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# ARTFORUM



Kate Newby, *I screamed "i was there!!"* (detail), 2019, glass panels in window frames, 9' 3/4" × 47' 9 3/4".

## Kate Newby

LUMBER ROOM

In an era when the monumental has proven surprisingly ephemeral, can the ephemeral conversely have enduring power? At the Lumber Room, the New Zealand-born, New York-based artist Kate Newby brought her peripatetic art practice to Portland, Oregon, for a long-term residency and a shorter culminating show that burrows into intimate modes of perception and leaves a lingering effect. With tendrils extending into the sculptural, the conceptual, and the socially relational, Newby's work operates on an interdisciplinary cusp, under the sign of what one might call the strongly subtle or the assertively lyrical.

The central work is *I screamed "i was there!!,"* 2019, a site-specific intervention into the gallery's grid of street-facing windows. After removing many panes from their mullions, Newby replaced them with glass fashioned to resemble ice in various states of dissolution. Milky and perforated with holes, the panes together perform a metaphoric phase change on

the room's atmosphere, infecting the remaining panes with a vibration of entropy and highlighting the impermanence and porosity of the architecture in general. As an exclamation point, Newby installed a set of brightly colored sculptures on the top of a building a few blocks away, directing the viewer's gaze across the city's rooftops and expanding the show's theater of perception in a dramatic, if elliptical, flourish.

On the windowsills, the artist arranged her *I love you poems*, 2018. The crude, fairy-size ceramic vessels resemble oyster shells, with pools of melted glaze bedizening their basins like collected dew. Bewitching to the eye and inviting to the touch, the bowls conspire with the frozen panes above to set the sound of melting ice tinkling in the mind's ear.

The ceramic receptacles are echoed again in another piece, a Newby signature—a tide pool chiseled into the gallery's back patio. *Nothing that's over so soon should give you so much strength*, 2018, is a small pit sprinkled with cast-silver matchsticks and filled to varying levels with water and leaves depending on the day and the hour. At first glance seeming to be a tranquil oasis, the piece takes on a harder edge as a viewer recognizes the permanent destruction it caused to the gallery's property. The nature-smitten sentimentality of, say, Andy Goldsworthy's work seems to fuse with the vandalistic punch of that of Gordon Matta-Clark.

Newby includes many other objects and gestures in the show, both in and out of the gallery, in various registers of space and time. A flock of ceramic teacups used at the opening doubled as take-home invitations to a closing event; dangling, handmade rope installations lead the viewer's eye outside, upstairs, wherever the mind travels; musical performances gather groups of people into a shared sonic realm; a welcome carpet emblazoned with the words COLD WATER lies in the stairwell of the gallery; and another sculptural piece sits in a park across town. Throughout the show, the prevailing feeling is of fruitful distraction—nature-oriented but sociable, pensive but observant, critical but wistful. And at the center of this cosmos floats Newby herself, a flickering presence. With a friendly, commanding hand and some pixie dust, she guides the viewer's attention to one glinting facet after another, then disappears. It is as if she had opened her fingers to reveal a palmful of rocks, pills, and gems and said, "Take one."

— Jon Raymond