

BOUND:

A state of being, an action in flux

9 November - 22 January

We are often told that actions speak louder than words.

An action makes visible innate impulses, intentions, anxieties and desires. There is an agency and importance rooted within our gestures. Art-making brings physicality to intention, capturing and manifesting the physical energy of an action within an art form. The state of being bound, or the act of binding, are widely accessible and understood notions which often evoke powerful imagery. Focusing upon artworks produced since the turn of the century, this exhibition invites you to contemplate how 20 artists vocalise what it means to be bound or to enact binding. Stemming across different mediums and contexts, the exhibition compiles variant examples of 'bound' to be considered concurrently, without homogenising or conflating. Immensely personal, occasionally humorous but largely elusive and provocative, the works invite speculation.

'Bound' frequents wordplay and sayings. You might declare that something was 'bound to happen', or 'bound for disaster', or perhaps you were 'too bound up' in your own thoughts to provide any reflection. The playful nature of the word is shown within Tim Lee's 'Upside-down Water Torture Chamber, Harry Houdini, 1913 (2004)'.¹ The photograph depicts Lee bound to a chair whilst reading; at first the viewer perceives his book to be upside-down, before realising Lee is hung from the ceiling and the photo is inverted to produce an illusion.² This absurdity and amusement extends to Tine Bek's exploration of material.³ Taking inspiration from a bakery's window display, 'Komfort Skulptur' (2018) imitates elaborate pastries 'in a down to earth, humorous way' through the appropriation of everyday items.⁴ Evoking both the bodily and the commercial, the work highlights how binding material in a speculative manner can be high-spirited and lighthearted. Certainly the act of 'bounding', of leaping or prancing, might recall joyful imagery of dance, of children playing or doe springing through fields. This action evokes a real sense of freedom, of fresh air, spontaneity and buoyancy.

¹ 'Upside-Down Water Torture Chamber, Harry Houdini, 1913, Tim Lee, 2004', *Tate* <<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/lee-upside-down-water-torture-chamber-harry-houdini-1913-l02686>> [Accessed 1 March 2020].

² 'Exhibitions & Events: Houdini: Art and Magic', *ArtSlant*, 2019 <<https://www.artslant.com/sf/events/show/179891-houdini-art-and-magic?tab=EVENT>> [Accessed 1 March 2020].

³ Rosie Flanagan, 'Tine Bek creates soft sculptures inspired by Danish pastries', *IGNANT*, 2019 <<https://www.ignant.com/2018/12/05/tine-bek-creates-soft-sculptures-inspired-by-danish-pastries/>> [Accessed 29 February 2020].

⁴ Claudia Fuggetti, 'Tine Bek', *Collateral*, 2019 <<https://www.collateral.al/en/tine-bek-sculptures/>> [Accessed 29 February 2020].

The notion of binding within artistic practice brings to mind traditional and arduous crafts, such as book binding or weaving. Mrinalini Mukherjee's 'Jauba' (2000) demonstrates how such established methods of working can be reimagined to produce commanding sculptural forms.⁵ Inspired by natural formations, Mukherjee's intricate binding of hemp fibres produces a tactile surface which invites closer inspection. The close-knitted nature of the work evokes a togetherness. Certainly the idea of being bound may infer homely comforts and safety, of being bundled in a tight embrace.

Shantel Liao's photographic series extends this idea of togetherness through depicting the practice of Kinbaku. Originating from Japan, 'Kinbaku' infers 'tight binding'.⁶ The act of rope binding was traditionally used to torture criminals during the Edo Period, yet it developed as a form of bondage and masochism within the 20th Century.⁷ The practice often brings forth an intensely intimate connection between people, a closeness that goes beyond the erotic to become empowering or invigorating for those that partake. The body shown within 'the way we love no.7' (2018) appears vulnerable yet energised, suspended and contorted within a complex web of rope. Liao uses photography and mixed-media calligraphy,⁸ to voice her fascination with 'the power of identity [and] how it shapes us in various ways'.⁹ Today it is widely acknowledged how identity is not bound but constantly shifting and merging. Despite contemporary society being more accepting of this, discrimination and longstanding ills relating to fictitious categorisations continue to shape opinion. The palatable tension of the work implores an urgency.

