a similar sense Michaux has used painting and poetry as languages to try to express something that is truly inexpressible.

In a similar vein, the event to coincide with the exhibition forms the outcome of a dialogue, in which improvised music by John Coxon, Evan Parker and Toma Gouband, will be made in direct response to artworks. The musicians have been exchanging ideas and references with Lydia Gifford over a period of time, ideas such as a non verbal practice and communication, repetitions and differences, improvisations and rhythms, interaction between thought and the physicality of playing or making, and the private experiments of the studio made public.

The exhibition is curated by Vincent Honoré
Text composed and edited by Niekolaas Johannes Lekkerkerk





“In a state of great uneasiness, of anxiety, of inner solemnity. - The world retreating in the distance, an ever increasing distance.- Each word becoming more and more dense, too dense to be uttered from now on, word complete in itself, word in a nest, while the noise of the wood fire in the fireplace becomes the only presence, becomes important, strange and absorbing its movements... In a state of expectancy, an expectancy that becomes each minute more pregnant, more vigilant, more indescribable, more painful to endure ... and to what point can it be endured?”¹

“Cardboard now, cardboard, cardboard sheets, cardboard boxes, factories of cardboard, truckloads of cardboard... and finally an avalanche of cardboard. (Documentary film or sonata?)

Enormous sheets of cardboard, bigger than screens, of a gray that is unpleasant to look at and a texture that must be unpleasant to touch, are being handled very briskly by hands I do not see.

To hell with all this cardboard! I'm not interested! Why all this cardboard? [...]”²

“What surface is so smooth as not to show enough variations for the imagination to seize upon? What atmosphere is so free from particles of dust that there is not one to catch and hold a chemical object?”³

“An idea arrives, quickly ceases to exist. When it returns a few minutes later it seems absolutely new. Just before it disappears again you have a fugitive notion, if not of recognizing it, at least of heaving passed close to it before. But when? Three minutes ago? An hour?”⁴

“[...] It is probably in the same way an old man repeats a phrase a hundred times, an idea that ninety-nine different zones of darkness have successively hidden from him, so that it comes back to him as many times, fresh and spontaneous. All men know this uncontrollable rambling, but are able to keep it to themselves. The old, no longer having the same control, betray themselves. As for a child, why should he hide this? [...]”⁵


“[...] Similarly incomplete, as could be expected, are the webs of spiders that have been induced to take the urine of schizophrenics.

Wouldn't it be more appropriate to try the experiment on the psychiatrists, rather than on the spiders?”⁶

“[...] But this idea, after a few quick triturations, would in turn become dangerous, for is there anything in a word which cannot be turned into a dagger? And after that how can one keep from seizing the dagger, how to stop it? Resist them? [...]”⁷

“Did these surroundings recall the sensation of internment which I had dreaded? And the dusk, did it make me think of the state which was possibly mine (!) the crepuscular state that also calls for internment? Who knows?”⁸





“I recalled that Chinese saying which had in the past surprised me: “Music is made to moderate.”... But I had remembered it wrong. It says, the idea originating with Yo-Ki: “Music is made to moderate joy.” Joy! Is joy then so exorbitant? [...]”⁹

“[...] You were, only moments before, a man with possessions, and, like all men with possessions, constantly looking to acquire and appropriate more. You were busy with the functions of acquisition, retention, and - mental ruminant - of elaboration, integration. Is it, as it would seem, the fact of “having” that maintains the ego, hic et nunc, that allows each of us to continue to individuated?”¹⁰

“Now that, by abandoning acquisitions, reserves, desires, now that a shrewd lysis has liquefied everything, what is left? Emptiness?”¹¹

1 Henri Michaux, *Miserable Miracle*, Translated from the French by Louise Varèse and Anna Moschovakis, Introduction by Octavio Paz, New York Book Reviews, 2002, p. 9. Originally published in France as *Misérable miracle*, Editions Gallimard, 1972.

