

KATE MACGARRY

Rose Finn-Kelcey

14 February - 4 April 2020

Kate MacGarry is pleased to present a solo exhibition of works by Rose Finn-Kelcey (1945-2014). The exhibition will focus on key pieces from the 70's and 80's, exploring a breadth of work central to Finn-Kelcey's practice. She first came to prominence in the early 1970s as an artist central to the emerging communities of performance and Feminist art in the UK. The nature of Finn-Kelcey's work is richly diverse, both in form and subject matter, however it is consistently conceptual and "characterised by a dry wit that belies the formidable intelligence and deep humanity that drove her practice". She deftly offers humour as a point of access into her work, allowing a wide and varied audience to consider topics as varied as life, death and spirituality communicated with great depth and profundity.

Finn-Kelcey was involved in different forms of social and political activism, communicated in particular in her series of 'flagworks'. The flags, which she described as 'wind-dependent objects', are sculpted by the unpredictable environmental variables they encounter, the position of the spectator and their performative messages. *Here is a Gale Warning* (1971), was flown from the top of Alexandra Palace which was, at the time, both an exhibition space and broadcasting station for BBC2. The installation triggered a considerable response from worried callers who jammed the BBC switchboard as a result.

In the mid-1970s, Finn-Kelcey began staging performances. *One for Sorrow Two for Joy* (1976) for example, was presented over two days and nights in the window of Acme Gallery in Covent Garden and featured the artist alongside a pair of magpies who's calls were broadcast to passing onlookers. The performance was a direct response to Joseph Beuys' habitation with a coyote, *I Love America, America Loves Me*, and signalled her early interest in making work which transitory and ephemeral. The magpies symbolised Finn-Kelcey's alter-ego, a mythical female species associated with witchcraft and mischief, and represented the search for her role as a female artist in a male-dominated art world.

One of the most publicly known works *The Restless Image: a discrepancy between the seen position and the felt position* created in 1975, portrays the artist doing a handstand on a beach near Dungeness, UK. It appears to be an act of exuberance, an impulsive gesture, but the work's subtitle suggests a divergence between the lived experience of the subject and what is presented to the viewer. In 1980 she introduced the idea of a 'vacated performance' in an effort to express a desire to be both 'inside' and yet objectively 'outside' a work. This involved combining live-action and recorded elements as part of an installation and was epitomised in exhibitions *Mind the Gap* (1980) and *Glory* (1983) staged at the ICA and Serpentine Gallery respectively.

In the early 1990s Finn-Kelcey challenged the material and spiritual limits of the built environment with works such as *Steam Installation*, a room sized block of steam held in place by cold air curtains, exhibited in 1992 at Chisenhale Gallery and again in 1993 as part of *Young British Artists Part 2* at the Saatchi Gallery. The work visually dramatised tensions between opposing forces, holding nature in suspension.

Rose Finn-Kelcey lived and worked in London. Exhibitions include *Bureau De Change*, Tate Britain, 2019; Dhaka Art Summit 18, Bangladesh, 2018; *Rose Finn-Kelcey: Life, Belief and Beyond*, Modern Art Oxford, 2017; *It Is Just A Beginning*, National Gallery of Modern and

Contemporary Art, Rome, 2018; *Sculptors' Papers from the Henry Moore Institute Archive*, Whitechapel Art Gallery, 2015; *Keywords: Art, Culture & Society in 1980s Britain*, Tate Liverpool, 2014.

Her work has been included in group exhibitions at Tate Britain, permanent collection re-hang, London, 2014; *Modern British Sculpture*, The Royal Academy of Art, London, 2011; *Live in your Head: Concept and Experiment in Britain 1965-75*, Whitechapel Gallery, London, 2000; *Young British Artists Part 2*, The Saatchi Gallery, London, 1993; Documenta IX, Kassel, Germany, 1992; *Out of Actions: Between Performance and the Object 1949-1979*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, 1998; New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York, 1987.

This exhibition is curated by Andrée Cooke, Artistic Executor for the Estate of Rose Finn-Kelcey and artist and curator Simon Moretti.