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Alex McQuilkin

Use What You Have To Make What You Need

October 22, 2022 - January 1, 2023

Opening Reception: Saturday, October 22 (4-8pm)

de boer (Los Angeles) is pleased to present *Use What You Have To Make What You Need*, a solo exhibition by Alex McQuilkin. This is McQuilkin's second exhibition with the gallery. For this exhibition, McQuilkin utilizes dyed birdseye fabric that she hand embroiders with sentences pulled from Sol Lewitt's 'Sentences on Conceptual Art' (Artforum, June 1967) which are framed in bespoke color matched frames that reference traditional small scale needlepoints and their hoops. The soft pastel hues and birdseye fabric which McQuilkin hand dyes, is also known for its utilitarian purpose as cloth diapers. This process presents an aesthetic that unifies the experiences of artistic pursuits with motherhood, loss, and intimacy.

McQuilkin's subversive tactics bring to mind the work of Mary Kelly, Louise Bourgeois, and Senga Nengudi. By applying a rationalist, language-based approach to feminism and psychoanalysis, McQuilkin legitimizes a mothers experiences as a subject for art. Having recently given birth to her second child, McQuilkin's needlepoints co-opt both the aesthetics and materials of motherhood as well as Lewitt's privileged guidelines for making conceptual art. Subverting the aesthetics of conceptual art and using Lewitt's text as critique on societal mansplaining, McQuilkin compellingly complicates the dynamics of postpartum where intimacy and separation collide.

McQuilkin writes: "It seemed like the natural thing to do to combine physical labor (handiwork, embroidery, "women's work") on diaper cloth (more labor, more women's work) with the headiest thinking about art and ideas which I am sincerely drawn to but can never quite separate myself enough from the physicality of life to fully wrap my head around. The ridiculousness of this combination- these things I usually keep totally separate and compartmentalized- seemed to beg the scale and goofiness of these non-utilitarian oversized "hoops". Honestly it all seemed kind of obvious to the point of being basic. But thinking back to Sol Lewitt's letter to the editor regarding his sentences: ""Most ideas that are successful are ludicrously simple. Successful ideas generally have the appearance of simplicity because they seem inevitable.""

Alex McQuilkin combines psychoanalysis, maudlin sentimentality, dark humor, and deep sincerity in her videos, drawings, objects, and installations, through which she explores the construction of female identity in Western culture. McQuilkin's work has been exhibited internationally since 2000. Her paintings, drawings, videos and sculptures explore themes such as the role of cultural aesthetics in defining female identity and the power structures embedded within artifice.

McQuilkin has had solo exhibitions de boer, Los Angeles; Plymouth Rock, Zurich; Marvelli Gallery, New York; and Galerie Adler, Frankfurt. Group exhibitions include those at MoMA PS1, New York; KW Institute, Berlin; Museo Reina Sofia, Madrid; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Konig Gallery, London; Tick Tack Gallery, Antwerp; Marlborough, New York; Andrea Rosen Gallery, New York; Knoxville Museum of Art, Knoxville; McQuilkin's work has been reviewed in the NY Times, the Village Voice, FlashArt, Art Magazine, and elsewhere. She received her MFA from New York University.

Image: Alex McQuilkin, *Irrational Thoughts*, 2022, thread and dye on birdseye fabric in lacquered metal frame, 24 in. diameter

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