

PIPPY HOULDSWORTH GALLERY

Press Release

MARY KELLY

*On the Passage of a Few People
through a Rather Brief Period of Time*

5 September – 4 October 2014



Mary Kelly, *Circa 1968*, 2004, compressed lint
and projected light noise
254 x 266.7 x 3.1 cm, 100 x 105 x 1.23 in

That which was directly lived reappears frozen in the distance, fit into the tastes and illusions of the era carried away with it. – Voice in Guy Debord's film, 1959

Pippy Houldsworth Gallery is honoured to present Mary Kelly's first solo exhibition in London in over a decade, *On the Passage of a Few People through a Rather Brief Period of Time*. Juxtaposing an iconic installation from 2004 with a new body of lint works, Kelly uses the show to explore the legacy of the past. When the influential cultural theorist, Stuart Hall, died in February of this year, many described it as the end of an era. Taking this perspective, Kelly asks what defines an era, and for whom, not only as political discourse, but also, as trace, or residue, of the personal lives that were defined by it.

Kelly's discourse specific site is located in London of the early 1970s at the moment of an emerging women's movement, but her focus is not on feminism. Rather, the installation frames a wide-angle view of that brief period of time, stretching from the end of World War II to the beginning of the Arab Spring, in which the passage of a few women, who formed the History Group in 1969, is barely visible, although it determines the shape of Kelly's allegorical representation of the past.

The new work in this exhibition revolves around an earlier one, *Circa 1968* (2004), in which Kelly addresses those who were not yet born at that time, and follows a retrospective trajectory to the questions posed by her own generation. Her aim is neither inclusiveness, nor objectivity. Omissions and exaggerations are part of what she calls the 'archive of symptoms that become legible in objects or images when they register a moment of crisis,' and what becomes most legible in *Circa 1968* is the generational transmission of unconscious desire.

In her performative act of remembering, the durational aspect of the lint medium is central. First developed in 1999 for her project *Mea Culpa*, individual units of lint are cast in the filter screen of a domestic tumble dryer over several months and hundreds of washing cycles, then assembled as large panels of image and text in intaglio. Referencing, film, photography, newspapers, magazines and the internet, Kelly transcribes the iconic signs of former times into uncanny analogs of their digitised reappearance in the present.

Regarded as one of the most significant figures in the feminist movement of the 1970s, Mary Kelly, the American artist (b 1941), has had a profound influence on postmodernism and cultural politics as well as the development and critique of conceptual art. Predominantly interested in the way language mediates between the social and the psychic, Kelly's working process blurs the boundaries between the personal and the political in order to address the impact of historical events on quotidian life. Her large-scale narrative installations include *Post-Partum Document* (1973-1979), *Interim* (1984-89), *The Ballad of Kastriot Rexhepi* (2001) and *Love Songs* (2005-07).

Mary Kelly's work has been the subject of major solo exhibitions at the ICA, London (1976 and 1993); New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York (1990); Generali Foundation, Vienna (1998); Santa Monica Museum of Art (2001); Center for Contemporary Art, Ujazdowski Castle, Warsaw (2008); Moderna Museet, Stockholm (2010); and a large scale retrospective, *Mary Kelly: Projects, 1973-2010*, Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester (2011). Kelly was represented in the 1991 and 2004 Whitney Biennials, Whitney Museum, New York; Documenta 12, Kassel, 2007, and the 2008 Biennale of Sydney.

Upcoming: 10 October – 15 November 2014

Carrie Mae Weems, *Color Real and Imagined*, Main Gallery

Tania Kovats, The Box