

JASMINE BRADBURY in conversation - by Sam Krarup

I meet Jasmine Bradbury in a café next to the project space where her new show has just been installed. A few days earlier we spoke over the phone and the usual questions of where and how she works were put to her. Talking with her now, in person, I'm aware that some unknown expectation I had was wrong. Something doesn't quite match up – it doesn't seem possible that the person in front of me, meticulously dressed, calm and reserved, is the same one that described the arduous physical processes that are involved in the creation of her work; wrestling with molten lead and brittle plaster in a sculpture foundry out in Suffolk. 'It's hard' she tells me.

As we make our way around the space, I notice that the artist's way of working seems to have given her a special understanding of her sculptures. Bradbury reveals the true nature of her materials, highlighting the ironic tension between form and material. 'The pillows are so fragile' she says, referring to those trapped between the lead bricks. She goes on to explain her fascination with plaster; 'it's a material that looks strong but is really fragile.' The difference between the perception of an exterior and the reality of the thing itself comes through strongly. It is made all the more apparent when Bradbury reveals that the 8-foot sculpture *I can admit to conceal* 'is really a pillar of weakness.' The piece contains 'accidental but beautiful' surface imperfections and the artist 'wasn't even sure it would make it here,' stopping the interview briefly to discuss putting up 'Do Not Touch' signs.

The fragility of the piece is echoed throughout the show, demonstrating Bradbury's concern with questions of 'stability and instability.' Pointing out things that may easily be missed – and revealing a layer of her thought process – she tells me that the penultimate rung of the ladder rising out of the antique bath is thin and wobbly, representing 'the danger of not quite making it out when you're nearly there.' The 'out' she refers to is the oppressive mass of lead in the bath - 'the weight/stagnancy of lead that implies the state of an anxiety-ridden body.' The ladder, then, acts as both a way into the bath and an escape route, it's 'in or out, a metaphor for being either up or down.' Bradbury is eager to stress that there is always a choice.

The tactility of the materials – soft and malleable - is an important aspect for the artist. 'You can imprint on them.' She goes on to stress her personal attachment, that the works contain her imprint. There is also an undertone of strength, a newfound confidence. The pillar piece represents 'a kind of turning point' for the artist – adding another layer to the piece, she tells me 'it is about strength, about overcoming a lot in the last six months – it's the first thing I've made that I didn't get a chance to test – it reflects coming out the other side, a little changed but still upright.' The idea resounds when I discover that the lead and plaster in the pieces are still setting, becoming stronger and stronger. As we talk about the bath rusting, the pillar still drying out, there is a realisation that there are organic processes of rebuilding continuing around us – 'it's alive' she half jokes.

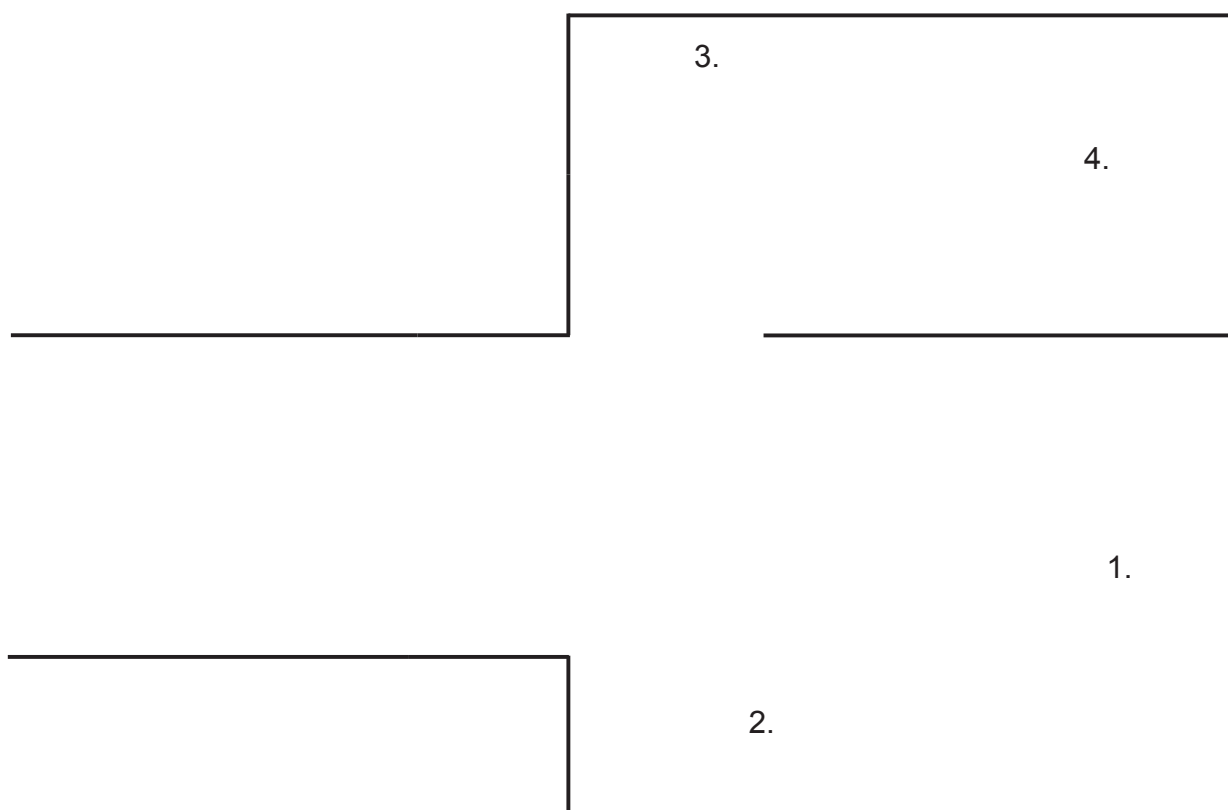
Describing her processes, the artist explains 'it's my therapy,' hinting at the cathartic working-through of her own feelings of anxiety and depression. When making *Denial, or is it restraint*, Bradbury cast each individual brick separately, building a mould, casting the lead and breaking the mould open again. 'It's monotonous,' she says, 'I realised I was doing the same thing over and over again, and that's how I feel about a lot of things.' As I learn more about the processes behind the work, it becomes apparent just how much of her self the artist puts into the pieces. The very act of creating reflects the monotonous repetition she feels in her daily life.

'I'm interested by ideas of weight and pressure and how these can represent pressures we feel in the world.' This is explored throughout and when asked about the choice of titles, the artist explains how they act as clues to the pieces. They are poetic and offer an unspecific access point for the audience. I ask her if there is a specific way she wants her audience to react and her answer is blunt 'I don't really expect a lot back from them.' She elaborates. 'I want to open a dialogue about mental health, I think it's okay to be a bit dark and weird and it's okay to talk about it. I do that through sculpture. It's the way I talk.'

SHED A LAYER

Jasmine Bradbury

13.10.17 - 05.11.17



1.
Denial or is it restraint? (2017)
Lead & plaster

2.
There is no ceiling
Let the water rise
Tomorrow I will come (2017)
Cast iron bath & lead

3.
It was clear from then on it was only through choice (2015)
Photograph (single mattress, mattress protector, stainless steel sink, water, cotton)

4.
I admit to conceal (2017)
Plaster