

Shannon Bool

Gaslight

September 24 – October 29, 2022

Daniel Faria Gallery is pleased to present *Gaslight*, Shannon Bool's fifth solo exhibition at the gallery.

The term "gaslight" comes from the title of a 1938 play by Patrick Hamilton, adapted to film in America in 1944, starring Ingrid Bergman and Charles Boyer. Set in the late nineteenth century, the play follows Bella Manningham as she is psychologically manipulated by her husband Jack into thinking that she has lost her grip on reality. It is not surprising that the word might circulate in contemporary society, where truth tends to flicker like a dying light. This is the territory into which Bool wades, playing with the notion that fact and fiction coalesce so easily that to pull the two apart might be to unravel them completely. In this exhibition, surfaces shimmer in and out of focus as Bool explores the relationships between psychological, architectural, and digital space through anachronistic materials such as weavings, hand-made tiles, and blown glass. There is a collapsing of interior and exterior that occurs throughout: public streetlights illuminate the space, brick walls normally seen on the screen of a video game hang in the gallery as glimmering mosaics, and bodies become shining high-rise buildings.

Bool's jacquard tapestries, in which collaged, photographic images are translated from computer to the loom, are now a recognizable and important facet of her practice, including a recent presentation at Art Basel Unlimited and a permanent installation in the lobby of the Park Hyatt in Toronto. In *Eastbound Borderline* and *Li Ze Borderline* the bodies of mannequins from the exhibition design by OMA's Shohei Shigematsu for the 2018 Dior show at the Denver Art Museum are replaced with architectural bodies—the New York City skyline and Zaha Hadid's Leeza SOHO tower in Beijing. The hardness of the mannequins, the digital image, and the steel and glass of the architecture, are all rendered soft through weaving, and elaborated by an expanded palette of hand embroidery.

In Bool's work the mannequin often appears as a figure of projection and unconscious processes, an idealized body that is fit for consumption by means of capitalism. Her use of the word "borderline" proposes a state of indeterminacy, a dissociation of the body in space, just as the bodies in her tapestries both become and are subsumed by a spectrum of architecture. In her 1992 essay, "Bodies-Cities," Elizabeth Grosz suggests that in contemporary society, body and environment "produce each other as forms of the hyperreal, as modes of simulation which have overtaken and transformed whatever reality each may have had into the image of the other."¹ The scale of the tapestries brings the viewer into contact with a monstrous female body that at the same time disappears into its environment, becoming a mirror of its surroundings. Shigematsu's reflective, corrugated backdrop further accentuates this, bouncing the colours and lights from the surface of the buildings back at the viewer. The collaged body is fully integrated into the real space of exhibition—what Bool presents is an illusion with depth, one that only breaks down on the surface, in a frenzy of threads. From afar, the image appears cohesive and legible, but it disperses upon closer inspection, the viewer becoming lost in the textile.

¹ Elizabeth Grosz, "Bodies-Cities," *Sexuality and Space*, ed. Beatriz Colomina. New York, NY: Princeton Architectural Press, 1992. 241-252.

This enmeshing of digital and real space is further accentuated in Bool's new series of paintings. Constructed of hand-made, glazed ceramic tiles, they reference 8-bit computer graphics—images that, like mosaics, are made up of composite parts that break down the closer you get (or, in the language of the screen, the more you zoom in). In computer games like Minecraft, these are the kind of graphics with which entire cities are built, brick by digital brick. Much like the tapestries, the individual tiles of Bool's mosaics disappear in service of a readable image from a distance, but up close, the paintings break apart into a dazzling abstraction of colour. The surface of the tiles is imperfect, some are reflective, and some are pools of dense pigment, like negative space. 256 colours can be represented in an image with 8 bits, and Bool developed over 75 unique glaze colours in the careful process of negotiating colour experienced on the screen versus colour experienced materially.

Lighting the way through these screen-made-tactile walls and curtains are two new "Gaslight" sculptures. These works reference two streetlights, one of which, called "Wilmsdorf Widow," resides in Europe's largest outdoor gas lamp museum in Tiergarten Park. Bool's hand-blown lanterns are quite literally blown out of their confines—the glass swelling beyond the torched steel armatures that contain them. Hints of colour in the glass reference the decorations adorning streetlights in Görlitzer Park that Bool stumbled upon on her walks during the Pandemic—small, public anti-gestures made under the influence of alternative realities, or perhaps, to remind passersby that they are not alone. Straddling function and dysfunction, and with blackened armatures that appear almost dystopic, the "Gaslights" leave the viewer to negotiate their perceptions in the gallery's space.

Shannon Bool was born in Comox, Canada and lives and works in Berlin. Bool attended the Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design, Vancouver; Cooper Union, New York; and graduated from Staedelschule, Frankfurt in 2004. Recent and upcoming solo exhibitions include: Museum of Contemporary Photography, Chicago (2022); Kaiser Wilhelm Museum, Krefeld (2022); Confederation Centre Art Gallery, Charlottetown (2022); Gut Kerkow, Angermünde (2021); Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Kingston, ON (2020); Kunstverein Braunschweig (2019); The Canadian Cultural Center, Paris (2019); and Musée d'art de Joliette (2018). Bool's work has been included in exhibitions at institutions such as: Kunstmuseum Stuttgart; Kunstsammlung Chemnitz; Kunstmuseum Bonn; Sprengel Museum, Hannover; National Museum of Germany, Bonn; Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt; White Cube Gallery, London; the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa; and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. In 2013 Bool was artist in residence at the Villa Romana in Florence, Italy. Her work can be found in numerous collections, including: the Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Lenbachhaus, Munich; The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa; The Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto; and Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, Montreal.