



## **Beth Collar**

*Basher Dowsing*

01 May - 06 June 2021

Washington DC: von ammon co is pleased to announce its eleventh project at 3330 Cady's Alley, *Basher Dowsing*, a solo show by Berlin-based multidisciplinary artist Beth Collar.

The exhibition's namesake is William "Basher" Dowsing, an English Puritan iconoclast whose mandate was the destruction and removal of idols and objects of superstition from buildings in Cambridgeshire and Suffolk in the middle of the 17th century.

The most prominent adjustment to von ammon co (a former grocer's warehouse completed in 1904 and adjacent to the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal, whose construction was completed in 1850) is the painting of the gallery's structural columns from white to black, in order to evoke the two-toned siding of timber-framed homes of the English countryside and suburbs. Similar to Oliver Cromwell's residence (and likely that of Mr. Dowsing), this quaint style of architecture was pragmatic in essence during the Tudor period but resurfaced as a popular faux style in the mid-20th century, as England became industrialized and the middle class gravitated towards a synthetic suburban experience based on nativism and nostalgia.

On the upper segments of eight columns hang narrow vertical tablets wrapped in various linen and wool fabrics. This second intervention alludes to the modern amplification systems in churches. Easily overlooked, these normally electronic devices crackle with the activity of the altar, whether that be sermon or simply the ambient murmur surrounding the microphone. This adjustment reconsiders the peculiar architecture of the grocer's warehouse gallery as a church nave with no altar, its ambiance defined by eerie absence.

Installed on the gallery's rough hewn columns (some of which are made of unshaped tree trunks) is a series of objects carved from Linden wood using traditional methods. The subject of each object, whether it be a vignette of veiny skin, or a realistic body part, or a gush of liquid frozen in time, is the human circulatory system and the blood that flows through it. Collar's sculptures cite the *Crucifixus Dolorosus*, or *forked cross*. Often the site or container for relics, the *Crucifixus Dolorosus* began appearing in the Gothic Period, tracking closely with the Black Death, and depicted a shockingly corporeal representation of the Christ, his arms either nailed splayed in a Y-shape to a cross, or, frequently, to a Y-shaped construction that represented the forked branches of a living tree (The Tree of Knowledge, charged with bringing sin to the earth). These lurid manifestations of sensitivity and pain belied Christ's commonly assumed role as the conqueror of death, and instead allude to the frailty and fallibility of the human body under strain.

Collar's installation is made of objects, but its primary strategy is to refocus the attention of the viewer to the peculiar character of the space, and to form a nexus of sensitivity, pain, and longing using the structure of the gallery as its basis. In this sense, Collar is working inversely to Dowsing: while Basher sought to purify parochial spaces of their sense memories; Collar's strategy is to not only revive the consciousness of the space but to encode it with a new intelligence, a *logos* borne out of personal and collective trauma. Drawing on her memory of visiting the whitewashed sacred spaces of Cambridgeshire and Sussex, Collar uses the gallery's space as a similar type of void, and reinscribes it with a new prosthetic iconography.

Beth Collar (b. 1984, Cambridge) is a multidisciplinary artist based in Berlin. She earned a Master's degree in Sculpture from The Royal College of Art, a Postgraduate Diploma in Drawing from The Prince's Drawing School, and Bachelor's Degree in Art from London Metropolitan University. She has exhibited and performed widely in the UK, Europe, and The United States. *Basher Dowsing* marks Collar's first solo exhibition in Washington DC and with von ammon co.

von ammon co is a contemporary art gallery based in Georgetown, Washington DC and founded in 2019. One of the only privately-run contemporary art spaces in the US capitol, the gallery's agenda is to exhibit important exhibitions on a project basis by international artists. *Basher Dowsing* is the eleventh project in its current location. The gallery is open Friday through Sunday, 12pm to 6pm and by appointment. Please email [info@vonammon.co](mailto:info@vonammon.co) for additional information.