

Nancy Youdelman
Lucy's Coat and Other Mysteries

09 February 24 – 09 March 24

ADZ Gallery
Rua do Crucifixo, n.º 28, 1.º
Lisboa 1100-183
Portugal

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Upon first glance, *Lucy's Coat*, 1977, appears ordinary. Fanned open invitingly, as if shrugged off by a young girl playing elsewhere, a singular disembodied, blonde plait running down its central pane invites further inquiry. Looking closer still, the coat reveals an inner lining of thinly spaced, grey, human hair. A photograph of a child, dated January 31st 1900 and named Lucy, is pinned to its lapel, heavy with speculative weight.

Nancy Youdelman subverts received ideas of identity by centering objects in her work, exploring the self as something which is materially, socially, and symbolically inscribed. Taking found objects - from dresses, hats, and shoes, to buttons, pins, letters, and photographs - the artist's sculptures create fictive portraits of characters unmet, with deft and nurturing touch. Exploring nostalgia, caesura, memory, and acts of care, the works build on Judith Butler's conception of gender as something one does, rather than one is.

An original member of the Feminist art movement, Youdelman began her career in the early 1970s when she was one of a handful of students first taught by the renowned Judy Chicago, as part of the Feminist Art Programme at Fresno State University in 1970. Having previously studied costume design, Youdelman went on to contribute to the collaborative installation project *Womanhouse* (1972), a project organised by Chicago and Miriam Schapiro, and intended, in the words of art historian Linda Nochlin, to 'help women [...] build their art making out of their experiences as women.' Here, the artists centred craft-based practices and mediums traditionally marginalised within the art historical canon to subvert ideas of value, hierarchy, and tradition.

Indeed, Youdelman's works belie soft questions about the shifting space occupied by women, their place, their roles, and their presentation from childhood to motherhood. Many of the works yield symbolic potency through shades of juxtaposition, apposition, and parity. In *Long Line Bra with Dried Roses and Dress Patterns*, 2014, the work explores ideas of embodiment through the artist's use of underwear, implied soft fleshiness rendered crinkled and bound, but also syncretic shades of life - the tightly swaddled bundle acting as a cipher for both birth - a swaddled baby - and death, an embalmed body. So too does *Orphan*, 2004, which pairs found letters from a child at an orphanage to her mother, woven together with fine roots from plants upon a child's dress. Here, the roots both unite and divide, binding the piece tightly together but metaphorically denoting the sadness of a child uprooted from their home, latently probing ideas of absence, place, and belonging.

Speaking about her work, Nancy Youdelman recalls Edith Wharton's 1905 novel, 'The House of Mirth'. Towards the end of the book, Lily Bart, the book's well-born but impoverished protagonist, rifles through a trunk filled with opulent dresses and accessories, heirlooms of a past life. Running her hands through the items laid out on her bed, 'an association lurked in every fold: each fall of lace and gleam of embroidery was like a letter in the record of her past'. In the same way, Youdelman's works become an exercise in not only memory and history, but also projection and substitution: insentient portraits, surrogate selves.

Lydia Earthy

Nancy Youdelman has been exhibiting her artwork since 1971. She has the distinction of having been part of the very first feminist art class that was taught by Judy Chicago in 1970 at California State University, Fresno. She continued her participation in the Feminist Art Program (1971—1973) at California Institute of the Arts, Valencia, where she participated in the internationally acclaimed project, Womanhouse (1972), receiving her BFA from CalArts in 1973 and her MFA with an emphasis in sculpture from UCLA in 1976.

Youdelman has had a varied and interesting career: she worked as an artistic consultant on the 1975 Rolling Stones concert in Los Angeles, was a founding member of both Grandview Gallery at the historic Woman's Building in Los Angeles and Double X, a feminist collective, and was a university art instructor for 20 years. She has been the recipient of numerous awards including grants from the Pollock/Krasner, the Adolph and Esther Gottlieb and the Tree of Life Foundations. Her extensive exhibition record includes many national and international exhibitions; her work is in many private and public collections including the Brooklyn Museum, the Crocker Art Museum in Sacramento CA, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles and the Museum of Modern Art in New York City.

