

“I found a nice object today,” Gen texts me, and follows with a picture of a large purple egg crate she picked up on the street. It is distorted already from the unknown events of its past life, or lives. “Soggy and smelly though,” she describes, and in my mind I can feel its moist texture, imagine its stench. In its current state, the egg crate can no longer contain the three dozen eggs it was originally made to hold. It has, in essence, lost its singular purpose.



Soon, though – once Gen dries it out, masks its odours – it will be reincarnated as yet another entry in her ever-expanding, ever-evolving vocabulary. An object that spoke to her, and through which she will



find ways to speak; to form half-sentences and unfinished paragraphs with other objects.

I think of Gen’s approach to objects – her choosing, making, arranging, reconfiguring of them – as being suspended in the liminal space of trying-to-find-the-right-words. It is a paradoxical state of implicitly knowing what one wants to communicate, but not exactly how to communicate it. Something just on the tip of the tongue, on the peripheries of the mind. Hers is a language that exists only as continuous propositions, a method of articulation that acknowledges its inherent and inevitable failure-to-complete. Yet, it pushes on anyway. “How about this?” asks a fragile eggshell, a chunk of

THE — RIGHT — WORDS



plasticine, some shards of broken porcelain. “Or this?” proposes a tilted cup, a bent nail, the plaster mould of a plastic container. But they only ask, rephrase, ask again. There is no resolution. It is the jar tipped over just so, paused there, such that the water it carries never finds its way over the lip. Almost; not quite.

The right words are never to be found. This is not a statement of hopelessness. Consider, perhaps, that Gen doesn’t want to find them. Hers is a language that will not be codified, will not coalesce into a coherent system. Her objects are words that exist without definitions. Or, they are objects from which definitions have been stripped, by intent or by



accident. Within Gen’s practice, these objects do not possess meaning within themselves – only the meaning that is generated in relation to other objects and spaces in each temporary constellation. Ever closer, these constellations orbit a sensation that feels known, but resists explanation. Better that it remains undefinable, if only that this sensation may persist in each failed communication. Once it is explained, it detaches from the body – disappears.