

BRONWYN LACE
BRED IN THE BONE
22 February – 19 March 2017

Everard Read/CIRCA is proud to present **Bronwyn Lace's *Bred in the Bone***, opening **22 February** at CIRCA Cape Town. This is Lace's first solo exhibition at the Cape Town gallery and featured mixed media examples, video and sculptural installations. A portfolio is available upon request.

Lace's latest exhibition *Bred in the Bone* features a range of Lace's methodologies and media, from meticulously captured timelapse photography to delicately perforated paper and calligraphy ink, from finely cast bronze wishbones to precisely folded and *Rorschached* DNA autoradiographs.

The starting point revolves around a core component, a film installation by the same title. The 1 minute 30 second timelapse video piece was created in the basement of the Natural History Museum in Vienna in mid-2016. Over a period of 3 days a photograph was taken every minute capturing *Dermestes maculatus* (carrion beetle) removing the flesh of a *Tyto alba* (barn owl).

Previous '...bodies of work have led to further exploration of skeletons and bones – and of flesh eaters, of flesh-devouring flesh. Lace's recent encounters in various museums in Vienna, Washington DC and, not least in the Egyptian archives, have birthed further connections, feeding her subject. Her observations of nature continue to feed into her fascination with processes and mysteries of life, death, destruction and seduction. She returned from Vienna with the owl work, *Bred in the Bone*, - an accelerated time-lapse video, lasting a minute and thirty seconds, of carrion beetles frenetically feasting on the flesh of a gasping owl. This sequence conjures up the lunacy of hunger and entrapment – even desire, which enters the field in a way that was not there before. This piece features the dank underbelly of gestation which happens under a grid – another strong visual feature in much of Lace's work. (Koulla Xinisteris, 2017)

Another determining element to this exhibition is Lace's origami series, made from the pages of redundant Encyclopædia Britannica books.

The origami works – made from her parents' abandoned Encyclopaedia Britannica set, purchased when they were expecting their first child – have been crafted to Lace's design by her dedicated assistant Masetho Mohohlo. They invoke patience and the process of transitioning into meditative states. Each carefully crafted piece – of which there are thousands – is beautifully still. (Koulla Xinisteris, 2017)

Lace's ways of working are firmly instilled in her artistic practise. As a deeply committed artist her process is intrinsically bred in her bones.

Site specificity is one of the things that stirs the imagination of Botswana-born Bronwyn Lace into fiery life. Born in 1980, she was educated at Wits University and focuses her intellect on the relationships between art and other fields, including physics, museum practice and education. She elects to work with found, recycled and repurposed elements and builds her installation in situ, often with intricate threading and weaving. Light is a central component to all of her work, which is often interactive, playing with a diversity of approaches that has over the past years surrounded her audience with swarms of fishing flies, rearranged animal skeletons or thousands of shards of shattered stained glass. In collaboration with Marcus Neustetter, Lace initiated community and land art projects in South Africa's small towns. Lace is currently the director for The Centre for the Less Good Idea, an interdisciplinary incubator space for the arts based in Maboneng, Johannesburg. Founded by William Kentridge the Centre aims to create and support new experimental, collaborative and cross-disciplinary arts projects.

Bred in the Bone - Koulla Xinisteris

An intent to encompass and ameliorate the dark is a dominant feature in Bronwyn Lace's work. Across the course of her bright trajectory, she has unflinchingly honed her fascination for dissection and other forensic pursuits that many of us might perceive as gross or hard.

It is a fact. Not many of us want to grapple with the intense and the difficult. Lace enters her world through the aesthetic, then she dissects looking for the DNA in everything. Fearlessly, she gets stuck in. Her gift of depth set in early as she witnessed her mother among the beds of the dying. Lace's mother is an active realist – a relentlessly dedicated hospice nurse. Her imprint runs deep.

Lace is not scared of the dark. Nor is she shy to aestheticize and etherialise – and few can, as she can. In the aesthetic, we join in the flight to be bright, innocent, and unafraid. In her work, which straddles different media, including installations and performance, she uses weightless materials and colours: x-rays, translucent fishing gut, white satin, glass, resin, electricity...

Works like *Stained and Engorged I and II* and *Punched and Impregnated I and II* feel like totems or religious symbols. Yet they are also intently sexual works that defy the dumbing down of erotic mystery. Here, the erotic is spiritual, akin to love.

For *Airs above the Ground*, which appeared on an exhibition curated by Ricky Burnet in 2011, she re-assembled the bones of a horse. For *Response* (2015), which followed on from Neels Coetzee's *Crucible* exhibition, Lace depicted the pelvis in resin in dialogue with Coetzee's bronze skulls. These bodies of work have led to further exploration of skeletons and bones – and of flesh eaters, of flesh-devouring flesh. Lace's recent encounters in various museums in Vienna, Washington DC and, not least in the Egyptian archives, have birthed further connections, feeding her subject. Her observations of nature continue to feed into her fascination with processes and mysteries of life, death, destruction and seduction. She returned from Vienna with the owl work, *Bred in the Bone*, - an accelerated time-lapse video, lasting a minute and thirty seconds, of carrion beetles frenetically feasting on the flesh of a gasping owl. This sequence conjures up the lunacy of hunger and entrapment – even desire, which enters the field in a way that was not there before. This piece features the dank underbelly of gestation which happens under a grid – another strong visual feature in much of Lace's work. Gentle, fragile paper works bring Rorschach into the mix – a visual system intended to dissect a person's personality, characteristics and emotional functioning.

The origami works – made from her parents' abandoned Encyclopaedia Britannica set, purchased when they were expecting their first child – have been crafted to Lace's design by her dedicated assistant Masetho Mohohlo. They invoke patience and the process of transitioning into meditative states. Each carefully crafted piece – of which there are thousands – is beautifully still.

For Lace, the origami works invoke the loss associated with the technological shift from information in hard copy into digital forms that has defined our era. In tearing these pages from the Britannica, folding and stitching them, she gives them another life. The encyclopedia, and its words will remain physically present – potentially for a long time to come.

Geometry is mysteriously and symbolically everywhere in this show. Some works are circular, *Forked Flock Reflected*, (2017) and *Encyclopaedia Britannica Revolve* (2016-2017), others have strong triangular elements, the installation *To Unfold and Reflect* (2017), and *Encyclopaedia Dart* (2017), is lit in such a way that it casts dramatic shadows, reminiscent of an electrocardiogram.

These works are imbued with a sense of immediacy and transience as though they were collective shooting stars moving through the sky, or a flock of swallows in flight. They recall the weightlessness of her bronze-cast wish bones and the work of MC Escher, who is a particular inspiration for Lace.

It is believed that if you fold 1 000 paper cranes, your wishes will come true. Sadako Sasaki was living in Hiroshima when the atomic bomb was dropped on Japan on 6 August 1945, inflicting her with the 'A-bomb disease', leukaemia, at the age of eleven. Ten years later, she died, having folded 1 300 paper cranes. In perseverance there is peace. Perhaps, in the end, passion leads to truth. Perhaps there is little choice in this, but to surrender. Sasaki's story is folded into the origami layers of this exhibition. Lace shows us that light can drop into dark places and that dark places with light shone on them can take flight.