

5 / BRIGHID FITZGERALD

Brighid Fitzgerald held her first solo exhibition at TCB art inc. in Melbourne, in early 2017, and made several important contributions to group shows, including *Real Life Fantasies*, curated by **Patrice Sharkey**, at West Space. Fitzgerald's work relies on its own guttural syntax, where literal meanings are synonymous with their digestion, and the mental process of interpretation is externalised. Dried orange peel tenuously held together two draped ropes at the entrance of *Real Life Fantasies*, ceremoniously suspending the sensation of a bite. Shaped into a form that could have been a diagram for a body, a throne to greet the mouth, or a shrine for fruit, two netted bags sat at the conclusion of each end of rope. Peel was shaped into stars, or flowers, and adjoined to bangles, ready to wear.

In Fitzgerald's first solo exhibition, *Belly Flip*, at TCB in Melbourne, homemade belts were suspended from a large, hand-knotted network of string hanging from the ceiling, which itself set a rhythm of reprieve, a cloud to look upward at. The knots were sure assertions, as opposed to anxious tangles. Below the belts were lumps of Peridot stone from Mount Shadwell Quarry, near where the artist grew up, embedded in baked dough, to evoke chyme; food that has been mixed with hydrochloric acid and pepsin in the stomach. The belts, unfurled and vertical, could be thought of as impotent, or suspended in preparation for a speculative constriction. Previously they had performed outside the gallery,

where they often adorn Fitzgerald herself, who refers to them sometimes as "clenchers," and intermittently works and reworks them, until they are suspended both literally and figuratively in the gallery. Icons were often placed where the stomach would be in relation to the belt. The butterfly has been a recurring symbol for Fitzgerald, and chimes with the multiplicity of the artist's wordplay and reference. To speak of *having butterflies in one's stomach*, has varied in interpretation since the early 20th century. The consistent feeling, of something fluttering in one's stomach, is a sensation easily retrievable, and can correlate with a number of emotional responses.

Chyme, which occurs after food and before excretion, stands in, as a metaphysical metonym for other experiences; the chewed up, broken down leftovers of social, geological, and institutional experiences of the life of an artist. Though Fitzgerald's amalgamations are products subsequent to a creative process, they detail these narratives in a manner contrary to the way history usually might. Their cryptic, haptic enigma enunciates the confusion of transactions with reality. They are laced with the experience of a Melbourne social life; ingesting, walking, baking, talking, and appear as something confusing, inexplicable. Somehow, they are incomprehensibly less synthetic than versions of "history" itself.

Feeling Garrulous Terrors

1. Brighid Fitzgerald, *Swing*, 2017. Rope, ribbon, eye screws, orange peel, net orange bags, metal rings, tanbark, translucent print of sky and bite. 280 x 280 x 280cm.

2-4 Brighid Fitzgerald, *Belly Flip* detail, 2017. String, leather, buckles, wire, dried beans, aluminium flashing, plastic butterfly clip, dough and Peridot, dimensions variable.

COURTESY OF THE ARTIST.. PHOTO: CHRISTO CROCKER



