

STEPHEN FRIEDMAN GALLERY

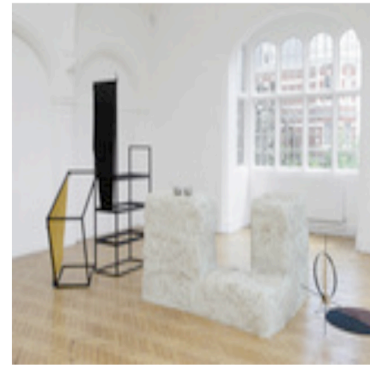
Artforum online
'Claire Barclay at Camden Arts Centre'
10th June 2008
Courtney J. Martin

ARTFORUM

Claire Barclay

CAMDEN ARTS CENTRE
Arkwright Road
May 2–June 29

The Scottish sculptor Claire Barclay marries industrial and organic materials in ways that challenge viewers' perceptions of weight, density, and balance. Her installation for the Scottish pavilion at the 2003 Venice Biennale included sculptures that appeared, at times, to sway and bend in opposition to the direction of their orientation. Here, the precariousness of her earlier work has given way to solid refinement, without sacrificing its mystic properties. *Perching*, 2008, a series of wooden plank seat swings that balances notched dowels and cloth banners, is installed in this venue's second-floor hallway. The work engages the space's functionality as a passageway, as well as its alchemical possibilities. The swings—along with their reflective material, metals (silver and steel) and, curiously, horn—transmit one from the fluid part of the exhibition to the more stable. *Shifting Ground*, 2008, materializes such transitions. The installation comprises low-lying, molded-straw structures that face one another and are accompanied by slim, vertical painted-steel sculptures. Each group has its own specific forms that serve as talismans or insignias for the larger structures: a steel circle festooned with braided straw, color-blocked cloth banners (a cross between a wizard's robe and mid-twentieth-century Scandinavian designs), and a pair of small, round metal pots, perfect for potions. If these works reference architecture, they do so under the premise that the natural must coexist with the manmade and that there are elemental, if not fundamental, alliances between the two. Once again, Barclay incites magic in material juxtaposition.



Shifting Ground, 2008, straw bales, render, painted steel, fabric, stainless steel, woven straw, and leather, dimensions variable.

— Courtney J. Martin