



TENSION

I produced four sculptural works for exhibition in The Birley Artist Studios and Project Space from April 25th to May 14th.



Brian J Morrison's work is informed by the physicality of the body in relation to the production and consumption of art, and considers how art objects might be capable of offering alternative relationships to the gendered body.

Morrison draws aesthetic inspiration from the work of the 1960s Minimalist sculpture movement and the reactive process driven art that followed, where ideas of gendered art objects are prevalent. The work in TENSION, produced for The Birley, develops his relationship with two specific materials, mild steel and latex, via a series of performative physical actions.









I have a story:

“There was once a man

standing on a high elevation. A company of several men who happened to be walking on the road noticed from the distance the man standing on the high place and talked among themselves about this man. One of them said: He must have lost his favorite animal. Another man said:

No, it must be his friend whom he is looking for. A third one said: He is just enjoying the cool air up there. The three could not a-gree and the dis-

cussion	(Shall we have one	later?) went on until	they reached the high
place where the man	was	.	One of the three
asked:	Oh friend	standing up there	have you not
lost your pet animal	?	No Sir,	I have not lost any
.	The second man asked	:	Have you lost your friend
?	No, sir		I have not lost my friend
either	.	The third man asked	Are you not enjoying
the fresh breeze	up there?	No, sir	,
I am not	.		What, then
,	are you standing up there	for	,
	if you say no		to all our
questions	?	The man on high said:	

I just stand .”

The exhibition was reviewed by Anneka French for the internationally recognised website This is Tomorrow

Brian J Morrison: Tension
The Birley
27 April - 14 May 2016
Review by Anneka French

Various suspended, wedged, curved and grounded are a new body of sculptural works from Brian J Morrison. Shown at The Birley, a fledgling project space and artist studio complex in Preston, the exhibition 'Tension' sets out to develop a dialogue between works that are held together through tension, action and repetition.

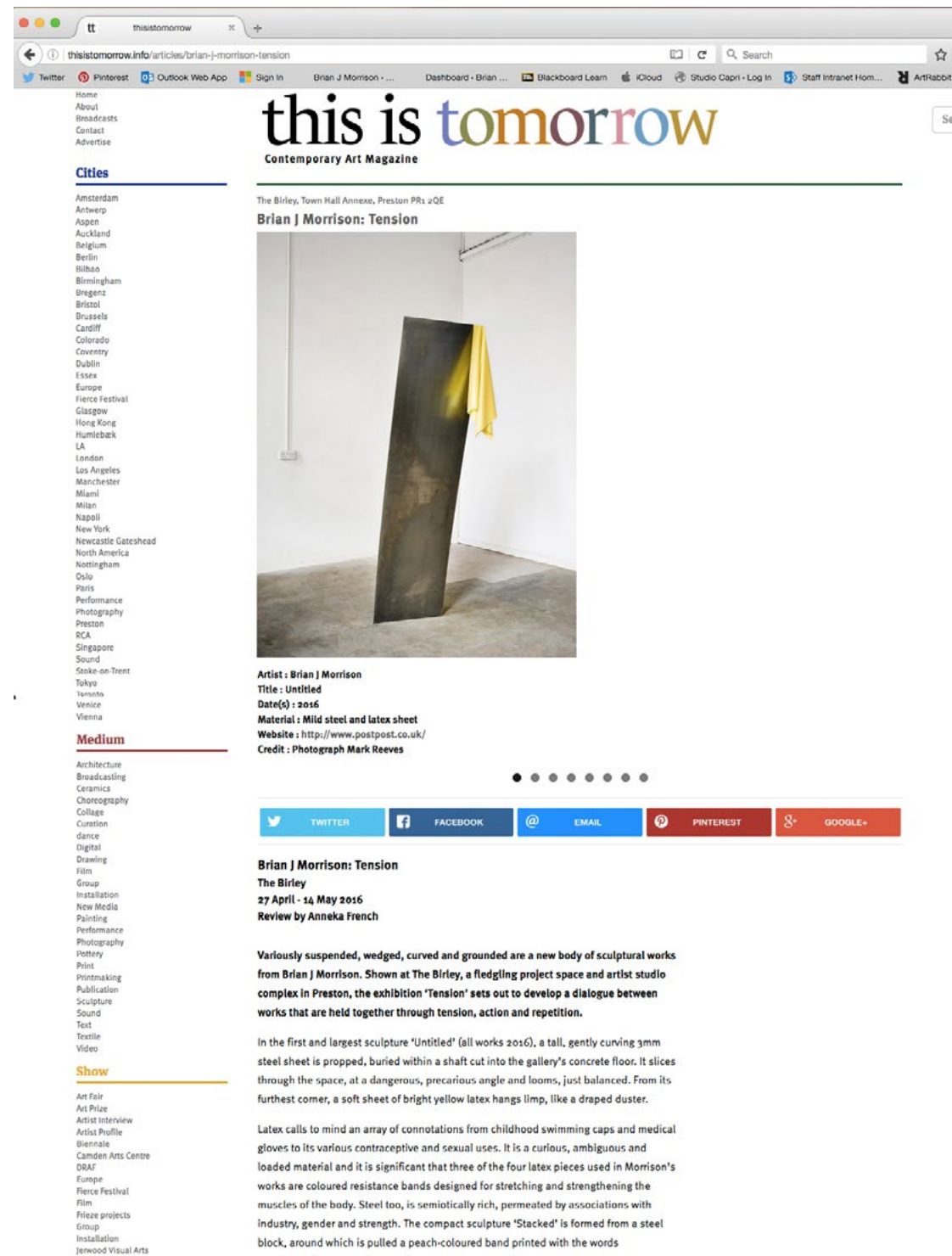
In the first and largest sculpture 'Untitled' (all works 2016), a tall, gently curving 3mm steel sheet is propped, buried within a shaft cut into the gallery's concrete floor. It slices through the space, at a dangerous, precarious angle and looms, just balanced. From its furthest corner, a soft sheet of bright yellow latex hangs limp, like a draped duster.

