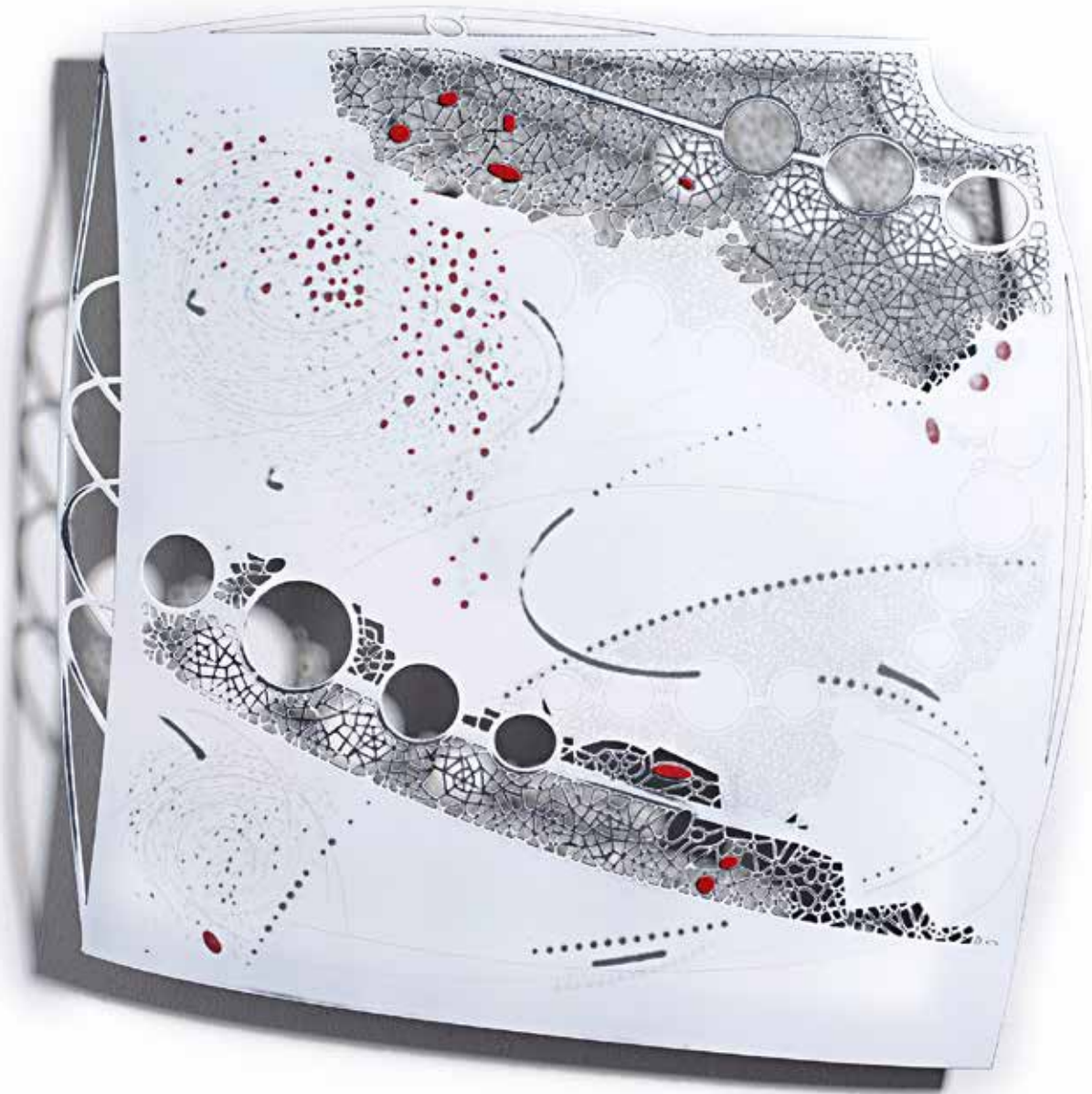


Beate Gegenwart
Translating Between
the Lines_

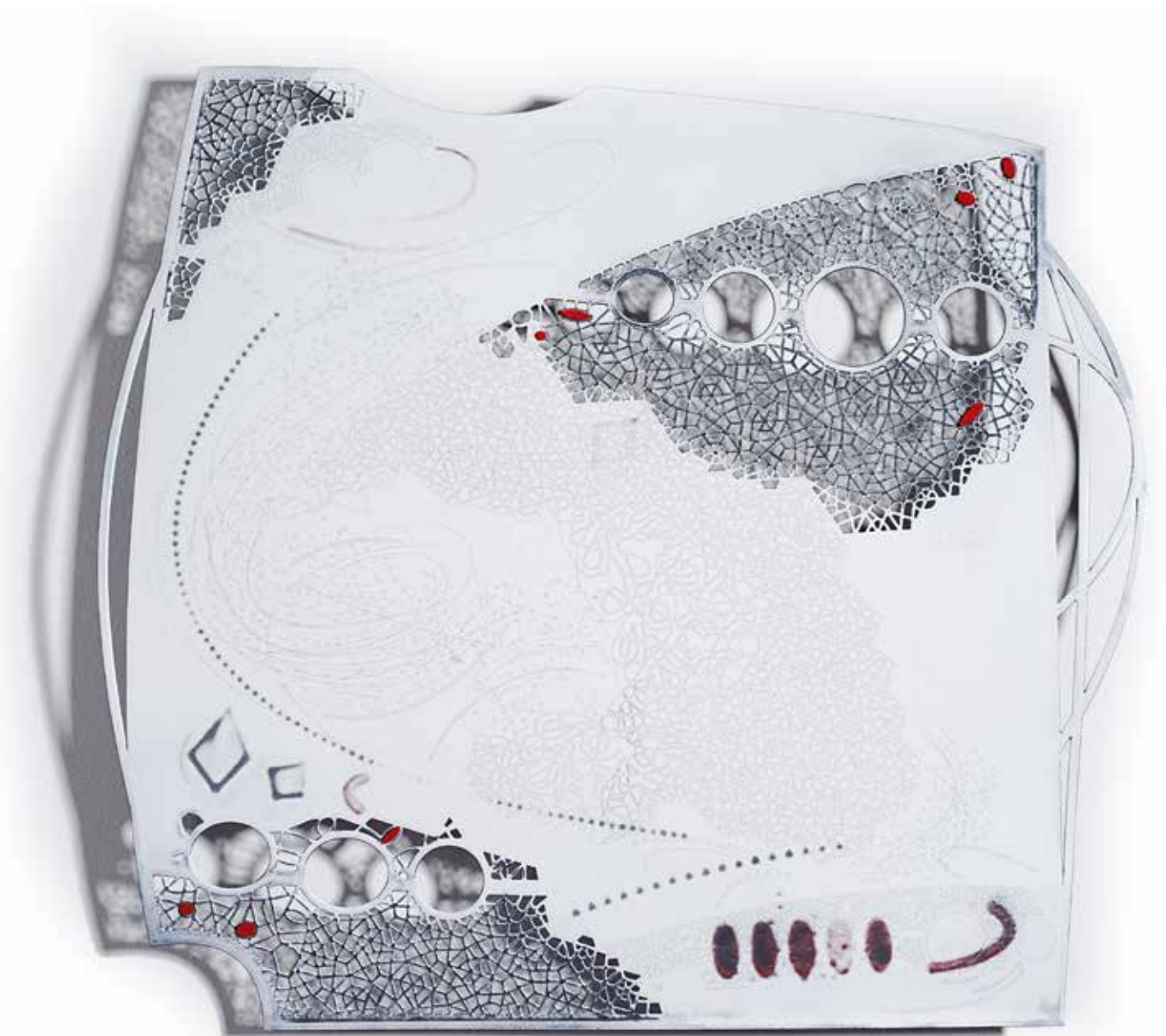


Moving Pictures_ <i>Marjorie Simon</i>	9
Translating Between the Lines_ <i>Karen Ingham</i>	25
Process Notes_ <i>Beate Gegenwart</i>	35

FLIGHT BEHAVIOUR 3, 2016
