

Rachal Bradley, Interlocutor, Gasworks, London, U.K.

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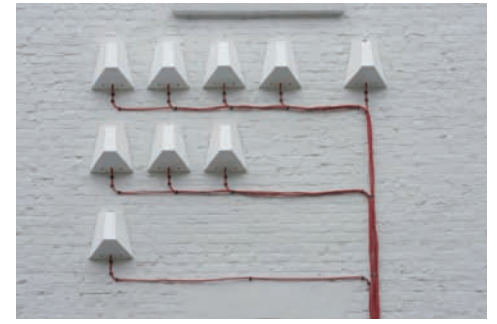
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Rachal Bradley

Interlocutor, installation views,
Gasworks, London, U.K., 2018.

Photos : Andy Keate, courtesy of the artist

Rachal Bradley

Interlocutor

How to heal a body, from the inside out? How to transform its ailments into something useful, something autonomous and intriguing, something with a life of its own? How to suffuse the organism from interior to exterior; to penetrate every cell, every membrane, so that what remains is entirely altered—a new and improved ecosystem? How to do this, and so much more, when the body—the organism, the ecosystem—in question is a place: an institution, a gallery space, an exhibition? Artist, heal thyself; artist, heal thy onlookers.

Interlocutor is a major new commission by Nottingham-based artist Rachal Bradley, produced by Gasworks through the Freelands Artist Programme, and developed in partnership with Künstlerhaus Stuttgart. The work is site-specific, and builds on the residency Bradley undertook from July to September of 2017, during which she ran a series of events and workshops, both private and public. The resulting work, literally spread through the two connected rooms of the gallery, is both expansive and gnomic, intriguing and frustrating, clear and opaque—literally and figuratively.

Wall-to-wall, door-to-door, the ground is covered with natural resin that has been “infused with a bespoke herbal tonic” created by the artist’s sister, a medical herbalist. A cream-white resin slickly encases the floor, thicker and raised in places where multiple pours are visible—puddles of white on white, with stains of brown here and there, in uneven drips and splotches—the dried remains of a thin liquid seemingly used to anoint various areas of the room. This is the herbal tonic, *Infinite Resistance*[™] (pending patent and trademark), which was developed in response to a series of interviews Bradley held with all of the permanent staff of Gasworks, asking them about their roles within the institution, and how it functions as a whole. *Infinite Resistance*[™] has been engineered to address impediments and to remedy ailments, as has a series of purpose-engineered vacuum-formed units

that have been mounted on the exterior walls of the building. These units emit negative ions (linked to good health, as well as various organic processes in nature) that travel throughout the institution’s many rooms and corridors, as well as its hidden spaces—walls, ventilation system, electrical cable networks—and out into surrounding areas.

And so, to enter Gasworks is to walk *into*, to be subsumed by *Interlocutor*—to be sensually surrounded and impacted, both visibly and invisibly. At least this is the wager. Why not, one might ask, in this era of contemporary uncertainty about the value of productive systems, including art and culture, accept the metaphor? Allow negative (ions) to become positive (forces); examine all of the impalpable but significant impulses that hover everywhere around the self and its many constructions; question to what degree, and in what form, we truly apprehend that which affects us on a daily basis. Most crucially, perhaps, to recognize the value of alternative narratives and visions of health—if only for their critical, and as such vital, difference.

Emily LaBarge

Gasworks, London, U.K.

January 25–March 18, 2018