

WOMEN'S WORK

April 18 - June 8, 2019
Opening: April 18, 6-8pm

Anne Low, Luanne Martineau, Olga Abeleva

Women's Work at L'INCONNUE from April 18 – June 8, 2019 includes the work of artists Anne Low, Luanne Martineau and Olga Abeleva. Women's Work probes the implications of work viewed through the gendered lens of labour, artifact and the concept of artist as worker.

Anne Low's *women workers could be found on the medieval construction site* (2016-2017) emerged from the discovery of an archival illustration (fig. 1) of two women laying bricks in the Middle Ages. Weaving is at the foundation of Low's practice and she ascribes to her work a highly specified normally furniture decorating. words "it's a realm of an and material woodwork hand-woven armature for of how I are mostly the studio,



Fig 1.

approach applied to or interior In the artist's work that is in the extremely formal methodology (i.e. the and the hand-dyed and wool cloth) that is an the more unknowing aspects think about subjectivity. The bits garbage and things I picked up around but they are with silver components that are made like jewelry. The woman as worker, the weaver as worker are things that are always present in my work." For *women workers could be found on the medieval construction site*, Low hired a craftsman to fabricate the wooden component of the work. Her materials include outsourced objects such as pieces of jewelry. The work functions as a shrine, an offering to women and as a recognition of their work. Here the viewer can pause and consider a topic of public interest with an intimate engagement.

Luanne Martineau's *Fall Carcade* (2019) consists of three parts: a prairie blanket collapsed over a hanger, a diseased and grotesque eye, almost animalistic but still human, and lastly a plate with a quotidian dinner side of sliced carrots and green beans. *Commissure, Carol* (2019) is composed of three triangular forms structured off a discarded hanger in Martineau's studio. Commissure is the connective tissue between the two hemispheres of the brain. Two hanger impressions oppose each other in reverse, resembling a moth-like creature. They form an hourglass-shape that connects to the work's third component via an umbilical-like cord that points like an arrow towards the rest of the work. The banal chain of everyday objects in each work composes a sentence. One object cannot exist without the other, together they create meaning. The artist states "there is humour there for me – to work that hard to get something that stupid!...it's humorous but at the same time there is simplicity to the appetite and satisfaction it offers."

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Unlike the delicate woven fibers of Low's work, felt is an industrial material achieved through compression that does not require warp or weft. "Felt is a non-precious textile, it didn't have attributes that feminized it overtly." Iconically, Robert Morris radicalized the material through his decades long practice. Felt needs to be manipulated by hand. Much like chiseling through marble, it's laboriously malleable, diverging from the gentrified medium of textiles.

Olga Abeleva paints in a theatrical language. Tension builds between two scenes fighting for dominance on the canvas' two-dimensional plane. Framed to articulate a sense of time and create a scene similar to a strip in a comic book, one person plays numerous characters. A spotlight is shown on a neglected scene of a creature, a bug or chewed gum stuck beneath a desk. In *Intruder 2* (2019) a character gazes upward at a figure meeting her lips. Their faces are blurred, making it uncertain if this is imagined or real. A counter divides the scene, an exaggerated shadow of a bug dictating the foreground. One is left wondering who the intruder is here? Is it the mysterious kisser from above, the bug or the protagonist pressing the bell calling for service?

My friend Clarice (2019) pictures the novelist and short-story writer Clarice Lispector fast asleep while a diener-like man is hunched over her face applying red to her lips. A spotlight magnifies her witchy green-hued face, a contradiction to her reputation of beauty and glamour. Two scenes are about to meet with flames nearing the edge of Lispector's bed, a burning cigarette between her fingers. It's rumoured that Lispector hired a beautician to apply make-up to her face; sometimes the transformation occurred while she was in an unconscious state. Lispector was obsessed with maintaining her physical appearance and exposing the abjection of female aging in her writings. Similar to the themes of the madness and the mundane in the modernist writer's work, the painting forces two separate events to co-exist: the life-altering fire and the banal tasks of daily beauty rituals.

In both Abeleva's and Martineau's works, humour and the glorification of banal play a central role.

ANNE LOW was born in Stratford, Canada, and lives and works in Montreal. Her work engaging with the history of textiles materially, produces mysterious contemporary forms that speak to wider narratives around the impulse to individuate surface, object and self. The artist produces handwoven textiles that she presents in custom-made glass and wood cases. The works draw upon the distinct presence and autonomy of textiles and allude to some intimate or practical use, while their considered display methods position these as select objects warranting special care and attention. This line of investigation also speaks to the artist's role in upholding and furthering unique orders of knowledge embedded within these traditional practices. Low's works have been exhibited at The Taut and Tame, Berlin; Belvedere Project Space, Vancouver; Hex Projects, London; the Western Front, Vancouver; and ISSUE Project Room, New York. She regularly studies at the Marshfield School of Weaving, Vermont.

LUANNE MARTINEAU was born in Saskatoon, Canada, and lives and works in Montreal. Her drawings and felted wool sculptures explore the places in between art genres, engaging a long tradition of social satire within contemporary art. Combining various methods of craft and the legacies of 1960s fine art, the Saskatoon-born artist's "drulptures" blur the boundaries between style and ideology as well as high modernist art and the baseness of the body. Martineau was the recipient of the 2007 Shadbolt Foundation's VIVA Award for the Visual Arts, and in 2009 represented British Columbia for the Sobey Art Award of Canada. A guest lecturer at the Tate Modern for the Banff Centre for the Arts and Middlesex University symposium, Informal Architecture, Martineau has most recently exhibited work at the National Gallery of Canada, the Vancouver Art Gallery, the Power Plant, and Musée d'art Contemporain de Montréal, MASS MoCA.

OLGA ABELEVA was born in St. Petersburg, Russia, and lives and works in Montreal. She graduated from Emily Carr University of Art + Design, and studied at Universitat der Kunst in Berlin. Her paintings explore historical and personal stories through a theatrical framework, blending reality and fantasy to create a series of unfinished narratives.

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¹ Martineau, Luanne. "What Materials Can Do: A Conversation with Luanne Martineau." Interview by Ray Cronin. *Sculpture Magazine*, Spring, 2019.

² Martineau, Luanne. "What Materials Can Do: A Conversation with Luanne Martineau." Interview by Ray Cronin. *Sculpture Magazine*, Spring, 2019.