

ALICEBLACK

RACHAEL LOUISE BAILEY

‘Thirst of the Tide’

25 May - 25 June 2022

46 Mortimer Street
London, W1W 7RL

aliceblackart.com

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25 May (6–8PM) – 25 June 2022

ALICE BLACK is proud to present ‘Thirst of the Tide’ by Rachael Louise Bailey (b. 1975), 25 May - 25 June 2022 at 46 Mortimer St, London W1W 7RL. The exhibition will occur ahead of Bailey’s participation in XXII Bienal Internacional de Arte de Cerveira, in Portugal (2022).

Bailey’s practice is a form of artistic whistle-blowing. Pushing the boundaries of art’s engagement with ecology, her practice is rooted in a local context, but has a worldwide reach embedded in the social, political, economic and environmental spheres she seeks to address and expose. Bailey stands in opposition to contemporary greenwashing.

‘Thirst of the Tide’ brings together iconic pieces from Bailey’s ‘the black stuff’ series as well as new, site-specific works. She relishes the exploration of materiality and is bemused by our anthropocentric dislocation from our roots. The departure point for the exhibition is the concept of strata - geologically, environmentally, sociologically and psychologically.

Since 2015 Bailey has concentrated her practice primarily upon the collection, research and transformation of a specific marine pollutant, which she refers to as ‘the black stuff’: Spliced inner tubes of repurposed car tyres make up part of industrial oyster sea farming equipment, a technique used globally. Regurgitated by the sea, what isn’t deposited on the beach, is swallowed by the waters. Bailey first encountered this material littering her local Kent (UK) beach in 2015. It was often wrapped up and camouflaged under native seaweed. Over the last 7 years Bailey has amassed over 7km of ‘the black stuff’. Systematically sorting, knotting and crafting the rubber, the resulting body of work is informed by the historical, physical and contextual characteristics of this toxic waste material. Last year, Bailey’s ‘the black stuff’ series became the single largest body of physical evidence used in a public enquiry to demonstrate the environmental hazards caused by the controversial expansion of oyster trestles. The largest work from the series, ‘Global’, made up of 3.5 kilometres of plastic pollution – tied and knotted – was acquired by the François Schneider Foundation, France.

In the summer of 2019, Bailey was propelled into foreign conditions and engulfed by the elements as part of the An Lanntair Island Going Residency in the Outer Hebrides. Finding herself aboard a ship with six strangers, swayed between suggestiveness and ambiguity, the environment was in a constant process of transformation. Sailing from Berneray to the remote, evacuated island of St Kilda, she spent 2 days exploring the landscape of a forgotten land, now inhabited mainly by a “feral” mob of sheep, military personnel and bone-filled cleats. Sitting upon the undulated shadows of a village once made up of ‘blackhouses’ and ‘whitehouses, St Kilda – adorned by a rich tapestry of coarse heathers and other unfamiliar fauna – is still delineated by a skeleton of drystone walls, struggling to maintain verticality and governed overhead by the calls of endangered gannet, puffin and fulmar colonies. Returning to land, this immersive physical absorption lingered for weeks; it was a time of extremity and contradiction. Now home searching for some continuity from there to here, Bailey found an additional studio space in a disused dairy in which she unearthed her grandmothers’ spinning wheel, unlocking new threads.

Please find further information on Rachael Bailey and the wider reverberations of her practice throughout this PDF.

For more information, please contact:

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'226' 2022

Aeroplane engine fan cover,
Hebridean fleece, stock fencing
187 x 190 x 100 cm

£ 35,000 (excl. VAT)









'Dust us Depart' 2022

Ivy vine, butchers hook & cord
160 x 135 x 31 cm

£ 10,000 (excl. VAT)

'Luke's gate' 2022

5 bar oak wooden gate
124 x 258 x 9 cm

£ 12,000 (excl. VAT)





'Rest' 2019

1 smoke alarm, 3 pill packets, 1 washing up bowl, 1 santa hat, 3 inhalers, 1 toy monkey, 2 dustpan brushes, 2 washing up brushes, 8 pens, 2 suntan lotion bottles, 2 mobile phones, 1 bottle of tomato ketchup, 1 alarm clock, 2 plant labels, 2 hose spray guns, 21 plastic bags, 2 coat hangers, 2 extension lead wires, 1 set of headphones, 5 vitamin C canisters, 6 hose connectors, 1 bottle lid, 1 bike helmet, 1 back sport support, 2 electric toothbrushes, 1 potato masher, 1 box lid, 2 shoe horns, 1 scrubbing brush, 1 pair of slippers, 2 sport tops, 1 dress suit, 1 tie, 1 hoseslock multi-sprinkler, 1 pair of sport sock/gloves, 1 inflatable mattress, 1 bed sheet, 1 pillow, oyster shells, the Black Stuff.

180 x 50 x 35 cm

£ 23,000 (excl. VAT)



2 hose spray guns, 21 plastic bags, 2 coat hangers, 2 extension lead wires, 1 set of headphones, 5 vitamin C canisters, 6 hose connectors, 1 bottle lid, 1 bike helmet, 1 back sport support, 2 electric toothbrushes, 1 potato masher, 1 box lid, 2 shoe horns, 1 scrubber



Moved by the emotional endeavour of clearing her cousin Michael's home after his sudden death, Bailey sculpted a skeletal form from a multitude of his daily plastic essentials left abandoned for landfill - the material debris that once sustained his unsustainable life. Clothed in his smartest suit and favourite father Christmas hat it was then tenderly mummified in his polyester bedsheets and laid to rest inside an inflatable bed, encased in woven 'black stuff'.

