

SIGNALS FROM: SHAN TURNER CARROLL & RYOTA SATO

The song of stone

If we were going to fail, I thought we might as well have fun. I'm convinced that this kind of stupidity would work in good ways. So, bigger failure would lead us to bigger possibilities. We welcome failure because through failure something unexpected will come to us. Any stupid ideas are welcome.

~

*And fishing is trying to understand the underneath as well. You can't really see but you're trying to feel underneath with this bait and with the fishing rod. I think that's quite interesting, trying to communicate with another world.**

Signals From is an exhibition of found objects, reinterpreted, re-visioned, and transfigured. Presented as a collection of artefacts that vacillate between fact and fiction, the body of work invokes an extended act of service, memorialising the psychophysical history and legacy of The Lock-Up. Developing this collaboration over a three-year period, Shan Turner-Carroll and Ryota Sato positioned themselves as data receivers in the broadest sense—intuiting and inventing the tensions of the site, as well as the tensions of their role as artists within it. The resulting works are an invitation into the tension between making something and not making something; witnessing something and not.

As individual artists Turner-Carroll and Sato share a mutual non-hierarchical attitude toward materials. Technology and organic matter communicate freely and at the same volume, while frameworks and supports are treated with as much gravity as the objects they present. In their own ways, the two artists watch, with curiosity, humanity's attempts at advancement. In its wake, they have each built a practice around collecting the detritus of life lived, and of labour executed, with an almost holy reverie.

Collaboratively in *Signals From*, Turner-Carroll and Sato took the stance of object-reverie from the outset, disavowing their own authorship and as a result drawing out new possibilities for the life of their materials. In the process these possibilities have emerged as a third entity, beyond their individual touches—gentle and mysterious, as though conducted by some other force. During Sato's recent month-long residency onsite, the artists have

worked together intensively in dialogue with the material at hand—that of the building. This has unfolded as an act of hope, exploration, and adventure in earnest, where real and imagined connections have been left to lapse and sync of their own accord.

A defining feature of their collaboration is a loosening of the borders that usually curtail our perception of reality, and a beautiful literalness. In their readiness to find points of contact with other dimensions, Turner-Carroll and Sato address the building materials directly, as both subject and object. They invite history to speak for itself in a language that (they guess) may be closer to its native tongue: offering tiny microphones to the sandstone, a canvas to the chimneys, infrared imaging to the internal plumbing, and touring some recovered bricks to their possible originating quarry.

The fallibility of such gestures is not lost on the artists. An openness to preordained failure runs through the works in *Signals From*. They are not so foolish to suggest they can know the language of sandstone, but the great lengths they go to here to coax out an alternative to what we know contains a beguiling mixture of naivete and wizardry.

Their sculptural experiments invite us to float between the interstices of history, fiction, magic and logic for a brief moment. Suspended in this way, we can ride a current through and beyond our binary definitions of the creative act—be that making art, or indeed making and interpreting history. A chimney authors a 200-year-old painting; the internet returns alliterative responses that read as strangely familiar; the storeroom provides

a trove of readymades; tales of a network of tunnels emerge from the community... The stones begin to sing their song.

In *Signals From*, who made what loses its importance, but the space vibrates with an anima—a life force, a vitality, a breath that equalises the air on either side of a membrane. That membrane itself may be thought of as shifting too: the literal membrane of building separating inside and out, the membrane between the maker and the made, the division between the psychological and physical realm, and the ever-vibrating drum skin between history and myth, fact and fiction, seen and believed.

Like conduits, astronauts, or fishermen, Turner-Carroll and Sato felt their way about this space, wondering what was there. They probed it; searching for a signal, trusting without knowing, offering themselves in service to the site. This exhibition invites viewers to now reciprocate that act of hope in their own navigation of these works; beholding without knowing, feeling without seeing.

**Excerpts from a conversation with Ryota Sato, 2019*

essay:
CLAIRE KROUŽECKÝ

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IMAGE: Shan Turner-Carroll and Ryota Sato, detail from *Chimney Paintings*, 2023. Soot, canvas, 136 x 110cm.



THE LOCK -UP

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SIGNALS FROM

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