

Susan Collis *Since I fell for you*
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First Floor Galleries

The following is an extract from an interview with Susan Collis, March 2010.

How do your titles affect our reading of your work?

New pieces such as *Twice Removed*, *Tongue and Groove* and *Forever Young* (all 2009) are based on old bits of wood that have been collected from skips following refurbishment projects. These pieces refer to the continual collapse and renewal that is part and parcel of progress.

Since I fell for you is a song title. When I heard it I realised there was a dual meaning, the idea of something old being sacrificed in order to make way for something new. Similarly in other titles there's an identification with human qualities. I imagine a lot of these little 'nothings' I make, recreated in precious materials, might have ideas above their station, an aspiration to grandeur.

What are the recent developments in your work?

I have been continually trying to make my work more awkward, to get two opposing features into a single piece; dirty and clean, tidy and messy, well crafted and un-made. I'm aware that the craft processes I use would usually result in the production of something manageable, often on a domestic scale, and I want to subvert this. I became aware that the earlier pieces, such as the brooms and overalls, still held a relationship to domestic scale. For the last five years I have been trying to find ways around this by making things that don't fit into a domestic environment in the way that craft pieces traditionally do. Tiny screws, the Rawlplugs and every item that is individually made becomes part of something that is very big, awkward and annoying.

In what ways does your work deal with considerations of time?

I use time as a material, again an attempt to make individual pieces hold a duality of meanings. Often a work that looks very careless, as if it hasn't taken any time

to make, like a random mark, ends up being something that takes a long time to produce.

I'm not interested in using time as a way of making work that emphasises endurance, it's merely a necessary thing to do. I try to counter-pose something that is quick, messy and thoughtless with something that is the opposite. The way I make my work takes time.

Is there a particular work that demonstrates your interest in the relationship between process and materiality?

A lot of the materials I use are very expensive because they are so hard to produce; gold and diamonds require difficult mining processes. Very often there is a process of replacing the throwaway with something that has been carefully sourced; often these work within particular cultural or poetic associations.

As an artist I try to defile those things, to devalue those precious materials because they look like something completely ordinary. I like the idea that meaning is yo-yoing back and forth; it's precious but it doesn't look it. It is and it isn't ...

The laundry bag pieces such as *Untitled (Tony Amore)* (2009), don't rely on precious materials – the 'precious' part is the time expended upon them. They are paper structures drawn out in pencilled grids, filled in with biro to become three-dimensional representations of themselves. These works make strong reference to Minimalist grid drawings by artists such as Agnes Martin and Sol Le Witt. Here meaning becomes slippery in terms of what these objects actually are and what they represent.

The bags are also almost about something else. By putting time into them I am trying to bring the viewer's attention to the amount of possible meaning they can carry. Such works involve an intense kind of observational drawing – they are an attempt not only to represent the original, but to convey a bigger cultural and economic picture.