

Frieze

Trisha Donnelly Sculpts in Four Dimensions

At Matthew Marks, New York, the artist's enigmatic marbles and projections perform a subtle excavation of the gallery's architecture

BY TRAVIS DIEHL

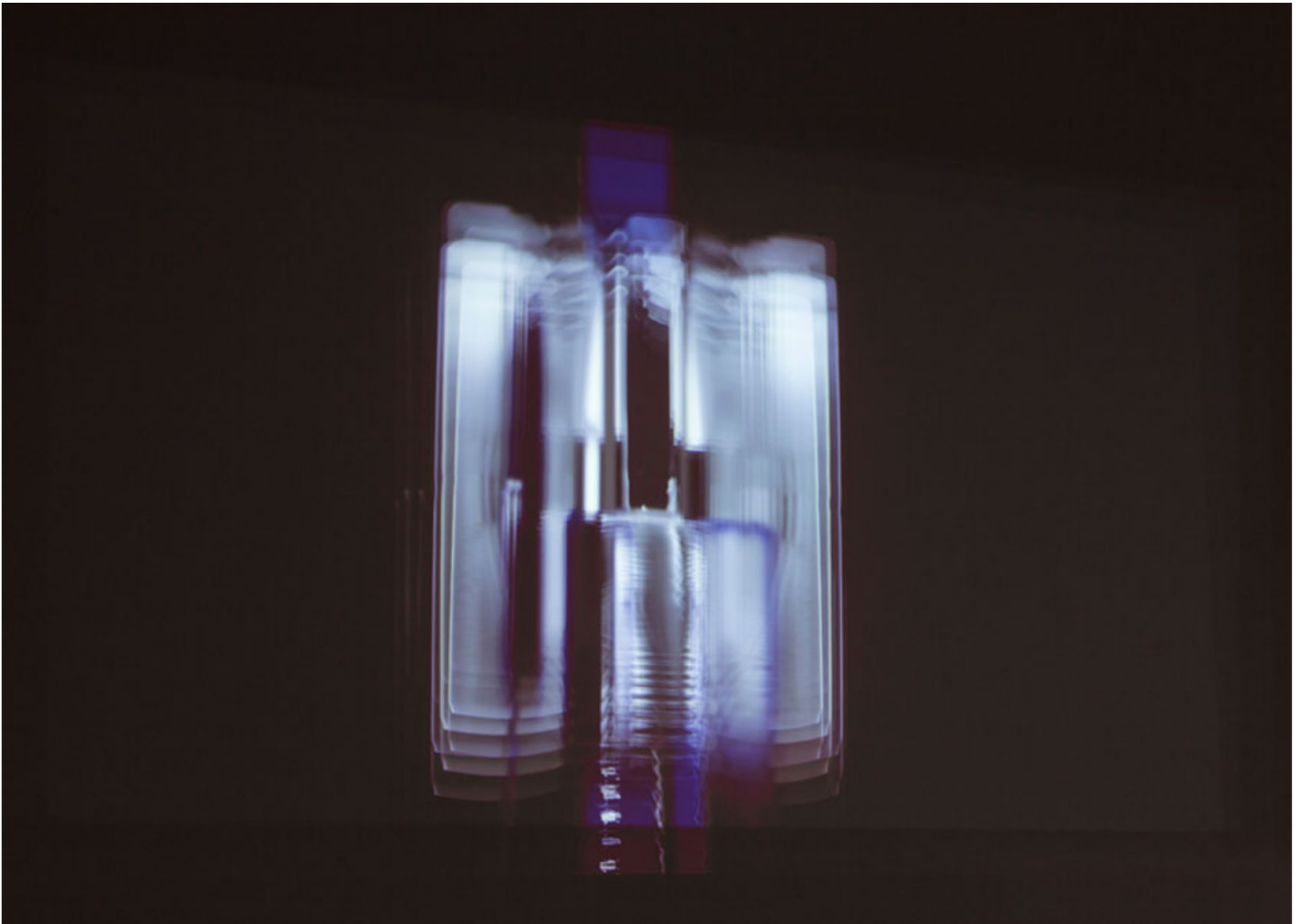
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One of the earliest lessons an artist learns is how to play with positive and negative space. Yet, few artists ever master what Trisha Donnelly knows: how to do it in four dimensions. Her exhibitions are at once so comprehensive and so sparse that it's not always clear which parts are determined by choice and which by chance – an ambiguity that deepens over time.

