

In their collaborations, Jane Fogarty and David Lunney blur documents and artworks into solitary form. Their work crosses back and forth between streams of origination and preservation. Its visual language is concealed in the transitions between place and time, extraction and reproduction. It maintains the aesthetic vigour of an artwork, coupling that with a document's tendency to record; but crucially, the requirement to read is sheared off. I am settled somewhere amongst these competing currents; the matters discussed in this essay are superfluous, but the accumulation of words, the dense black catalyses into a spine for the artworks. As ever, the words confer some manner of historical motility by their presence alone – a glow of activity that is granted well before I arrive to any matter at hand.

These documents are built from rough materials. There is an image wrapped in between their patterned threads and hardwood backing; a freestanding tower situated in the chaotic ecology of the Wicklow mountains. The image takes on a blurry, indecipherable form, like pillowed stacks of plaster captured in space, and pressed into a speckled monochromatic surface. You get the sense that a sustained investigation into the tower's nature might reveal the origins of a mineral deposit, an irradiated tree trunk, or with a measure of imagination, the mystic archaeology of some grotesque squid.

The towers are constituted from bulbous slabs of plaster, piled together to reach waist height. The upper portion drips downwards in a whitish paste, thinly covering a series of dried crescents on its way. Its bottom refuses to surrender to the earth; instead of yielding at a visible base it continues piling down through the ground, giving no particular indication of its appetite for depth or the shape of its eventual end. The tower stands for a number of weeks and months, only growing to its full height so that it can pose for a picture, which will supply its final printed life. In this flattened form, the thing is situated alongside some paragraphs of text, quantifying it in the mould of other important objects. It is not clear when it transitions from being an object to being a document of an object – to being a recording of something that was once made actual. The tower's relationship with time is purposely impaired; its most concrete moment is hidden from view by continual attempts to preserve its transition from one form to the next. With every effort to create a momentary pause, there is always the crushing force of reality ready to defibrillate the present back into regular motion.

For those who do not resist the tide of weeks and months, preservation is still a thankless task. A good archive takes time to build, the job is never complete, and the assembled material is open to revision – even the immediate past is an unfamiliar

guest of the present. The words of yesterday cannot adopt their original form to a changed world, they are always absent of context and diminished in their possibility. Hardly anything can be replanted in the old soil; hardly anything can be washed in the waters of its origination.

In these representations, the whiteness of the page forms an outer surface. It is a type of woollen shell that sharply craters into the edge of every paragraph, delineating a pool of blunted letters. Inside, threading patterns relieve the words of their tightly assembled shapes. In the place of language, there are small voluble waves to simulate the sensations of a letterform; to mimic the way that each glyph might stress its eye, neck or shoulder.

It is appropriate that these words should become obscured – obscurity is both an enemy and consequence of the preservative mission of documents; it is born out of the way that historical records tend to uncomfortably jut into a space between the present and the future. Every document is, in at least some small way, party to its historical moment, but it contains the power to survive entirely without context. With every tomorrow its language becomes more broken, less connected, referring only to things that used to be. As time goes on, it becomes necessary to explain what once was with newer language – forsaking the sensibilities of historical and contextual accuracy for the practical benefits of simplicity. And here, in the monochromatic threads, every dark speck and noisy thicket was once a finite descriptor spun up to isolate and saturate this artwork with an easier meaning.

Fogarty and Lunney recursively capture object after object, making minor embellishments here and there, continually folding every new thing in on top of its ancestor. There is no concrete moment wherein their forms became complete, and are stood upright to be declared as such. Each artefact within their timescale takes on an improbable form, tampered with until nearly new, still in a state of becoming, and drunk on the sum of its remaining possibility.