

CLAIRE LAMBE:  
Mother Holding Something Horrific  
Australian Centre for Contemporary Art  
8 April – 25 June 2017

Exhibition Wall Labels

CLAIRE LAMBE

Born 1962 Macclesfield, England

Lives and works Melbourne

***The manual of instructions* 2017**

mild steel frame, jelutong wood, wooden birthing stool,

photographic prints, audio booth on tripod

dimensions variable

Courtesy the artist and Sarah Scout Presents, Melbourne

*Manual of Instructions* was the unassuming name of a detailed guidebook prepared by French conceptual artist Marcel Duchamp to assist with the disassembly of *Étant donnés* 1946–66 in his New York studio, and the work's eventual reinstallation at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. *Étant donnés* is an elaborate assemblage in which the body of a naked woman – face obscured and legs spread – appears through a pair of peepholes in a wooden door. Reclining on a bed of twigs and leaves, the woman holds up a gas lamp to illuminate a landscape and waterfall in the distance.

Ideas of perception, distance and depth continue throughout Lambe's installation – named in reference to Duchamp's manual. Upon a sculpture which takes the form of a cyclorama wall, a photograph of the artist giving birth appears, together with a stool that features in the image, worn now from years of use. Elsewhere are photographs of a shoot in Lambe's studio: a body covered in melted chocolate in homage to a scene from Dušan Makavejev's 1974 art house film *Sweet Movie*. Surrounding this, source material and reference images are taped to the studio walls; assistants in the background reveal the artifice of their trade; and sculptural works in progress – now finished objects elsewhere in this exhibition – serve as backdrops and props. The candor of these images, together with that of Lambe giving birth, provides a glimpse into the real, despite the staged environments of the studio, cyclorama and gallery space.

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***House of bones* 2017**

acrylic screens, steel and wood frames, slumped glass,  
photographic prints,  
rocking chair

3 screens: 220.0 x 320.0 x 20.0 cm; 220.0 x 180.0 x 20.0 cm;  
180.0 x 220.0 x 20.0 cm

Courtesy the artist and Sarah Scout Presents, Melbourne

In *House of bones* three Perspex screens divide the space of the gallery into both physical and metaphorical layers. Physically, they serve as architectural dividers, dictating our movement through the space and framing our perception of images and objects that appear visible through their transparent surfaces. Metaphorically, the screens can be read as dividing time: serving as symbolic markers of our past, present and future.

Time is ever-present across Lambe's body of work for this exhibition. Made in a contemporary moment, her works frequently make reference to a remembered cultural or personal experience. Here, a wooden window frame appears within one Perspex structure – a nod to an architectural feature in Antoni Gaudí's famous building Casa Batlló. Another screen frames a rocking chair from the artist's studio, its floral upholstery and decorative wooden frame are uncomfortably nostalgic and unsettling. Two framed images on the gallery walls, reminiscent of film stills, depict images of family and friends in compositions that reference the respective film works of Helke Sander and Pier Paolo Pasolini. A central image, taped to the middle screen brings us back to the play of fact and fiction. Simply taped to the structure as if a reference or a reminder, it recalls the detailed process of visualizing and thought that has gone into the making of otherwise minimal and abstract sculptural forms.

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***Ma femme au chat ouvert* 2017**

bronze, sound, speakers

sound: Daniel Jenatsch, singer: Sarah Byrne

90.0 x 75.0 x 75.0 cm

Courtesy the artist and Sarah Scout Presents, Melbourne

Taking centre stage within this composition of sculpture, light and sound is a bronze flower, positioned as if growing up directly from the gallery floor. Based on an illustrated form from a 1970s graphic, the flower here becomes an extra-terrestrial character, for which sound artist Daniel Jenatsch has created a filmic score.

Lambe is interested in the transformative potential of sculpture, and how the meaning of objects can shift and change in response to their environment. In a neighbouring gallery the flower appears in photographic form, in flirtatious proximity with a young woman. Elsewhere, it is seen as a work in progress amidst images of working chaos within the artist's studio. By contrast here, issuing from the floor of this darkened gallery, the sculpture assumes a powerful presence and agency of its own, changing in mood according to the arrangement of Jenatsch's accompanying soundtrack.

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***The waterfall* 2017**

glass mirror, mild steel frame, photographic prints, sculptural objects,  
found furniture, memorabilia, LED lights

250.0 x 500.0 x 1000.0 cm

***She hasn't got much money* 2017**

C-type photographic prints on aluminium composite panel

3 prints: 94.0 x 140.0 cm

Courtesy the artist and Sarah Scout Presents, Melbourne

*The waterfall* takes its name from the alternative title of Marcel Duchamp's *Étant donnés* 1946–66; the final – and somewhat subversive work – that the late artist produced. Conceptually, the title also alludes to the double meaning of a waterfall: being a sublime natural phenomenon, with abject allusions to bodily expulsions.

Part sculpture, part-stage set, *The waterfall* speaks to Lambe's long-held interest in dramaturgy and the conventions of film and theatre. In amongst the mirrored corridor of architectural details are images and sculptural objects that reflect the wide-ranging interests that percolate throughout the exhibition. A sculpture of Sigmund Freud's chair appears in relationship with images of the real thing; stills from films feature alongside other reference material and process shots taken directly from Lambe's studio walls; and performative photographs, representing the experience of everyday life, return an element of the real to the illusion of the sculptural set. Constructed from mirrors, *The waterfall* becomes a psychological space of encounter, prompting visitors to reflect upon their own influences and experiences, and consider universal ideas of space and time.

ATLANTA EKE

Born 1983, Melbourne

Lives and works in Melbourne

***Mother Holding Something Horrific – The dance*** 2017

dancers: Atlanta Eke with Annabelle Belharry

music: Daniel Jenatsch

video: RDYSTDYSTUDIO

A weekly performance with music as accompaniment and films;  
edited via live-feed video recording, and playback on TV screens

Courtesy the artist