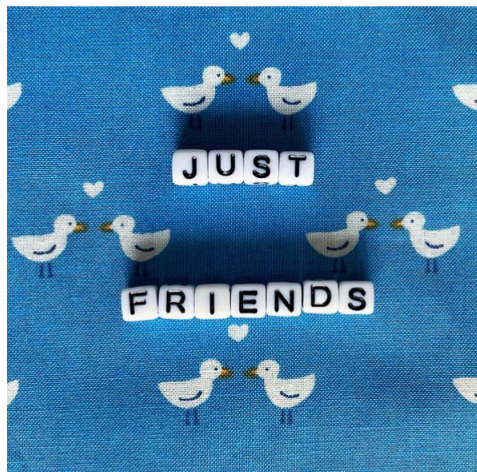


Bockley Gallery



Maggie Thompson: Just Friends

Exhibition: July 21 through August 27, 2022

Bockley Gallery is pleased to welcome Maggie Thompson (Fond du Lac Ojibwe) for her first engagement with the gallery. Her solo exhibition, *Just Friends*, shares an intimate body of five new works that process love and its aftermaths.

Thompson's multimedia works are known for expanding various textile traditions' inherited ways of becoming and being. She often supplants natural fibers for the unlikely - such as plastics, bottle-caps, panty hose - while pushing and pulling textiles' communicative histories and functions, ranging from the exclusively coded to the overtly literal. This experimentation intersects with the artist's emotional worlds and intuitive ways of learning and knowing. Thompson's work focuses on specific events of personal loss and grief - from deaths of a parent, relative, and friends, the psychological loss of self in abusive relationships, to her current working-through heartbreak. She says, "Making is a means of processing. So much of my work has come from things that are difficult. I often say I hope one day it doesn't. But for now, I still need my work to quietly give voice to what is hard to talk about. Everyone experiences loss and grief. Normalizing emotions feels like a form of resistance, and gives me and others the opportunity to acknowledge, move-through, and transform - consciously or not."

Situated between private diary and public break up album, *Just Friends* embodies a range of emotions, resonating as confessional and anthemic. In such laborious, cared for, conscious acts of grieving, there seems to be no rage or wallowing, no blame or shame. As a diary, it reveals an honorific reading of the heart told through the first-person - a deliberate healing rendered by observantly tending to the self. As an album Thompson tunes it "quietly loud" as she reflects on her lifelong love from various vantage points.

Love (2022) is a soft sculpture rendering of a love poem written by twelve-year-old Thompson in which she likens and longs for happiness through the metaphor of perennially-monogamous ducks. The nostalgic blue stuffed letters (with each letter “U” featuring a duck pattern) are intended to evoke the simple and innocent emotions for her first love at its beginning.

Thompson often makes sense and form of emotions as they inhabit her body and transform into language, “Emotions arrive first as a physical register, in the body, specific places, then language follows.” In another text-based work, *Intentions* (2022), Thompson uses her body to spell out MY BODY FEELS LIKE A PLACE YOU ONLY WANT TO VISIT BUT NEVER CALL HOME. The conflating of body and language was performed for the camera behind a vellum curtain; its message arrives to us as opaque clues that demand speculative attention.

Ghost of you (2022) began as a photographic souvenir - a portrait of her love at the shores of Gitche Gami - before undergoing a classic pre-digital heartbreak ritual: the cut-away. Here it is a meticulous and intricate cutting to pieces, tethered from photograph to floor; echoing acts of fragmentation that appear throughout Thompson’s work. In the making of a silhouette - the quintessential dialectic of presence and absence - there is a breaking-up of memory and her relationship to it. She asks, “In death or other endings and transformations, how do they and how do we exist after their physical presence is gone?”

The heart - the organ chosen ages ago as the home of love - possesses and radiates its own electromagnetic field. The wall-based sculpture *Quantum Entanglement* (2022) explores the spiritual physics of heart-soul connections. Two identical heart forms are dressed in raw, tender, fleshy fabric, bordered and bound to one another with beautiful beaded lines – destined conduits.

The final and largest scale work in the exhibition exemplifies Thompson’s tendency to embrace soft spoken irony and humor as a companion to suffering. Borrowing its title from a newish euphemism referring to the act of leading someone on, *Breadcrumbs* (2022) emulates a picket fence in all of its faux. Structurally nonfunctional, its fourteen vinyl panels are a wall bound, gridden abstraction. Upon closer look, each panel is sewn with dainty metallic thread into templates that mimic a paint-by-number wood grain pattern when filled with various brands and shades of breadcrumbs. The sculpture reflects on experiencing the simultaneity of expectations and false promises – how acts of service can lure and conjure attachments, only to be abandoned along with whatever commitment or future they seemed to have signaled. While Thompson finished building the actual abandoned fence around her home, she built *Breadcrumbs* - a wry yet empowered play on the facade in all of its physical and emotional forms, and for Thompson, a monument to closure through self love and care in the face of the love’s aftermath.