

Alice Anderson: Time Capsules

The Glass Tank Oxford presents a series of new sculptures by artist Alice Anderson. These geometric forms made from rusted recycled steel are shown for the first time alongside Elevator Data, a large copper coloured object that was created last year. Together these works explore how the mechanisms of human memory function in the age of digital technology.

Elevator Data (2015) is an actual elevator woven entirely in copper thread. In a series of performances the artist rhythmically encircled the entire object with spools of thread in a slow, intimate and meditative process undertaken in real time and space.

The work engages with the idea that the thread 'records' or 'memorises' the object through this physical interaction. There is a draw to the physical and to the socially connected in Anderson's practice which becomes especially pertinent when the artist invites people to collaborate in her performances. This embodied recording is inspired by an instinctual need to generate other forms of learning and memorising that can co-exist alongside digital memory.

Time Capsules (2016) show a departure in Anderson's practice in terms of concept and form. Varied in size and shape, these geometric forms make bold interventions in the space and the colour of the rust on the surfaces of the steel echo Anderson's practice with thread. Like many of her pieces, the works began with the artist inviting participants – in this case Oxford Brookes students and staff - to donate objects they saw as being significant to today. The artist then sealed these offerings inside individual steel capsules where they became protected and preserved. The resulting sculptures - conceptual and minimal - take their size and shape from the objects they contain and encourage a response from the viewer as they lead them to visualise what is inside.

These sculptures are naturally coated in a rusty film that gives them colour and texture. Usually an agent of corrosion and decay, the layers of rust actually act as a protective barrier on this weathered steel. There is an emphasis on preservation as the artist creates material witnesses of our time - three-dimensional alternatives to the databanks of information that sit in the ether. This is the strength of Anderson's art as she brings us back to the material and to the body and to a heightened awareness of how human life is being rapidly and irrevocably changed by technology.