



Modern Western society is built on two, at times opposing, 'truths': that we are all individuals with agency in the world, and that we are also socialised through a common set of values and dominant cultural and political narratives that demarcate a system of conduct. The current system will protect you, as long as you abide by the 'laws' and follow the rules that are created and enforced to regulate behaviour.

*Barriers to Entry* is an exhibition by artists Chloe Bensahel and Amelia Dowling that use personal narratives and shared experiences to explore topics related to societal expectations and commonly accepted 'truths'. Through textiles, installation and performance, the works in this exhibition also interrogate the idea of boundaries or borders – whether those be geopolitical or personal – as a way to interrogate ideas of power and authority.

Challenging authority can begin by using your voice to speak out, by refusing to accept the status quo or by asking for more. Dowling's work *A Wall of Nos* combines multiple voices with her own to consider the psychological and emotional demands of saying no. There is a feminist critique here in how women are typically socialised to be agreeable and compliant, and are often told being 'nice' is more important than being assertive. How many times do we see women in positions of power being ridiculed for their voice, for being 'bossy'?

Bensahel similarly explores how language is used to control bodies in her work *Dirt, Skin and Gold*. Using old socks from her family's wardrobe, Bensahel inscribes each piece with Latin text from Leviticus in the Old Testament which translates as "*When a stranger/foreigner/alien sojourns/resides with you in your land, you shall not do them wrong.*" The sock in this context can also be interpreted as a physical boundary around the body, an item whose usefulness resides in its ability to clothe and 'civilise' us. In the context of the international refugee crisis and the continued displacement of populations, Bensahel's work is a cutting critique to how the fate of people lies in the hands of a select few who make the 'laws'.

At the heart of *Barriers to Entry* is a questioning of the tension between the private and the public, a challenge to how we as individuals operate and relate to each other within systematic forms of oppression and control. The other works in the exhibition – Bensahel's small paper weavings and Dowling's embroidered book covers – further explore these themes through a focus on personal narratives and experience through the use of text and language. Bensahel and Dowling do not seek to give answers, but rather provoke further questions about our own complicity within societal structures that control us.

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