

LAUREL GITLEN

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KATE NEWBY
We are such stuff

SEPTEMBER 7 – OCTOBER 15, 2022
OPENING RECEPTION WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 6-8 PM

A plastic shopping bag waves like a flag caught in a tree; a flag printed with a bit of found language hangs high in the air from a balcony across from a former Masonic lodge occupied by Kate Newby's installations. A red rope is threaded through the roof of a Brutalist building, a scarlet line drawing the eye. Maybe. Or, maybe you miss it. Ropes dangle outside from the roof of Laurel Gitlen's space here. Inside, they're threaded with blown glass tubes, a horizon directing the gaze beyond the gallery walls. About the bag Kate wrote, "It was having the time of its life... flying past the rules and regulations of the city. Not a bad model for art in the world. Why not let it fly instead of fitting into these narrow spaces."

She draws attention to small, radically slight elements we might ignore. Our vision works to bundle information, so what we expect to see we don't have to focus on, not precisely. These will be things like a can's pull-tab, a gum scab or a graffitied heart with initials, TC and JL, say. They can all be found in Newby's work. She'll also make bricks, cement ramps, porcelain pebbles and clay tiles that quote human interventions in the urban landscape. The word's origin means to shape the land, and she creates poetic responses to specific spaces and locations. Outside a gallery a puddle looks like a repair to the pavement, or bricks fill in abandoned planters outside the Palais de Tokyo. At the Kunsthalle Wien, what looks like a drainage ditch is rendered in handmade clay tiles, a line limned in the grass just beyond the gallery windows.

Now, look outside. The colored rope leads the eye to the window. The window opens to the cityscape, and in the distance boulders sit on roofs. The boulders beg a question, are they really there? Newby has made the rocks from clay. Chris Kraus writes that her work, "is by no means an arbitrarily bland 'intervention' upon what we call 'architecture.' Lines that were always there appear as if out of nowhere [...] Looked at this way, the slightness of Kate Newby's work becomes monumental." Or, put another way, curator Mami Kataoka calls it, "The most reserved but radical way of transcending the fixed architectural space for contemporary art."

Her installations bear the marks of their making, as if a diary of their creation but also capturing the haphazard and handmade sense of the city itself, like ramping of cement and tarmac. Newby twists fibers collected from thrift stores into ropes, creates her own bronze fixtures, and mixes custom ceramic glazes, where outcomes are more unpredictable and unknown. The wall tiles *I hate and love* have been fired with bits of broken glass collected on the streets near the gallery. Newby, Gitlen and her children all gathered pieces, and bending over—staring at the ground—comes with its own demands of awareness, noticing human interventions on a small scale. Now transformed into a skin on the wall, the grassy green glow

comes from a San Pellegrino bottle; a shattered mirror from Newby's old Greenpoint apartment was sprinkled with minerals before firing and coruscates with a dappled chartreuse light. Lines of curved clay tiles climb another wall. In a sense, they are Newby herself, or a self-portrait, the tiles cast from her forearms and thighs. She had to sit still for hours to make them. She couldn't move, couldn't even read. They become a journal of her time, held in this place. That is her attention, her presence, on the wall.

Her work asks for awareness. Her pocket works, an ongoing series for more than a decade, began with gallery attendants. The pieces are an assemblage of the sort of stuff you might have in your pocket now, a piece of beach glass, an acorn, a match stick, but cast in bronze or silver or made of porcelain. They were meant to be private, for the guards to hold in their pockets, to take home and live with, creating an intimate experience of a piece the public might not see. The work also asked for attunement, the awareness itself being the point. Like all her work, the series asks questions too about where art is and how it is shown, of what spaces it is allowed to occupy. Asking these questions comes with radical possibilities of what might be art or how we encounter it.

Once you see Newby's work, drawing out what she calls, "the small often vague things," the world blazes anew. It's held in landscapes: A steel plate covering a hole in the pavement, some asphalt mounded to smooth the edges or a puddle in the street...

- Jennifer Kabat (August 2022)

Kate Newby and Jennifer Kabat are frequent collaborators. In addition to contributing essays to two books on Newby's work in 2019 and 2013, Kabat penned a feature on Kate Newby for *Frieze Magazine* in 2014. The two also collaborated on exhibitions in 2014-15: in 2015 they mounted *The January, February, March* an outdoor installation of Newby's works accompanied by a walking tour narrated by Kabat in Margaretville, NY and in 2014 they made *The Place of The Bridge*, a work for *The Promise*, at the Arnolifini in Bristol where a text by Kabat was accompanied by Newby's images.

Kate Newby (b. Aotearoa New Zealand, lives and works in Floresville, TX) has exhibited widely and internationally. Recent solo exhibitions include the Adam Art Gallery, Wellington, NZ; the lumber room, Portland, OR; and the Kunsthalle Wien; as well as gallery shows with Galerie Art: Concept, Paris; Fine Arts, Sydney; Cooper Cole, Toronto; The Sunday Painter, London; and Michael Lett, Auckland. Newby has been included in recent museum exhibitions at Artpace, San Antonio; the Palais de Tokyo, Paris; the Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris; the Hessel Museum of Art, Bard College, Annandale, NY; and SculptureCenter, Queens, NY. Newby has been the recipient of numerous awards including a Joan Mitchell Painters & Sculptors Grant, The Walters Prize and residencies at the Chinati Foundation and Fogo Island Arts.

Jennifer Kabat's books *Gentian* and *Nightshining* will be published by Milkweed Editions in 2024. Awarded a Warhol Foundation Arts Writers Grant for her criticism, she has written for *Frieze*, *Granta*, *BOMB*, *Harper's*, *The Believer* and *McSweeney's* and been included in Best American Essays. She lives in rural upstate New York and teaches in the Design Research MA program at SVA.

Please contact the gallery, office@laurelgitlen.com for further information or images.

*The entrance to the gallery is on East Broadway at the rear door of the Apple Bank Building. There is an elevator in the building. Please contact the gallery for access to the ramp.