



It is tempting to say that Carol Bove's show at Kimmerich's new space in New York is, quite simply, beautiful, and leave it at that. It would not be wrong, either, to state as much, though it likely would be to leave it at that, not only because a show like this, with its conceptual underpinnings (Bove became known for her acute arrangements of historically symbolic items, such as touchstone books and photographs from the 1960s) and manifest attention to detail (no arrangement of things in a gallery has ever been more 'acute' than they are here) is after so much more than any mere pronouncement on what can count as beautiful, or perhaps 'tasteful', today, but also because one gets the sense that this is exactly what such beauty, or perhaps 'taste', is being asked to do – that is, to compel us not to go too far with any kind of enquiry.

Consider the first piece one encounters, an untitled sculpture that consists of a found object – a leaded-red bloom of twisted, rusted metal layered with sunbaked and caked-on insulating foam – held aloft on a custom-made steel museum stand, itself standing on a concrete-capped open lattice of polished bronze. This syntax, of object, stand, cap and shaft, is repeated elsewhere in the show, such as in *Shell Sculpture*, *The Oracle* and *Empathicalism* (all 2010), and some of its parts are left out in others, for example in the small tabletop items that make up *La Traversée Difficile* (2008–10), or in *Touch Tree* (2008). The power of such displays would seem to warrant a whole dialogue on 'the power of display', except to engage in such a dialogue would seem somehow passé. "That's so early-1990s", we might say, not as an indictment of the work, but rather of our own problematic proximity to such onetime urgent concerns, now too far away to enlist but not far enough to historicise or recuperate.

Bove is very good at staging these kinds of suspensions, and now some of her work is opening up to what we might as well call the 'structural logic' (I'll risk the passé reference) that subtends them. The two untitled works of peacock feathers on linen supports hint at it: one is encased in Plexiglas, the other is not; the former is roughly half the size of the latter; and the two are hung back-to-back on opposite sides of the gallery's dividing wall. These oppositions between open and closed, back and front, tactile and optical, when combined with the peacock feather's natural status as an information-bearing signal, begin to show us, to put it plainly, how things become images. Such is the function, I suspect, of Bove's pair of *Harlequin* sculptures too: eight-foot-tall and four-foot-wide open Plexiglas boxes covered by pristine sheet metal grates. The pieces stand as both thresholds and obstacles whose particular material arrangement appears to collapse three dimensions into two. Again, things become image, and again, it does not pay to delve too deeply into the latter.

Jonathan T.D. Neil

## Carol Bove

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Carol Bove, 2010 (installation view). Photo: Thomas Müller

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