northcabin

Balancing a leaf, by Chloe Brooks

A response by Jeremy Walton

Subtly inhabiting the formerly superfluous north cabin of Redcliffe bridge, Chloe Brooks' *Balancing a leaf* could easily go by unnoticed by the stream of pedestrians passing daily. Yet this is just one of the beguiling contradictions that make up this artwork, for once it commands your attention, you would wonder how you ever missed it.

Almost hidden in its conspicuousness behind glass windows, and through accustomed bypassing, is a 1/4 scale replica of the *leaf* being balanced, or for those of us not adept in the terminology of bridge engineering, the road being raised by the letting in of water to act as a counterweight, that effectively *balances* the bridge open. Faithful in its adherence to the original blueprints and construction of the bridge, *balancing a leaf* is, despite its approximation with utility, a work without function. Whilst it replicates the intricate designs of the original in order to hold itself together, the purpose of this *holding together* is altogether distinct, as it becomes a curious echo of its influence.

Constructed out of materials including hardboard, roofing felt and upholstery pins, this simulacrum, in its immediate proximity to the bridge, creates a reflective impulse in the viewer, as contemplation oscillates between the original and the copy. The same familiar forms, colours and patterns that initially make it blend seamlessly into the background suddenly become mirrors, guiding the viewer back to that which is represented, and filling the familiar with a new vitality.

The infrequency of this balancing act, and the intricacy involved in creating this movement, is brought to the fore by the doubling induced by the model. Viewing this, conversely, is possible only when the reality of this occasion is not occurring. Through an imaginative representation, Chloe Brooks fills the north cabin with the image of the very activity the cabin was designed to elicit, in a way that delicately elucidates the hidden properties of this complex process.

Balancing a leaf was produce by artist Chloe Brooks September 2008 as part of the *northcabin* commission's at Redcliffe Bridge 2008-2009. *northcabin* is a commissioning programme which invites artists to respond to unusual architectural surroundings.

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