Several gorgeous hunks of stone have been arranged across two of Matthew Marks's Chelsea galleries. These vary in both size – from pipe stands to refrigerators – and orientation, sitting upright like plinths or reclining like lost bumpers. Their hues range from blue to emerald to rose. Each has been polished on almost every face. (The one exception is an untitled boulder of basalt the size of a bull, which has been sliced flat across its top.) But Donnelly's seemingly modest gesture – nothing if not solid – soon shakes loose. It is impossible to tell if these are vertical forms laid sideways, or horizontals forced upright, or whether each has been quarried with its present orientation in mind. Nearly every stone is scored with deep, straight, alien lines: the marks of a

powerful industrial saw – perhaps Donnelly’s work, perhaps a stonemason’s. From readymade rocks to objects of profound ambivalence: this is classic Donnelly.



Trisha Donnelly, *Untitled*, 2019,
digital video still. Courtesy: the
artist and Matthew Marks Gallery,
Los Angeles and New York



Trisha Donnelly, *Untitled*,
2019, Botticino marble,
133 x 40 x 19 cm.

Courtesy: the artist and
Matthew Marks Gallery,
Los Angeles and New
York

The concept, again, is elementary: that some objects are intentional, and others not. The marble pillars rest on the floor, just as their neat, flat sides have been forcibly sliced from wild veins of rock. Donnelly, perhaps, returns to the classical medium of marble to remind us that art has always been an imposition on non-art. When she projects an image of warbling lines and greying rectangles in a white-box gallery, it is as much an intervention as turning stone into sculpture, whether she sculpts it herself or not. The walls of the east gallery at Matthew Marks bear three digital projections, each an untitled, grayscale abstraction that suggests a graph or an oscilloscope or a billowing sheet. One is a still, single frame; another, a short loop; the third, taking pride of place on the gallery's back wall, seems to phase in and out of focus. The latter work is comprised of three overlapping projections of the same amorphous shapes, bobbing up and down – a fact that only becomes apparent at a distance too close to comfortably view the whole. Donnelly's projections do for video what her marbles do for sculpture: demonstrate how seemingly hermetic images gradually, irrevocably bleed into their surroundings.



Trisha Donnelly, *Untitled*, 2019,
Azul Bahia granite in three parts,
31 × 166 × 18 cm. Courtesy: the
artist and Matthew Marks Gallery,
Los Angeles and New York

Notice the big signal lamps that look like something from a train next to the east gallery's desk; the printout of another twitchy grisaille shape taped under the stairs in the west gallery; the tarps over the skylights. Donnelly plays the clearly staged against the seemingly unintentional until aesthetic pleasure arises precisely from the ambivalence of this contrast. She has removed one door and opened another in the corners of the east gallery, revealing a dark hallway of old brick and blocked-up, alley-facing windows. An open hatch to the roof lets in winter cold; on stormy days, rain streaks its cinderblocks and pools on the concrete floor. This is why a galvanized metal outlet, exposed to and softly lit by the elements, is protected by a rough, translucent flap of plastic. Donnelly's deconstruction of the white cube apparently required this precaution. Of all the show's moments, this admission of fragility is the most beautiful.

'Trisha Donnelly' is on view at Matthew Marks Gallery, New York, from 8 November 2019 to 18 January 2020.

Main image: Trisha Donnelly, Untitled, 2019, Rosa Portogallo marble in two parts, 42 x 167 x 35 cm. Courtesy: the artist and Matthew Marks Gallery, Los Angeles and New York

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