2 Ibid, p. 14.

3 Ibid, p. 40.

4 Ibid, p. 79.

5 Ibid, p. 80.

6 Ibid, p. 111.

7 Ibid, pp. 131-132.

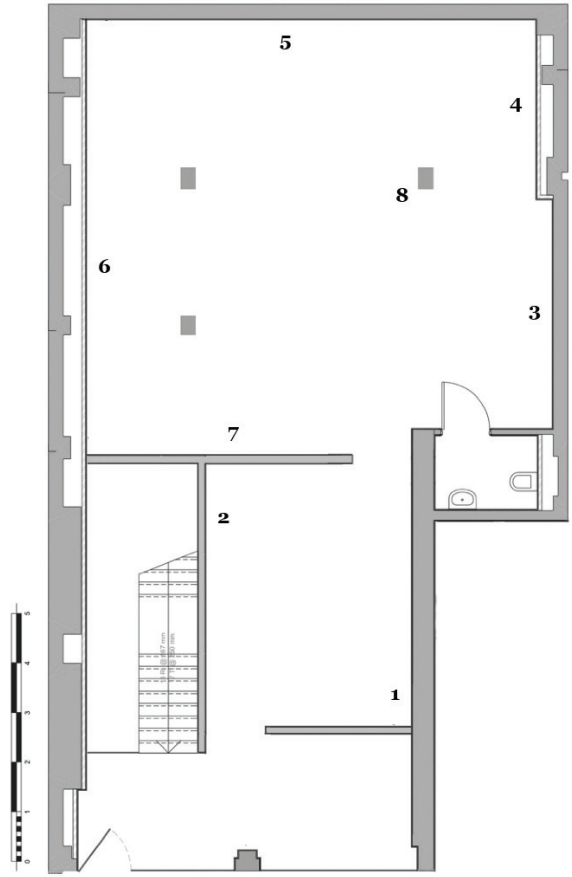
8 Ibid, p. 147.

9 Ibid, p. 151.

10 Ibid - Addendum II, p. 171.

11 Ibid - Addendum II, p. 171.





Ground Floor:

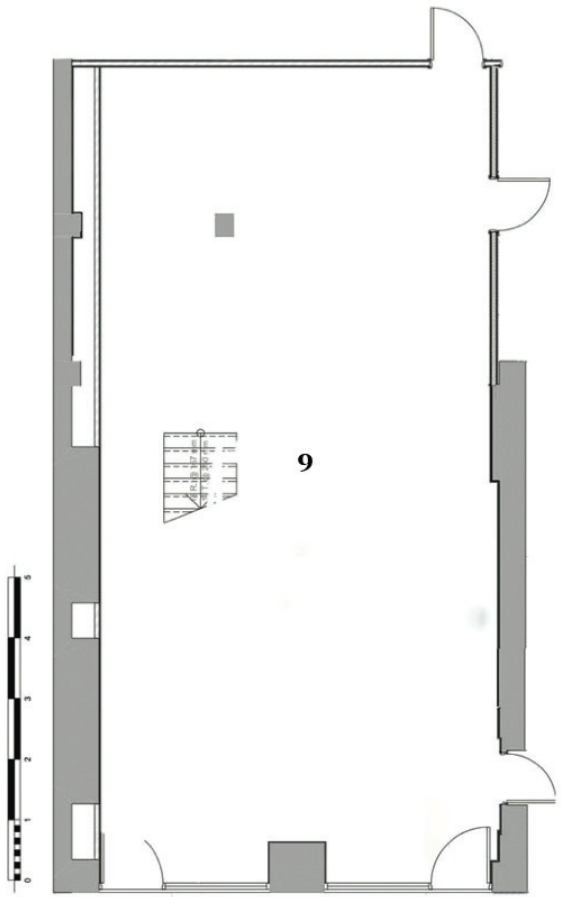
Room 1

1. *Sault*, 2012
2. *Midday (Follower)*, 2012

Room 2

3. *Midday (Dry Hill)*, 2012
4. *Midday (Nape)*, 2012
5. *Midday (Many)*, 2012
6. *Midday (Siding)*, 2012
7. *Midday (Foal)*, 2012
8. *Panning*, 2012





Lower Floor:

9. *Dell*, 2012





About D.R.A.F.

D.R.A.F. is a space dedicated to research and critical dialogue. It is directed and curated by Vincent Honoré. The David Roberts Art Foundation Limited is a registered charity in England and Wales (No. 1119738) and a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales (No. 6051439) at 25 Gosfield Street, London, W1W 6HQ. It is proudly supported by the Edinburgh House Estates group of companies.

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