

Wilde

PRESS RELEASE

CORNELIA PARKER

Being and Un-being

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WILDE | BASEL

The conscious life is filled with strategies; it is all show... The unconscious, on the other hand, is randomly organized;... It loves dust, it loves the unstable or repressed image, the reverse side of the picture, the outline, the lining, the dotted line, the trace, the stray mark, the remnant, the hint, the echo, the shadow.¹

Wilde is pleased to present Cornelia Parker's solo exhibition *Being and Un-being*. This is the artist's first show in Basel and the fifth with the gallery. In May 2022, Tate Britain will mount a retrospective of works by Cornelia Parker. *Being and Un-being* brings her new series *Ghost Notes* featuring neon works made specifically for this show into dialogue with the artist's iconic series of photogravures, combining two facets central to Parker's practice: materiality and the antithetical.

Cornelia Parker made many of the photogravures from the series *One Day This Glass Will Break* (2015), *Thirty Pieces of Silver (Exposed)* (2016), and *Through a Glass Darkly* (2020) by placing glassware, medicine bottles, flowers and glass negatives in glassine bags directing on plates then exposing them to UV light. The process captures their shadows which is then etched onto a plate, inked and finally released onto paper.

Similarly, neon, a luminous gas gathered in a tubular glass, here functions as receivers and transmitters of light. The neon works in the exhibition make up twelve antonyms. The positive meaning (in most cases in blue) fights for dominance, hovering assertively over its subjugated dark relation. The shadow meanings that hang as an anxious undertow are in mirrored writing and painted black on the front surface of the neon. White light emanates from the underside, outlining the recumbent word with a haloed glow. The series's title, *Ghost Notes*, relates to notes played at lower volumes to be almost hidden behind the beat. Like a subconscious voice, they are often felt more than heard.

Parker's choice of blue echoes the hyperlinks of online dictionaries and Wikipedia pages that she has spent many hours surfing. Its combination with black cite a previous a body of work, namely her embroideries. In her seminal work *Magna Carta (An Embroidery)* (2015), Parker had the entire Magna Carta Wikipedia article stitched by over 200 people, including Julian Assange and Edward Snowden. In another tapestry series, Parker superimposes antonymous words with their dictionary definitions. Here she also utilizes the mirroring technique, so that one definition could more easily be read from behind while its antithesis is sewn from the back side, and though legible, is frayed.

Cornelia Parker's interest in polarities, the inverse, and the opposite is found in numerous works and ultimately lie in her commitment to seeing things in a new way, pushing the boundaries of a material to explore its peripheral, its shadows, what's underneath and what lies behind. At times it means completely altering its form, by blowing it up (both exploding and magnifying), burning, melting, steamrolling, to name just a few of her methods.

Together, the photogravures and the neons unify concepts Parker has been interested in throughout her career. Some pieces, like *Poison / Antidote*, directly reference previous works of the same title. In her *Verso* (2016) series, where she photographed the backs of cards that had buttons sewn on the front, the essayist Colm Tóibín writes: "All I am left with are the traces, the clues. This must be what shadow is like, or aftermath. Some lines or shapes that must have made sense at one time, or may still make sense, but seem random now. If only I could follow what their intention was, or whisper to whoever made them! That desire is the closet I have come to feeling, and it is not close at all."² Works such as *Cold Dark Matter: An Exploded View* (1991) and *War Room* (2015) or *Mass (Colder Darker Matter)* (1997) and *Anti-Mass* (2005) function as inverses of one another, always bringing the viewer to experience the duality of ideas, and often the irony of that flip-side.

¹ Tóibín, Colm, *Cornelia Parker*, The Whitworth, The University of Manchester, 2015.

² Tóibín, Colm, *Verso*, Ivorypress, 2016.

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BIOGRAPHY

Cornelia Parker was born in 1956 in Cheshire, UK. She studied at Gloucestershire College of Art and Design (1974-75), Wolverhampton Polytechnic (1975-78), and received her MFA from the University of Reading (1982). Parker was awarded an honorary doctorate from the University of Wolverhampton (2000), the University of Birmingham (2005) and the University of Gloucestershire (2008). Parker lives and works in London.

Parker's first major solo exhibition *Thirty Pieces of Silver* took place at the Ikon Gallery Birmingham in 1988, with another early show taking place at Manchester's Cornerhouse the following year. In 1997 Parker was shortlisted for the Turner Prize. In 2010, she was elected to the Royal Academy of Arts and became an OBE.

She has had major solo exhibitions at MCA Australia, Serpentine Gallery, Tate, Royal Academy, ICA Boston, Galeria de Arte Moderne Civica in Turin, Württembergischer Kunstverein Stuttgart, Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, Museo de Arte de Lima, Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art in Gateshead, UK and a rooftop commission for the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

Recently, her work was included in the 10th Gwangju Biennale, South Korea (2014), 3rd Aichi Triennale in Japan, the 55th Venice Biennale (2013), the 4th Guangzhou Triennial in China (2012), in the 16th Sydney Biennial and the 8th Sharjah Biennial (2008).

Parker's work is held in many collections, including Tate, New York's Museum of Modern Art and Metropolitan Museum of Art, Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, the Yale Center for British Art, the De Young Museum in San Francisco, the Henry Moore Foundation, the British Council and the Whitworth.

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