

MARY MARY

ARTFORUM

Lorna Macintyre

KUNSTHAUS BASELSTADT

St. Jakob-Strasse 170,
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Many contemporary artists make work that evokes the much-handled adjective *poetic*; surprisingly few, however, make use of actual poetry. Glasgow-based artist Lorna Macintyre falls into both camps, and with remarkable relish. The title of her latest exhibition, "Form and Freedom," is gleaned from a William Carlos Williams phrase; many of the sculptures, photographs, and videos that compose it refer to T. S. Eliot's seminal poems *Four Quartets* (1936–42) and *The Waste Land* (1922). When Macintyre's works do not explicitly quote these texts, they make implicit reference to lyric poetry's dominant themes: the seasons, the elements, and an ever-mysterious nature that is nearly noir in the darkness of its magic properties.

Four new sculptural works each embody an element: A series of interlocking copper triangles, dangling down a wall, stands for fire; one steel cable and one aluminum one, titled *Words Move, Music Moves*, 2009, descend from the ceiling like attenuated bolts of lightning and stand for air. Three short videos offer more literal poetic fragments: a shadow moving across a wall, as well as dappled blue and green foliage shimmering in the wind. The videos are saved from sheer preciousness by being sped up and looped; the intimacy of the caught moment is given levity by the jittery, jagged speed with which that moment must play on infinitely.

Not all Macintyre's works are saved from tweekness. Several sculptures in various metals (a silver egg, driftwood painted gold) set atop rough wooden pedestals seem ripe for a Celtic seaside gift shop, with their alchemical referents and New Age titles. But Macintyre is discerning enough to often be sincere and surprising both. An installation of cyanotypes exemplifies this: A brown envelope, exposed to sunlight, offers shadowy dark blue forms; a large piece of paper, exposed to moonlight, results in a milky blue field streaked with starlike spots. Between these prints, a spare arrangement offers a blue photogram with a white circle burned into it, a glass, and a snapshot of a melon against a blue door. The work's meaning is inseparable from its making and as carefully selected as words in a line of poetry. How to describe it? Poetic, indeed.

— Quinn Latimer



Lorna Macintyre, *Neil*, 2009, four gelatin-silver prints, stainless steel, 18 7/8 x 24 3/8".