TINTYPE

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Published by Tintype to coincide with Flora Parrott's solo exhibition
*Circuit: Five Deductions*, 21 September - 22 October 2011

## Circuit: Five Deductions

The work in *Circuit: Five Deductions* comes from objects that I have come across and developed a preoccupation with. A skate wing, a pillow lava, a wired jaw, a snail, a carnivorous plant, all are curiously difficult to describe.

I struggle to grasp the measure of the experience of encountering them. I find it hard to resolve the combination of their properties, the shape and consistency or the pace at which they move. I become confused and find it hard to define whether I am identifying smell, taste, touch, sight or hearing. This confusion is both compelling and frustrating.

The five groupings in the exhibition are an attempt to explain or convey the sensations that the objects evoke. I compare, divide, repeat and order materials into configurations. I know that I can never quite evoke the same feeling, yet using physical structures helps to create the illusion of order.

The central core of the spinal column is crucial to instinct and subconscious perception; it is protected by pentagonal vertebrae, the point running through your back. The five circuits emanating from the pentangle on the floor are spaces in which to resolve analogous states of being.

**Flora Parrott**

**Snail on Glass**

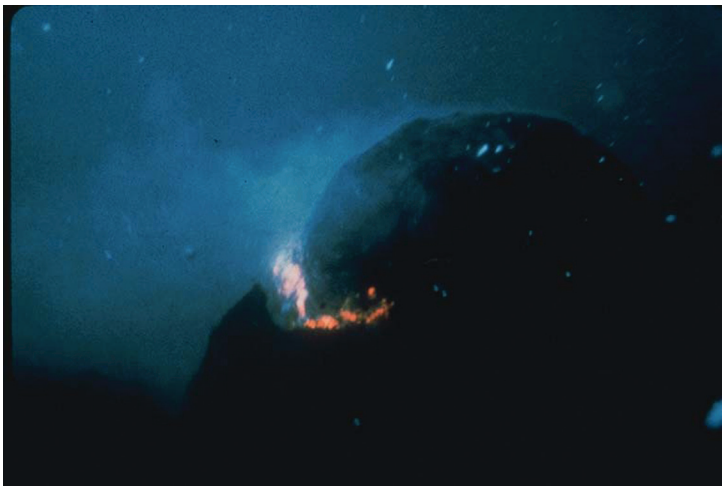
Pull a snail away from a piece of glass and the change in pressure almost seems to make a sound. It is as if the snail and surface were stuck together by a magnetic force.

I hold two magnets of the same charge, one in each hand between my index finger and thumb. As I move my hands towards each other, I feel the resistance build between the two cold, smooth, shiny pieces of metal. The movement is slow and controlled until a fraction before the metals touch, the force of the magnetic fields collide and my hands slide off course.

Although I know I cannot change the way the metal behaves, I repeat the action over and over again, often holding the magnets on the edge of the invisible barrier between them. It becomes difficult to distinguish: is it my own movement and anticipation making the magnets jerk away from each other or is it the magnetic force?

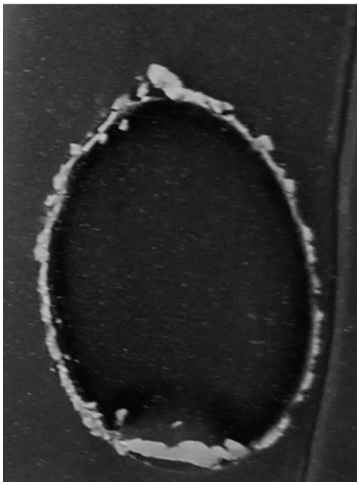
**Carnivorous Plant**

The plant traps its prey in a rolled leaf that contains a pool of digestive enzymes. Remaining in the same stretched, yawning position, it does not swallow, just ingests. The action seems incomplete.



**Pillow Lava**

I saw a television programme about underwater volcanoes. There was footage of a pillow lava sliding slowly but relentlessly down an underwater slope. It was doing so many things at once: cooling, solidifying, destroying and smoothing while simultaneously under the immense pressure of the thick, dark water around it.

