



Angell Gallery is pleased to present *Passage No. 170424*, an immersive sculptural installation that addresses themes around materiality and physical engagement, by **Ellen Bleiwas**. Recent table-top and floor-based sculptures by the artist accompany the installation, as does a wearable artwork worn by a staff member during gallery hours. An opening reception takes place on Friday **September 8th from 7PM to 9PM**, and the exhibition continues through **October 7th**.

felt

noun: A cloth made by rolling and pressing wool or another suitable textile accompanied by the application of moisture or heat, which causes the constituent fibres to mat together to create a smooth surface; verb: past and past participle of 'to feel'.

The material matters in the sculptures and interactive installations of Toronto-based **Ellen Bleiwas**. In her work, **Bleiwas** takes a common utilitarian fabric – felt – and plays with the multiple definitions of the word, using it to explore how materials and environments shape our physical and psychological states of being.

Bleiwas works with a heavy industrial felt that allows her to wrap, bind and hang the material in geometric shapes. *Passage No. 170424* (2017) takes the form of a horizontal cube, measuring approximately six-by-six feet square and eight feet tall. Dark grey strips of industrial felt drape from a wooden armature to the floor. Standing at the entry to the Project Space, the viewer is confronted with this grey woolly curtain; it is difficult to avoid brushing

against it when entering the space. Visitors are invited to part and penetrate the strips of felt and walk through them. The arrangements of felt become denser until a small 18 x 18-inch open space is reached at the centre. "I want visitors to have a concentrated sensory experience," explains the artist. "The nature of the material combined with the form of the work means some senses, like touch and smell, are heightened, while others such as vision and hearing, are actively deadened." In effect, the work becomes a momentary buffer from the outside world.

The box-like form taken by *Passage No. 170424* considers how people respond to being in an enclosed space. For some, being enfolded by a familiar material like felt – its soft abrasiveness – will be comforting; for others, it may trigger claustrophobia. Some may feel a desire to pause within the piece. Others may quickly push through to the open interior space. Still others may anxiously talk themselves out of entering at all. Regardless, this quietly cascading waterfall of felt raises the question: Is it we who touch materials, or is it materials that actually touch *us*? – Bill Clarke

Toronto-based **Ellen Bleiwas** completed her MFA at York University earlier this year. She also holds a Masters in Architecture from McGill University. Since 2011, she has participated in group shows in Canadian and international venues, including Art Mûr (Montreal), the Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art (Toronto), Kunstraum Tapir (Berlin) and the Open Studios of the School of the Visual Arts (New York). She is also the 2017-18 recipient of the 401 Richmond Career Launcher Prize.



Front: *Sphere No. 170406* (detail), Industrial felt, 30 x 30 x 30 inches, 2017

Clockwise from top left:

Passage No. 170424. Industrial felt, cedar; 8'-4" x 6'-2" x 6'-2" inches, 2017

Spiral, Industrial felt, cork; 13" x 11" x 11", 2017

Passage No. 170424 (interior).

Photos: Eva Kolcze

