



## An appearance, uncertain

Sanné Mestrom

by Kasia Pawlikowski

'In fact, everything is subject to fluctuating sets of conditions that in themselves are not static, and this dynamic of a world of qualities is the stuff of real-time perception'.<sup>1</sup> – Robert Irwin

### A story

They were three, suspended, detached from an anchor. They balanced between the floor and the ceiling, filled and yet holding an emptiness. They obscured and yet contained the room, and intersected the interior space with the exterior. They were three balloons, filled to capacity, their plastic skin stretched, their material translucent and tensile. They were still and aligned with one another; only subtle vibrations could be traced.

### A variation

They were five, unfixed, hanging at different heights. They were closer to one another, then further apart—the space between them irregular. Guided upward into the air by a passing hand, then falling quickly to the ground. They were five balloons, now empty, heavy, occasionally lifting. They were smaller in size, their plastic skin now exhausted, deflated. They were no longer parallel and the space above them came into focus.

Sanné Mestrom, *Enough is as good as a feast*, 2009, pegasus print, balsa wood, clay, 35cm x 49cm x 15cm. Courtesy of the artist.



Exchange, movement and negotiation are central to Sanné Mestrom's installation-based practice. Her recent work underscores the protean nature of material, space and perception. In particular, the work addresses the negotiation between the 'container' and the 'contained'. We become aware of the inherent tension between the materiality of the object and the balance of forces—of the relationship between mass, distance and gravity. Mestrom observes the spatial and temporal conditions of our encounter with the work, the space and other viewers.

*A slow shift in the balance of power* relies upon the inevitable, progressive deflation of two balloons. Here, an encounter with Mestrom's work is one with motion. The balloons, loosely held by twine, glide through the exhibition space and, over time, expel air at an unregulated rate. Mestrom draws direct attention to the negotiation between forces and the conditions of the material. This negotiation, the change in the phenomenon, can be observed as the shift in form and position, and the shift in the tensility and opacity of the material. A disruption to, or transference of, balance emphasises the spurious division between movement and standstill.

By embodying narrative and duration in her work, Mestrom recognises that our experience of space is defined by coexisting variable factors, by an oscillation between succession and concurrence.<sup>2</sup> Geographer Doreen Massey, regularly attributes the notion of a 'simultaneity of stories-so-far' to space.<sup>3</sup> In fact, a multiplicity of narratives, times, and interrelations are subsumed in Mestrom's work. Every viewer approaches the work at a different phase; our changing experience and the varying dimension and position of the work form a series of vignettes. The relationship between the container, the balloon's material surface, and the contained, the atmosphere, highlights the nature of transitional spaces, where they inform, control and regulate one another. As such, the work emphasises a spatial performativity—we perceive movement and fluidity in a three-dimensional form, and in particular, in the space which surrounds us.

Sanné Mestrom, *A slow shift in the balance of power*, 2010, weather balloon, helium gas, gravity, clay, twine, dimensions vary. Courtesy of the artist.

The two white, turgid balloons in *A slow shift in the balance of power*, tower over *Enough is as good as a feast*, a photographic print of an emptied balloon balancing on two pieces of balsa. The perceived association between the two works, between the material balloon in the former and the event-sequence recorded in the latter, is imbued with narrative potential by the arrangement and spatial relationship of the two works. Observing a material consonance, albeit in different states, Mestrom alludes to the expectations and preconceptions we bring to the work. The imposition of a narrative frames the stages from dynamic (inflated) to static (deflated), affirming the unpredictability of the sequence.

For Mestrom, criticality is returned to the viewer as a tool for re-evaluating the environment. Mestrom addresses the unfixed boundary between the interior and exterior; between the subject and the object. In a gesture which echoes Robert Irwin's mantra, 'perceiving yourself perceiving,'<sup>4</sup> the viewer is encouraged to critically approach the space—the unfolding situation—and to subsequently question the very act of perceiving. Mestrom's intention to create an active, participating subject is explicit in *A door opened and almost closed again*, where each viewer is addressed directly and thereby implicated. By isolating individual experience, a heightened sense of awareness and objectivity come to characterise the approach of the viewer.

- 1 Olafur Eliasson and Robert Irwin, 'Take your time: A conversation,' *Take Your Time: Olafur Eliasson*, edited by Madeleine Grynsztejn, (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2007), 53.
- 2 See: Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space [1974]*, translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith, (Oxford, OX, UK; Cambridge, Mass., USA: Blackwell, 1991), 71. Lefebvre described this as 'the incessant to-and-fro between temporality [succession, concatenation] and spatiality [simultaneity, synchronicity]':
- 3 Doreen Massey, *For Space*, (London: Thousand Oaks, California: Sage, 2005), 9.
- 4 Grynsztejn, *Take Your Time: Olafur Eliasson*, 55.



Sanné Mestrom, *A door opened and almost closed again*, 2010, gallery door, your entrance into the gallery, floor sheet, title of work, bronze brick, dimensions vary. Courtesy of the artist.

# the nothing

presented by West Space

Curated by Kelly Fliedner  
16 April–8 May 2010  
Artist talk Thursday 6 May, 6–7pm

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**Damiano Bertoli**  
*Continuous moment: AndAndAnd*,  
2010, video with sound, 3 mins 35 secs  
Courtesy of the artist and Neon Parc,  
Melbourne.

**Lou Hubbard**  
*E.T.*, 2007, floorlamp, nail scissors, drawing  
pins, 1500cm x 30cm. Courtesy of the  
artist and Sarah Scout, Melbourne.

**Sanné Mestrom**  
*A door opened and almost closed again*,  
2010, gallery door, your entrance into  
the gallery, this floor sheet, title of work,  
bronze brick, dimensions vary. Courtesy  
of the artist.

*Enough is as good as a feast*, 2009  
pegasus print, balsa wood, clay  
35cm x 49cm x 15cm. Courtesy of  
the artist.

*A slow shift in the balance of power*,  
2010, weather balloon, helium gas, gravity,  
clay, twine, dimensions vary. Courtesy of  
the artist.

**Deborah Ostrow**  
Series: *Deviations of nothing: reworked  
an improved*

1. *Office dredge (Neurosis excavated)*
2. *Head shot (Maladaptive behaviour)*
3. *Working girl (Unbearable awareness  
of banality)*
4. *Office haul (Immoral appropriation)*
5. *Office angst (Self-propelled)*

**Daniel Price**  
*There is a pattern to loss*, 2010,  
graphite on paper, 5cm x 7cm.  
Courtesy of the artist.

**Matthew Shannon**  
*Without tomorrow*, 2010, video and  
original Portapak camera, dimensions  
vary. Courtesy of the artist.

*Untitled*, 2010, 12 A0 wall posters,  
344cm x 220cm. Courtesy of the artist.

**Jackson Slattery**  
*Man made paradise*, 2010, cast  
polyurethane, paper, paint, glue,  
150cm x 30cm x 20cm. Courtesy  
of the artist and Sutton Gallery,  
Melbourne.