 Enamel on steel, felt
 57cm x 55cm



FLIGHT BEHAVIOUR 2, 2016
 Enamel on steel, felt
 57cm x 55cm





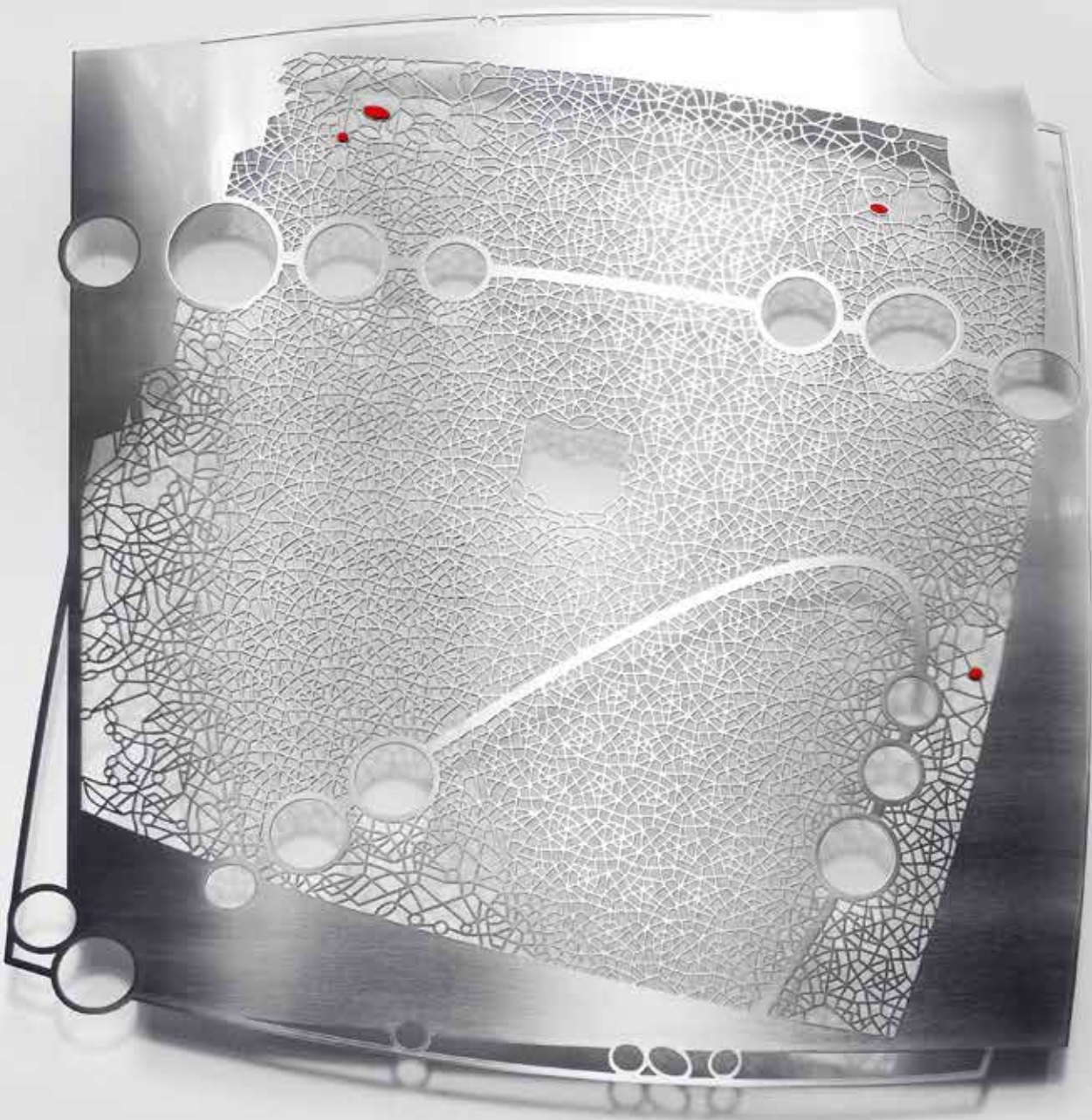
Moving Pictures_

Marjorie Simon

*"I am used to forever crossing, from one country to the other,
from one language to another."*

_Beate Gegenwart [1]

