

Kato Six  
*State of Matter*  
VITRINE, London  
Chris Bayley

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**In advance of the opening of *State of Matter*, Kato Six's first solo exhibition in London and in the UK, AfterNyne invites the exhibition curator Chris Bayley to reflect on the show and offers an insight into Six's multi-disciplinary practice.**

*State of Matter* continues VITRINE's engagement with Brussels-based artist Kato Six's practice through a series of site-specific sculptural configurations. Six previously participated in the group exhibition *Identify Your Limitations, Acknowledge the Periphery* at VITRINE Basel in 2017, which explored VITRINE's unique exhibition space (a 16-metre glass showcase) by inviting artists to devise site-specific artworks that inhabit the restrictions and potentials of the gallery space. It seemed fitting to invite Kato Six to present a solo show of new works given that much of her practice adopts these methods. Six embraces VITRINE's exhibition space, toying with materiality, immateriality, three-dimensional and two-dimensional which manifests into the presence (or absence) of human activity.

Seemingly drawing influences from Arte Povera, Modernism and Abstraction, Six expands the realms of painting, drawing and sculpture, employing a wide range of material within her oeuvre including dye, wood, wallpaper, concrete, wax, rope and dust particles. Through the use of familiar materials, Six recalls not only personal, but collective memories through a series of theatrical, sculptural assemblages that reference still lives distanced and abstracted from their original function.

Despite a generous number of works in the exhibition, *State of Matter* seems much sparser and pared down in comparison to her past installations. Although still meticulously staged, Six is particularly interested in heightening the viewers understanding and sensitivity to the material nature of the works which, in turn, leads one to observe the light, shadow and reflections cast in and around the works; questioning where the artwork begins and where it ends. Central to this new body of work is her distinctive response to the gallery's architecture. As challenging as the space can be, Six simultaneously works with and against it, grappling with the two dimensional, tableau-like quality of VITRINE. Extending beyond the walls, Six plays with the margins of space through subtle disruptions and configurations which shift with the time and light of the day.

Sculptured boxes with deep blue, glossy liquids are dispersed throughout the gallery floor. Using Methylene Blue, a photoactive medicine and dye often used to treat methemoglobinemia<sup>1</sup> as well as the

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<sup>1</sup> Methemoglobinemia is a blood disorder in which an abnormally high amount of methemoglobin — a form of hemoglobin — is produced. Hemoglobin is the molecule in red blood cells that distributes oxygen to the body. In some cases, methemoglobinemia can cause sufferers skin to turn blue. See 'Blue Fugates' [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blue\\_Fugates](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blue_Fugates) (last accessed 21 March 2019)

liquid used in an injection which allows abnormal skin tissue planes to be identified, further alludes to Six's subtle indications of the presence and absence of the human body. These contained, sculptural worlds reflect their immediate surroundings - the track ceiling lighting, the edges where floor meets wall or even the viewer - while changing your way of looking. Over the course of the exhibition's life span, the Methylene Blue will crystallize, further altering the material's function and materiality from its intended use.

Fixed and unfixed seems to be a recurring motif within the exhibition. Calling to the intangibility and impermanence of material, a series of black and white and coloured MDF dust works populate the gallery walls. The process, Six says, was discovered by making other sculptural objects. Using a sanding machine, the artist directs the machine towards the surface where the wood particles settle. Framed and rendered into various shapes in gradient tones, they call to the remnants of former sculptural works that could have existed - the frail and faint elements of projects that did not make it into the exhibition.<sup>2</sup>

In opposition to the fleeting nature of many of the works that inhabit the gallery, a red and white rope work wades throughout the space, tracing the topology of its environment. A recurring material in many of Six's installations, the rhythmic quality of this work leads the viewer across the gallery space as it loops up and down, before collapsing on the floor in a giant knot. Topology, knitting and knotting is further articulated in a delicate pencil drawing towards the end of the exhibition space. The fibres of the material are obsessively traced with incredible mathematical precision, the markings quivering across the paper into an intricate web.

Like those affiliated with the radical Arte Povera movement, Six's artworks are all part of a single continuum. Each artwork is specific to every moment, yet timeless and changing as well.<sup>3</sup> Six's work rotates, morphs, distorts, repeats, and loops back on itself in new constellations, yet memory and familiarity remain prevalent. Interested in not only the placement of works but the placement of the viewer, Kato constructs a multifaceted environment that can be viewed from a multitude of perspectives: across the public square, against the window, and through reflections and shadows cast around the works and by the works themselves.

Positioned between material and immaterial, Six's poetic approach to the placement of the works in *State of Matter* at times, function as ephemeral and fleeting suggesting impermanence or domesticity. Asking the viewer to pay close attention to not only their own position when observing, but to the finer details, the physicality and perceptions of space - the transitory states of matter.

Kato Six *State of Matter* is on view at VITRINE, London until 21 June 2019

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<sup>2</sup> Six, K. (2014) Interviewed by c-o-m-p-o-s-i-t-e for her solo exhibition *Re-located into Silence*. Available at [http://www.c-o-m-p-o-s-i-t-e.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/0\\_PR\\_KS\\_ENG2.pdf](http://www.c-o-m-p-o-s-i-t-e.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/0_PR_KS_ENG2.pdf) (last accessed 10 March 2019).

<sup>3</sup> Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, *Arte Povera: Art from Italy 1967-2002* (Sydney, Australia, Museum of Contemporary Art, 2002), p11.

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