Fundamentally, many of the artworks within this exhibition are fraught with concern and severity. Being bound is potentially sinister, implying a forced limitation or entrapment. Despite focusing on works of the past two decades, historic concerns are prominent. Many of the artists reflect upon the resonance of past inequalities and traumas. Using a bold and gestural layering of paint,¹⁰ Enrico Riley's work was motivated 'by the proliferation of news

⁵ 'Jauba, Mrinalini Mukherjee, 2000', *Tate* <<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/mukherjee-jauba-t14458>> [Accessed 20 February 2020].

⁶ Alexander NawaRonin and Natasha NawaTaNeko, 'About Kinbaku', *discoverkinbaku.com* <<https://discoverkinbaku.com/en/about-kinbaku/>> [Accessed 29 February 2020].

⁷ Brooke Larsen, 'Unraveling the Mysteries of Kinbaku, the Erotic Art of Japanese Rope Bondage', *Gaijinpot Blog*, 2020 <<https://blog.gaijinpot.com/uncut/unraveling-the-mysteries-of-kinbaku-the-erotic-art-of-japanese-rope-bondage/>> [Accessed 29 February 2020].

⁸ 'Vernissage: Shantel Liao', *Karada House*, 2019 <<https://karada-house.de/2019/11/23/vernissage-shantel-liao/>> [Accessed 29 February 2020].

⁹ Shantel Liao, 'About', *shantelliao.com* <<http://www.shantelliao.com/about>> [Accessed 20 February 2020].

¹⁰ 'Enrico Riley, New World Exhibition', *Jenkins Johnson Gallery*, 2019 <<http://www.jenkinsjohnsongallery.com/exhibitions/enrico-riley-new-world?view=slider#2>> [Accessed 29 February 2020].

stories [showing] violence against African-Americans'.¹¹ While prompted by contemporary ongoings, Riley draws upon various reference points, stemming from the 16th-19th century transatlantic slave trade to lynchings which continued into the 20th century. The paintings converge recognisable symbols from throughout history, suggesting a coexistence between past and present violence.¹² Unnerving and jolting, Riley's works force the viewer to consider how oppressive and racist practices of the past resonate within contemporary society.¹³ Within Britain, the resurgence of national sovereignty and dominance in light of Brexit highlights how territorial limits and national boundaries often prevail over the wellbeing and welfare of people. The focal point for many works is the depiction of a solitary bound figure or object, which makes one question: 'who is in control of the binding?'

Through foregrounding 'bound' the exhibition challenges you to look beyond your immediate assumptions of the term, and reflect upon how this contemplation might be applied to other everyday words. The works invite you to question how we make sense of the world, urging you to be open to alternative perspectives. Perhaps you might view a piece not as incorporating the nature of being bound, but rather as knotting or entangling. Through positioning the works in fluid dialogue with one another, without thematic or didactic arrangement, the exhibition hopes to encourage varying interpretation and multi-vocality.

The gallery will hold weekly discussions to aid active listening and introspection. Each week will invite different artists, gallery staff or community members with particular stakes in artworks shown. These individuals will not lead the sessions, but will partake and infuse the conversation with their insights. Please check our website for the schedule, or ask at reception.

¹¹ Andrew Shea, 'Enrico Riley's Cycled Histories', *The New Criterion*, 2019 <<https://newcriterion.com/blogs/dispatch/enrico-rileys-cycled-histories>> [Accessed 29 February 2020].

¹² 'Enrico Riley', *Wall Street International*, 2019 <<https://wsimag.com/art/50152-enrico-riley>> [Accessed 29 February 2020].

¹³ 'New York Galleries: what to see right now', *nytimes.com*, 2019 <<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/13/arts/design/new-york-galleries-what-to-see-right-now.html>> [Accessed 29 February 2020].