SIMON LEE

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MAI-THU PERRET: FLOWERS IN THE EYE

15 SEPTEMBER – 17 OCTOBER 2020
SIMON LEE GALLERY, NEW YORK

Simon Lee Gallery, New York is proud to present an exhibition of new ceramics and tapestries by Swiss artist, Mai-Thu Perret. This will be Perret's fifth show with Simon Lee Gallery and her first at the New York space.

Known for her multi-disciplinary practice that engages installation, performance, sculpture, ceramics and textiles, Perret derives inspiration from a range of twentieth-century avant-garde and radical art movements, including Dada, Constructivism and Bauhaus design. An interest in the work of 19th century polymath William Morris has provided fruitful ground for Perret. Morris' anti-capitalist ideology and vision of a utopian socialist future reflects the fictionalised women-only commune that has been central to Perret's practice for the past two decades. *The Crystal Frontier* explores the lives of an autonomous community who have abandoned Western neoliberal society for the remote desert of South Western New Mexico, envisaged by the artist as a refuge from the ills of capitalism and patriarchal convention. Like Morris, Perret engages with the promise of an ideological agenda that promotes egalitarian human relationships.

Perret's ceramics are at once representational and abstract, morphing from geometric shapes into figurative forms found within the fictive universe of *The Crystal Frontier*. In new ceramic wall reliefs and baskets, she invokes the plastic nature of clay, a tactile material that loses its elasticity once it is fired in the kiln yet never escapes its relationship to the artist's intuitive touch. In this way, the ceramics are intimately connected with the body, each composition at once figurative and painterly due to its gestural facture. Perret plays with dichotomies: the relationship between hard and soft, edges and curves, are explored in these works that examine classic typologies of the genre, such as Attic pots and vases, gesturing towards traditional function without losing sight of formal innovation. She recycles materials so that in two rectangular ceramics the knotted coils that decorate their surfaces are leftovers from the production of the baskets, playing with the regenerative properties of clay, which can be re-formed endlessly before it is fired.

Two new tapestries, made in Mexico on a high-warp loom, are based on water-colors painted by Perret. The tension between fluidity and geometry in their compositions reflects the ways in which her materials intersect; the basket weaving technique used in the ceramic pieces relates directly to tapestry craft practice. In this way, Perret blends the traditional and artisanal with a postmodern aesthetic that fundamentally questions communal identity.

26 EAST 64TH STREET
NEW YORK, NY 10065
M: +1 646 824 9249
info@simonleegallery.com

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NOTES TO EDITORS

About Mai-Thu Perret
Mai-Thu Perret was born in 1976 in Geneva, Switzerland and studied at Cambridge University, Cambridge, UK and the Whitney Independent Study Program, New York, NY. In 2018 she was the recipient of the Paul Boesch Art Prize, Bern Switzerland. Recent solo exhibitions include Simon Lee Gallery, Hong Kong (2020); Badischer Kunstverein, Karlsruhe, Germany (2019); Spike Island, Bristol, UK (2019); MAMCO, Geneva, Switzerland (2018); Nasher Sculpture Center, Dallas, TX (2016); Kunsthaus Aarau, Aarau, Switzerland (2011); MAMCO, Geneva, Switzerland (2011); Le Magasin, Grenoble, France (2011) and The Renaissance Society, Chicago, IL (2006). In 2011 she took part in *ILLUMInations* at the 54th Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy, curated by Bice Curiger. Her work is housed in major international collections including Bonnefanten Museum, Maastricht, The Netherlands; Kunsthaus Zürich, Zurich, Switzerland; Marciano Art Foundation, Los Angeles, CA; Rubell Family Collection, Miami, FL and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA.

About Simon Lee Gallery
Founded in London in 2002, Simon Lee Gallery represents artists of diverse generations whose practices explore a wide range of media, from sculpture and painting to video and photography, and who share a broad interest in an exploration of the conceptual. Aiming to provide a significant international audience for its artists, the gallery also regularly punctuates its programme with historical exhibitions and curated group shows, which present shifts in contemporary art practice and thought, whilst broadening the dialogue with artists outside of the gallery's core programme. In addition to its UK activity, in 2012 the gallery opened a space in Hong Kong, which introduced its artists to a wider public in Asia, with a fully independent programme. In 2014, Simon Lee Gallery opened an office and private viewing space in New York. In 2017, this space was re-launched with a year-round programme of exhibitions and events, showcasing the work of emerging and established artists in dynamic group and solo exhibitions.

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www.simonleegallery.com

Image: Shattered and shimmering, the moon in the water, 2020, 12 x 53 x 53 cm (4 3/4 x 20 7/8 x 20 7/8 in.). Courtesy of the artist and Simon Lee Gallery.

For further press information, images and requests please contact Zoe Gorell: zoe@simonleegallery.com / +44 (0) 207 491 0100.