

Emma Witter: *Remember You Must Die*
18th – 22nd September 2019
Sarabande Foundation

Artist Emma Witter is breathing life back into bones in solo show at Sarabande Foundation



Untitled (Giclee Print on Hahnemuhle Bamboo Rag), From *Bloom 2:3* (Bone on wooden base), From *Bloom 1:2* (Bone on wooden base)

Artist Emma Witter will present a new series of work in *Remember You Must Die*, a solo show at the Sarabande Foundation from Wednesday 18th September to Sunday 22nd September, 2019.

Featuring sculpture and special objects, derived mostly from bone, alongside photographic prints and a site-specific installation, the works will pay gentle tribute to the symbolic and emotionally loaded material. The series focuses on the flower motif, from which Witter forms beautifully intricate studies constructed from tiny chicken feet bones.

For the past three years Witter has explored the use of bone in varying forms, her meticulous process along with the stark bleached whiteness of the material results in objects that are hauntingly beautiful and surprisingly gentle.

The artist began recycling bones from her own consumption and that of friends, going on to source from chefs, butchers and by combing the shores of the River Thames. Her process is labor intensive as she then boils, cleans, bleaches, dries, and then categorises the bones forming a lengthy and ritualistic part of her practice.

Witter draws parallels with the art historical term *memento mori*, translating to 'remember you must die' which has been explored by artists through the ages and was particularly prevalent in 16th and 17th century Flemish art. It was common for artists from this period to use the skull as a recurring motif, often juxtaposed with flowers and/or fruit in its various stages of decay. Witter plays with this idea in her bone vase works where she uses pig shin bones as empty vessels which hold dying flowers, referencing Flemish painters who used the flower as a symbol for the fragility of life.

Bones have long been shown as symbols of death as well as wealth, power longevity and protection, but Witter chooses to reference their uses in everyday life. Bone matter is an ingredient in everything from soaps, sweets, oil, photographic processes, ink for body tattoos, distilling wines and crushed into powder for

bone china. The artist has experimented with a number of these processes in her hope to change people's perception of bones as purely a working material.

Witter is currently an artist in residence at the prestigious Sarabande Foundation, founded by fashion legend Alexander McQueen in 2007 as a creative community supporting emerging artists. Both McQueen and Witter are linked through their shared interest in history and materials.

The artist's previous residency at Mark Hix's Tramshed in Shoreditch succeeded in raising consciousness of waste excess in the food industry. Here, she had a bountiful supply of bones from the kitchen which she was able to clean and prepare on site, before transforming the disused material into permanent objects of beauty. Witter's obsessive practice puts emphasis on process and materials as she glorifies the functionality of the recycled matter.

This new series of works will introduce copper elements into the bone for the first time, by doing so the artist hopes to draw parallels between the strength and high mineral value in both materials. By using copper in small support structures, stems, and delicate signatures, Witter will also be lining the interior of bone vessels with copper plating, where once was the mineral rich bone marrow, where blood cells were produced, a new sire for repair and regeneration.

Emma Witter says:

"I am intrinsically drawn to the inherent strength of bones, their lightness and their fragility. Through the ritual of sourcing, cleaning and categorizing, the bones inform me and speak to me of sculpture and reinvention - a modern day *momento-mori* that conveys beauty and spirituality rather than something morbid and associated with death."

Press please contact Damson Communications: Ella De Cleyn at ella.decleyn@damsonpr.com or +44 (0)20 7812 0645.

Notes to Editors:

About Emma Witter:

Emma Witter is a London based artist. In 2008, she earned her diploma in Art and Design from The London College of Fashion. In 2012, she received a first-class honours degree in Performance Design and Practice from Central Saint Martins. On graduating, Witter won the 'Seed Fund' Award' from the University of the Arts London - a grant to set up her own studio practice in Food Sculpture, for which she won the 'Best New Business Award' during UAL Enterprise Week 2014. Other awards include 'Eccentric Artist of the Year' 2015, from The Eccentric Club - and the category of 'Personal/Non published' in the Creative Review Photo Annual 2015. She was noted at the Worth Global Style Network talent section as 'One to Watch'.

Witter has participated in numerous exhibitions, most notably her solo show Bloom at Hix Art 2018, an exhibition resulting from her three-month residency at Hix's Tramshed restaurant. She was selected twice for the ING Discerning Eye show at The Mall Galleries 2017, and The London Group Open at The Cello Factory, in 2015 and 2017. Currently, she is a studio resident at Sarabande, the Lee Alexander McQueen Foundation, in London.

About Sarabande Foundation:

Sarabande Foundation was founded in 2007 by fashion designer Lee Alexander McQueen CBE. McQueen passionately believed that creative minds with the potential to push boundaries should be given the same opportunities he'd enjoyed. Named after McQueen's 2007 Spring/Summer collection, the foundation provides scholarships to students at graduate and postgraduate level as well as housing artist studios at Sarabande HQ for designers, artists and jewellers. Sarabande is there to observe and facilitate – the partners and friends of Lee are there to guide and inspire. The space is a place where it's safe to experiment,

to succeed, to fail but always to move forward. The genesis of all Lee's achievements was his open-minded approach to absorbing diverse creative influences and applying them in new and exciting ways. It is that openness and bravery that Sarabande seeks to inspire in future generations of creatives.