FLIGHT BEHAVIOUR 1, 2016
Stainless steel, felt
57cm x 55cm

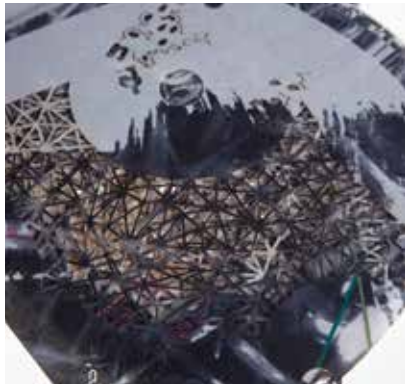
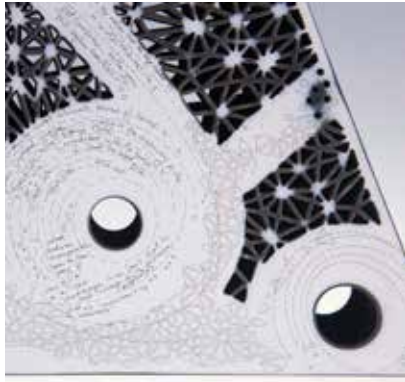
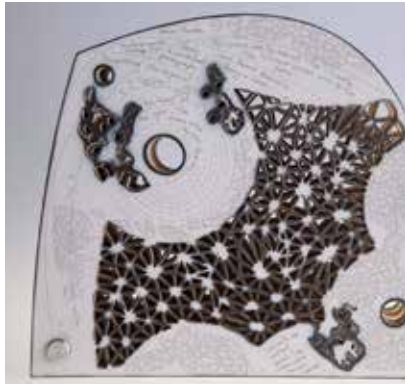


EXPERIMENTS, 2016
Lasercut paper, various sizes



A sort of restlessness animates Beate Gegenwart's work. A greedy, joyful experimentation with materials and processes in the service of intellectual inquiry about place and identity, dislocation and belonging, people and the spaces between them. Gegenwart reads and writes, eloquently, about these subjects and more, but she really expresses herself through her hands. Her materials—vitreous enamel on steel, electroplated 3-D printing and paper—bring to life meditations on borders and boundaries, crossings, movement, and water, always water. The resulting objects, though not explicitly narrative, reflect the journey of a welcome guest, born in Germany and living in Wales, who nonetheless cannot help longing for home.

Gegenwart's worldview, and, ultimately, her work, is informed by her close readings of poets and artists of the 20th century, many of whom left home to find their truest selves in other lands. Poetry, compressed and symbolic, seems a fit match for the way art objects stand in for bigger ideas and messier emotions. At Gegenwart's suggestion I read the noted twentieth century German language poet Ingeborg Bachmann, and her lover, poet Paul Celan; I reacquainted myself with Walter Benjamin. Together they seemed to constitute a tri-part lens, a natural framework, through which to view her work. Ultimately, it is the poets who cast the biggest shadow. Substitute "objects" for "poems," and words that are written about Bachmann seem to be really about Gegenwart: "supple and beautiful and clear on the surface, but ... actually composed of layered, almost imaginistic, metaphors, which, like small explosive devices, detonate the more often one [revisits] her work." [2]



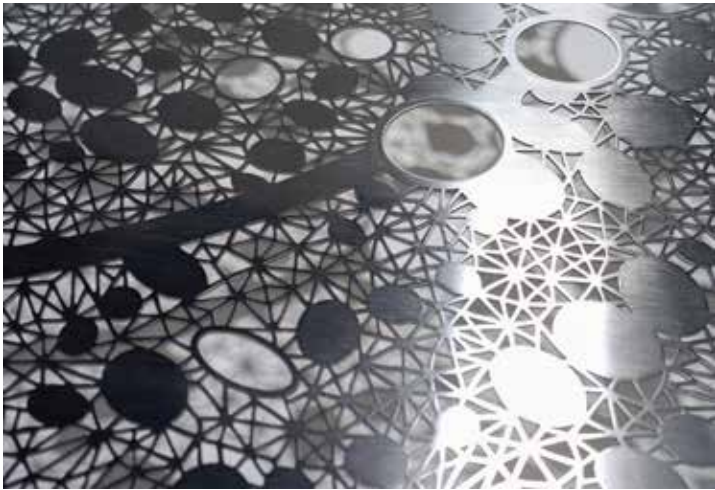
ARTISTS BOOKS, 2012
Enamel on steel, Somerset Velvet paper, Japanese paper
20cm x 20cm approx.

It is not surprising that Gegenwart's closest affinities are with writers whose first language is her own. Bachmann's influence can hardly be overstated. Her poem "Bohemia Lies by the Sea" expresses not only generalized Utopian longings but specifically Gegenwart's love of water: the landlocked kingdom of Bohemia never lay by the sea. Through Bachmann, the notion of "the impossible Bohemian seacoast has become a symbol for the European search for meaning and identity...." [3] But Gegenwart is by no means alone in claiming "Bohemia" as a touchstone. Anselm Kiefer borrowed the title for one of his dense, allusive paintings. So did Earnest Woodall, a little known American jazz composer, for a short composition containing musical references not only to the sea but the music of Kurt Weill as well. Of Celan, Gegenwart says, "I only need to read four lines and my head is filled with images."

The more time I spent with Bachmann and Celan, with "Bohemia Lies by the Sea," and the artwork it spawned, fanning out in an ever widening gyre of influence, the more I saw in Gegenwart's layers of metal and glass. Walter Benjamin's monumental Arcades Project dovetailed with her interest in ambiguous, permeable boundaries, and conflation of interior and exterior space. A grant enabled her to set off among arcades of northern Italy. She documented a dizzying array of vaulted arches, row upon row of curves overhead. Photographs are evocative, but as a maker, her desire was "to understand these spaces through making..., to activate them... by exploring rhythms of form and light through rhythmical forms of production, such as the 'to and fro' of the laser through cutting and engraving." Gegenwart's work not only mirrors the materials, but the lacy perforations of her enamelled steel latticework seem to interpret the iron window frames of Victorian glass buildings. Working as she usually does in series, the slotted wall forms, with their shadows and spaces, concretize the interrupted sunlight, appearing and disappearing, the silhouetted forms, and again, movement, as indoors becomes outdoors.

