



LIBBY BLACK

Returning To This Moment

April 9 - May 21, 2022

Opening Reception : **Saturday April 9th, 4 - 7pm**

Gallery 16 is proud to present *Returning to This Moment*, Libby Black's third exhibition with the gallery.

Returning to This Moment encompasses work from different phases of Black's over two decade career. Drawing, painting, and sculptures are made from paper, hot glue, and acrylic paint, playing with the line between two and three dimensions. The exhibition is a chance to look at and return to moments from the vantage of the present— to observe, reflect, and marinate. She decodes and combines to create work that represents the things she thinks about, to see herself in the world.

Libby Black relates to being in the back of the room, always looking, being alongside things. Varying modes of noticing and replicating prevail in the work. Black returns to the past through art history to understand how women are portrayed in artwork. With sobriety, meetings are for remembering rock bottom, so as never to return. Black returns to her coming out in the 90s as an undergraduate in Ohio, leafing through the pages of a Playboy magazine. She looks at herself, hands sitting awkwardly at her sides, her current hairbrush covered in her silver hair. She plays out scenes from her two-mom household. Black goes over things to understand where she is now as an artist, lesbian, and mother.

Black's past work, centering over-the-top luxury objects, reflected on the notion that "if you look good, you are good." *Returning to This Moment* moves from luxury to labor, from playing expected gender roles to authenticity, to Black's present home. But there's also luxury in the mundane, and in loving and living with another woman. The over-the-top-ness of this artwork is less obvious. *The Build Up* is a surreal stack of dishes made of paper, paint, pencil, and hot glue. A domestic still life. Its objects— dishes, pots, pans, a nail clipper, uneaten fruit, a razor, a dirty sock, a turkey baster, and barbeque tongs— are openings into the themes of the exhibition. The tongs refer to a conversation Black had when she started dating her wife— "Who runs the grill?" the person asked— and to the constant washing, stacking, and role switching that make a kitchen work.

Right-sized focuses on being neither too big nor too small, amidst and beyond the awkwardness of trying to fit in. The work is a rack of hanging clothes, an open closet, stripped of shame and artifice. The articles of clothing and garment bag hang on the rack and oscillate from drawing to sculpture and back again,

shrinking and puffing, seeking a moment to surrender to oneself. *Beloved Life* takes the viewer through a lifetime up to this moment, through a handwritten story and her son's birth certificate (on which she is named her son's father).

The grip of the show is an installation of over 45 redrawn Sunday New York Times Newspaper pages, yesterday's news painstakingly rendered and re-positioned for the viewer. Like clothes on a clothing line blowing in the wind, the installation slows down to look at the years and days spent. A curated selection of what strikes her, what she finds beautiful, breathtaking, and horrific, and the simple joys and comforts of the At Home section the Times ran at the beginning of the pandemic. The papers come in each week, stack and stack, and eventually end up in the trash. Some of the objects in the newspaper pages mirror the objects in Black's sculptures, and she relishes in the magic of these confluences.

Looking to a more distant past and selecting art historical images to redraw, *Some Women* is a collection of ink drawings. The drawings are recreations of artworks by women, or men depicting women. In the works depicting women through the view of a man, Black started to notice what women were doing—working, posing, bathing, looking, loving, or pretending to love. They are sex objects and companions and still lives. A reformulation of what she'd been taught in art history, it is directed by what was interesting to her—her story and not her story at all, what was in the world, and what she put together. Black put the drawings in a box, and then a book, so they all live together— a small art history lesson.

In *Returning to This Moment*, Libby Black curates things for her and the audience to view, uniting in humor and humility as they experience a culmination. *Returning to This Moment* has Black looking from afar, close up, and standing with the viewer.

Libby Black is a painter, drawer and sculptural installation artist living in Berkeley, CA. She has exhibited nationally and internationally, with such shows as "California Love" at Galerie Droste in Wuppertal, Germany; "Bay Area Now 4" at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts; "California Biennial" at the Orange County Museum of Art; and at numerous galleries in New York, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. Black has been an artist-in-residence at Headlands Center for the Arts; Montalvo Arts Center; Santa Fe Art Institute; and Spaces in Cleveland, OH. Her work has been reviewed in Artforum, Art in America, ARTnews, Flash Art, and The New York Times. She received a BFA from Cleveland Institute of Art in 1999 and an MFA at the California College of the Arts in 2001. Libby is an Assistant Professor at San Francisco State University.