

STATION

Marian Tubbs

riven

24th October — 21st November 2015

Gold liquid in a coke bag, rose in an old condom. Kept where you can see but not quite access it, can't *touch*. Common objects in strange combinations are encased in breakable glass, withholding the promise of their tactile materiality.

riven is full of disposable things that have been preserved or given new existence: bubble wrap, plastic baggies, bits of foam, artificial roses. Plastic and other feminized materials are constantly thrown out, considered disposable; you don't see seastealers proposing a libertarian paradise on the Great Pacific garbage patch. In the exhibition, Marian Tubbs has suspended these synthetic objects, plasticky and richly pigmented, in rectangular glass moulds small enough to hold in two hands. Presented atop torn sheets of painted foam, the glass moulds are at once solid and fragile, transparent and opaque. Inside them, overlapping materials suggest a form of intimacy.

But *riven* is not just concerned with the presentation of things in their inaccessible thingness. To be riven is to be torn apart, cracked or split, with violence—*the wooden floor is riven with cracks; I am riven with guilt*. Or, to rend the garments: the tradition of women in mourning in classical Greek myth, in which bits of cloth are torn from the body in grief, a process echoed formally in the found painting strips hanging in a work titled *definition*. These wrinkled white and latex strips are discarded fragments, unrieved, marked by their uselessness. Set against a metallic digital print in a deep frame, they reattain value of a different form—the precious particularity and market value of the art object.

Yet value—and processes of de- and revaluation—are treated with appropriate suspicion in Marian Tubbs' work, given that producing value is foremost the exploitative mechanism of capital. She deploys a sensuous materiality that doubles back on its own ascriptions of (gendered) worth. Her work acknowledges and moves beyond the coding of certain materials, forms, bodies as feminine, abstracting gender and desire into politicised processes. A new video, also called *riven*, insists on the value of feminized forms. Painted acrylic nails, detached from fingers, float across a background of slime mold and bounce against the edges of the screen. Their juxtaposition suggests a collapse of the (imagined) boundaries between natural and artificial, girly and gross. Nail glitter, pixels, mold spores—it's all particles.

It's almost an atmospheric work, following slow but continuous processes of movement and growth: nail-forms and streaks of color drift around; neuronal networks bloom; backgrounds undulate; a percussive soundtrack fades in and out. At the start of *riven*, drips of clear liquid run down the screen like tears or raindrops—*I've been crying all day and I want to say the screen is crying with me*. I'm watching the work and looking for empathy in images, feeling around for love in some casual heap of

materials. If to be a human now is to be a technologically embedded, biopolitically produced agglomeration of symbiotic organisms beneath the increasingly tenuous veneer of an individual, coherent body or self, then really what's the difference between me and this bit of painted bubble wrap peeling back on itself, or that cluster of slime mold cells? I have a feeling they're touching back.

— Dana Kopel