Material curiosity and technical challenges excite Gegenwart and drive her investigations as much as philosophical ones do. She is a fearless 21st century materialist, embracing technological advances such as laser cutting, etching and 3-D printing along with her mastery of vitreous enamel on steel. A former ceramic artist who worked in bone china, she routinely cut into the clay, removing more and more until the material could no longer support her ideas. Metal, with its structural integrity, allows her to work much bigger and realize her ideas more completely. Marginally limited by the size of her studio kiln, already a massive 70cm on a side, the laser and waterjet cutters further freed her from the restrictive size of manageable sheet metal. She uses the new technology to develop a new language of image and object; the water jet cutter becomes her translator. Unlike those for whom technology dictates design, Gegenwart brings her form language to the technique. She even embraces 3-D printing, a process that produces objects in an unappealing plastic. She redeems the intricate layered forms through electroplating, essentially transforming them into metal that may be oxidized or patinated. Without the intrusive plastic surface, the viewer's eye can peer down into a bowl within a bowl, a cloth wrapped around a lacy, perforated dish, or table setting conflating the cloth and the dish.

TO AND FRO SERIES, 2016, detail
Stainless steel
44cm x 51cm



TO AND FRO SERIES, 2016,
Enamel on steel, slate, felt



Everything begins with drawing. High contrast ink drawings are “subsequently reinterpreted for water jet or laser cutting, predominantly in stainless or mild steel (occasionally in fine silver).” Although the steel will be digitally assisted, there must always be handwork. “The pieces are... enamelled in a kiln using ‘wet process’ [liquid] vitreous enamel, then drawn, scratched, abraded, polished and laser engraved.” Gegenwart typically works with a limited palette of enamelled black and white, and the silver of bare metal. It’s almost not a choice, but her default selection. She comes from northern Europe and lives in a grey country, where colours are muted, and sunlight slants pale, glancing off the globe.

Ironically, metal, especially steel, so grey and masculine, best represents the paradox of fragility and precariousness of cultural dislocation and the strength necessary to survive. One can portray the spaces so much better in steel, the better to show the absences. Gegenwart has a passion for the way things feel, the physical act of making, the Zen of a subtractive process. She searches out physicality, getting dirty, a sense memory from ceramics, like sticking one’s hands in a bucket of glaze.



TO AND FRO SERIES, 2016
Stainless steel
44cm x 51cm

FLIGHT BEHAVIOUR 1, 2016, detail
Enamel on steel, felt
57cm x 55cm

Looking at the pieces on the wall, there's a hint of jaunty optimism, resiliency, in all the curves and diagonals. It is only in the lacy scrim of cloudy memory or the worn-away edges where surface colour has been removed, that hints of sorrow appear. We always glimpse the past within the present. Gegenwart concretizes this notion by creating walls and doors that are windows, through which are glimpsed what has gone before, what has been left behind. A lattice-work of steel in silver and white hides and reveals in equal measure.

Together the multi-layered, ambiguous objects are arranged like phrases, clauses, sentences or pages in a book. Thinking of the gallery space "as a paragraph, Gegenwart says, "I wanted to write a room." Like the exposition of a musical theme, —language change—introduces the themes of identity and dislocation in widely varying bodies of work. Included also are artist books, in which one can tell a story that's not on one page. Each element in a series might be a chapter, a page, a paragraph, a fluid sentence, punctuated, improbably, with red. One group developed from brushstrokes suggests the broad motion of handwriting. Blown up to wall size, brushstrokes (To and Fro Series) are not only gestures, but a nod to the still active enamel sign industry in the UK, reinterpreted as pure movement, pure action. Eventually they morph into a web of icy, flickering bubbles, or a frosted window.

Without actually portraying human figures, Gegenwart's allusive compositions suggest the absences all wanderers experience in journeys benign or brutal. Despite the sense of loss that accompanies migration, there is also renewal in the transformational possibilities of work, of art, of creating new work. Gegenwart's methods – sanding, etching, adding colour and eroding it – repetitively return to the same spot, like a wave returning to shore.

Marjorie Simon is a metalsmith and writer residing in Philadelphia, USA.

References

- [1] Beate Gegenwart. This and all unattributed quotes taken from written and spoken communication with the artist.
- [2] <https://shigekuni.wordpress.com/2010/06/27/paul-celan-ingeborg-bachmann-correspondence/>
- [3] Julia Boll, quoted, <http://www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk/poems/bohemia-lies-sea>

SPRACHWANDEL, 2015-2016
Enamel on steel, stainless steel, felt
Each approx. 60cm x 23cm



HERBEI, HERBEI WAS ROT SEI (Come, come, all you reds) 2015
Enamel on steel
Each approx. 16cm x 16cm



Bohemia Lies by the Sea

*If houses here are green, I'll step inside a house.
If bridges here are sound, I'll walk on solid ground.
If love's labour's lost in every age, I'll gladly lose it here.*

If it's not me, it's one who is as good as me.

*If a word here borders on me, I'll let it border.
If Bohemia still lies by the sea, I'll believe in the sea again.
And believing in the sea, thus I can hope for land.*

*If it's me, then it's anyone, for he's as worthy as me.
I want nothing more for myself. I want to go under.*

*Under – that means the sea, there I'll find Bohemia again.
From my grave, I wake in peace.
From deep down I know now, and I'm not lost.*

*Come here, all you Bohemians, seafarers, dock whores, and ships
unanchored. Don't you want to be Bohemians, all you Illyrians,
Veronese and Venetians. Play the comedies that make us laugh*

*until we cry. And err a hundred times,
as I erred and never withstood the trials,
though I did withstand them time after time.*

*As Bohemia withstood them and one fine day was released to
the sea and now lies by water.*

*I still border on a word and on another land,
I border, like little else, on everything more and more,*

*a Bohemian, a wandering minstrel, who has nothing, who is held
by nothing, gifted only at seeing, by a doubtful sea, the land
of my choice.*

- Ingeborg Bachmann

Böhmen liegt am Meer

*Sind hierorts Häuser grün, tret ich noch in ein Haus.
Sind hier die Brücken heil, geh ich auf gutem Grund.
Ist Liebesmüh in alle Zeit verloren, verlier ich sie hier gern.*

Bin ich's nicht, ist es einer, der ist so gut wie ich.

