

# TINTYPE

LAURA WHITE | THE CLEVER GIRL PAINTER

1 May – 1 June 2019



British sculptor Laura White creates three dimensional entanglements of forms in which interactions are paramount.

*The Clever Girl Painter* brings together sculptural objects made by White to react with and against a long row of wood engraving blocks. The interaction here is physical, aesthetic and personal; the exhibition links two artists, separated by a generation but linked by a family relationship.

The 'clever girl painter' referred to in the title is Joan Ellis, Laura White's grandmother. An artist working in the 1920s and 30s, Joan Ellis attended the School of Leon Underwood in West London where Gertrude Hermes was a fellow student. Hermes remained a lifelong friend of Joan Ellis and both artists were known for their work with woodcut prints.

Laura White recently acquired the entire collection of Ellis' wood engraving blocks, the majority of which were produced over a period of 8 years, 1924 – 32, before Joan Ellis married. After her marriage she never returned to such an intense level of production.

White has a long term interest in the sculptural quality of images. She is drawn to the wood blocks' materiality, the process and labour of their making apparent in their fragmented appearance, rather than the specific narratives intended for the final prints. They are made from box wood and are intricately hand crafted. There are areas of precision where detailed patterns are cut into the hard material and other areas that are much looser and roughly carved – these would be the areas left white on the paper print.

For White, it is the physicality of the wood blocks and how they link to the labour of the artist that is of prime importance – the agency of what artworks are made from and how they are made. This connects

to White's interest in making and showing work that appears to be in transition, changing, becoming something else.

One wall of the gallery is given to the wood blocks presented on a long shelf. Lined up across the space are White's sculptures. Using a range of materials – ceramics, jesmonite, fabric, leather, steel, wood, expanding foam and dried bread dough – White has built up layers, staked uprights of multiple facades, with depth and material mass. These sculptures sit somewhere between object and material sampling, with every potential to realign into new combinations.

Research is an integral part of White's practice – she continually explores what it means to handle and come up against stuff, material and objects – how we use our hands, how a skill is acquired, the relationship between materials, hand and cognition, and the rich experience of understanding through direct engagement. In the recent past she has learnt meat skills, glass-blowing, sushi-making, shoe-making, basketmaking, and blacksmithing; "it is important for me to explore as the maker, and communicate to the viewer a material engagement, where the works suggest a human physical interaction, such as an object that can be used, yet is untried or unrecognizable."

The objects she makes from everyday and ready available materials, such as bread-dough, clay and expanding foam appear on one hand familiar, but equally strange and anomalous like prototypes or hybrids. White Mud, a recent installation of a hundred hand-made porcelain objects, fused everyday items such as plastic washing-up bottles squigged and squashed with precious museum collectables.

Laura White lives and works in London. Recent exhibitions and projects include: Laura White: The Esque Collection, The Dean's Chapel, Worcester Cathedral, 2019; The Precious Clay: Porcelain in contemporary art, Museum of Royal Worcester, commissioned by Meadow Arts; Dissonant Heritage. Viborg Kunsthall, Denmark, 2018; Double agents and great refusers. theAgency Gallery London, 2017; The Superorganism. Gallery Box, Gothenburg, Sweden, 2017; Wayfaring, &Model, Leeds, 2016; The Flat Pack Session, Best Practice Delta House Studios, London, 2016; A Colorful World, Nanjing International Art Exhibition, China, 2014; Morphisation, APT London, 2014; Cowboy Style, Marlborough Contemporary, London, 2013; The MALAHITE Room, Gallery Cadaqués, Spain, 2013; London Utd. Kling&Bang, Reykjavik, Iceland, 2013; More Than I Dare to Think About: works with paper, Marlborough Contemporary, 2013; We Can Have It All, SPACEX, Exeter, 2012/13.

Laura White also initiated and co-ordinates Tenderfoot, a rolling space for her writing on materiality; a website, artwork and curated space where writers, researchers, artists and other practitioners are invited to showcase a piece of work or share their writing.

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image: Getting inside dough (still) video | 1 mins. 2017