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Orphan, 2004
mixed media relief sculpture
21 x 23 x 3 in | 53.3 x 58.4 x 7.6 cm
(ADZNY002)

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Uprooted, 2019
Plant material, dried calla lilies, waxed cord and encaustic
29 1/2 x 12 1/2 x 3 1/2 in | 74.9 x 31.8 x 8.9 cm
(ADZNY022)

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Baby Shoe with Dried Flowers and Mortise Lock, 2014
mixed media sculpture with encaustic
3 1/2 x 4 1/4 x 7 in | 8.9 x 10.8 x 17.8 cm
(ADZNY009)

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Baby Shoe with Dried Flowers and Mortise Lock, 2014
mixed media sculpture with encaustic
3 1/2 x 4 1/4 x 7 in | 8.9 x 10.8 x 17.8 cm
(ADZNY009)

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Lucy's Coat, 1977
mixed media relief sculpture
23 1/2 x 28 x 3 in | 59.7 x 71.1 x 7.6 cm
(ADZNY004)









Long Line Bra with Dried Roses and Dress Patterns, 2014
mixed media sculpture
4 1/2 x 5 3/4 x 23 1/4 in | 11.4 x 14.6 x 59.1 cm
(ADZNY007)

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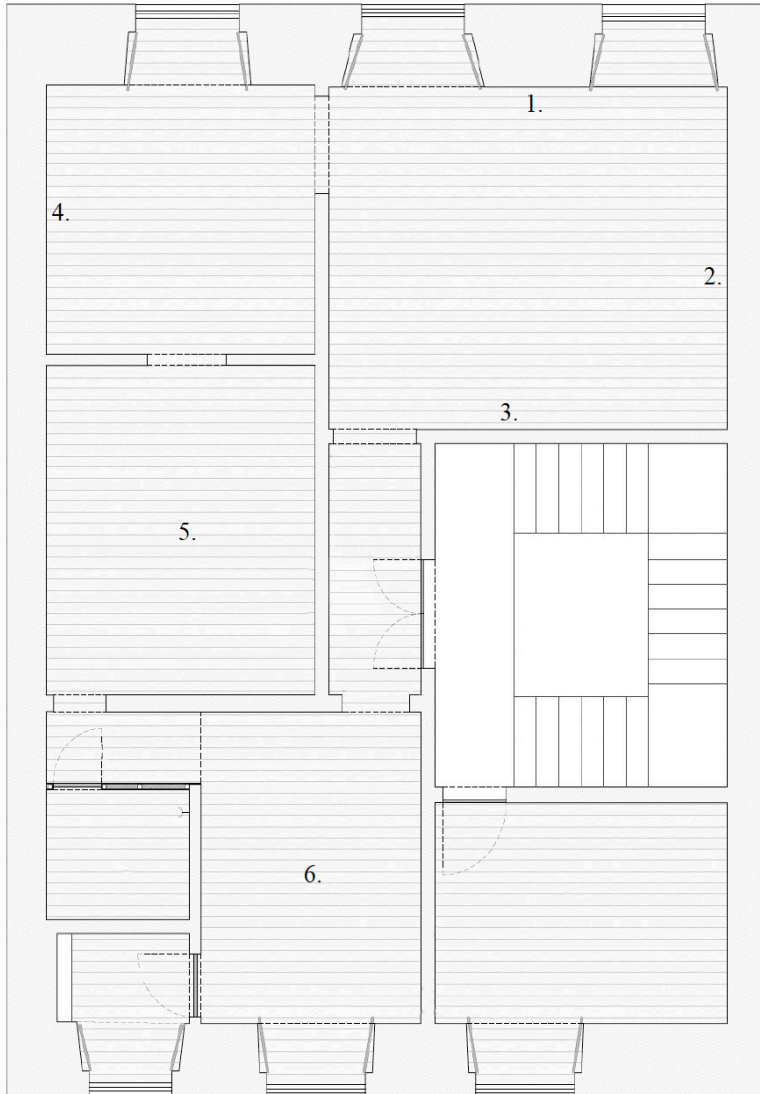




Rolling Pin with Pearls & Tiny Porcelain Doll, 2016
mixed media sculpture
3 x 15 1/2 x 3 in | 7.6 x 39.4 x 7.6 cm
(ADZNY006)

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