

I can't help but let my imagination run wild when I look at the artworks of Katie Cuddon. They are akin to physical snippets or clues from surreal stories, fables or myths. Take for example *Listener* (2015), where a slab of poked and prodded ceramic has been painted white and recalls a submarine out of which an oversized burgundy periscope protrudes. As the work's title points out, this device is meant for listening: I picture slowly extracting the sheep's wool that has been stuffed into the opening (which the artist collects from fields while walking in Northumberland). Or there's *Untitled* (2016), evoking a volcano with a dark, ash-stained peak, at whose base protrudes a giant, muscular form. It is the colour of liver – deep, dark red – and could be a thick split tongue, or bunched fingers; either way, I fantasize that it begins to wriggle and talk, perhaps the top of the mountain starts to smoke. And as for *"I no longer know what the money is"* (2010), a work that aims to question the value of things, a large amorphous form recalls the bulbous body of an ancient whale, perhaps washed up after years of searching the sea but never finding its bounty.

Cuddon has worked with clay since 1999 while studying at the Glasgow School of Art. Often responding to prose poetry, and in a recent interview she described how their narrative quality comes from 'the desire to make work which stands up against language ... [and] a suspicion of the ease with which we might ascribe words to complex, visual and often emotional subjects'. Perhaps this explains why her objects are so hard to pin down. While seemingly anthropomorphic, they remain strangely elusive and nonspecific, not quite one thing or another. For her, 'they occupy an awkward space in-between subjects and consciously avert language. I think of the works as linguistic stutters and exponents of the inadequacy of words.'

As with literature and writing, clay is a recorder of marks and Cuddon calls to mind the twentieth-century French sculptor Germaine Richier's comment on clay: 'the more you touch it, the more it screams'. Cuddon's sculptures see thin skins of clay being gradually built up, retaining the movements of her fingertips to create a textured, 'masticated' – a word that she pointedly uses by way of connecting the mouth, language and clay – surface that slowly takes (indefinite) form. We see this in *A Problem of Departure* (2013), where two upturned stumps protrude from a rounded mound, its dimpled, pale pink surface hinting at a pair of fleshy cellulite-stained thighs that squeeze between them a pillow – to keep something in, or perhaps help it to come out? Either way, the clay's rough, pitted surface appears emotively raw when set against the smooth, bouncy cushion and if you stop to imagine the sculpture's story, you can almost hear it wailing. ■ Louise Elderton

Katie Cuddon Born 1979, London. Lives and works in Newcastle upon Tyne, UK. **Selected Solo Exhibitions:** 2014 – 'Pantoon Lip', Collaboration with Celia Hempton, Cell Projects, London; 2011 – 'Spanish Lobe', Camden Arts Centre, London; 2010 – *"I no longer know what the money is"*, Alma Enterprises, London; 2008 – 'Overshoot and Collapse', Globe Gallery, Newcastle upon Tyne, UK. **Selected Group Exhibitions:** 2016 – 'Buffet d'art', Ambika P3, London; 'Sticky Intimacy', Katie Cuddon, Emma Hart & Nicholas Pope, Chapter, Cardiff, UK; 'Layered Narratives', L'étrangère, London. 2013 – 'Material Matters', Gerald Moore Gallery, London; 2012 – 'Studio Voltaire Members Show', Studio Voltaire, London; 'Stone of Folly', Downstairs Gallery, Hereford, UK; 2011 – 'Friendship of The Peoples', Simon Oldfield Gallery, London; 2010 – 'New Symphony', Simon Oldfield Gallery, London; 2009 – 'Spazi Aperti', Accademia di Roma, Rome; 2007 – 'Stick\* Stamp\*Fly', Gasworks, London.

Katie Cuddon



- \* *Untitled*, 2016  
Buff, black and painted ceramic  
17 x 9 x 13 cm  
(6 1/2 x 3 1/2 x 5 1/8 in)
- \* *Schema*, 2014  
Painted ceramic and fired black clay  
50 x 37 x 77 cm  
(19 1/4 x 14 1/4 x 30 1/4 in)
- \* *A Problem of Departure*, 2013  
Painted ceramic, pillow  
64 x 43 x 30 cm  
(25 1/8 x 16 7/8 x 11 3/4 in)
- \* *You must be able to act independently*, 2011  
Ceramic  
30 x 30 x 10 cm  
(7 1/2 x 7 1/2 x 3 3/4 in)
- \* *"I no longer know what the money is"*, 2010  
Painted ceramic  
23 x 90 x 60 cm  
(9 1/4 x 35 1/2 x 23 1/4 in)

