GEORGE TAYLOR INTIMATE IMMENSITY

PANGOLIN LONDON



FOREWORD

Feathers; complex structures that cover all birds, not only evolved in a variety of ways to enable flight and keep birds warm, they are also elaborated through sexual selection into the most extraordinary colours and shapes for displaying to one another and attract a mate.

Humans have appropriated this beauty in their quest to embellish and decorate their bodies in a parallel and symbolic search for status and attractiveness to the opposite sex. War bonnets, feather cloaks, funeral shrouds and even currency have been painstakingly assembled from feathers creating astonishingly beautiful objects stunning in their brightness and perfection.

George Taylor selects, recycles and preens feathers of Victorian taxidermy specimens, road-killed birds, plucked chickens and pheasants destined for the butchers' shop to extraordinary effect. The exquisite sheen of metallic iridescence, delicate feathery plumes and rich colours provide a sumptuous palette for Taylor to construct her objects. In her use of individual feathers, like a painter might of separate brushstrokes, she builds blocks of colour, shape and tone in geometric frameworks with shimmering and unrivalled sensuality and texture.

Such voluptuous raw material evolved as it is to appeal to the eye of the beholder, be it avian or human, must be used and constructed with care and skill to transcend its immediate attractiveness and create new significance. Taylor therefore makes sensuous innerscapes; musical pastorals suggesting birdsong and display: the flash of a kingfisher dashing across the water, the signalling call of a strutting cock pheasant or the gentle cooing of a fat wood pigeon in a summer wood. In the process, she invokes feelings, deep and brooding, longing and nostalgic, bright and ecstatic. They, like her own self-portrait, shiver between external display and inner sensation.

Nature is the perennial inspiration for artists everywhere, only Taylor is not merely inspired by nature, she uses its most delicate and exquisitely beautiful structure as her raw material of choice to create her art and, as a result, distils an instinctive language of potent sensuality and staggering beauty.

Submersion 2017, Photo Montage Photo: Steve Russell

INTIMATE IMMENSITY

Cor George Taylor's first solo show with Pangolin London she presents a compelling Γ body of new work, testament to her desire to stretch the possibilities of sculptural form, in which she has applied her signature use of an array of exotic feathers that echoes the painstaking practice of making Andean death shrouds, to complex optical imagery from the canon of modern art history.

The impulse for the work came from Taylor's search for a conceptual language that would accord with her personal experience of the natural world - she lives and works on a farm in a secluded Gloucestershire valley - connecting with what the philosopher Gaston Bachelard has termed 'Intimate Immensity' in his book The Poetics of Space, 1958, - a poetics of embodied sensation where the image comes before thought, association and memory before reasoned judgement. Indeed, Taylor's self-portrait, Submersion, 2017, has a membraneous translucency which rhymes the colour of her hair and the pheasant feather frieze of the art work she is absorbed by and emerges from and is a defining emblem for both her and our inextricable link with the natural world.

Taylor extends Bachelard's statement that "immensity is within ourselves" where he correlates metaphorical associations between internal architectural spaces and inner emotional states, to the continual movement, cycles of life and death, of the natural world. For her, such a sensation is a quintessential form of sculptural experience, of inner vastness experienced most intensely at the epiphanic moment of stillness, a liminal point where looking without and looking within meet and interchange. Taylor refers to a seminal passage in Bachelard's text where he cites Gabriele d'Annunzio's image of a 'trembling' hare, paused momentarily in a frosty Autumn field:

'Its gaze seems to confer peace upon the entire universe. And it would be hard to think of a surer sign of deep peace than this motionless hare which, having declared a truce within eternal disquiet, sits observing the steaming countryside. At this moment, it is a sacred animal, one that should be worshipped'.

It is at such a moment - this still point of awareness that reveals an unravelling of continual movement - where Taylor enters into dialogue with the hard-edge abstraction of Bridget Riley by overlaying the optical play of the seminal forbear's work

Erotica: Return to Chaos 2016, Golden Pheasant & Kingfisher Feathers. Canvas on board Unique 136 cm diameter

I love the fact that the body is a whole world in itself GEORGE TAYLOR

with the variegated texture of feathers. The unalloyed materiality of this medium, whose iridescent surface sheen conjoins with underlying earth colours to produce subtly mutating hues - rich madder reds of the golden pheasant or celestial blues of the kingfisher - amass to form modulated 'fields of movement' enhancing the sensation of gliding, the visual pull into the space of the imagination. Such a narcotic effect of being lulled inwards, 'One might say that immensity is a philosophical category of the daydream' as Bachelard says, is enhanced if not inherent in the quality of the material itself.