Latex calls to mind an array of connotations from childhood swimming caps and medical gloves to its various contraceptive and sexual uses. It is a curious, ambiguous and loaded material and it is significant that three of the four latex pieces used in Morrison's works are coloured resistance bands designed for stretching and strengthening the muscles of the body. Steel too, is semiotically rich, permeated by associations with industry, gender and strength. The compact sculpture 'Stacked' is formed from a steel block, around which is pulled a peach-coloured band printed with the words 'PRO-TONE® by BodyCore Fitness'. The band fits tightly against the metal, curiously securing it, measuring it, testing it.

In the other two of Morrison's sculptures (both 'Untitled'), it is the strength of the latex that supports the weight of the steel form. A resistance band is used to shape and support the curve of one fractionally thinner metal sheet. Another is hung from a hook using a band wrapped around its upper section like a hunk of meat for curing. In both, the sharp edges of the metal strain against the latex in a palpable threat to the integrity of both material and sculpture. At any moment these bands may snap, or so it seems.

Morrison has selected for his exhibition interpretation a fragment from John Cage's text 'Lecture on Nothing', first published in 1961 in Cage's collected writings 'Silence'. The text relays a conversation between four men, one of whom stands alone, above the others. Persistently asked why, the lone man replies, "I just stand." Though both artists' works are invested in the tropes of minimalism – tension, repetition, variation, self-reflexivity and nothingness – there are, of course, many 'things' at play and despite protests to the contrary, nothing 'just' stands.

It is sorely tempting, indeed, to see these sculptures as body stand-ins. Morrison has bent, propped and positioned the objects using performative actions that mimic the exercises for which the resistance bands were designed. The walls and floor of the gallery support the sculptures as they might a body undertaking particular conditioning exercises, striving to be stronger, more malleable and physically improved. Smudged finger marks and scratches across the surfaces of the steel make present the artist's own physical exertion in the construction of the works, testament to an examination of the properties and possibilities of material-form combinations and to the legacies of minimalism.



Following the exhibition at the Birley, I installed the works in the PR1 Gallery to begin research into a collaborative project with the School of Dance.

Working with six student dancers and one member of the teaching staff (Giorgio De Carolis), we began to explore physical responses to the works and materials used.

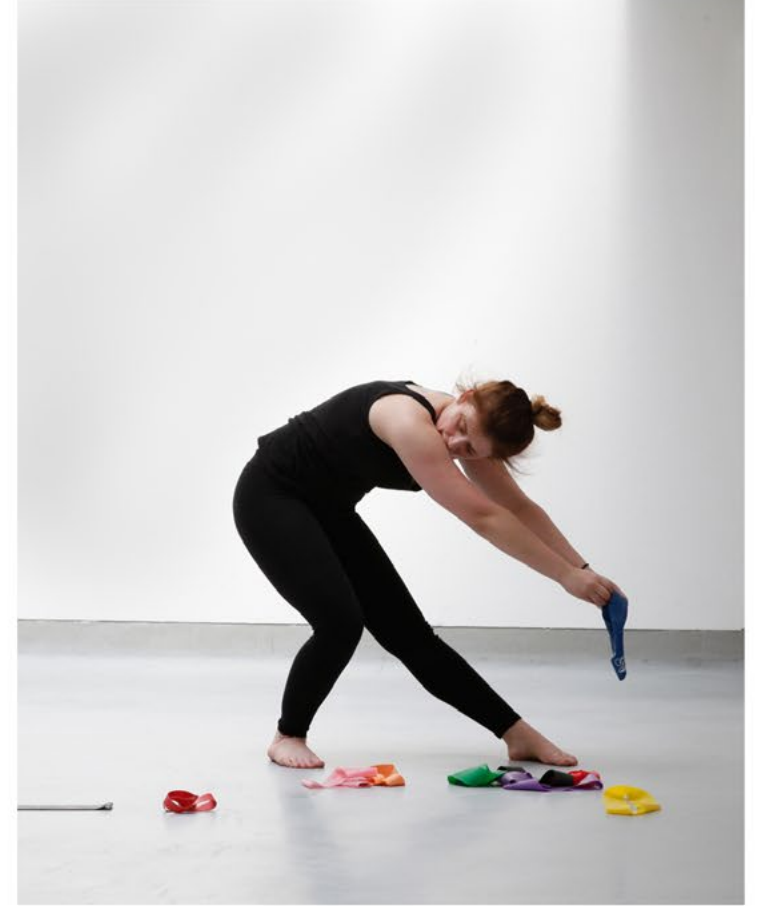
















Special Thanks to:

All members of The Birley

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Photographs

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Brian J Morrison

Dancers:

Giorgio De Carolis
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Review:

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