

Between You and Me
4 Nov–17 Dec 2022
PV: Thurs 3 Nov, 6–8pm

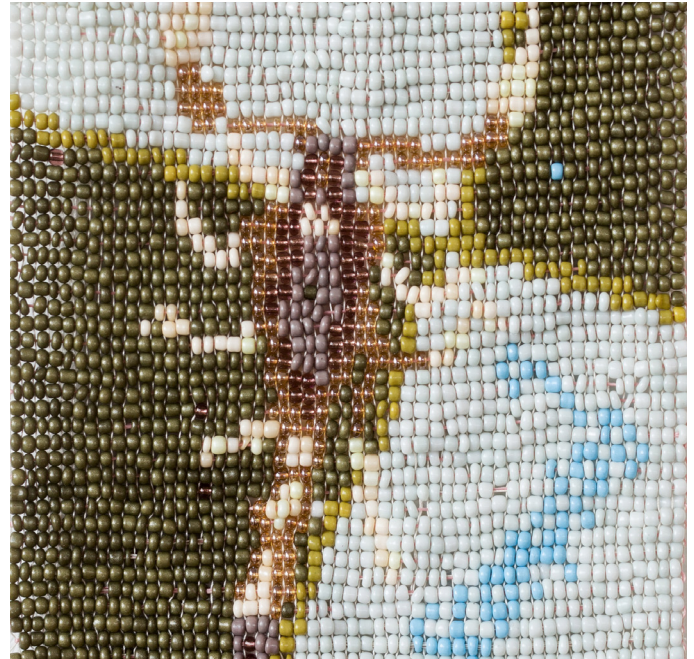


Image credit:
Veerle Melis, *Postcards from Spain (detail)*, 2021.
Courtesy of the artist.

San Mei Gallery is pleased to present *Between You and Me*, a group exhibition featuring works by Boon & Baum, Gray Wielebinski, Louis Blue Newby & Laila Majid, Madeleine Pledge, Steph Huang, and Veerle Melis.

Marking the five-year anniversary of the gallery, this exhibition brings together artists who have worked with San Mei Gallery or our sister space, Van Gogh House. Reflecting on the entanglements between material objects and social relationships, the artists in this exhibition explore the intimate, fleeting and fragmentary patchwork of things and people that coalesce and give form to an art space. In doing so, the exhibition emphasises the exhibition space as both a public and personal forum, informed as much by collaborations, casual conversations and friendships, as by wider contexts and historical events.

Extending across the gallery, *Stretch (after Sylvie Fleury) (red, black, white horizontal)* (2022) by Madeleine Pledge acts as a material tension point that demarcates the flow of people within the exhibition space. Positioned directly beneath, *Balaclava (+/-)* (2019), a folded balaclava and replica of a 1986 work by Rosemarie Trockel, rests on top of another of Pledge's works, *Be Soft But Not Too Soft (Michelle with Sylvie Stripes and Steep Curve)* (2022), unfired clay boots modelled on those worn by artist and friend Michelle Williams Gamaker. All three of these works directly reference other artists, self-consciously performing a politics of citation that troubles ideas around individual authorship. Pledge's work often turns to the materiality of fashion and design as a means to understand systems of production, power and authorship. *Stretch (afterimage) (crash) (September 2008)* (2022) and *Stretch (afterimage) (crash) (November 2020)* (2021) are part of an ongoing series of wall-based works created by pulping down past editions of British Vogue printed during years of economic crisis in 2008 and 2020. Reminiscent of stone, these works have been through processes of softening and hardening to reach their current sedimented and abstract form. Counter to the perceived smoothness of glamour, celebrity and capitalism, these works function as brittle disruptions of circulation and accumulation amidst cycles of boom and bust.

Echoes of economic activity can be heard throughout the exhibition, emanating from within a tomato tin can in Steph Huang's sculpture *Do you hear the people speak?* (2022). This work is one piece in a larger body of work by Huang inspired by markets and trade. The sound of people talking and chanting was collected by Huang at various markets around the world. Huang's sculptures, which incorporate

signage, stall structure, as well as rubbish and detritus, playfully combine materials to question how our collective behaviours produce a kind of surreal absurdity implicated by labour, culture and the economy. Do you hear the people speak? consists of a tomato tin hung on an abstract wooden panel, attached with a pinky glassy sausage and a speaker.