*Grenzt hier ein Wort an mich, so laß ich's grenzen.
Liegt Böhmen noch am Meer, glaub ich den Meeren wieder.
Und glaub ich noch ans Meer, so hoffe ich auf Land.*

*Bin ich's, so ist's ein jeder, der ist soviel wie ich.
Ich will nichts mehr für mich. Ich will zugrunde gehn.*

*Zugrund - das heißt zum Meer, dort find ich Böhmen wieder.
Zugrund gerichtet, wach ich ruhig auf.
Von Grund auf weiß ich jetzt, und ich bin unverloren.*

*Kommt her, ihr Böhmen alle, Seefahrer, Hafenhuren und Schiffe
unverankert. Wollt ihr nicht böhmisch ein, Illyrer, Veroneser,
und Venezianer alle. Spielt die Komödien, die lachen machen.*

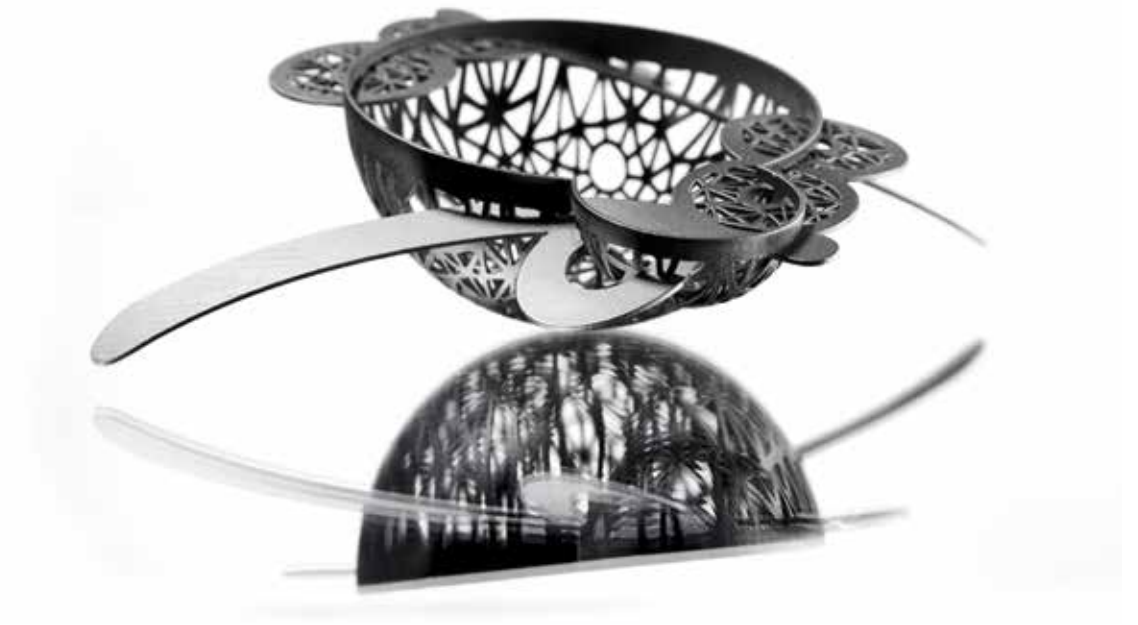
*Und die zum Weinen sind. Und irrt euch hundertmal,
wie ich mich irrte und Proben nie bestand,
doch hab ich sie bestanden, ein um das andre Mal.*

*Wie Böhmen sie bestand und eines schönen Tags
ans Meer begangt wurde und jetzt am Wasser liegt.*

*Ich grenz noch an ein Wort und an ein andres Land,
ich grenz, wie wenig auch, an alles immer mehr,*

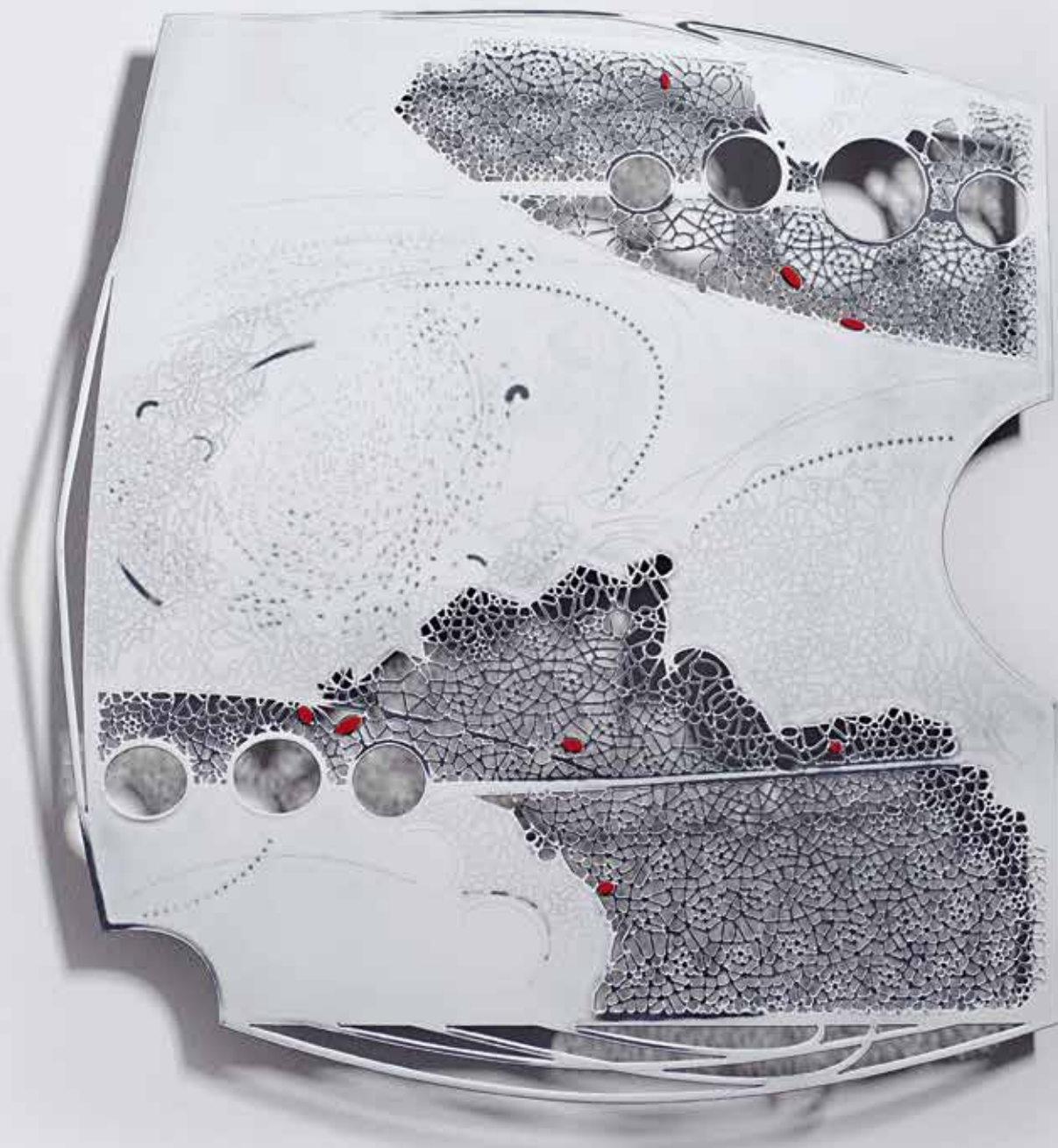
*ein Böhme, ein Vagant, der nichts hat, den nichts hält,
begabt nur noch, vom Meer, das strittig ist, Land meiner Wahl zu sehen.*

