



# TRACTION MAGAZINE.

Interviews with artists and creators.

ABOUT

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## AMY STEPHENS



Cold Front, 2012.

Amy Stephens meets with Traction Magazine to talk art, architecture and interaction.

**A question I often ask artists who work within sculpture and installation is where they consider the dividing line to lie between the two mediums. How does this question play out in your work?**

For me, there is a very fine line between sculpture and installation as I feel that one forms part of the other. You could argue that sculptures are self-contained arrangements designed to be viewed from the outside whereas installations encompass the viewer often using these objects as part of the composition to create the overall experience.

As an object maker, I make artworks that are open ended with the possibility of change. A large part of my practice involves appropriation where I take a previous material or form from an existing work and then transform the piece into a new artwork. During the installation of an exhibition, I look and respond to the architecture of the building as this often dictates how and where the forms should be positioned. Therefore it is often during the installation of an exhibition that I question the line between them.



A Light Less Ordinary - Series No. 6 and 7, 2013 (install shot).

**From the free-standing wooden structures that form the basis of works such as 'Against expectations' to the spaces photographed in your 'A Light Less Ordinary' series, we encounter architecture in much of your work. Is this a strong influence in your practice?**

As an artist interested in the space between and the simple elegance of the drawn line, I have a natural affinity towards architecture. 'Against expectations', and many of my other artworks, are a direct response to the architectural spaces in which they are exhibited. I describe the line drawings in space as tracings that form the basis of an architectural skeleton. I use an array of materials, including copper piping, bronze, wood, steel, paint and flock fabric. These materials might appear understated in isolation but I invite the viewer to reconsider the structure and surface of these familiar materials when they are brought together.

For the series 'A Light Less Ordinary' I painted forms directly onto photographic images that were a direct response to the immediate architecture of the Lookout building in Aldeburgh. Direct measurements were taken from both the interior and exterior of the building to create architectonic coloured forms within the works. By using images of the architecture and surrounding objects, I was able to combine my sculptural practice with photography.



Birch In Space, 2010.

**Works such as 'Cold Front' and 'Birch In Space' suggest a tension between natural and manufactured forms and surfaces. How do these two elements inform your visual language?**

'Birch In Space' was inspired by my time in Iceland whilst on an Artists' Residency. It displays my interest in the natural world and the result of human intervention through appropriation. One singular aesthetic form is made up of eight separate casts from a piece of Birch tree that I acquired during my time there.

When I create work, I think about highlighting the tension between the natural world and artificial methods of production. Within an exhibition, I enjoy contrasting the angularity of wood with the shiny surface of gloss paint like in 'Cod Front', or the hard appearance of metal with the soft tactility of flock fabric. I look for my assemblages to occupy a space between the abstract and the associative, and between seduction and control. In this way I can explore the symbiotic relationship between nature and human agency and draw attention to their tenuous interrelationship through the creation of objects.



The Circle, 2013.

**The planes of glass you employ in pieces such as 'The Circle' and 'The Tenant' (among others) cause both a physical break in the structure and a more ephemeral one - via the reflective qualities of glass - which in turn has the potential to insert the viewers' presence into the piece; an interaction you as the artist have little control over. Are you interested in the ability of materials to at times move beyond the control of the maker?**

I think it is really important for an artwork to entice the viewer to participate in some way. By using transparent or translucent materials such as glass or Perspex, I am inviting the spectator to view through and beyond as well as to see the actual makings of the piece. In the past, I have invited the audience to physically move materials from one piece to another or to take part in the making process. By working in an interactive and performative way, I loose full control of the work, which forces me to be less precious whilst offering me an insight into how people visualise sculpture.

**Where can we see your work going next?**

In my most recent work, I have been manipulating copper tubing to portray the fundamentals of linear drawing on a human scale. I want to go onto create a series of staggered mini portals that combines steel and concrete revealing the marks of the maker. Using a geometric framework, I hope to encourage the viewer to begin a dialogue of exchange through and around the artworks.

Visit [www.amystephens.co.uk](http://www.amystephens.co.uk) for more information on Amy Stephens' practice.



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