

SAY HI TO YOUR MUM FOR ME

Loni Jeffs

Maternal figures lurk nearby, as SAY HI TO YOUR MUM FOR ME disrupts the binaries and forces which have long inhibited and concealed the bodies of women. This mother exists and yet she is absent. The need to relay a simple greeting suggests she is unreachable, hidden.

Covered.

Under the red veil and printed work is an archetypal narrative, the plight of Venus, the plight of the 'every woman'. In considering Botticelli's Birth of Venus, we return to the beginning. Venus the goddess of sex, fertility and prosperity, a being born of air and water is swept onto the land of man, of earth and modesty.

In Botticelli's scene the god of the west wind Zephyrus produces an air current which carries Venus to shore. Seemingly weightless, Venus hovers atop a giant scallop shell. In what will become her most iconic state, Venus is nude. As such, the horae of spring stands eager by the water's edge. Already, this horae is in the act of covering, throwing a large, red fabric over the Goddess. The cloak of red, designed to censor, dictate and conceal this Goddess of Sex.

Centred between the water from which she was born and the earth she must inhabit, Venus' body becomes the point of intersection between pride and modesty, strength and frailty, between liberation and gendering.

Cargill's relief prints make reference to this same veil of red. An object and symbol with its own discourses, the veil maintains a presence in modern civilisation. To the western world it is perhaps most recognisable when used in marriage ceremonies. A garment to conceal, disguise and obscure the wearer for reasons of modesty and control, as was the intention for Venus.

Occupying the corner of the gallery these red veil prints, fixed to the wall by nails, indicate the garment maintains its power. While the veil as symbol may appear less often in modern society, its placement here suggests the control and obscuring of the 'every woman' is ongoing, lurking.

Cargill's prints are often bound to the wall in protest. In SAY HI TO YOUR MUM FOR ME their soft, unfocused greenery invites a sense of proximity, warmth but also confusion. As the paper lifts slightly from the wall the viewer is reminded to consider things which lay beneath. Moss itself

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is an epiphytic plant, an organism which grows directly over another. A battle occurring even in nature, in which species compromise and blur one another.

As an artform the protest poster traditionally lives a significant but short life-span. Wheat pasted to large surfaces, these works inhabit shared spaces, public walls, a constant tension as the new is placed directly over the old.

Cargill's prints, however, are not pasted. Held to the wall by metal bolts they claim the space, refusing to be covered, compromised or pulled down by man or gravity. For this structural integrity two bolts would suffice. Their abundance instead becomes a matter of style. Not unlike studded clothing, these protest posters showcase their act of resistance.

A large synthetic floating donut may be the most imposing object in the space. A kind of red herring, it takes on surreal qualities, suspended in air, and teases the viewer. Its descent and deterioration, however, is inevitable. Waiting below is a viscous and synthetic liquid, which, with the aid of time and gravity will consume the donut.

The balloon is not easily reconciled. Forcing the viewer to acknowledge that even the synthetic can deteriorate, be compromised and covered. An unnerving conclusion.

This consideration of descent links to the plight of Venus and the 'every woman'. The power of society has been relentless in its efforts to compromise and conceal the body of the goddess, the body of the 'every woman'.

SAY HI TO YOUR MUM FOR ME highlights and criticises the concept of power, relating to women, nature and the manmade. The diffused and unfocused greenery, the red veil and its intent to conceal, gravity, power and control - Cargill toys with it all. Drawing attention to the disparities between what is natural and synthetic, powerful and frail, dominant and inferior. These contradictory elements coalesce and the viewer is forced to consider these ideas not in contrast but in a state of unresolved fusion.

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