-Ingeborg Bachmann



IN A POCKET OF EARTH, 2016
Acrolyte, copper, oxidised silver
15cm

FLIGHT BEHAVIOUR 4, 2016
Enamel on steel, felt
57cm x 55cm



Translating Between the Lines_

Activating Space and Materiality

Karen Ingham

The poet moves from life to language, the translator moves from language to life; both like the immigrant try to identify the invisible, what's between the lines, the mysterious implications.

Anne Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces* (1997)

Where should we look for concepts of space as relatedness? We do not need to look far. Natural language sees space in this way. All languages have spatial terms which are purely relational ...our unselfconscious use of language means that in everyday life we routinely use relational spatial concepts to represent and interpret the world.

Bill Hillier (2005)

*'The Art of Place and the Science of Space',
World Architecture Beijing,
Special Issue on Space Syntax*

Beate Gegenwart's latest body of work is evocative of Anne Michaels' 'Fugitive Pieces', a narrative where elemental forces of geography are interwoven with language, transition, location and dislocation. A constant, underlying thread within 'Fugitive Pieces' is that of translation and the "mysterious implications" of deciphering "between the lines". For this new body of work Gegenwart, originally from Germany but resident in Wales for over three decades, researched Walter Benjamin's 'Arcades' project, seeking out architectural places such as arcaded streets and inner courtyards where boundaries are blurred, creating 'uncertain spaces', which bridge areas and functions. The visual and spatial motives of the arched arcade are clearly evident in many of her new pieces, but it is Benjamin's 'The Task of the Translator' that is at the forefront of my encounter with *'Between the Lines'*: "...to some degree, all great texts contain their potential translation between the lines". (1996: 263) Benjamin's recognition that the challenge of translation lies in the 'between' spaces, which language has the ability to activate, is metaphorically and literally etched into this new body of work. Cryptographies and cartographies – cut and burnt into metal as a series of symbols and glyphs, like a code inviting decryption. But what do these codes suggest? Timeless themes of migration, language, location and dislocation, spatiality, movement and borders – themes that are ongoing concerns within Gegenwart's practice.

In *'Between the Lines'* she expands these themes, setting herself the challenge of materially activating the uncertain and nuanced spaces that are situated in the gaps between physical, metaphorical, social, and representational space and encounter. She achieves this by being an accomplished maker – concept and meaning made tangible through a consideration of the properties of space, spatiality, and materiality. The technologies she incorporates in her research are 3D printing, sub-surface laser engraving, embedding photographic objects into glass, and water jet and laser cutting. Her work is hard to label, a form of making that is conceptually rich and complex, interdisciplinary and consummately crafted.



TWINS, 2016
Acrolyte, copper, silver





This new body of work has developed from earlier projects such as 'Marking Space' (2008), 'Momentum' (2011), and 'Drawing Permanence and Place' (2011). The focus in these exhibitions, that of place, location, dislocation and movement, was manifested through an engagement with 2D plane and cutting creating an interstitial space and double on the wall behind. The investigation of an 'interstitial' space, meaning a space that is related to interstices – an intervening gap, space, form or aperture between spaces – is a continuing and ever evolving consideration in Gegenwart's practice. In anatomy interstitial space is an intercellular space, a permeable space, and in *'Between the Lines'* the artist invests a new layer of investigation, that of malleability and repetition between spaces.

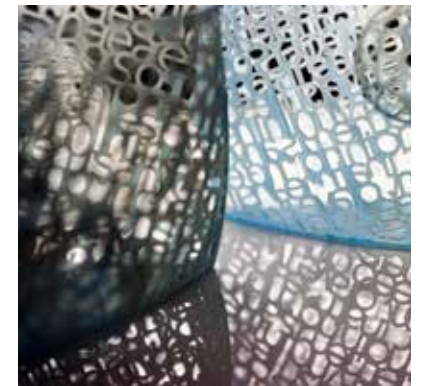
Bernard Tschumi (architect and educator) suggests that there is no space without event (1994), and it is this sense of bridging space and creating in-between spaces that can be activated by production – by the movement of the body or rhythms – that the artist is investigating: "I am interested in activating space, considering large-scale architectural works and related small artefacts on the body. I am fascinated by the possible conversation between the two and the questions that it proposes. Concepts of boundaries/non-boundaries, seeking out spaces that could be defined as 'inside', but allowing activities of the 'outside' to take place, hold infinite fascination for me. I am intrigued by the fabric of 'gaps' and see-through openings, the spaces in-between that carry specific meanings."

3D PRINTED MODELS IN THEIR WAX SUPPORTS, 2016

Gegenwart's notion of activating a relationship between the wall based works and the smaller jewellery like items worn by the viewer plays with Henri Lefebvre's concept of producing and activating social space, where he comments that when considering social space: "...it may help to consider the body. All the more so inasmuch as the relationship to space of a 'subject' who is a member of a group or society implies his relationship to his own body and vice versa." Henri Lefebvre (40:1991) This relationship, between body and space, is explored in the series 'Companions' and 'Twins', which act as mediators between one space and another, often blurring the boundary between a larger wall based work with a smaller 3D piece, occupying a space in the gallery. There is a playfulness with these works with the smaller pieces in the series acting as metaphorical 'full stops' or 'pauses' while other fragments, related but removable, have a sense of movement.

