



Top left: Rachel Whiteread, *Untitled (One Hundred Spaces)*, 1995. Resin, dimensions variable. Left: Rachel Whiteread, *Chicken Shed*, 2017. Concrete, 2160 x 2290 x 2780 mm. Above: Rachel Whiteread, *Due Porte*, 2016. Resin, 2470 x 1240 x 80 mm.

walls, ceiling, and floor—to create a claustrophobically sealed unit that allows no escape. The surfaces remain curiously pockmarked, as if pummeled with shrapnel, which contributes to the feeling of nagging disquiet. Similarly, the towering white plaster *Stairs*, which remains one of Whiteread's most impressive works, creates a compelling abstract composition out of repeated units cast from her studio staircase. Here, the use of inverted space taps into the realm of dreams and reverie, in that the stairs lead to nowhere. The viewer is left disoriented, observing the space where the stairs were, not the stairs themselves.

Two larger pieces were installed outside of the main exhibition space. *Chicken Shed*, a concrete piece made especially for Tate, was sited, somewhat forlornly, on the grass outside the gallery. *Untitled (One Hundred*

*Spaces)*, on the other hand, was installed to great effect in the Duveen Galleries. Within this group, 100 subtly colored, translucent resin casts made from the undersides of chairs suggest a metropolis in miniature. Whiteread retrieves everyday objects that are hidden or overlooked, injecting them with an inimitably dignified presence.

The challenge of placing so many sculptures within a single open space lies in retaining a balance between small studio works and large-scale architectural pieces. Both are equally important to Whiteread's practice; she has never ranked one above the other. Many sculptures would suffer under such a style of presentation, but the inherent gravity of Whiteread's work sustained the vital equilibrium of this unique exhibition.

—Ina Cole

#### OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA

##### Allison Leigh Holt

##### Pro Arts Gallery

The title of Allison Leigh Holt's recent exhibition, "The Beginning Was The End," calls up images of endless loops, along with apocalyptic scenarios and intergalactic explosions. Oscar Kiss Maerth used the same words in the early '70s to title a controversial pseudo-scientific book in which he argued that humans evolved from apes that ate the brains of other apes and that we are now de-evolving because our brains are too big and this cannibalistic practice has made us insane. (Maerth's theory of human de-evolution gained notoriety from association with the rock band Devo.) Whether Holt subscribes to any of this or just finds it fascinating, I cannot say, but her new work is quite unusual and different from what you might

expect, appealing on many levels—technical, aesthetic, philosophical, and metaphysical.

Holt's multimedia, glass, and metal sculptures, videos, digital prints with hand-drawn elements, and installations were inspired by research and residencies in Indonesia (a Fulbright in 2009 and another residency in 2010), as well as an ongoing study of metaphysics, theoretical physics, symmetry, consciousness, and neurodivergency. She examines symmetry, concepts of time and space, as well as our worldview and perception of the world around us, combining these ideas with the metaphysics of traditional Javanese culture. The books that she laid out on a table in the gallery are not typical reading for a visual artist: *I Am a Strange Loop* by cognitive scientist Douglas Hofstadter, which examines conscious-



**Left:** Allison Leigh Holt, *Strange Loops*, 2017. Scientific and recycled glass, neodymium magnets, mirror, and steel, installation view. **Below and detail:** Allison Leigh Holt, *A Living Model of Hyperbolic Space*, 2017. Glass, water, steel, neodymium magnets, mirrored acrylic, and Parmotrema lichen, 20 x 15 ft.

in creating her immersive and challenging exhibition.

—Jane Ingram Allen

#### SAN FRANCISCO

**Nayland Blake**

**500 Capp Street Foundation**

Using only a few deceptively simple-looking elements, *Workroom*, Nayland Blake's recent installation in the garage of David Ireland's former home, transformed a bare concrete cubicle into an imaginary performative environment. A little metal and leather and a temporary fabric wall punctuated with interesting openings succeeded, among other things, in recalling places and spaces largely erased from San Francisco—first by the AIDS epidemic and, later, by relentless gentrification.

Entering from the side door, visitors encountered three silvery leather pillows on the floor, each attached

by a cable to a steel rail running the width of the room just in front of the back wall. A pinkish, purplish light cast by several strategically located bulbs—the only illumination—appeared simultaneously festive and ominous, complicating any interpretation of the space and its function.

A few feet from the pillows, three sides of a fabric barrier were neatly fastened to the walls and ceiling with orange cord. Its surface flushed pink with reflected light, the wall divided the room into a larger, empty front area (accessible from the street) and a more intimate rose-colored rear. Examination of this partition revealed that the trio of cabled cushions corresponded to three sets of openings in the fabric. Each set consisted of a round, eye-level spy-hole and a small diamond-shaped window rimmed with orange nylon at crotch height, covered (or not) with an optional orange flap. Rectangular pockets of orange fabric, riveted at each corner and located just below the openings, offered places to stow personal things—a cell phone, lube, maybe condoms.

The reference is to glory holes: places where anonymous gay sexual encounters take place through

ness and self, in addition to volumes on theoretical physics and string theory by Brian Greene and studies of traditional Javanese belief systems.

Holt's thought-provoking work requires more than just a cursory once over. Yet, however much it relates to physics and cosmology, it is visually beautiful. The large multi-part wall installation *A Living Model of Hyperbolic Space* is created with hand-blown glass, steel, water, and Parmotrema lichen gathered in the Bay Area. Viewers, who see themselves reflected in each mini-environment,

are drawn in by the small glass globes, reflective parts, and the hairy and irregular lichen, which all reward longer investigation. The "strange loop" sculptures, made with scientific glass, mirror, and neodymium magnets, are especially intriguing. The quiet and unusually configured street level space at Pro Arts (one of the Bay Area's oldest and most significant nonprofit art organizations) is ideal for this type of solo exhibition in which the artist is given total freedom, an opportunity that Holt used to the utmost advantage

