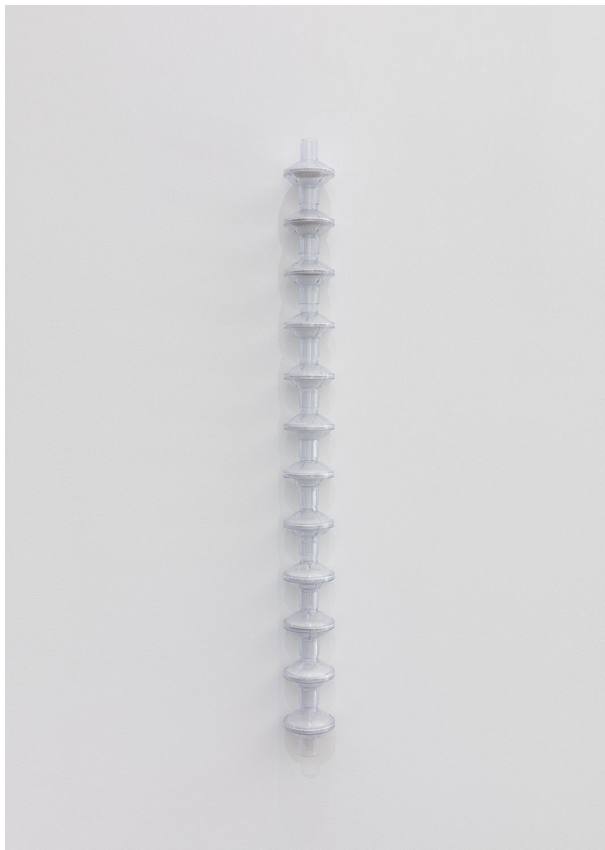


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Park McArthur: Edition One and Two Fantasies

By Rachel Small



Park McArthur, *Fantasies*, 2020. Twelve used ventilator filters, 27 $\frac{5}{8}$ \times 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ \times 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches.

The minimal installation of new work by Park McArthur that is her latest show, “Edition One and Two Fantasies,” at Essex Street, defies expectations that the aesthetic must be void of symbolism and narrative—a tenet of Minimalism that decades worth of its adherents have viewed as unassailable.

In creating a sculpture and prints for the exhibition, McArthur derived conceptual and material underpinnings from two medical devices she employs on a regular basis to regulate and otherwise aid her breathing: a ventilator she uses while sleeping; and an incentive spirometer, which measures the volume of air its user can inhale.

Mounted on the wall, *Fantasies* (2020) consists of a dozen, interlocking disposable filters expended by McArthur’s ventilator that form a segmented column—not unlike a certain stack of shelves situated at a museum in Midtown Manhattan, and that, for the duration of “One Edition and Two Fantasies” remained publically inaccessible due to ongoing lockdown mandates.

Though ventilators have become something of a highly warranted national preoccupation in the wake of COVID-19, it was summer of 2019 when McArthur began saving the filters; she was, at the time, considering their physical significance from a conceptual angle, namely “to preserve possible connections between dreaming and debility,” as she states in the exhibition’s press release.

The prints on view encompass multiple editions of *Form found figuring it out, show* (2020). It alludes to the incentive spirometer, replicating the markings from a transparent cylinder integral to the apparatus in which a piston ascends to reflect the volume of a user's breath. In the piece, the various graphic components—logos, numbers, and other indicators—unfold across two pages with lettering displayed in reverse, the whole of it a mirror image of the original design, McArthur explains, “rendered as they would appear from inside the device.”

The artist describes an initial framed version near the gallery's entrance as ‘Edition 1 of 10’ and the remaining fourteen pairs in the main space as ‘Edition 2 of 10’. In reality, however, it is available to download in unlimited numbers through the gallery's website.

McArthur, who uses a wheelchair, famously explored the politics of physical accessibility in the context of cultural institutions in her lauded 2014 solo show, “Ramps,” at Essex Street.

The online presentation for “Edition One and Two Fantasies” offers accessibility text, which extends to audio descriptions accompanying a video-walkthrough. After it pans across the gallery's entrance and pauses in the street-level foyer, where *Fantasies* hangs, the camera lingers at the top of a stairway leading into the main space before it cuts away, then descends on a single-passenger lift.