But there is also a palpable sense of absence and presence in this new body of work, which is heightened by the inclusion of heat fusing photographic fragments into the enamelled surface of many of the pieces. The influence of Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger is in evidence in the form of the palimpsest: subtle layered marks and traces cut, etched, and polished into the monochrome surface. There is a play of light and dark but also lightness and heaviness – metaphoric space and physical space, traces of mark making, traces of meaning. When Gegenwart speaks of the processes involved in her practice she employs terms like excavate, digging deep, embedding, to create multi-tonal imagery through layers of enamel/glass that invite a haptic means of looking, an indirect materiality. She describes this process as a kind of 'mapping' and it is this image of a world of movement, migration, transition and flux that I am ultimately reminded of when I view this new work. In many ways it could be seen as prescient, seeming to anticipate the current migration crisis that threatens to re-write our map of the world, borders and boundaries exposed for what they are, shifting and uncertain.

Perhaps the spaces that are activated in this new body of work are also unstable (can space be anything but), an instability that manifests itself oxymoronicly in seemingly solid and unyielding metal and glass, fashioned and fabricated here in innovative and conceptually rigorous new ways. But these physical, elemental materials are in fact malleable, not rigid, and as such they serve as a reminder that concepts like geography, identity, space and location are also fluid: where there are gaps there will always be between spaces waiting to be revealed and activated.





DAPPLED LIGHT SPOON, 2016
Acrolyte, copper, oxidised silver
6cm x 4cm

DAPPLED LIGHT CUPS, 2016
Acrolyte, copper, silver, oxidised silver
Both approx. 5cm high x 4 cm diameter



References:

Walter Benjamin (1996, original English translation 1968)
'The Task of the Translator', in (Eds. M. Bullock and M.W. Jennings)
Selected Writings Vol. 1 1913-1926, Harvard University
Press: Cambridge MIT Press

Bill Hillier (2005)
'The Art of Place and the Science of Space', in *World Architecture*,
Beijing, Special Issue on Space Syntax, pages 96-102 in English

Henri Lefebvre (1991) *The Production of Space*,
Wiley-Blackwell: Oxford UK, Cambridge MIT Press

Anne Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces* (1997) Alfred A. Knopf: New York

Bernard Tschumi (1994) *Architecture and Disjunction*,
Cambridge: MIT Press

*Prof. Karen Ingham is an artist-designer, writer, and an Honorary Interdisciplinary Research
Fellow at Swansea College of Art UWTSD Swansea, UK*



