

KATE MACGARRY

J Blackwell
R.O.I./J.O.M.O.

11 January–8 February 2020

Kate MacGarry is pleased to announce *R.O.I./J.O.M.O.*, an exhibition of new works by J Blackwell. In a world where anxieties over diminishing resources are a constant refrain, holding entities to account threatens to supersede other values. *R.O.I./J.O.M.O.* (return on investment/joy of missing out) considers where art fits in this austere moral landscape. The exhibition presents new works incorporating plastic bags in a variety of permutations accompanied by an organ recital by the artist's great uncle John C. Winter at the Farrell Recital Hall, Marie State University, KY in 1975. Blackwell has collected plastic carrier bags since 2004, amassing a supply of material that sits ambiguously between waste and necessity.

The impulse to embrace excess has been described as Maximalist. It can also be understood as queer. Confounding distinctions such as real/fake, enough/too much, or innocuous/toxic, the works combine organic materials such as wool or silk yarn with the explicitly synthetic plastic bag. Hybridity and complexity are revealed in the undulating patterns and supersaturated colours of the “net” pieces hung on the wall. Heterodox methods including embroidery, knitting, weaving and darning are collaged together yielding the lumpish mask-like objects called “Neveruses.”

Jonathan Griffin writes: “Blackwell’s work is never preachy or pious, and it avoids such on-trend terms as ‘upcycling’”. Instead, by reinventing materials that are seen as both environmentally toxic and morally compromised [they] claim a space for [their] own conception of beauty and pleasure, one that is not hampered by concerns with social morality, but rather is guided by private conviction.... As such [the work] is profoundly democratic, and joyously hopeful in the resourcefulness of the creative individual.”¹

J Blackwell was born in 1977 in New Orleans, USA. They live and work in Bennington, Vermont, USA where they are a Faculty Member in Visual Arts at Bennington College. In 2016 they completed a residency at the Josef and Anni Albers Foundation, New Haven, CT and, in the same year, their work was the subject of a solo exhibition, *Neveruses Report Progress*, at the Museum of Art and Design, New York. In 2020 Blackwell will have a solo exhibition at the Bennington Museum entitled *Neveruses: Beyond*.

R.O.I./J.O.M.O is part of CONDO 2019, a large-scale collaborative exhibition of international galleries where host galleries share their spaces with visiting galleries. This year Kate MacGarry is hosting Galerie Barbara Weiss, Berlin who is presenting an exhibition of works by Susanne PAesler. The initiative encourages the evaluation of existing models, pooling resources and acting communally to propose an environment that is more conducive for experimental gallery exhibitions to take place internationally.

1. Jonathan Griffin, *Vitamin T: Threads and Textiles in Contemporary Art*, Phaidon Press 2019 p66