

Britt Salt: Art & Australia/ Credit Suisse Private banking Emerging Artist Award 2013
Written by Jane Button
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Britt Salt is on an upward trajectory. Awarded the Freedman Scholarship in 2010, Salt has also conducted residencies in China and France and has had regular exhibitions in Perth, Sydney and Melbourne. Her artworks are also held in collections such as Artbank and feature nationally as commissioned pieces. All this Salt has achieved at only twenty-seven years old.

The materiality of Salt's artworks is both innovative and deceptive. Sourcing material largely from industrial and hardware stockists, Salt both utilises and subverts the inherent 'heavy-duty' qualities of commercial products, such as powder-coated aluminium and industrial mesh, to create instead sculptural and lightbased interplays of patterned forms. An heir to a tradition of optical and kinetic art, her practice contains elements of chance and unpredictability. Suspended from the ceiling, an early work such as *Monoform manifold 0.01*, 2008, whimsically hovers in space, its multilayered configurations of cascading folds revealed as people walk into and around the room. Attuned to this environmental flux, the sculpture is engaged with kinaesthetic processes and the optical play of light and shadow. At the moment that an aspect of the artwork becomes illuminated via the filtering of light through transparent mesh the surrounding creases become enveloped in cavernous spaces. These oscillating degrees of perspicacity are especially evident in *Monoform series 2 (No. 2)*, 2008, as are the structural tensions between strength and fragility. These works challenge our modes of perception. The layers of pleating in *Monform (S.040)*, 2008, or contortion in *Monoform manifold 0.001* call attention to how the eye recognises and integrates recurring and discontinuous motifs.

More recently, Salt has expanded her playful adoption of materials to include the bouncy ball, commonly known in Australia as 'Space Hoppers'. Salt was inspired to use such a form – a first in her practice – after an invitation to create a site-specific work at Linden Centre for Contemporary Art in May 2012. Her underlying premise for *Puzzlethèque* was for visitors to experience the installation space in unexpected and novel ways as 'something at odds with the gallery environment and the pristine architecture'. (1)

The possibilities afforded by these buoyant forms and their potential for movement captivated Salt's attention, especially in relation to interactivity when the objects were simply activated into a revolving state by passing air currents, began to sway through a visitor bumping into them, or when they became a mode of transit for the audience around the gallery space. Inherent in such a participatory logic was the fact that 'visitors then had the opportunity to relocate the hopper back within the [installation] space, allowing them to question how the shapes and form 'fit' together as a spatial whole'. (2) Of course, in Salt's work, this act of spatial repositioning is muddled through forms of optical illusion, insofar as *Puzzlethèque* consists of completely immersing the installation space, from wall to ceiling, in ribbons upon ribbons of black-and-white geometric stripes. The eye therefore is constantly tricked into how these all-encompassing lines actually relate to and are arranged around the other in an endless game of joining the stripes.

What can be gathered from Salt's practice is her abiding interest in the interaction between spatial and material dynamics. A phenomenologist of sorts, Salt finds special significance in how 'the qualities of a space become known via the matter which interacts with it'. (3) Perhaps it is no surprise that Gabriel Orozco's *Roof to roof*, 1993, *Breath on piano*, 1993, and *Pinched ball*, 1993, are cited as some of her favourite works, given their simplicity of form and moreover their ability to act as vessels that give space a place. And it is to the spaces and the places that Britt Salt next chooses to venture; with her driving momentum, that will be well worth watching from here.