



## Kathryn Campbell Dodd

### Main Gallery

#### Inhabit

21 March to 18 April

*Inhabit* brings together a new body of work which has been developed over the last four years.

The installation *Inside the Birdhouse* began life in 2005 as an exploration of Hallowe'en customs and superstition. It grew around ideas about fear and liminality, ritual and constructed realities – the things we do to keep our 'self' intact and the things that threaten it. The catalogue essay, suggested that the piece might assume the function of a kind of 'meaning machine', and that is certainly how it has worked for me.

I initially connected with ideas from Grayson Perry's 2006 *Charms of Lincolnshire* and Jeremy Deller and Alan Kane's 2005 *Folk Archive*. I then found further connections in the *Louise Bourgeois* retrospective at Tate Modern in 2007, in particular her *Femme Maison* series of drawings from the 1940s. These pieces in themselves perhaps made comment on her surrealist male counterparts in the *International Surrealist Exhibition* of 1938 – especially Andre Masson's *Mannequin of a woman* with her head in a birdcage.

Joseph Beuys' *Actions, Vitrines, Environments* at Tate Modern in 2005 was also influential and my most recent works acknowledge his folk utopianism and his intoxicating belief in the power of art, whilst also mourning the arguable failure of that vision. We long for the shaman to rattle his bones and tell us his visions, whilst we also fear and distrust him: his language and celebrity, the questionable veracity of his storytelling, his garb and his accoutrements. The arcane trappings in the elegant symbolism that inhabits his work and the promise of healing; the possibility of redemption and change it offers. Thirty to forty years on, we struggle with the treachery of utopia: the entrenched idea that we must always be striving for something better. We are challenged to find ways to live with our disappointments.

In the last couple of years, American visual artist Nick Cave's *Soundsuits* have been influential. I love the intricacy, the absurdity, the echoes of ritual and superstition. His pieces are 'carnavalesque'; they exaggerate the vitality of the wearer. I think in contrast, my works attempt to articulate the ghosts that live with us, each stitch or action is a kind of futile act of celebration for all that has shaped us.

In the time I've been making this work, there have been some momentous shocks to the financial establishment along with an increased awareness of green issues. How will we re-evaluate our condition, our ontology? How will we align our attitudes to consumerism and the cult of 'things'? There seems to be a drive towards simplicity, a fundamental need for meaningfulness. What is important and how will we keep ourselves intact? When I was a child, if we hurt ourselves my mum would tear a strip of cotton rag and tie it around the wound – it was called 'tying a bunny on it'. It seems now, when I think back on it such a simple and beautiful gesture.

*Inhabit* is concerned with the minutiae of the domestic. It tells stories about the little ghosts that inhabit the objects that we gather around ourselves. Beautiful, absurd, familiar; they are saturated with the memories and beliefs that we keep with us and that, in many ways keep our sense of 'self' intact. This work is about the comfort of collecting, arranging and repeating things – the nuts and bolts of everyday personal narrative punctuated by the tragedies and celebrations of our lives.

### Oriel Fach

#### Wedge Crimson

by **Natalia Dias**, **Josh Redman**, and **Lloyd Davies**, a group of recent graduates from UWIC

### Stairs

Photographs by students on the BA photography course at West Wales School of Art, Carmarthen



The Bird House | Into the Woods