

Press Release

Exhibition: Sweet Plums

Recent works and site-specific installation by Susan Stockwell

Opening: Saturday 17th October 2015 6-9 pm

Exhibition dates: 14th October to 14th November 2015

Patrick Heide Contemporary Art is delighted to announce Susan Stockwell's solo exhibition 'Sweet Plums.' The British artist unwinds the recurring themes and motives of her work and practice, considering a range of issues including identity, geo-politics, migration and trade. Subverting and appropriating maps, money and a selection of everyday household objects, these works suggest the 'other,' a separateness. By using embroidery, silk and other delicate fabrics, Stockwell highlights both femininity and the heirloom, private and family intimacy; things that are often taken for granted until lost.

Curator Grace Chung describes the works gently revealing nature: 'Accumulation, transformation, detritus, debris, everyday materials are all recurrent themes in Stockwell's work. Meticulously hand crafted, the benign sublime beauty in the work belies the devastating effects of our culture and our role in shaping it. Look more closely, and one is confronted by a cultural urgency of global-proportions. Political and cultural colonisation, globalize waste and consumption are reconfigured by Stockwell's work into a new festering eco system of meaning that slowly seeps like the rising ocean level.'

A new body of work made from old silk bobbins and thread spans the main wall of the upstairs gallery. Red strings of wool, cotton and elastic run parallel, intersect and end up in junctions at which they take on new directions. Stockwell subtly interrogates the value of these items, their travels from various places and their historical significance, tracing them back to colonial trade. The mapped out routes could be underground lines or pins on a map of personal memories. On a more universal perspective they also document larger scale migrations, a pressing question of our time while we are facing one of the largest migrations in recent history and the issue of open borders is again in question.

A selection of the work in 'Sweet Plums' was developed during Stockwell's recent residency at the Royal Shakespeare Company. These pieces were partly inspired by Shakespeare's plays, Othello and the Merchant of Venice and again she plays with questions concerning trade, material, power and social condition. Used handkerchiefs are stained with coffee and embroidered with images drawn from 16th century maps of London, Stratford and Venice or processed to a quilt (*To Die Upon a Kiss*). The downstairs gallery will be mostly taken over by an installation of sails, an adaption of the site-specific presentation of the work in the atrium of the Royal Shakespeare Theatre. It includes appropriated sails, alongside sails formed from packaging material for food goods traded around the world. The staging engages the viewer physically by obstructing the way into the gallery space and forces the viewers to navigate their own way while reflecting upon their own journeys.

Susan Stockwell has recently exhibited at TATE Modern and the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, The Katonah Museum of Art in America and The National Museum of China in Beijing. Her 2014 solo project 'Sail Away' in Tate Modern's Turbine Hall as part of the HYPERLINK Festival has had much critical acclaim as well as her recent solo exhibition 'Sea-Markings' at the Royal Shakespeare Company. She has been awarded scholarships, and commissions such as a Visiting Arts Taiwan-England Artists Fellowship and large commissions for the University of Bedfordshire, Black Rock Investments and the RSC.

Parallel to 'Sweet Plums' Stockwell participates in a group exhibition in New York that is taking cartography and mapping as a starting point to communicate concepts of personal identity, politics, and culture (*If You Lived Here, You'd Be Home* at the Children's Museum of Art in New York is on view until 17th January 2016). Moreover, Susan's work will be on view at the Llantarnam Arts Centre in Torfaen, Wales from 31st October 2015 to 2nd January 2016.