In her work, Veerle Melis often turns to repetitive manual gestures, understanding them as autodidactic processes, which draw on her own experience as a self-taught artist. *Postcards from Spain* (2021) is a series of postcards made from beads, which the artist produced during a residency in Spain. As a time-consuming and methodical object to produce, *Postcards from Spain* blurs the boundary between leisure and work, drawing on the postcard's role as a humble and intimate intermediary between places and people, as well as the ways in which constraint can offer windows for creativity.

Gray Wielebinski's work explores the intersections of mythology, identity, gender, nationhood, and memory, dissecting and transforming the visual codes and iconography that structure society. *Blind Item* (2022) turns its attention to that most trivial of things, gossip. 'Gossip does not want to be monumentalised,' argues Wielebinski. Constructed from copper plates used for newspaper printing, these works bear tangible traces of what gossip leaves behind, acting as an archive of rumour. *Blind Item* acts not as a record of any particular piece of information, but rather gestures towards rumour itself as an affective and ephemeral form of archive, one which forms the very contours of contemporary artistic production. The text featured in *Blind Item* is written by Asa Seresin.

Close-ups (2022) is one of a number of collaborative works by artist duo Boon & Baum exploring the intimate relationships we have with our clothing mapped onto social and architectural space. A monolithic wall dressed in magnified garment details, *Close-Ups* explores clothing as a form of architecture in and of itself. Over three metres tall, this imposing wall of fabric references the 16:9 aspect ratio of the contemporary mobile phone, emphasising the experience of clothing as a social space that is necessarily enmeshed within the networks of everyday life. Here, clothing can be understood less as a means of autonomous self-expression, but rather as the necessary and inevitable fabric by which we mediate between individual and collective entanglements.

Louis Blue Newby and Laila Majid engage in collaborative practice through layers of mediation that play with slippages of communication and deferrals of meaning. Their print series *Crystal 01-05* (2022) depicts a series of life-size public sculptures photographed by the artists. Belonging to the realm of fantasy, winged beasts and chimaeras are photographed in a soft, hazy light, their bodies cropped and partially concealed from view, extending beyond compositional edges. The photographs have been re-documented and printed using an instant thermal camera-printer, a process which uses heat and pressure in conjunction with heat-sensitive paper to produce text and images. The resulting monochromatic images, which have in turn been scanned, enlarged and re-printed, are composed using a finely textured, horizontal grain. With a surface texture difficult to situate, the images become displaced temporally through the various processes of documentation and mediation that Newby and Majid have used, as reprographic and photographic technologies are combined within a single, printed surface. The resulting artworks are marked by their own decomposition, bearing both archeological traces of artistic, social and material encounters, as well as speculative indeterminacy.

All the artworks in this exhibition are for sale, the profits from which will help support San Mei Gallery's 2023 programme of exhibitions and events with emerging artists. If you are interested in purchasing any of the works, please contact Eleanor Wang eleanor@sanmeigallery.co.uk. Affordable editions by many of the artists in this exhibition are also available to buy online or in person via the San Mei Gallery shop.

Notes to editors

For further information and images please contact Eden Szymura:
eden@sanmeigallery.co.uk, +44 (0) 20 7095 9771.

Press Tour

Join us on Thursday 3 November at 5pm for a Press Tour. RSVP to eden@sanmeigallery.co.uk.

Boon & Baum is the collaborative duo of Joe Boon and Anna Baumgart. Graduating from BA Fashion Design at Central Saint Martins, they went on to study the MFA in Sculpture at the Slade School of Art. Working between performance, video and architectural intervention, Boon & Baum use the language of fashion to experiment with notions of 'dressing' and 'wearing' in relation to ideas of the individual and the community. In order to extend clothing away from the body, they have dressed buildings, environments, and natural forms. Their work is often site-specific, exploring how we dress and can be dressed by a space. Positioned in the public sphere, they create spaces to play, learn and communicate through haptic interaction.

