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The
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#jacqueline donachie #fruitmarketgallery

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Jacqueline Donachie

Right Here Among Them

Glasgow-based artist Jacqueline Donachie (b.1969) graduated from Glasgow School of Art in the late 1980s. She was a committee member of Transmission Gallery (Glasgow) in the early 1990s, and recently completed a PhD in Visual and Material Cultures at Northumbria University. This mid-career exhibition consists mostly of new work, including several pieces made especially for the Fruitmarket, shown in the context of a number of existing works. The exhibition title, *Right Here Among Them*, speaks to the ethos that lies at the heart of the artist's practice, both her way of working with groups of people (friends, family, communities, experts), but also how she scrutinises the spaces and structures that bring people together and shape their interactions.

These issues are brought to the fore in *Advice Bar (Expanded for the Times)* (2017), a long concrete bar which cuts intrusively through the lower gallery. It is a reworking of a piece first made in 1995 that has had several iterations. In its earliest incarnations, it was a makeshift bar manned by the artist, who gave out drinks in exchange for problems, for which she would offer advice. The work raises questions about the availability, affordability and validity of professional advice. Donachie places importance on the height of the bar, raised on newspaper stacks, 'to allow for leaning', as she puts it. At the Fruitmarket,

Continues until 11 February 2018

Open every day, 11am–6pm

Free entry

The Fruitmarket Gallery

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the *Advice Bar* takes on monumental proportions, scaled up to acknowledge the political and social complexity of current times. Occasionally throughout the exhibition, the bar will be staffed by members of Fresh Fruit, our young people's programme.

The dimmed lighting of this space creates an atmosphere for the bar. This sense of the urban outdoors at night is added to by *Temple of Jackie* (2011), a work built into an adapted camping trailer, that spills its inviting orange glow onto the gallery walls and floor. Donachie has used these trailer tents as gathering points in many projects, setting them up to serve soup and drinks, to screen films, as a DJ booth (as here), as part of the impromptu, socially engaged part of her practice. The *Temple* will be used for several events throughout the course of the exhibition.

In the small gallery, the confusion of inside and outside continues. *Part Edit, Track A (Repurposed for Waverley)* (1994), is installed on the far wall, which has been stripped back to the bare brick of the warehouse building that houses The Fruitmarket Gallery. This exposure not only brings in the temperature of the outside world, but also allows the sounds of the train station beyond to seep into the gallery, and intermingle with the recording.

Several small works on paper relate to past projects. Larger drawings of lampposts and CCTV cameras on poles, shown both downstairs and upstairs, are part of the ongoing series *Glimmer* (2013–). The human scale and the slightly wonky hand drawing anthropomorphizes these inanimate objects, so that we begin to read character into their leanness and bearing, and think about our own bodies in relation to them.

For Donachie, the enquiry into how our bodies relate to the world begins with her family. In the video *Pose Work for Sisters* (2016), shown upstairs, Donachie and her sister, Susan, pose before the camera in homage to Bruce McLean's *Pose Work for Plinths* (1971). The sisters interact with the props in different ways, striking complementary poses that require various amounts of flexibility, balance and strength. Though the family resemblance can be seen, a disparity in the physical capabilities of the women becomes apparent. This difference is due to the fact that Susan has myotonic dystrophy, an inherited muscular degenerative disorder that affects several members of Donachie's family, but not the artist herself.

Although none of the other works in the exhibition refer explicitly to disability, Donachie's interest in how people navigate the world, and in similarity and difference, is intimately informed by her family experience. Through witnessing, and living with the increasing disabilities of her relatives, Donachie noticed the ways in which they began to differ from herself, and to negotiate the urban environment differently, using ramps and handrails that might be 'invisible' to an able-bodied individual.

The monitor showing *Pose Work* sits upon *In the End Times* (2017), a work that, like others in the upper gallery, takes on the appearance of this kind of 'urban furniture'. This powder-coated dark grey ramped platform is made of checker plate steel, a non-slip surface often used for stairs, walkways and ramps, and for the floors of trucks, trailers and ferries. While not being any of these things, it speaks of access, and shares the strange heftiness of structures designed to ease our path. The bold green line of *Walk With Me* (2017) zig-zags across the gallery. Made from aluminium tubing, it resembles play park equipment, scaffolding or railings. It is also a drawing, a way of tracing one's route through the space.

The *Winter Trees* (2017) resemble tall, thin urban objects, but also, as their title suggests, trees stripped of their foliage, containing a nest-like tangle of string. Like the drawings of *Glimmer*, these posts take on personalities: one tall, one shorter, one leaning, one straight. Such juxtapositions of difference are also made in *Between One Thing and Another* (2017), in which dozens of balls hang from the wall in a huddle. They range from the size of baubles to that of weather balloons. Some are textured and planet-like, while others collapse and seem like large broken eggshells. Some are made of paper, and some of heavy bronze. Like the sisters in *Pose Work*, these bodies have family resemblances, but each is different.

The family grouping of *Between One Thing and Another* suggests togetherness, and also alludes to the decorations with which we adorn spaces for shared celebration. This is also apparent in *An Era of Small Pleasures* (2017), a chain of linked leather that resembles a paper chain. Such decorations are usually made by collective effort, bringing people together. Yet, Donachie subverts the feeling of light-hearted festivity associated with paper chains through the use of heavy, dark strips of leather, held together with metal rivets. Like many of the works in this exhibition, it evokes the things that bring us together, and those that divide us, from our thoughts and opinions, to our physical way of being in the world.