

### ***Holding it together is a part of it***

**Cloud** is the first work one encounters on entering Greg Streak's solo exhibition entitled **Accumulative Disintegration**. It is perhaps a sign of things to come. **Cloud** consists of a stainless steel arc (1500 mm x 500mm) suspended in space by four steel wire cables – like a kite captured in mid-flight. The underbelly of the curved plate is tilted so as to face the viewer. Spotlights are aimed toward this surface to reveal 2000 razor blades that have been precisely inserted into the steel plate. The cool and precise aesthetic of the construction belies the menace it posits. One intuitively feels the pending threat of this hazardous surface as it hovers, guillotine-like, above one's head. The reflective stainless steel is followed in space by a large, dark distended shadow that billows onto the roof of the gallery like a brooding zeppelin. Aren't clouds supposed to have silver linings?

It is difficult to escape the manner with which one is confronted when entering the exhibition, but as one advances through this charged introduction, the works become deceptively gentler; deceptive in the sense that they invoke a sense of calm and meditation, and yet on closer individual examination, they indicate distress and trauma.

The triptych print series is a delicate rebuttal to the brutality of **Cloud**. Three original ink drawings have been scanned and digitally printed with archival ink onto 600mm x 400mm Hahnemühle archival paper. The 300mm diameter drawings now float in the space the paper provides. One presumes that these three prints are inter-related since they hang together and have a continuity of scale.

The first entitled **Someday I will find you** is an extreme accretion of connected circular dots – a matrix of interconnectedness. But that is too simplistic an analogy. The surface intensity is difficult to describe. Even with fine scrutiny one feels that one is not seeing it all - that it is finer than the eye can actually hold. Small patches of miniscule hollow circles are left unconnected, which almost serves to amplify the concentration of the rest of the drawn surface. Both this work and the one that follows ... **a rush of blood**, have a corporeal feel to them; almost like some part of the inside of the body under microscope. Reminiscent of a network of blood-filled veins or a tap root system out of control, ... **a rush of blood** is both manic and delicate. Of the three it is the most visually satisfying. **The end always has a beginning**, the final print in the series is similar in scale and format, yet it has a more cosmological feel to it. A densely woven maze that flows over the entire drawn surface resembles an atomic detail of a meteorite shard captured from outer space.

Streak has said that - "**Accumulative Disintegration** deals with the interstitial space between conflict and resolution. It's about trying to pull things towards a

whole whilst they disperse around us. It looks at our need, and at times failure, to control the chaos of our everyday lives.”

**Secrets (for those who don't have)** consists of a Perspex box approximately 200mm x 150mm x 30mm fastened to a white bracket. The Perspex box is filled with 2000 miniature envelopes that have been sealed and glued together to form 20 stacks of 100 each. The envelopes have been compressed into the sealed box, their contained messages suffocated below the transparent surface and locked away indefinitely; perhaps 2000 confessions captured and necessarily buried. The reflection bouncing off the Perspex lid casts a somewhat spiritual light onto the floor. On the roof above, hangs the cast zeppelin shadow of **Cloud**. The envelopes enclosed in the Perspex container are those that the razor blades from **Cloud** were packaged in. The presence of light and dark, on a physical and metaphorical level delicately reveals itself as a tangible presence.

**Accumulative Disintegration**, is a large 900mm x 600mm print. Here the original ink drawing has been scanned and blown up, yet the detail remains in sharp focus. As a whole there is a semblance to an aerial map, ephemeral; perhaps of somewhere we don't really know. Closer examination reveals individual marks that look like stitches: two small drawn dots connected by a line. But it's also molecular in feel - a vibrating double helix?

A reflected pool of light on the floor leads one to the next work. **Paper cuts on the skin (random, but deliberate)** is paper-thin pewter sheeting wrapped around a 500mm x 300mm MDF panel. The reflection on the floor below is the consequence of the spotlight ricocheting off the polished pewter surface. The surface is smooth but uneven?. It is made up of random welted marks. These raised cuts we are told are deliberate. Perhaps they are a ritualistic demarcation of transgression? The surface is at once ominous and arresting.

