

Catherine Telford-Keogh:
Source Supplements
Evans Contemporary
Peterborough, ON
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by Ruth Jones

The anchor points of Catherine Telford-Keogh's *Source Supplements* are four round objects, sheets of glass and Plexiglas covering the contents of grey and speckled containers in the shape of chunky, plastic dive-bar ashtrays. Sitting on the gallery floor, they're immediately intriguing, while Plexi boxes hang on the wall like windows. Katie Lyle's text for the exhibition calls the floor works "islands," but when I walk over and look down into them, they resemble pools to me. The things they contain (Unico® Stuffed Manzanilla Olives, Maynards Swedish Berries, White Wood Letters by Artminds®, 9" pigmented FlexFoam-iT!® III, LEGO® found objects and 3D-printed cookies – six of the almost 20 that make up *The telephone melted into a pond of blue goo in Jasmine's clammy palm after a caller's obscene message*) seem to float at different levels in the coloured resin that encases them in swirls of colour. The wall boxes hold lavender soap, dishwashing liquid and laundry detergent, in typical shades of purple and green and blue, which tint the digitally eroded images behind them. Their tops have been left open, and the purple liquid wafts its inorganic version of lavender scent into the gallery when I walk through the show, in contrast to the contained and odourless floor works, hermetically sealed underneath their glass tops. Words and letters float to the surfaces of the floor objects and drift across the images behind the wall boxes like messages from another world.

It's difficult to catalogue all of the objects Telford-Keogh's sculptures reference, but this exhibit isn't simply a puzzle to be solved. Instead, the objects' combination, solidification and eventual decay has the power of a chemical – or even alchemical – experiment, an attempt to bring together elements and catalyze a reaction. Telford-Keogh engages us in

a dissociative game. As you lose track of the things you have counted, lose a thread of associations that would hold them together, lose the division enforced by clear, hard surfaces that keep everything contained under glass, you move closer and closer to the worlds released by the breakdown of all of this accumulation.

For example, the fictitious universe of *Modern mathematics and sullied diapers was all Hal needed to formulate the abstruse and truly terrifying theological models that characterize Contemporary Life* (the title of an orange-hued specimen with Mickey Mouse hands on its top that seem to embrace its contents) is governed not by physics nor geography, but by the ways in which life's ordered systems dissolve when we re-write the rules of association between disparate things. The brand names that appear on labels and in the works' titles, or the ones that suggest themselves in familiar attributes (is that Tide blue and Gain green? Are those Froot Loops or Fruity Os?) are artefacts from a world built on one-to-one relationships between words and things. In symbolic shorthand, they write cleaner, happier, wealthier, brighter versions of ourselves. While product placement in movies helps us imagine these cinematic worlds are our world much like how romance novels tell you explicitly what kind of car the hero drives as a form of characterization, Telford-Keogh's works combine the specific language of branded objects with indefinite, generic, endlessly repeated terms like, for instance, the fractured scrawls of "community" behind her wall boxes. This is a constant additive process that pushes against the border of Hal's world and ours. *Protect your mother and the community* orders the title of a Plexiglas box of lavender soap behind which lies a layered image that includes a Shop-Vac, half-observed words and bits of a body. But how do these things, these words and names, interact to produce this kind of command?

In Wittgenstein's later work, the philosopher describes language's meaning in terms of its use, a practised understanding of social codes and rules of engagement filtered through experience both personal and shared. His language games – questions, commands, jokes, experimental results or directions for a recipe – adhere to rules that create context and



Catherine Telford-Keogh, *Modern mathematics and sullied diapers was all Hal needed to formulate the abstruse and truly terrifying theological models that characterize Contemporary Life*, 2018, Plexiglas Unico Olives, pickles, 3D printed grapes, dried peaches, Hellmann's® Light Mayonnaise, resin, pigmented FlexFoam-iT!® III, Yankee Candle® Home Sweet Home® Fragrance Spheres™, Forbo Flooring System Rubber, Bick's® Dill Pickles, President's Choice® The Decadent Chocolate Chip Cookie, peaches, Smooth-Cast® 325 & 326, cast ash tray and cereal bowl, other miscellaneous objects, Aluminum drain, snake plywood, 12" x 42" x 42" PHOTO: LAURA FINDLAY

alter meaning by being surrounded with patterns of use; dozens of questions teach us what a question is, and likewise, studying recipes for cakes then experiencing the cakes themselves tell us (if we needed to know) that we have to crack the eggs before we add them to the batter. By dissolving the rules and grammar that make us think, we know what names and objects mean, how they combine, what's good for us and bad. Telford-Keogh's dissociative game tests how far we're willing to go. Incorporated into each other by the medium that binds them together, exposed like specimens under glass, cleansed by lavender soap and digitally corroded, the images and objects calibrated to fulfill our needs and Hal's needs become subject to breakdown and decay.

But who is this Hal? *The democratic model of upward mobility saturated his fantasies of the good life, where Hal could languish in bed for years at the Holiday Inn watching National Geographic on piles of damp laundry and money* is a fantasy that traffics in the decay of soft and liquid foods already starting to shrivel and crack, as an entry point into ideas made meaningless by their endless proliferation. Telford-Keogh's work is a response to our construction of ourselves, endlessly languishing, like Hal, supported by the churning, world-building consumption of everything in easy reach. The descriptive titles of the works are the final clue to their world-making outcomes. *Add two tins of Tropicana, half a gallon of black berry ice cream, blend thoroughly, and it's ready to serve from the bowl* is (maybe) a recipe for a very sweet smoothie or a vitamin-injected frozen treat as well the name of a greenish-yellow sculpture that sits on the ground, clouds of mayonnaise billowing through its layers. The juxtaposition of title and object, of words and things, creates scenes, characters and whole complicated worlds without exposing the rules that govern them. Specimens of an unknown world borne from the words and names that populate ours, they show us our own insides.

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Steven Beckly: *Meirenyu*
Daniel Faria Gallery, Toronto
Jan. 18 – March 10, 2018
by Jessica Thalmann

"I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each.
I do not think that they will sing to me.
I have seen them riding seaward on the waves
Combing the white hair of the waves blown back
When the wind blows the water white and black.
We have lingered in the chambers of the sea
By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown
Till human voices wake us, and we drown."
— "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"
by T.S. Eliot

I often wonder how to make a photograph invisible. How to clear a path – to see past the photograph as an object and to reach deeply into the image, extend a hand and touch what is inside the frame. While Roland Barthes claims that a deep love for a photograph's subject matter enables him to erase the weight of the image, to see only "the referent, the desired object, the beloved body,"¹ I wonder if it isn't photography's flatness, rigidity and lack of haptic sensibility that epitomizes its failings and prohibits me from seeing, touching and possessing what I desire.

As if answering these thoughts like a siren's call, Steven Beckly's solo exhibition *Meirenyu* on view at Daniel Faria Gallery addresses questions of desire, touch and photography's materiality through the lens of mythology, fantasies of modern mermaids and the sublime nature of the sea. In the exhibition, images interweaving fragmented hands and fingers in various forms abound. For example, a white plaster hand extends from one gallery wall with a glimmering, flat object covered in fish scales. A blue finger pierced by a long thin pin points downwards. The shadow of a hand tenderly grasps a young man's stomach. These photographic and sculptural hands are groping for intimacy and are hungering to touch