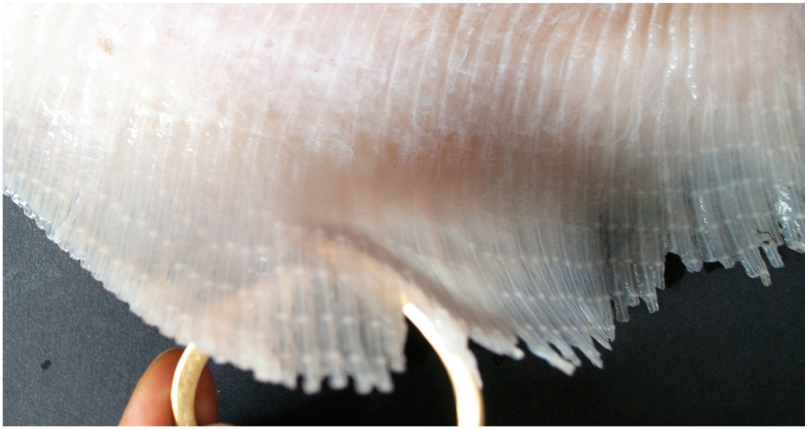


**Skate Wing**

At one end, solidly muscular, tense and in spasm. At the other, fragile, transparent, much more brittle. The two sides invite me to handle them quite differently.

Switch between them, like a tide coming in and out.

A resounding memory I have is one of simultaneously dreading and looking forward to the moment before I fell asleep. When my eyes were closed, the picture would switch between what could best be described as a loud, dark TV screen of white noise and a calm, pale screen of white noise – almost pure white. When I concentrated on trying to control the image or to understand it, I felt stressed and confused. When I relaxed into watching the transition I felt calm. But no matter how many times I tried, I found it very difficult to remain relaxed for long: the compulsion to divide the experience was too compelling.



**Wired Jaw**

Metal strands threading in and out of the bone clamping the two sides together: the idea makes me think of the opposite type of force. I try to open an oyster shell but the two sides of the shell grip one another tight. As I struggle to prise them apart, the muscle inside fights against it; the twisting motion of the blade makes a crunching, chalky noise as it levers the edges of the shell.

*"Art cannot be used to explain the mysterious. What art does is to make it easier to notice. Art un covers the mysterious. And when noticed and uncovered, it becomes more mysterious."*
*John Berger **

There is strange invincibility about certain forms of natural phenomena. A pillow lava can be explained scientifically but what else does it communicate? A kind of poetic power? An otherness?

The five 'things' that are the basis for the circuit in this show are all forms of natural phenomena. In creating the circuit Flora Parrott is in a sense dissecting and re-configuring these mysterious entities. Her starting point is fascination, obsession and curiosity – not only about the objects but about the sensations they evoke.

Parrott describes how she struggles to assimilate her chosen entities: "I almost feel the need to put the object in my mouth as a child might do, not in order to destroy it or consume it but in an attempt to grasp the measure of it."

Viewing the work, standing in the pentangle shape, turning to take in the five deductions and the visual clues and codes they contain, there are many possible 'explanations' to choose from. Are we being invited to locate a form of primal response within ourselves? Are we being presented with an arcane detective story? Or is it, as Berger writes, art uncovering the mysterious yet rendering it, in the process, even more mysterious?

Maybe Parrott is leading us into the equivalent of putting something in your mouth to discover what it is – inviting us to experience the work as a kind of sensual adventure. Rarely do artists employ quite such a diverse and eclectic range of media: vellum, snail shells, rubber, lard, ram's horn, copper, raw hide, gelatine, slate, egg shells – Parrott experiments to find textures and compositions that interact. It is as if she is creating a tactile, instinctive, visual language based upon elements bouncing off one another and resonating.

Her practice, with its pin-board way of assembling images and objects, is based on mirroring and repetition. It is striking how often contrasts appear: smooth next to lumpy, intact next to smashed-up, the broken sheet of dark glass in front of the intact one. Parrott says that she relates her materials and processes to "compulsive behaviour and a state of discontent", as if betraying an obsession to go further and further, even destroying the very thing you started out with.

What Calvino** called ‘geometric tension’ is at the heart of Parrott’s work: an inquisitive curiosity charged with the push and pull of contradictory forces – smashing the pane of glass to ‘see what happens’, juxtaposing fragility and strength, exploring simultaneous but opposing states. This presents, for the viewer, an unusual vantage point, almost as if we are in a work that is in process, a poetic quest to find visual and sculptural synonyms for a sensation or feeling. Her surprising montages and assemblages are a response to the unfathomable, a point where physical knowability meets the unknown and we – the viewer – become a conductive element in the process.

Teresa Grimes
Director, Tintype

** John Berger, from ‘Berger on Drawing’, 2005*
*** Italo Calvino writing about ‘A Private Matter’ by Beppo Fenoglio*

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