The largest work on show, **For every time I wish you hadn't** has an unavoidable presence from the time one enters the exhibition space. Its pitted physical surface has been flickering constantly in my peripheral vision. Up close its physicality is imposing and overwhelming. It consists of a grey / black polished panel 2750mm x 1830mm supported to the wall at an angle by a steel frame bracket. It resembles a studio painting on an easel – informally presented. The entire surface consists of small inflections - scars of varying depth and thickness that cover the entire panel surface. The surface vibrates with an intensity that could only be achieved by this density of mark making. The surface is at once falling apart and simultaneously coming together – like magnetised iron filings. It could almost be a wind swept grassland or a vigorously disturbed water surface; it could be a virus under microscope. The title however suggests an all-encompassing complicity to some form of indiscretion. It could refer to an account of intimate contravention or outwardly as a marking of colonial imposition. The darkness of the work is ironically imposing and seductive.

**Penance in progress** introduces the only colour in the show. Red cotton thread on grey canvas forms a random mapping of intense stitching. I am unsure

whether the red of the cotton is in fact luminous or whether the colour seems so dramatic because the rest of the work is so drained of life in its monochromatic rendering. The reference to blood here is unavoidable. Small sewn red scars that never overlap but remain separated - signifiers of individual indiscretions that collectively begin to map a journey of sin. The work remains open-ended on two levels. Firstly we can only surmise as to its meaning and secondly because the title infers that it is a process and not a conclusion. In places the canvas is slightly gathered and creates small welts – evidence of the awkward laboured hand-made rather than the neat precision of the machine. There is a flashback to **Paper cuts on the skin (random, but deliberate)**.

Collectively, it is difficult not to begin to make inter-connections between the works. The connected nodes in **Someday I will find you** resonate in **Accumulative Disintegration** which in turn find themselves as large raised welts in **Paper cuts on the skin (random, but deliberate)**. In **For every time I wish you hadn't** the welts have become excavated scars. The razor blades in **Cloud** suddenly become a charged literal accomplice to the various forms of cutting evidenced in many of the subsequent works.

Streak allows for some respite. Arguably the two most poetic works on the show are left as a lead out back passed the ever-glistening **Cloud**. It's not to say that these works are necessarily uplifting – on the contrary, they are imbued with enormous pathos. **Envelopes for tears** consists of tiny three-dimensional envelopes ingeniously constructed from white household insulation tape. Hundreds of these receptacles are randomly stuck onto a white plastic surface and boxed in behind a white wood and glass frame. There is barely enough space between the insulation tape envelopes and the glass front – inducing a sense of claustrophobia or suffocation. The wood and glass frame also references a museum case – a means of containing an object of value or historical significance. The envelopes themselves also look like small white sailing vessels or remind one of the beacons or markings on a map indicating conquests or victories. The envelopes are themselves empty, and Streak once again alludes to many possibilities of interpretation, but leaves the final meaning to be filled in. It reminds me of a quote in Francesco Careri's book, *Walkscapes, Walking as an Aesthetic Practice*,

“Much as the nomad trajectory follows habitual trails or paths, their function is not that of the sedentary path, which consists of spreading human beings out in an enclosed space, assigning each person his or her part and regulating communication between the parts. The nomad trajectory does the opposite, it spreads human beings (or animals) out in an open, undefined, non-communicating space.”

- Gilles Deleuze; Felix Guattari, *A thousand Plateaus, Capitalism and Schizophrenia*

**Anatomy of a captured snowflake** is another slight of hand. Streak takes a simple molecular structure constructed from co-joined circular pieces of Scotch tape,

places it onto the floor and encloses it with a simple Perspex dome. Through the title he begins to invoke a heightened sense of melancholy. His ability to transform the banality of the mundane into something so nuanced is extraordinary. Suddenly this articulated mass of glued together tape becomes the DNA cross-section of a captured snowflake. The delicacy of implication is heartfelt. The fact that it is confined compounds the emotive association. This is how we are asked to leave the show. The sensitivity of this final work, coupled with the menace of **Cloud**, which I am forced to bypass in order to exit the gallery, possibly best sums up the vast contradiction of the show in its entirety. I am left feeling that this was precisely Streaks intention. It feels totally orchestrated. An accumulative disintegration is precisely what it is, but a more cohesive reflection thereof you will be hard pressed to find. As I leave the articulated and controlled light of the gallery and re-engage the bleached light and reality outside, Streaks show follows me. The disconnected realities of a world fighting with itself over climate control, industrialisation, colonisation and globalisation suddenly sit less comfortably. **Accumulative Disintegration** is a psycho-minimal snapshot of our times.

- Jose Ferreira

**Jose Ferreira is an artist and Assistant Professor at The School of the Art Institute of Chicago. He teaches Sculpture and film studies and post-colonialism.**