Taylor's approach of respecting each feather as entirely individual yet connected as one medium, associates with Baudelaire: 'the very power of the synthesis through which the different impressions of the senses enter into correspondence'. Her interpretation of geometric abstraction sets the work within a history of optical geometric design for sacred purposes whilst simultaneously placing it within the complexity of natural systems of erotic attraction and signification, and, like the dark interior of the body, bearing a muteness with no corresponding linguistic equivalent save for poetic connotation.

The Beast in Me, 2017, with its scale and darkness, whose orientation of pattern reveals itself through the alternate lay of crow feathers, articulates Taylor's sculptural seeing, the interaction of opposing planes of movement as a form of dialogue that parallels the interaction between natural and cultural worlds. These shifts of register are achieved with a technique of such precision and gradualism that the work is as much a physical as a visual encounter, an experience set in the world. As Luce Irigaray says in *Elemental Passions*, 1992, 'movements in the world of the senses are almost imperceptible. Only an attentiveness that is not rigidified with formal frameworks can detect this kind of movement'. The work *Erotica: Return To Chaos*, 2016, extends the vertiginous sensation of relative movement enhancing the design's spiralling sensation with colour; turquoise blue and warm gold feathers combine to create an almost ethereal sensation.

Crucial to Taylor's phenomenological approach is her formative work in the fashion world - her experience of the subject of what film theorist Laura Mulvey termed 'the male gaze' - becoming acutely aware of life lived through the body rather than as disembodied conceptualized abstraction. Indeed she took on this role deeply aware of Irigaray's influence - as the latter maintains that for female emancipation: 'New models of sexual identity must be established. Woman must...not be subordinated...to

the values of masculine identity...she therefore needs her own linguistic, religious and political values. She needs to be situated and valued, to be she in relation to her self.'

Story of the Eye 2017, Quails eggs on board Unique 122 cm diameter

In addition, it was Irigaray's description of erotic intimacy, of proximity evoking a kind of sacred stillness, an onanistic self-sufficiency that sparked in Taylor the visual memory of the enfolding gesture of her work *Perineum*, 2016. Irigaray says: 'But when lips kiss, openness is not the opposite of closure. Closed lips remain open. And their touching allows movement from inside to outside, from outside to in, with no fastening nor opening mouth to stop the exchange.'

Such sensuality loops back to Taylor's initial research for her body of work, to her rereading of Georges Bataille's *Story of the Eye*, 1928, captivated by its metaphor and discussion of the sacred practice of transgressive eroticism. Reminded also of Bachelard's statement that 'everything round invites a caress', she constructed discs of quail eggs set in subtle hexagonal patterns that keep the viewer's eye dancing in a kind of Brownian motion, and then coalesce into a hallucinogen of spirals that call to mind the golden section, the sacred geometry of the Renaissance. Such a dance is Taylor's discovery; openness to natural systems heard from within, of the body as the whole world in itself, an 'intimate immensity' a unique sensorial language that is at once primal and contemporary.



COLIN GLEN



CATALOGUE

The Beast In Me 2016-2017, Cockerel & Crow Feathers, Canvas on board Unique 213 x 152 cm



La Bête 1975 2013, Golden Pheasant Feathers, Canvas on board Unique 137 x 147 cm





(OPPOSITE) Self Portrait No.4 Submersion 2017, Pheasant & Cockerel Feathers, Canvas on board Unique 91.5 cm diameter



Osiris Black Divinity 2017, Cockerel & Crow Feathers, Canvas on board Unique 91.5 cm diameter







Fecund 2015, Pheasant & Golden Pheasant Feathers, Canvas on board Unique 137 x 147 cm

Perineum 2014, Cockerel, Swan & Kingfisher Feathers, Canvas on board Unique 137 x 147 cm



Dreams on Being Lyrical 2017, Quails Eggs Unique 61 cm diameter





Insomnia in Yellow 2017, Rollerbird, Guineafowl & Golden Pheasant Feathers, Canvas on Board Unique 61 cm diameter







The Cult of Infinity 2017, Peacock & Golden Pheasant Feathers, Canvas on board Unique 30 x 24 cm *Illuminati* 2017, Golden Pheasant Feathers, Canvas on board Unique 30 x 24 cm

26





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Story of the Eye 2017, Quails eggs on board Unique 122 cm diameter



Love in a Brief Moment 2017, Golden Pheasant Feathers, Canvas on board Unique 14.5 x 14.5 cm



