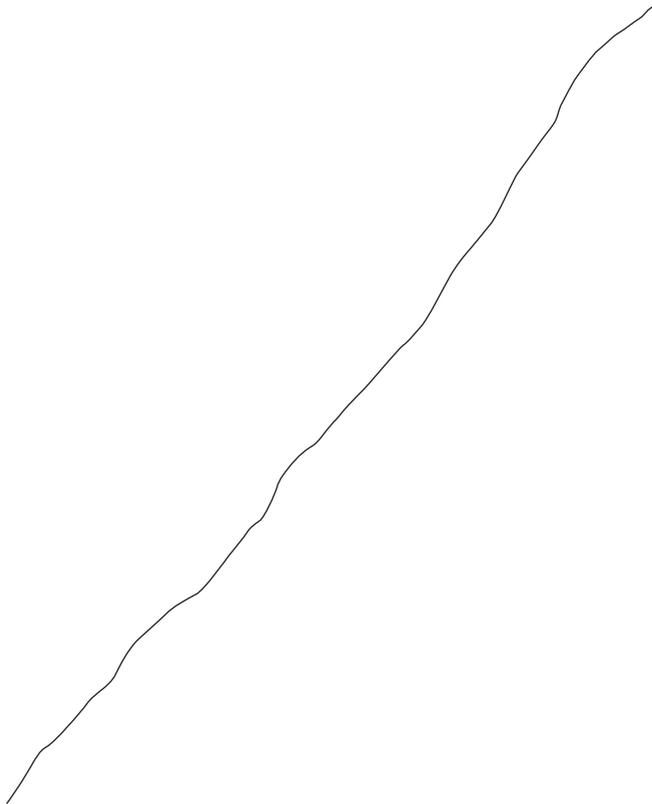


KATE BOHUNNIS



STRONG HOUSE / SOFT WALLS



Void

When I was ten our house burnt down. Even after we'd settled again we'd often drive around on the weekend going to house inspections. It was fun to envisage who our future selves could be and the things they'd do in these promising rooms. The instability of this was unnerving and exciting and probably explains my restless relationship to where I keep my stuff. We moved a few times in search of the right spot. I think we had aspirations that a new space could create something solid for us; the searching seemed to be a manifestation of a transitional state. Times of transition are often uncomfortable because I think we're encouraged to speed up the process. We feel the need to define our behaviours and ourselves rather than leaving a trail of unexplained gestures behind us, comforting neither others nor ourselves with an explanation. The practical activity of house hunting seemed to be a process of examining life from afar in order to find answers for what had been lost.

Movement of complication

Last year I experimented with allowing uncertainty to be a productive process. When things are changing it feels safer to hold on tight or bend around systems that were once functional but no longer work- a routine, thinking process, relationship. Letting go of knowing or feeling the need to know, have or own can be disorientating. Even as I write I am trying to commit to my words so I have the safety that they are concrete. Uncertainty necessitates addressing what is in your immediate surroundings, for which there are clever ways of avoiding. Social performance gives us the protection of hiding behind what we feel is expected of us. Embracing uncertainty challenges a more attuned state that behaves from subjective awareness. Part of embracing uncertainty is accepting that nothing is

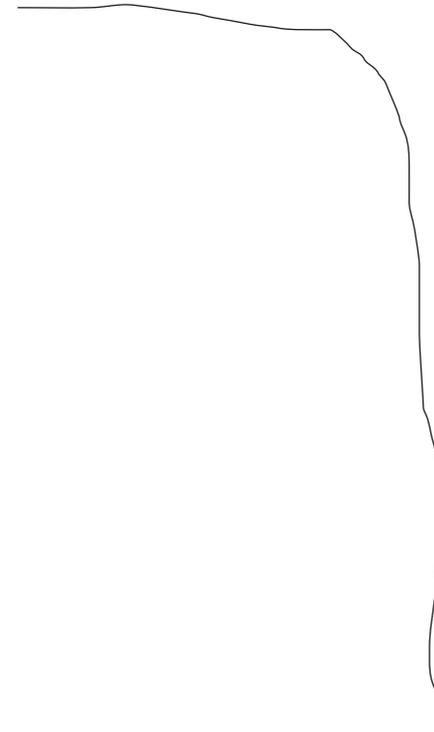
fixed but rather in a continual state of becoming and unbecoming. This idea of continuity repositions knowledge. The kind of intelligence, knowledge and strength we give value to are often based on attempting to fix things in place. The kind of knowledge I think is less trusted is developed through embracing intuition. Developing knowledge alongside the expectation of continual change makes observing and listening for new developments more possible. I'm imagining this process to be like dissolving or loosening, like wax melting to liquid so it can become something new.

Leaning into an absence

I've been reading about the Buddhist idea of suffering deriving from wanting to have things or hold things in place. I've been trying to lighten my grip. Sometimes I get a feeling that is like a sudden, ambiguous acceleration and it makes me grope around restlessly for something to fill it. I want to have a cigarette or a drink or have a confrontational conversation. I'm trying to pay attention to these hollow moments because it feels like I could be on the edge of something new. An absence could be something that is physically gone, like a person or place. It could be something without a shape or identifiable appearance, maybe because it is unfamiliar. You can't see it because you don't understand it yet. Maybe 'see' is not the right word but you can't sense it yet. So that is the absence. It could also be an empty emotional state – shock or sadness. How could you lean into that? Finding your own process for approaching the unknowable could allow a creative response that invites the unexpected rather than pushes it away. It could be listening, paying attention, sitting in or near it. You would need to be more perceptive, so it is really about being open to noticing things. What you do once you've noticed is also about leaning in, an integrity that allows comprehension of new things with an insight into how we can move forward without meeting expectations of what is acceptable.

Mapping

I think of the way Kate uses lines to mark a trajectory. They feel like a personal coding system. In this new work she doesn't use lines to trace experience in the same way but they imply the lines of structures. I wonder if she's thinking about these as support structures or inhibiting structures. I imagine it could be both. The lines might hold things up or protect them but it seems that they are also a struggle- they're too hard and too tight. In the same way Kate maps her experience through diverging lines, the steel seems to map a place – specifically the vertical lines of a house. It's not necessarily a domestic house but something that is holding another thing. This system is too confining for the things that need to exist within it, so they are changing form to adapt. The way these elements work together and push against one another seems like the two states are necessary. It feels like she has provided the things that are necessary for a functioning and strong system but there is a hierarchy creating unease. It could be about a problem of attempting to contain, holding the grip too tight.



Body through time

We ended the conversation asking; what is strong? We arrived here by starting with a house. Houses are usually places that don't move that have walls that protect us and create privacy. Imagining this as a way of being, we compared it to a garden with its delicate network of interactions. This ecosystem is similar to working with materials in a studio. The processes we put onto materials affect us, we move them and they move us, feeding a back and forth. Wrestling with a big sheet of steel or melting a slab of wax are gestures that could be considered

in the context of our own lives. The ability of wax to continually transform could be a way to think about the importance of coming apart in order to adapt. The rigidity of steel could be a way to think about impenetrability, an inability to be affected. Performative interaction with materials changes our relationship to ourselves over time. This process of object-oriented ontology seems to arrive at the proposal that there's strength in vulnerability that is capable of supporting more than its own weight.

sister

Words by Kate Power