STUDIO, 2016

Process Notes_

Process Notes_

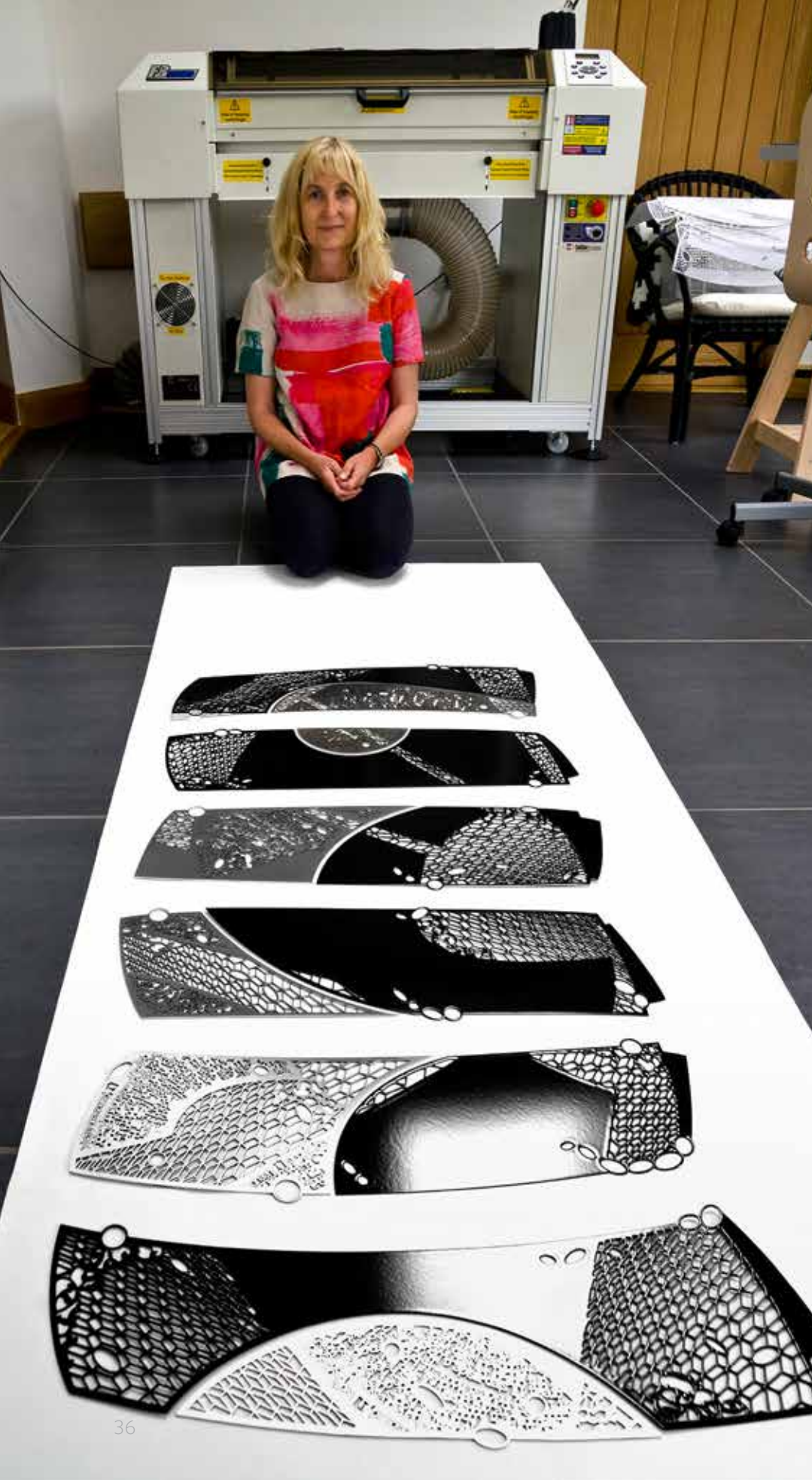
Beate Gegenwart

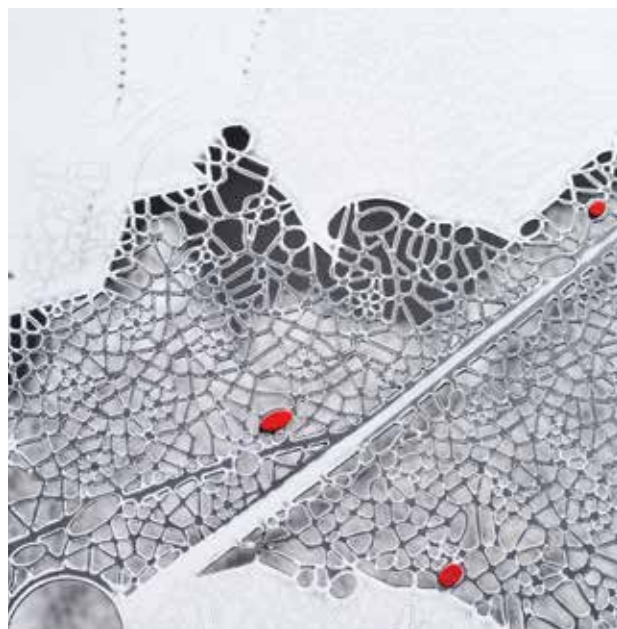
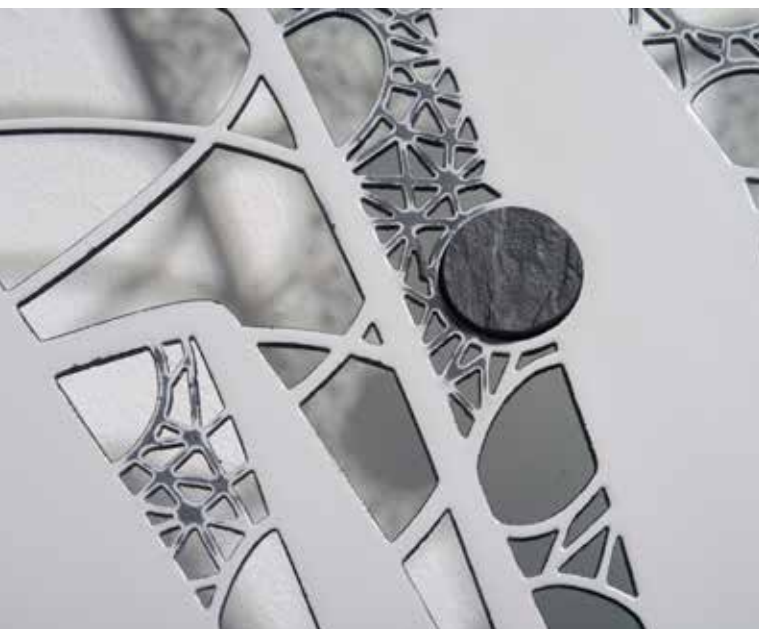
My principal medium is enamel, a thin layer of glass fired onto metal. I am passionate about this wonderful material and the vast array of beautiful surfaces and qualities that may be created.

All pieces begin with drawing. I see the initial drawing process as a 'rehearsal' for the permanent marks to be cut; areas are removed by the laser, describing space, lines creating shadows on the wall behind forming the 'double'; connecting the artwork, wall and panel. Subsequently, the layers of enamel, fragile yet hard and permanent, interrupt the juxtaposition of the cut spaces, each meticulously drawn, scratched, abraded and engraved. This introduces an element of 'chance', the artwork being fired and re-fired several times, the handmade mark unpredictable and intimate.

Cutting, incising and piercing have been part of my vocabulary of making for most of my life. In the early days as a practicing ceramist I intricately incised and pierced very thin and fragile bone china forms. These incisions, lines and holes created energetic movements around and across the forms. The act of cutting through stainless steel with a laser is much more extreme – the high heat required to cut the steel slightly deforms the metal creating physical tensions in strong contrast to the original intricate mark making. I am aiming for an ever-increasing level of intricacy and complexity.

3D printing is a fascinating new departure for me, yet it is an extension of my work in ceramics. It enables the freedom to be playful with my ideas and to make pieces with the most intricate forms. It allows me to take the work off the wall, to create small pieces in space, which may be moved or held. They belong to the wall pieces in concept, yet are 'free' and playful. I do consider them 'handmade', everything as always is drawn first, then meticulously modelled in Rhino, there are no 'algorithms'. The electroplating, first in copper, then silver, sometimes oxidised silver, adds the element of the hand and chance. It is difficult to entirely control the electroplating process, hence irregularities are introduced, bringing life to the object.





DETAILS AND EXPERIMENTS, 2016



Acknowledgements

I would like to gratefully thank the following people:

Charlotte Kingston and the team at Craft in the Bay for their generous support, advice and encouragement.

The Arts Council of Wales, and in particular, Louise Wright and Sian Griffiths, for supporting me with a grant. I will forever be thankful for that.

My writers Karen Ingham and Marjorie Simon for their enthusiasm and different insights into my work.

My photographers Aled Hughes and Chinch Gryniewicz for their beautiful photographs.

My graphic designer, Amparo Barrera, who is highly creative, a joy to work with and cheerfully manages the many changes.

A very special thank you goes to Daniel Butler at UWTSD, whose patience with me is extraordinary and who supports my 'ridiculous' cutting with great skill and grace.

Lloyd Stoker, Will Lennard and Ashley Bryant at CBM (www.cbmwales.co.uk) for so enthusiastically embracing the challenge of printing my 3D designs.

Karen Bartlett at the Birmingham Jewellery Innovation Centre, whose skill in electroplating as well as her kindness and enthusiasm are amazing.

All my family and friends, especially Tony, for putting up with me during this project.

Beate Gegenwart