Gray Wielebinski (b. 1991 Dallas, TX, USA) lives and works in London, UK. In Wielebinski's expansive practice, incorporating video, performance, collage, installation, sculpture, and more, he explores the intersections of mythology, identity, gender, nationhood, and memory. Reconfiguring and transforming iconography and visual codes, his work seeks to navigate and question society's frameworks and belief systems. Wielebinski deftly confronts realities in order to imagine and propose alternatives. Recent exhibitions include *Testament*, Goldsmiths CCA, London (2022); *Oil and Water*, Hales Gallery, London (2021); *By Any Means*, VO Curations, London (2021); *Two Snakes*, 12.26 Gallery, Dallas (2020); *Repurposed Textiles*, Krefelder Kunstverein, Krefeld (2020); *Frieze London*, Hales Gallery, London (2020). Wielebinski's work is in the collections of Los Angeles County Museum of Art, CA, USA and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art Library & Archives, CA, USA.

Laila Majid and Louis Blue Newby live and work in London. Their collaborative practice seeks to unlock a slippery and unbounded visual language that attempts to defy easy categorisation. Recent solo shows include: *SKINFLICKS*, Xxijra Hi, London (2022); *not yet*, San Mei Gallery, London (2022); *healthy pink*, springseason, London (2020); *and hold my hand by the tail*, Transition Two, London (2019). Selected group exhibitions include: *Blue Not Blue*, Collective Ending (2022); *Sour Persimmons Chasm*, Ex Baldessarre, curated by Andy Holden (2019), and *Hydrangea*, Underground Flower, Nakhon Ratchasima (2019). In 2020, they were awarded funding for an ongoing video and prints project by the Elephant Trust, and recently received the Omni Colour Artists Award (2021). Laila Majid has also recently shown work at *Wipe Clean*, Rose Easton (2022); *New Contemporaries*, South London Gallery, London and Firstsite, Colchester (2021); *Nude*, Fotografiska, Stockholm (2021); *THEN OUTSIDE FROM NOW INSIDE*, Chaos Magic Space, Nottingham (2018). Majid graduated from her MA at the Slade School of Fine Art in 2021, and is currently studying towards an MSt in Film Aesthetics at the University of Oxford. Louis Blue Newby has recently shown work at *I Knock On Your Skin*, SET Woolwich (2022); *MELTDOWN*, Ridley Road Project Space (2022); *JUDD*, Barbican Arts Group Trust (2022); *Shape Open 2021: All Bound Together?*, Shape Arts (2021); *Picture Palace*, Transition Two, (2020); *Bloomberg New Contemporaries*, South London Gallery, London and Leeds Art Gallery, Leeds (2019); *Sour Persimmons Chasm*, Ex-Baldessarre, Bedford, September (2019); *Hydrangea*, Nakhon Ratchasima, Thailand, (2019); *Scalands*, *Coastal Currents Festival*, Hastings (2018). Newby graduated from his MA at the Slade School of Fine Art in 2022.

Madeleine Pledge (b. 1993, UK) lives and works in London. Working via replicas and remakes, she often uses the surfaces and structures of fashion and design to approach bodies as subjects and objects within systems of production and power. Strategically borrowing from a lineage of artistic production including Sylvie Fleury and Rosemarie Trockel, objects from the cultural imaginary surrounding figures like Christine Keeler, and the 'artist uniform' of colleague and friend Michelle Williams Gamaker, her work attempts to find and hold space between the repetitive tyranny of capitalist production and fictions of individualised authorship and artistic originality. Selected exhibitions include *The London Open*, Whitechapel Gallery, London (2022); *Weaponized Glamour*, Case Study Project Space, London (2021) (two-person exhibition with Alice Channer); *On the Western Window Pane*, Van Gogh House, London (2021); *Like a Sieve*, Kupfer, London (2020); *Stretch*, Flatland Projects, Hastings (solo); *The Weather Garden: Anne Hardy curates the Arts Council Collection*, Towner Eastbourne (2019); *Die Wohnung (The Dwelling)*, SET Project Space, London, (2018) (two-person exhibition with Eva Gold); *Portrait (for a screenplay) of Beth Harmon*, Tenderpixel, London (2017).

