

SAVINA HOPKINS

Close Quarters

For many years Savina Hopkins' practice has involved the synthesis of multiple fragments, creating 2D assemblages greater than the sum of their disparate parts. Often pillaging the musty, dusty domain of old stationery for inspiration, her latest exhibition *Close Quarters* conjures both visual poetry and meaningful suggestion from source material that would seem incongruous to both – namely, antiquated office files. Through collaging remnants from past paper bureaucracies, Hopkins has skillfully constructed works that are anything but mundane with a lyrical yet understated aesthetic.

This series relies on numerous perforated pieces of card and paper that were used as file tabs in the early–mid 20th century. These little fragments which in the frugal war years were often cut-up and recycled from other documents, would sit on top of papers contained in old Naval Department files, the entire file then punctured through with a metal pin to hold it together. Rescuing the tabs from imminent disposal, Hopkins was drawn to their interesting aesthetic qualities; their fragmentary words, symbols, patterns and palette of often faded pastels that go beyond the ubiquitous manila. This combined with their apparent incompleteness and intriguing incoherency made them ideal fodder for collage construction.

With forensic precision, Hopkins has sliced each individual tab to fit perfectly into a broader schematic conception. Some collages in the exhibition contain an almost topographical resonance, with swelling lines of meticulously shaped rectangles that flow around or between sections of old maps, such as in *Crosscurrent*. The artist frequently arranges the tabs into groupings of tone and colour to demarcate masses within her compositions. Like patchwork fields viewed from the sky, or bodies of water that negotiate protruding land masses, certain works such as *Magnetic Passage*, *Harbour* and *Unwatched Channel* seem to deconstruct and reconstruct topographical conventions.

While the tabs contain individual snippets of words in different typeface (or sometimes hand written), along with various truncated shapes and emblems, they share one common characteristic in the perforation that resides at their centre. These small remnants have been injured in their former life, and each carries its own ragged little wound. Yet with infinite care Hopkins has re-invested value into worn shreds of paper that were destined for the bin. In doing so she evokes both the intimate and the abstract, prompting deeper inspection at close quarters.

Offsetting the nostalgia for a bygone era that rises through the seams, a subtle word/letter play contained in the works reveal Hopkins' intellectual approach. As she sets down a paper trail of fragmented human activity, the artist invents a secret language – one that is ultimately left for the viewer to decode.

Marguerite Brown
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