So Close You Forgot I Was There 2017, Golden & Red Pheasant Feathers, Canvas on board Unique 35 cm diameter



(ABOVE) Insomnia in Red 2017, Rollerbird, Guineafowl & Golden Pheasant Feathers, Canvas on Board Unique 61 cm diameter (OPPOSITE) Insomnia in Blue 2017, Rollerbird, Guineafowl & Golden Pheasant Feathers, Canvas on Board Unique 61 cm diameter



Evolution of Love 2010, Pheasant, Golden Pheasant, & Peacock Feathers, Resin on board Unique 152 x 152 cm





Poetics of Space 2016, Peacock, Golden Pheasant & Crow Feathers, Canvas on board Unique 209 x 168 cm





Skins 2017, Golden Pheasant Feathers, Canvas on board Unique 14.5 x 22 cm



Beauty's Magic Trick 2015, Quails Eggs Unique 61 cm diameter



Sex Death Sex Death Sex Death 2011, Golden Pheasant, Mallard Duck, & Pheasant Feathers, Resin on board Unique 183 x 183 cm



Intimate Immensity 2016, Golden Pheasant & Kingfisher Feathers, Canvas on board Unique 136 cm diameter Private Collection







INNOCENT POTENCY

reorge Taylor's film features the artist and three striking female friends in a $oldsymbol{V}$ haze of falling feathers as they engage in a pillow fight shot in slow motion. The action rhymes with imagery from film sequences such as Jean Vigo's Zéro de Conduite from 1933 and Frederico Fellini's La Dolce Vita, 1960, vet is laced with a thread of the uncanny, a dreamscape shot through with brutal raw imagery from a documentary about Cuban cock-fighting rituals. Each position interchanges with each point of view, the pillow fight becomes edged with disquiet. What at first appear to be diametric opposites - through association of gesture and movement, an arching back of the heads with black hair bursting out in an explosive release or intense capture of the viewer by the ferocious dark-eyed gaze, the outstretched wheeling turns of the figures at their extremes - and one is reminded that what we bring to what we see makes up half the meaning. Our intentions, our position of viewing is revealed back to us for our own reflection.

Taylor's film continues her ongoing enquiry into the dynamic between states of movement and stillness, following her inspiration from the 1960s Feminist philosopher, Luce Irigaray, who in her text Elemental Passions, 1992, posited a theory that for gender equality to be realised, for power to be balanced, there requires a change to the 'economy of property' that has created a 'monopoly of power'. For exchange to occur she advocates a change to the nature of perception, rekindling an awareness of the continual 'movement in the world of the senses', which accords for Taylor with her experience of moving back to the farm of her childhood. She relates one particular time returning from a diving expedition: "what was amazing was that everything was like a landscape forty metres down below the surface, but a landscape where I had a sense of everything moving in absolute relation to itself, that the only stillness was my perception. When I returned home and was looking at the frieze of trees, the woodland that hangs steeply on the opposite side of the valley facing the house like a film set, the deep sea experience was repeated but this time inverted, and I had the sense that the air too was material, each leaf, twig and branch was atomised and in motion like the elements under water".

Such a shift in perception echoes Irigaray's venture: 'Movements in the world of

White. Immense spaces. White, a rush of breath LUCE IRIGARAY the senses are almost imperceptible. Only an attentiveness that is not rigidified within formal frameworks can detect this kind of movement. A mobility which is incessant, yet furtive in relation to the categories of apprehension'. Indeed the philosopher's last sentences of the book are redolent of Taylor's: 'I opened my eyes and saw the cloud. And saw that nothing was perceptible unless I was held at a distance from it by an almost palpable density. And that I saw it and did not see it. Seeing it all the better for remembering the density of air remaining in between'.

The key element that evokes a dream-like sense of mobility, the curious laconic atmosphere of the *Innocent Potency* film is that the players revolve on a rotating turntable, lending the action enough of absurdist edge to make the fun unsettling, and by extension hint at the subtext beneath much 'light-hearted' jocularity.

Indeed the spur to making her film derived originally from a viewing of Steven Spielberg's film *Schindler's List*, 1993, where once the ash from the chimneys appears as snow to the child in delight, to Taylor they were feathers, feathers that thickened the air with the threat of asphyxiation. That such light, fanciful materials can betray deep quiet terror beneath brings to the fore the intransigence of raw material, the untranslatability of the natural world, its ultimate refutation of appropriation by culture; as Taylor says: 'What I love about feathers is that they can't be anything other than they are'. For Taylor acknowledging such inherent potency of natural material goes beyond its decorative representational function and acts more as reverence for the pure 'innocent' power of what is already there before us and what lies within us.

Seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, living, all these wait to be made fecund by an innocent potency - LUCE IRIGARAY

COLIN GLEN

George Taylor Innocent Potency Director & Cinematographer: Gary Young Running Time: 7 minutes 15 seconds © George Taylor & Gary Young www.garyyoungdop.com

(OPPOSITE) Stills from Innocent Potency





GEORGE TAYLOR b. 1975

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2018 Intimate Immensity, Pangolin London2008 La Petite Mort, Scream Gallery

Born in Macclesfield in 1975, George Taylor moved at the age of 10 onto a farm set within its own steep-sided secluded valley in a remote part of Gloucestershire. Here she began working with her father as he tended livestock and managed the woodland, initiating what has been a lifelong enchantment with the natural world especially as a creative environment beyond landscape solely as a leisure destination – more as a site from which to engage with contemporary issues such as embodied experience in place.

At Bretton Hall, University of Leeds, she experimented with sculptural form and constructed environments, introduced by tutor John Penny to the work of Minimalism and Land artists such as Walter de Maria. Indeed the latter's *Lightning Field*, 1977, prompted her to install six 30-foot steel poles in the small lake in the valley. Yet her urge to form a new creative language, as she says "Donald Judd meets Meret Oppenheim", which could speak of the daily reality of life and death in farming, particularly at lambing and calving time, drove her to work with the residual materials of living forms, animal skins such as goat or snake, then ultimately feathers. Her studies culminated in 1998, with the creation of total immersive environments where the viewer was oriented in a single direction through feather-lined passages connotative of our passage through life, articulating her interest in Gaston Bachelard's metaphorical evocation of the links between phenomenological architectural spaces and the nuomenal world sensed from within our body and memory, succinctly captured by his phrase 'intimate immensity'.

Work following College saw Taylor continuing her exploration into expanded possibilities for sculptural form and environments as art assistant in the studios of Dan Chadwick and Science Ltd, and in the Fashion Industry, strategically applying herself to the role of the 'motivating object', the subject of what Film theorist Laura Mulvey has termed the 'male gaze' by working as model with the creative director, Isabella Blow.

In 2008 she presented a body of work entitled *La Petite Mort* at Scream Gallery in London. Stimulated by Georges Bataille's writing on 'transgressive religious practice', rituals of sex and death, the exhibition consisted of a series of wall-based sculptures, concave-shaped discs designed to capture and amplify sound covered with her signature

'landscape' of modulated feather patterns that in turn connoted the death shrouds of Andean culture. The entire exhibition space was suffused with a specially designed aphrodisiac scent lending the work an entirely kinaesthetic experience.

Her current body of work emerged in 2013 from a little sculptural sketch that felt compelled to make on re-reading Georges Bataille's The Story of the Eye, where she glued five blown quail's eggs, originally destined for lunch, to an old satellite dish in a perfunctory yet deliberate hexagonal pattern. As she scaled up the pattern onto four foot discs, the relation between the intricate complexity of each egg's surface and its bare pale interior sparked in her mind a passage from Luce Irigaray's text Elemental Passions that refers to the open exchange of the kiss, 'But when lips kiss, openness is not the opposite of closure. Closed lips remain open. And their touching allows movement from inside to outside, from outside to in, with no fastening nor opening of the mouth to stop the exchange.' The lips are as a moebius strip where inside and outside surface combine, interchange and replace one another in an erotic dance that evokes the play of presence and absence of life and death. Taylor then embarked on the gesture of 'softening the hard-edges of Minimalism' by taking seminal Bridget Riley Op Art compositions that suggest this open folding in and out, overlaying the graphic design with the variegated hues and exotic texture of feathers, as both homage and gauntlet.

Taylor's work is in various pu Club and Murder Me.



George Taylor working on The Beast In Me Taylor's work is in various public and private collections, including the Groucho

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost our thanks go to George Taylor for all her hard work in creating a compelling new body of new work for this exhibition. Our special thanks also go to Colin Glen for the introduction, Steve Russell Studios for the photography, Gary Young for his cinematography in *Innocent Potency* and the stars Nancy Trotter Landry, Sarah Pulley and Lucie Tay.

George would also like to thank Sophina Dobrocsi, Colin Glen, Rita Roup, Lucie Tay and Andrea Thomen for all their hard work in the studio, and Dan & Juliet Chadwick for letting her work at Lypiatt Park.

Please note: No animals were harmed to create this work. George Taylor carefully sources her feathers from birds that have died naturally or from Victorian taxidermy collections.

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