Steph Huang (b.1990, Taiwan) works and lives in London. She graduated from the Royal College of Art in 2021, where she studied Sculpture. Poetically charged, Steph's work expresses autobiographical narratives through a process of layered storytelling. Rooted in the close observation of incidental details, the relationships objects have with each other, as well as in the eccentric moments in everyday life, her work attempts to examine something of the lives of modern human beings through mass-produced objects. Often captured through her analogue camera, these moments become trigger points for new ideas given form through assemblage. In this way, Steph's sculptural works have a lyrical quality, one where the encounter is an invitation. Previous solo exhibitions include at Goldsmith CCA, London (2022); *mother's tankstation*, London (2022); *ArtWorks Project Space*, London (2020); *Peak*, London (2020); and *4Cose*, London (2019). Selected group exhibitions include *Bloomberg New Contemporaries*, Hull and South London Gallery (2022); *Staffordshire St*, London (2022); *AplusA Gallery*, Venice (2022); *Belmacz*, London (2021); *San Mei Gallery*, London (2021); *Bloc Projects*, Sheffield (2021); *South London Gallery* (2021); *Cromwell Place*, London (2021); *Nida Art Colony of Vilnius Academy*, Lithuania (2020); *Bolton Museum*, Bolton (2019); *Podium*, Luxembourg (2019); *Alte Handelsschule*, Leipzig (2018); *Incheon Art Platform*, Seoul (2018); and *A.P.T. Gallery*, London (2017). She has received awards, including Taipei Art Prize (2022); Taipei Art Village x Arts Catalysts x Asia Platform Residency Programme (2021); Gilbert Bayes scholarship (2020); and neo:artprize (2019).

Veerle Melis (b. 1990, Tilburg, Netherlands) is a self-taught textile artist/craftsperson, currently based in Brussels. Taking inspiration from this autodidactic background, her work can be seen as an ongoing meditation on the ingenuity of (human) nature and on what it means to create. Performing countless repetitive gestures, she learns from her materials and the environment in which she works. These manual gestures, the making of a sketch, material-specific characteristics, conceptual ideas, family histories, slips of materials and attention, little mistakes and other unforeseeable events bring forth inspiration and insights that find their place in her works. Being attentive to these insightful moments leads to a belly-button understanding of and humble stance towards creative phenomena and the world's different unfoldings. Traces of these insightful moments can be found back in small technical details as well as in the thematics of her works. Recent and upcoming exhibitions include *The Lamb is Not Innocent*, duo show with Liza Prins, Hotel Maria Kapel, Hoorn, NL (2022); *Exercises for Sabotage*, duo show with Liza Prins, Van Gogh House London, UK (2022); *Prospects, Art Rotterdam*, Rotterdam, NL (2023); *Generation Brussels*, Gallery Weekend Brussels, BE (2022); *Apples & Oranges*, CIAP, Genk, BE (2021); *Salon Sale, Level Five*, Brussels, BE (2021); *Time Hangs Heavy*, with Jot Fau and Lucie Lanzini, 10N, Brussels, BE (2021); *Salon Sale, Level Five* (2020); Collectible Fair Fraca's Gallery, Brussel, BE (2020); *EYL-YUHN, EY-LEE-UHN AND MASTERPIECE*, with Liza Prins en Lidewij Sloot, The Boostore Foundation, Amsterdam, NL (2020); *Fading Mantras*, with Liza Prins, part of Kunstlijn Haarlem 2019, *Paviljoen Welgelegen*, Haarlem, NL (2019). Melis has undertaken residencies at Van Gogh House London, UK (2022) and Arteventura, Aracena, ES (2021).

San Mei Gallery

San Mei Gallery is an independent non-profit space for contemporary art in South London, committed to research-led, educational and collaborative exchanges. Operating with an artist-led approach, we support artists and curators to experiment with new ideas.