

# LAUREL GITLEN

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## *HOLLOW LEG*

November 16 – December 15, 2023

Max Guy  
Bill Jenkins  
Kate Newby  
Chadwick Rantanen  
Emily Mae Smith  
Stefanie Victor  
Matthew Watson  
Bruno Zhu

The fruits of mass production are always in season. Ripe products constantly drop, bounce around and then settle, packing every available nook and cranny of negative space in the world. When enough solid objects accumulate, they begin to mimic liquid, oozing out of our carts, closets, and feeds to envelope, saturate and reseed themselves in our bodies and minds. Insatiability irrigates the fields, keeps conveyor belts rolling; our collective hollow leg never fills.

Is art, by definition, scarce and difficult to produce? Does art circulate in the same flowing ooze of consumer goods? Artists circumvent societal rationale surrounding labor and value, to more intimately negotiate the value of their products in a speculative and volatile marketplace. But artistic access to broader global consumer markets is limited by the most timeless and transcultural quality in the arts: scale. Not only are the material scales of mass production unobtainable to artists; the very control, agility and holistic messaging required for an individual's work to be realized is not possible by its means. In the artist's case, mass production must be deployed conceptually; global efficacy only comes with alchemical success.

In the simplest and most terrestrial definition, alchemy is the attempt to produce a valuable and rare substance from a common one. Alchemic success would appear something like a “hack;” an unlocking and instantaneous redistribution of hoarded power and wealth; a synthesis of the pursuit of justice, clarity of perception, and gambling. As alchemists operated from proto-laboratories, attempting a material reordering of the personal and social world, so the artist conducts their work in semi-privacy, bolstered by the idea (or promising others) that their product – the work – will reach beyond its own, mere edges.

Organized in collaboration with artist Bill Jenkins, *Hollow Leg* includes works that permute production into metaphor and back again, opening portals for previously unallowed or unattainable agency. Inhabiting the aesthetics of mass production and confounding its conditions of material, design, media, marketing and consumption, artists and artworks are brought together in an exhibition of ongoing alchemic defiance.

**Max Guy** lives in Chicago. Guy works with paper, video, performance, assemblage and installation. He uses fast, ergonomic ways to make poetry of the world, filtering it through personal effects. The works in *Hollow Leg* are made from modular halloween decorations that pack flat and compact. Papered with news clippings about recent wars, political campaigns, environmental catastrophe and finance, the works are ghost-like and perpetually current. Max Guy had a solo show at the Renaissance Society in 2022, and was included in *We Buy Gold: Seven* at Jack Shainman in 2023. Guy will have a solo exhibition with Goodweather, Chicago in 2024.

**Bill Jenkins** explores individual agency within the structure of an urban environment. Often taking up impossible tasks with inadequate means, such as capturing and channeling light with packing and shipping materials. Jenkins' work can embrace failure as a space to imaginatively recuperate questions about functionality that would otherwise be wasteful or disastrous outcomes in architecture, or consumer product development. Jenkins lives in New York and has had recent solo shows at 9 Herkimer Place, Brooklyn; **CAPITAL**, San Francisco; Galleria Stereo, Warsaw; and Laurel Gitlen, New York.

**Kate Newby** makes works in ceramic, glass and cast metals that engage directly with the viewer and the environment, often responding to the elements of wind, water and time and questioning where and how sculpture happens. Kate Newby's works can also toe the line of invisibility, with interventions that risk disappearing into the architecture. In *Hollow Leg*, Newby replaces the doorknob to the gallery with an earthy, funky ceramic sculpture, an unexpected pleasure for the hand and eye. Recent solo exhibitions include Fine Arts, Sydney, Sydney; Marfa Book Company, Marfa; Michael Lett, Auckland; Sunday Painter, London; and Laurel Gitlen, New York. Recent institutional shows include The Blaffer Museum, Houston; and Palais de Tokyo, Paris. Newby was born in Aotearoa, New Zealand and lives and works in Floresville, Texas.

**Chadwick Rantanen** lives and works in Los Angeles. Rantanen is an aftermarket modifier, adding additional functions to home goods, and then adding modifications to those functions. Redundancies are typically about due diligence, insurance and safety, but Rantanen adds redundancies until order and utility collapses in his hermetic and circular forms. Recent solo exhibitions include Michael Benevento, Los Angeles; Secession, Vienna; Museo Pietro Canonica, Rome; Standard (Oslo), Oslo; and Maxwell Graham/Essex Street, New York.

**Emily Mae Smith** lives and works in New York. Her sly and subversive paintings use a vocabulary of signs and symbols that reference gender, class, and violence often humorously skewering art history's misogynistic myths. Smith's painting *Blue Jean* references a 19th century wallpaper design of rats and wheat, which the artist has linked to a preoccupation with cycles of feast and famine, desire and disgust. Emily Mae Smith had a breakout exhibition at Laurel Gitlen, New York in 2015, and has since had solo exhibitions with Contemporary Fine Arts, Berlin; Galerie Perrotin, Paris; Petzel, New York, and Rodolphe Janssens, Brussels, among others. Solo Museum exhibitions include Pond Society, Shanghai; SCAD Museum of Art, Savannah; Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford; and Le Consortium Museum, Dijon.

**Matthew Watson** lives and works in New York. Watson produces portraits of human, animal, and material subjects, realized through the optimizing potential of several mediums. Watson relies on the most up to the moment technical aptitudes of the photographic medium, and the depth of conservation research about western styles of oil painting to fabricate images. Optics and digital tools fully replace observational drawing, but then Watson shifts to making images by hand in oil paint following procedures that guarantee his prints will outlast any other current photographic medium and have more saturation and complexity of color than is possible with photographic printing. Solo exhibitions include Federico Vavassori, Milan; and Joe Sheftel, New York.

**Stefanie Victor** lives and works in New York. Victor makes sculptures that relate to the body and its movements, as well as interior infrastructure and hardware. Made from a range of raw materials including cement, glass, metal, and clay, their forms often belie their materiality. Rather than hard and still, they conjure the possibility of pliancy or activation. Recurring, shifting, and singular elements suggest and disrupt pattern, referencing the repetition of commonplace elements such as hinges, decorative moulding, and electrical cords. But the sculptures' abstract qualities, unusual relationships to the wall, unexpected details, slight variations, and imperfections borne from hand-made processes shift the work away from the mechanized and familiar and towards more particular, human kinds of forms. Recent solo exhibitions include Laurel Gitlen, New York; and Adams and Ollman, Portland. Victor has also been included in exhibitions at MoMA PS1, Participant, Inc., and The Drawing Center, New York.

**Bruno Zhu** lives and works between Portugal and The Netherlands. Zhu's work is influenced by fashion, design, publishing and scenography, engaging the audience in questioning and rewriting collective narratives. Operating in the space of fiction, Zhu effectively subverts agency and authorship while simultaneously manipulating time and value. Negotiating nostalgia, ornamentation and abstraction, Zhu's works interrogate efficiency and associative thinking via redundancy and humor. Recent exhibitions include What Pipeline, Detroit; Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin; and Centre d'Art Contemporain Genève, Geneva. Zhu will have solo exhibitions at Veronica, Seattle; and Chisenhale Gallery, London in 2024.

Please contact the gallery for further information or images, [office@laurelgitlen.com](mailto:office@laurelgitlen.com).

\*The entrance to the gallery is on East Broadway at the rear door of the Apple Bank Building. Gallery hours are Wednesday - Saturday, 12-6, and other times by appointment. The main gallery is wheelchair accessible and has a gender neutral accessible restroom; please contact the gallery for ramp access.

