Transgression is a central theme of Gaea Todd’s work. She places an emphasis on boundaries and margins, and between that which is contained and that which seeks to escape. Many of the works incorporate domestic liquids, such as red wine or molasses, reminiscent of blood and bodily fluids, and whose gradual movement through vein-like forms marks the passage of time. One source of inspiration is the work of anthropologist Mary Douglas who observed how the orifices of the body are regarded as especially vulnerable and the bodily fluids which pass through them, such as blood, milk, urine or tears, are understood as symbolic of danger (as are the parings of the body like nail and hair clippings). She suggested that our response to such bodily margins could be extended to other kinds of boundaries: ‘All margins’, she wrote, ‘are dangerous. If they are pulled this way or that the shape of fundamental experience is altered. Any structure of ideas is vulnerable at its periphery. We should expect the orifices of the body to symbolise its especially vulnerable points.’ In this sense transgression always involves an evasion of control and a threat to power.

Gaea Todd has linked such ideas to her experiences as a child of the 1980s, when HIV emerged as a significant threat. She notes that: ‘Suddenly the world begins to talk about sex, about the exchange of bodily fluid. Blood took on a new meaning, it became dangerous … ’ She speaks of an interest in exploring the social boundary between the private and the public and of orchestrating sensations of repulsion and fascination, ideas which are also linked to transgression and to the space of abjection described by Julia Kristeva as that which ‘… does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite’ causing disruption to system and order.

Clockwise from base of stairs:

**Study 4** has the visual freedom of a gestural line drawing, one in which three-dimensional architectural space is defined over time and as a viscous liquid passes slowly through. The blown and stretched clear glass structures filled with molasses provide the drawing with its defining elements of lightness and darkness, while the material elements and their shadows are easily conflated.

**In vino veritas** tantalises us with traces of people: On the table lie a collapsed decanter and wine glasses; on the wall a mirror mysteriously weeps; it is as if the former physical inhabitants of the scene have collapsed into an ectoplasmic substance and seeped through the seats of the chairs. The uncanny character of the tableau arises from its confusion of the animate and the inanimate, of life and death, and where a sense of beauty and the grotesque are disturbingly indivisible.

**Reverberations** is an architectural intervention where the fabric of the building becomes a source of sensation and feeling, something which, like ourselves has the capacity to weep and to bleed. The installation is also one of cause and effect: As the viewer moves and breathes the glass veins reverberate in response, causing us to become acutely aware of our own body and its actions.

**Ladder** is inspired by ideas of belief, control and hindrance. The rope ladder of hair and glass reminds us of fairytale episodes of escape or of entry in to strange magical worlds and, perhaps, an escape from captivity or danger. The rungs of the ladder, which contain a milky fluid, are alluring yet fragile and threaten to prevent the possibility of exit.


3 The tears are sodium silicate, also known as liquid glass.

The Project Space curators are Tessa Peters and Janice West