

JULIE COCKBURN

TELLING IT SLANT

12 September - 2 November, 2019

**Private View and Book Launch:
Wednesday 11 September, 6-8PM**

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In the nineteenth century, long before the current era of fake news, Emily Dickinson wrote a meditation on truth in her poem *Tell all the Truth but Tell it Slant*. With a title alluding to the poem, this exhibition of Julie Cockburn's latest work similarly excavates authentic stories by circuitous means. Using a rich material language, Cockburn embarks on a visual journey to delicately reveal narrative histories and layered meanings in lost and discarded images.

Cockburn's work centres around found photographs - sourcing archetypal images of people, objects and places such as formal studio portraits from the 1940s and 50s, long-forgotten holiday snaps, and amateur landscape and still life photography. Cockburn partially obscures the images in a process she describes as "paradoxically unmasking" their intrinsic truths, layering and embellishing them with exquisitely hand-crafted embroidery, beading, vibrant screen printing and gestural flurries of paint.

Cockburn overlays the images with recurring patterns of shapes including spots, kaleidoscopes, Venn diagrams, harlequins, flower heads, and cages, formally balanced with the existing composition in response to imagined internal dialogues. In this exhibition, enlarged prints of portrait sitters are given newfound vigour by dazzling polka dot veils, while groups of figures are entwined by pixel-like interlocking geometric grids of embroidered thread. Other figures and objects are lassoed with draped strings of beads and fibre braids or combined with a surrealist enamel cloudscape. Working with the moving image for the first time, *The Five Senses* offers a discomfiting viewpoint, aligning the entrapment of a rigid sitter in the photographic portrait with the animated movements of a captured insect.

Originally trained as a sculptor, Cockburn's material transformation of two-dimensional found photographs releases them from their temporal suspension as images of the past and delivers them into the present with a newfound physical resonance. Cockburn's meticulous attention to craft and celebration of the 'handmade' can be seen as a rejection of the processes and ideals of generic mass-production, rendering physically worn objects precious again and freighted with different values. Through her imaginative interventions and careful reexamination of the photographic object, Cockburn presents a slower experience of viewing images and a visceral alternative to today's fast-paced, immaterial digital culture.

The exhibition coincides with a new book *Stickybeak*, the first comprehensive monograph on the artist's work published by Chose Commune in September 2019. www.chosecommune.com



Armour, 2019,
Hand embroidery and ink on found photograph





Clockwise from left: *Feed the Birds (Man)*; *Feed the Birds (Women)* both 2019, C type print of found photograph, glass beads; *Yodel*, 2019, hand embroidery on found photograph; *Blue Face (Man)*, 2019, enamel on found photograph.

ABOUT JULIE COCKBURN

Julie Cockburn currently lives and works in Suffolk, UK. She studied at Chelsea College of Art and Central St Martins College of Art and Design, and she has exhibited extensively in the UK, Europe and the United States, including the Museum of Modern Art, Arnhem, NL; Yale Center for British Art, USA; BALTIC 39, Newcastle; New Art Gallery, Walsall; MAC, Birmingham; Nottingham Castle Museum and Art Gallery, Nottingham, UK; and Pôle Image Haute-Normandie, Rouen, France. Her work has been selected for the Jerwood Drawing Prize in 2007, 2010 and 2015; the John Moores Painting Prize 2012 and 2016; and is included in the collections of Yale Center for British Art; The Wellcome Collection; British Land; Caldic Collection; and Pier 24; as well as numerous private collections.

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Exhibition opening hours: Tuesday - Saturday 10am - 6pm.

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