

NICELLE BEAUCHENE GALLERY

Jonathan Baldock

Grave Goods

March 3 - April 2, 2022

Opening reception Thursday, March 3 6-8 PM

Nicelle Beauchene Gallery is pleased to present *Grave Goods*, a solo exhibition by British artist Jonathan Baldock.

Jonathan Baldock's practice—encompassing sculpture, installation, and performance—has long contended with the body's implicit tensions and the affect borne out of its performed representations. Through labor-intensive processes that reject traditional value distinctions between high and low, the artist constructs worlds with a distinct visual language deeply rooted in vernacular histories of craft, theater, folklore and ritual. These processes—such as appliqué and weaving—refer to and honor the often overlooked contributions of working class people throughout art history.

In *Grave Goods*, the sculptures and wall hangings specifically interrogate the body as a present and absent specter. In another sense, they work in tandem as though actors within a stage set. Bauhaus theatre has served as a key influence for Baldock over the past fifteen years; the school's experimental approach to performance, based on symbolic and geometric representations of the body and spirit, is a recurring antecedent to the artist's multivalent practice. His approach to materials and technique itself emphasizes performance: traces of one's hand in the stitching throughout a tapestry or in the teared seams of a clay pot.

Situated throughout the gallery, brightly-glazed stoneware vessels embody the memory of their making. Baldock's body literally renders itself present in each piece: punched, hugged, squashed, and ripped, the vessels are leaky containers, imperfect reliquaries for a variety of remains. Cast feet, hands, and even tongues break through the walls of some, while in others, impressions of the artist's fists impale the outer structure. Inside, piles of funereal herbs produce a subtle olfactory experience that lingers throughout the space.

On the gallery walls, three hand-stitched tapestries made of burlap and felt serve as a representational mirror or rubric to the sculptures they surround. Referencing Early Renaissance painting, *In Your Face* (2022) and *Seasons in the Sun* (2022) comprise minimal, color-blocked shapes that build out within the structures of an altarpiece and a frieze. Long-stalked felt flowers that mimic Millefleur in medieval tapestries, and leafless felt trees that look to northern European folk traditions overlap a body in each hanging. From the two dimensional surface, a burlap and felt head then emerges. Mouthless, the heads seem to describe a body between two realms: two and three dimensionality, containment and freedom, life and death. The third tapestry, *Alack I am worn to a ravelling* (2022), abstracts the body into even simpler forms: green, lavender, and cream shapes suggest the essence of beings and their spirits.

As the titular oxymoron suggests, *Grave Goods* offers objects bound up in material and affective dualities: most things, Baldock suggests, are equal parts tense and loose, sacred and profane, brimming and leaking, mournful yet full of mirth.

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Jonathan Baldock (b. 1980, Pembury, UK) lives and works in London. Recent solo exhibitions include Accelerator, Stockholm (2021); La Casa Encendida, Madrid (2021); Kunsthall Stavanger, Norway (2020); Stephen Friedman Gallery, London (2020 & 2019); Camden Arts Centre, London (2019), which then toured to Tramway, Glasgow (2019) and Bluecoat, Liverpool (2020); De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill (2017); Southwark Park Galleries, London (2017); Chapter Gallery, Cardiff, Wales (2016); and Nicelle Beauchene Gallery (2016). Recent group exhibitions include Towner International, Towner Art Gallery, Eastbourne (2020); Assembly Point, London (2019); The Aldrich Contemporary, Ridgefield, CT (2018); Fondazione Memmo, Rome (2016); and Rockbund Art Museum, Shanghai (2013), among others.

Baldock received an MA from Royal College of Art, London and is a 2007 alumnus of Skowhegan. His work recently entered the Arts Council Collection, UK.