

LUKE ALEN-BUCKLEY

“*THERE ARE THINGS KNOWN AND THERE ARE THINGS UNKNOWN, AND IN BETWEEN ARE THE DOORS OF PERCEPTION.*” — ALDOUS HUXLEY

In *Doors of Perception*, interlinking, anatomically derived forms carved into slabs of Irish limestone are held, jewel-like, in industrial stainless-steel clasps. Some are suspended just off the wall, others hang on steel wires in the viewing space; the largest two stand, embraced, thirteen feet high, forming a portal.

The works memorialise a key juncture in the artist's life yet more broadly offer a meditation on how we might engage with what is momentous or decisive in our lives. The work gives form to this through its many registers of materiality. In turn, a poetics unfurls. *Door of Perception*'s physical qualities take the gaze through passages and across thresholds that evoke transitional times in life. These are times of both gravitas and transience, something exemplified by how we encounter the work in the exhibition space. Despite the stone's significant scale and weight, the reliefs, suspended by wires, seem to hover uncannily. That the word 'engrave' shares its roots with 'gravitas' furthers this theme.

The reliefs are framed by structural steel that contrasts, in its glinting modernity, with the geologic memory of the highly polished blue-black stone peppered by white fossils. Time and sight intermingle here. Through apertures made by piercings in the carved relief, we see the space on the other side. On the verso of the reliefs carved shapes appear inside out so that what was convex is now concave, giving the metaphorics of hindsight a literal expression.

The passage of the eye through and around the *Doors of Perception* establishes a theme to do with inner journeys that is echoed in other key aspects of the work. In its development, intimate, diaristic life studies have undergone a process of abstraction that nonetheless in-form the flowing lines and shapes of the relief. The carvings, therefore, sit on a boundary between representation and abstraction. The sense of movement these forms convey is enhanced by the mercurial quality of the light across the highly polished limestone, historically known as Kilkenny Marble.

This local material connects Alen-Buckley's body of work to a heritage that traces back to Neolithic Dolmens; megalithic structures still prominent and revered in the Irish landscape. In the Celtic tradition, the ritual significance of liminal spaces persisted. Standing stones and passage tombs, often made of the same limestone used in Alen-Buckley's art, were frequently aligned to solstices and seasonal transitions, transforming physical thresholds into temporal ones and tying human ritual to cosmic rhythm.

As is the case with these ancient stones, through *Doors of Perception* the known and the unknown and the past and the future are as if betrothed. To face either is to enter a dialogue with uncertainty, yet in doing so something is brought to light.