

Art and Cake  
October 12, 2020

Camilla Taylor  
*Your Words in My Mouth*  
Track 16  
September 12 - October 17, 2020

by Jody Zellen



Camilla Taylor's evocative exhibition *Your Words in My Mouth* includes works on paper, as well as large and small-scaled sculptures, most of which are black and white or darker tones of gray. Taylor's pieces explore the body and its relationship to architectural space, often representing the body without architecture and architecture without the body. The exhibition has a graceful flow as viewers make their way through the gallery toward the light that beckons at the back of the space. Here, glowing in the sunlight are a collection of small opaque glass staircases on deep brown, beam-like wooden pedestals. Entitled *Means of Concealment and Deception* (2020), these kiln cast sculptures are fragments— narrow sections of staircases leading to and from nowhere. Taylor uses stairs as a metaphor for emotional and physical ups and downs, as well as to suggest places that are inaccessible. These pieces also recall the etchings of Piranesi, as well as the optical illusion of the impossible staircase— a never ending loop.

Hung in two long rows across the wall that connects the back and front spaces of the gallery are twenty-eight drypoints etchings depicting isolated dollhouses, chairs and staircases set against deep black or paper white backgrounds. A narrative is implied that imagines the stairs and chairs located within a house, yet in Taylor's presentation this never comes to fruition. Like the glass sculptures, the loosely drawn staircases allude to comings and goings, but exactly to and from where is never revealed. Taylor is more specific with her chairs. She includes representations of traditional as well as modern chairs floating alone or in small groups in empty spaces. While some are titled by type, *Shaker Chair* or *Ladder Back Chair*, others are given the more ambiguous title *Haunting*. Though the subject of each print is beautifully rendered, the works are as much about the negative space as they are about what is depicted.

For the table-top sculpture *One to the Other* (2019), Taylor created 120 tiny chairs, presenting them in ten rows of twelve installed within a plexiglas box. The cluster of chairs appears like a relic, perhaps a collection from a doll's house, now stripped of color, organized and preserved in pared down form. Upon closer examination, it becomes evident that each chair is unique and though chairs are often considered utilitarian objects, Taylor plays up their individuality akin to the diversity of people.

Suspended from the ceiling in the main space is *Many Times Over* (2020), a sculpture

comprised of many interlocking black buildings— boarded up two story houses emanating from a central point and nested together to become a large planet. Taylor speaks about this work as a collection of dream houses, structures that recur in one's dreams but each time they appear they are a bit different. Something has changed, but exactly what is hard to discern. Like the sculpted chairs, Taylor is interested in the tenuous place between sameness and difference. This idea is further explored in *Speaking in unison, telling their own lies* (2020), a compelling and affecting work consisting of seventeen doll-sized, black glazed ceramic heads arranged in a circle on a white flower patterned tablecloth. These seemingly identical sculptures have empty eyes and are connected by a thread that forms a star-like pattern as it emerges from each of their open mouths. They purportedly speak at the same time and tell the same lies that circle from head to head, perhaps becoming more and more distorted as if in a game of telephone. The lies that travel along the thread are not too dissimilar from the endless pathways up and down the impossible staircases.

Throughout her works, Taylor investigates the notion of home as well as more open ended architectural spaces. Though many of her works include figures, she seems more interested in its absence or lack. While the works are personal and draw from her family history, they simultaneously speak to something tangible and universal. What is most striking in the exhibition is the way Taylor drains color from everyday things — chairs, heads, houses and stairways— infusing them with a different kind of presence, one that exists in the realm of shadow and silhouette.

<https://artandcakela.com/2020/10/12/camilla-taylor-at-track-16/>