

Please Touch

Tactile encounters

Artists: Rhona Byrne, Maud Cotter, Richard Forrest,
Katie Watchorn

The sense of touch implies a relationship of intimacy. However, while we can look closely at artworks, museums must usually discourage direct handling in order to protect fragile and delicate surfaces. **Please Touch** is an exception to this rule, allowing a physical response to works by four Irish artists whose individual practices often emphasise texture and tangibility.

Audiences are invited to get up close and personal, feeling the textures of the artwork, its folds and crevices, edges and angles, and the ways in which different materials become integrated into a single object. From intricate geometric shapes to skin-like resin surfaces, assemblages of diverse materials to artworks you can wear, **Please Touch** captures the value of an embodied encounter with visual art.

Curated by **Chris Clarke** and **Fiona Kearney**

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Rhona Byrne

Rhona Byrne's work is predominantly site and project specific. In *Colour Threshold #3*, visitors are welcomed by two corridors of hanging blue and yellow sheets. The installation invites the viewer to become immersed in, and part of, the work by wearing blue or yellow capes which are hanging on the wall, and passing through a hanging threshold of colour. Your decision therefore either contrasts or complements the passageways, creating a temporary moment of interaction between body and shape, colour against colour.

Katie Watchorn

The work of Katie Watchorn is rooted in the materiality of rural farming, highlighting the processes of contemporary and ancestral Irish life, and traditions which are often understated and overlooked. A careful observer of the acreage of her father's dairy farm, Watchorn is interested in the presence of livestock and softer substances within the more harsh aspects of a modern farmyard setting. In both her sculptures *A Calf Remembered* and *Hot Wash*, metallic elements sit side-by-side with carpet, rubber, beef fat and beeswax, evoking a terrain that is both pastoral and industrial.

Maud Cotter

Maud Cotter has often employed mundane, man-made materials in her practice. The sculptural works here are constructed of card and resin but, in their different surface qualities, are suggestive of smooth skin, undulating ridges, parched roughness. Cotter also emphasises the viewer as participant, with her horizontal wall piece *also* set at chest-height, able to be skimmed with the palm of the hand or felt along its edges. Her other work here, *all that is necessary*, offers a more personal, one-on-one encounter: it is softer, smoother, and reminiscent of a human torso.

Richard Forrest

Richard Forrest's practice combines sculpture, new media and painting to explore ideas of perception and technology. He uses computer graphics software to construct his installations. In *Hive*, a cubed sculpture reveals a series of intricate geometric openings, allowing visitors to feel the miniature negative cubes receding into the structure. *Looking* also emphasises the tactile over the visual; the object balances on the gallery floor with various rigid obtrusions extending into the surrounding space. Forrest's works combine the precision of mass-produced, machine-tooled or 3D printed objects with the sensibility of handmade design and imperfect finish.