

KLEA McKENNA

S H I F T *a change / a simple dress / a unit of labor*

September 7 - November 9, 2019

Conversation: Friday, October 25, 2019, 6-8pm

between Klea McKenna and Leah Ollman (The Los Angeles Times)

EUQINOM Gallery is thrilled to present *SHIFT*, an exhibition of new work by Klea McKenna. This is McKenna's second solo exhibition with the gallery and includes unique works made in the last year, an evolution of her ongoing series *Generation*.

McKenna utilizes the photogram process, a direct-contact technique whereby photographic paper physically meets its subject and records the mark of an interaction. She innovates within this technique to not only record light and shadow, but to translate touch and texture into visible imprints. In darkness, objects are transcribed to analog light-sensitive paper using a combination of the pressure of the artist's hand, an etching press and a flashlight. McKenna's "photographic rubbings" and "photographic reliefs" are embossed with the patterns of textiles and natural artifacts, transforming the paper into sculptural images – her own technique, which is driven by risk and experimentation.

The works in *SHIFT* continue McKenna's ongoing series made from textiles and women's clothing from the last 200 years. Fraying fibers and unraveling embroidery imprint their flaws onto photographic paper in crystalline detail. This work and the accompanying book *Generation* address the history and cultures from which these fabrics originate and the stories of colonialism, migration, cultural appropriation, and women's labor and sexuality



that are embedded in them. McKenna begins each piece by thoroughly researching her subject and studying the object before poetically reinterpreting its form. Textiles carry a rich legacy of touch—from the labor of their making to signs of gradual wear, alteration and reuse. McKenna seeks out textiles that have been deconstructed both by time and by the human hand. The act of embossing stretches the photographic paper, creating ripples and folds that intersect with the imagery of fabric. The resulting pieces revel in imperfection, emphasizing deterioration, decay and signs of this haptic interaction.

In these recent works McKenna loosens the boundaries, allowing for more personal expression. Photographic toners (liquid copper, sepia and selenium) create warm earth tones while hand drawn

lines and streaks of light animate the subjects. In the newest examples, McKenna introduces plants, specific to the region from which the textiles originate, using the shadows and patterns of the leaves as a context for the textiles. Three of the pieces represent figurative imagery (inherent in the textile), including a female figure, animals and mythological figures. Working in darkness, McKenna builds these images up layer by layer, creating unique, large-scale photograms that contain the paradox of gestural abstraction and detailed evidence.

Also on view is a 40 foot mural entitled *Life Hours*, comprised of found imagery depicting women from diverse cultures and eras making fabric. This photographic mural, on the exterior of the gallery, is a temporary installation that accompanies the exhibition inside. It is intended as an offering to the invisible labor that is ever-present in the objects that surround us – both the precious and the mundane. The title refers to the infinite hours of finite life that women (historically, presently, locally and globally) pour into making the materials we all live with. While the conditions of textile production are not universal, the archetypal act of making fabric shares meaning and gestures.



About Klea McKenna

McKenna was born in Freestone, CA in 1980 and received a BA from the University of California in Santa Cruz and an MFA from the California College of the Arts. Recent exhibitions include: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA; Contemporary Jewish Museum, San Francisco, CA; Heckscher Museum of Art, Huntington, NY; Museum of Photographic Arts, San Diego, CA. Public collections include: The Victoria & Albert Museum, London, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA; Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Santa Barbara, CA; Mead Art Museum, Amherst, MA; Peabody Essex Museum, MA; and the US Embassy, Republic of Suriname, Art in Embassies, US Department of State. She is the daughter of renegade ethnobotanists, Kathleen Harrison and Terence McKenna. Klea lives in San Francisco with her husband and their young daughter.

About Euqinom

Founded in 2015, EUQINOM Gallery (formerly EUQINOMprojects) represents emerging and mid-career contemporary artists. The gallery is focused on presenting multidisciplinary work that expands the boundaries of photo-based practices. Ranging from the ephemeral to the documentary the program champions work that is rigorous in process and practice and demonstrates a lively engagement with photo and art histories.

Director Monique Deschaines is a curator, gallerist, and educator. She is on the Board of Directors at SF Camerawork. Prior to founding EUQINOM Gallery, Deschaines was Associate Director at Haines Gallery. She has her MFA in photography from the San Francisco Art Institute and her BFA from the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston and at Tufts University, Cambridge.

Image Credit: Klea McKenna, *Faceless Immortals (1)*, 2019. Unique photographic relief. Copyright Klea McKenna, courtesy Euqinom Gallery, San Francisco.