

Bold Tendencies 2021

Q&A with Rebecca Ackroyd

To start, could you give us a bit of background on yourself, such as where you studied, where you're currently based and some of your key interests as an artist?

I did my postgraduate degree at the Royal Academy of Arts, which I left around five years ago. Since then I have worked in London and recently moved to Berlin.

What first inspired you to become an artist?

I don't think it's something I ever decided, more that I followed what interested me and have been going from there.

A central motif in your work appears to be a sense of loss or melancholy, either for one's personal childhood or an imagined symbolic past. Do you agree with this, and if so, why do you think this is something you return to in your work?

I do think loss is a central idea in my work. I'm interested in how memory or story telling shapes the past and how this can be distorted and romanticised to create a sense of longing for something that didn't really exist. I'm also interested in how we might carry the various parts of ourselves from childhood into adult life.

In recent years you have made a number of sculptural works from cast resin, featuring fractured body parts often in proximity to furniture or infrastructure. What are the core ideas that inspire this series?

It's a continuation of the idea of memory, a fractured object or figure, removed from its original context. The works were made after a series of conversations with my mum about her life, which became a text of short paragraphs in no particular order. I cast chaise longues in resin as I liked the idea that they represent a literal site of mental excavation through therapy and the piecing together of self through memory.

Your new commission for Bold Tendencies is called *Back in the days of bare feet*. It is an interesting title — where

does this phrase come from and what relationship does it have to the work?

The title comes from a conversation I had with my mum where she told me about walking around London in the 60s with bare feet — a concept that seems absurd today. The boots cast in the sculpture were hers and I wanted that connection between London then and now.

The commission has been designed to function as a rooftop sundial for the car park. Can you tell us about the different elements of the physical sculpture, and why was it important for you to make the passing of time so integral to the work?

I wanted the work to connect a different time in London to the present. There's a nostalgia associated with 'Swinging London' — connotations of sexual promiscuity and a break from the black and white conformity of before. The sculpted frog heads are meant to be like sad little suitors looking up longingly at the fragmented cast of my legs in my mum's old boots. Both elements of the dial (the legs and the frogs) reference fantasies, whether that's rooted in make-believe or nostalgia, they each reflect an idea of female sexual liberation or desire that contributes to a narrative of "what women want" — it's myth-making of different kinds from different times.

Working with aluminum is a new approach for your work. What drew you to this material choice?

It was mainly driven by wanting to make the work durable to go on the rooftop. I started researching the possibility of different metals and decided on aluminium because it doesn't have the same art historical connotations as a material such as bronze, it has a more futuristic feel to it somehow.

Previous work — such as *Singed Lids* (2019) at the 15e Biennale de Lyon or your solo show at Peres Projects, *The Mulch* (2018) — has expressed a sense of chaos or uncertainty with the time we are currently living through. However, this new commission appears to take a different approach — more circular than chaotic. What inspired this change in tone?

I don't really conceive changes in tone, as each body of work is very much related to the time of making. It's a way of reflecting

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a current state — of mind, feeling, the world. I suppose in the last year time has had a very different quality — of being stretched out and shortened consecutively. The work for Bold Tendencies is a concise rumination on time and reality, the idea felt quite complete since its conception and there's a simplicity that I'm more interested in at the moment.

How do you think about your new commission in relation to the Bold Tendencies 2021 programme theme of Arcadia?

When researching the term I kept coming back to the idea of the idyll — the unsustainable idea of a happier time. I wanted the work to resonate with the sense of longing, loss and fantasy. I wanted to literally root it in time — it becomes time.

What have you got planned for the rest of the year — are there any special projects in the pipeline?

I have a few things on the horizon but nothing set in stone yet — everything is very much up in the air still!