“These ribbons of plastic, which look like brown algae, are regurgitated by the sea. Rachael Louise Bailey gives a new importance to these fragments, which she assembles in the form of “Black Stuff”.

Excerpt of the article 'The eco-artists, the real whistleblowers' by Edwige Breiller-Tardy, 2020.





'Untitled', 2022

'The Black Stuff'
200 x 404 x 2 cm
Ceiling straps variable

£ 16.000 (excl. VAT)



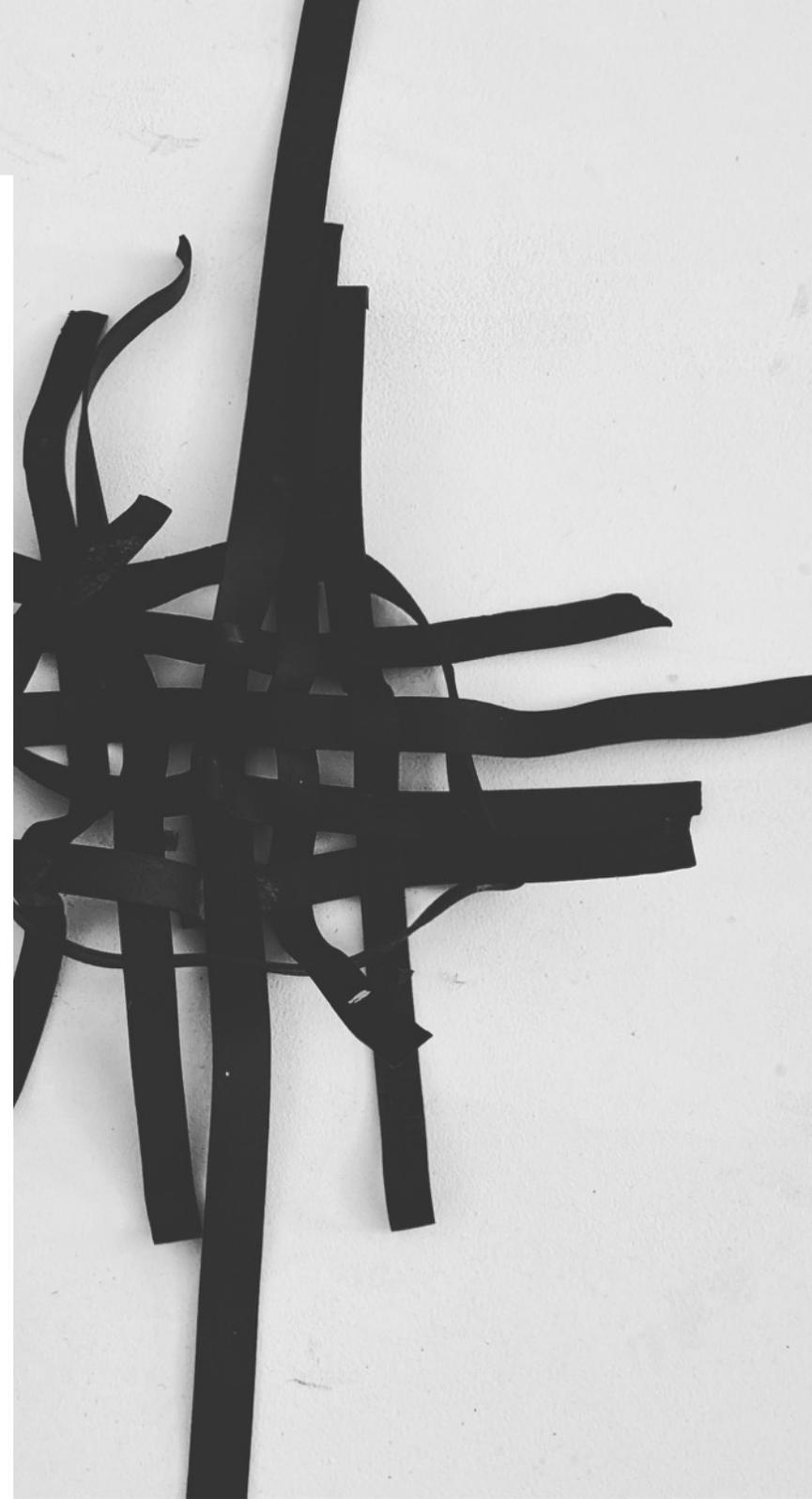
"It's really important for artists
to play the role of cultural agitators
because no one else seems to."

Mark Dion, French contemporary artist and author



RACHAEL LOUISE BAILEY lives and works in Kent, UK. Bailey studied at Statuaria Arte School of Sculpture, Carrara, Italy (2004); Conception de jardin dans le paysage, Formation Professionnel - Ecole Nationale Supérieure du Paysage, Versailles, France (2006-08). Direct Carving Stone and Wood, Formation Professionnel-Beaux Arts de la Ville de Paris, France (2010-14); In 2019 Bailey won the Fondation François Schneider, Contemporary Talents International Art Award as well as the An Lanntair Island Going Residency in the Outer Hebrides. In the summer of 2022 Bailey will participate in XXII Bienal Internacional de Arte de Cerveira in Portugal.

Bailey's practice is a sustained form of creative climate action rooted in a local context but with worldwide reach. The genesis for Bailey's work is in the collection, exploration and transformation of overlooked or discarded material that is often deemed to be of little value or significance. Embedded in reuse and reclamation, Bailey creates highly personal, environmentally charged works which shine an unsparing spotlight on the anthropocentric realities of our time. A practice which stands in counterpoint to contemporary habits of mass production and consumerism, Rachael will often study and work with a material for a number of years, meticulously researching its impact and experimenting with its physical properties.





Rachael Bailey in her Whitstable, Kent studio (UK)



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