

**A catalogue documenting all Barclay's major work** since 1997, and containing new essays from Fiona Bradley, Penelope Curtis, Claire Doherty, and an interview with Claire Barclay by Francis McKee, accompanies the exhibition and is available from the Gallery bookshop.

**One of the screenprints in the series A Life Livelier has been editioned by the artist on the occasion of this exhibition.** The prints, in an edition of 40, signed and numbered by the artist on the reverse, are available in the bookshop, price £250 unframed, £325 framed.

## Talks and Events

### Artist's Talk: Claire Barclay

Wednesday 11 March, 6.30pm. Free.

### Handling Space

Wednesday 18 March, 6.30pm. Free. Michael Archer, critic and Head of School, Ruskin School of Drawing and Fine Art, University of Oxford, talks about the articulation of space in Barclay's work, her use of materials, and the physical intimacies inherent in the infusing of those materials with form and structure.

### Jeanne Cannizzo: More is More

Wednesday 25 March, 6.30pm. Free.

### Author's Talk: Anne Donovan,

Wednesday 1 April, 6.30pm. Free.

## Seminar

### Dysfunctional Objects

Friday 20 March, 5.30–8pm (light meal included) Tickets: £10 (£5 conc.). Booking essential.

This seminar investigates the nature of making sculptural objects and their references to functional objects. Speakers include: **Jeanne Cannizzo** (anthropologist, University of Edinburgh), **Stephen Feeke** (curator, Henry Moore Institute), **Dean Hughes** (artist, Edinburgh College of Art), **Chantal Knowles** (principal curator, Oceania, Americas and Africa, National Museums of Scotland), **Alistair Rider** (art historian, University of St. Andrews). **Chair: Dominic Paterson** (art historian, University of Glasgow).

## Tours

### Tour for Visually Impaired Visitors

Thursday 26 March, 6.30–7.30pm. Free.

### 'Ways of Seeing' 60+ Gallery Tour

Thursday 2 April, 11.30am–1.30pm. Free. Refreshments provided. Booking essential. A tour of the exhibition for visitors aged 60 and over, led by freelance educator Mary Keegan.

# Claire Barclay Openwide

Exhibition **7 February – 12 April 2009**

Mon–Sat 11am–6pm, Sun 12–5pm

**Always free**

Over the past fifteen years, Claire Barclay has shown her work around the world in solo and group exhibitions at institutions such as Tate Britain (2004), Dundee Contemporary Arts (2003), Moderna Museet, Stockholm (2000) and at the Venice Biennale (2003). Her work has been installed in a Venetian palazzo, a former fireboat station, and a hay barn. Nearly all of her installations have only been exhibited once. At The Fruitmarket Gallery, Barclay is showing new and older work together for the first time.

**Talks and Events Calendar** To book call 0131 226 8181

For full details of the programme of talks, events and workshops, pick up a leaflet.

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## The Fruitmarket Gallery

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Barclay's installations are composed of large structural supporting elements and smaller objects, with the structural support operating like a backdrop or stage set for the objects. The objects themselves, either handmade or machined, are the dynamic players, made of familiar materials such as leather, iron and wood, but crafted into strangely functionless things.

Early on in her career, Barclay decided to move from using ready-made objects to making her own, because she wanted simpler, more pared-down forms with less specific references – objects more ambiguous and for her, more authentic and more open for the audience to make meanings for themselves. Together, the structural elements and smaller objects exist in relation, opening up understandings of their formal properties and creating dialogues between them.

Although Barclay is often described as an artist who uses the gallery as a studio, it is more accurate to state that she brings her studio-based practice into the gallery. As such, her practice is more generative than responsive to the gallery space: the work creates its own environment, its own atmosphere and narrative. The smaller objects are focal points for each installation, carriers of ideas rather than idealised forms. The painstaking object-making process, and the conceptualisation of the installation as a whole, takes place in her studio over a long period of time. Thinking about and making the smaller objects, using them, reusing them and reflecting upon them is part of what gives them their power.

The work downstairs offers insights into the interplay between elements through a range of presentational contexts for older and newer work. First exhibited in 2005 at Stephen Friedman Gallery, London, *Silver Gilt* is the only work in this exhibition

previously installed in its original configuration (despite its displacement to a new context). Objects and structural elements are brought together in a triangle of tension and balance: at one point, a string of metal bowls hangs from a precariously positioned machined brass pole; at another, screenprinted fabric drapes onto the floor; the final point consists of a semi-collapsed metal frame.

By contrast, *Openwide* (2009) concentrates on sculptural elements from past installations. Sometimes used in more than one installation, the objects presented here were made and exhibited over the course of Barclay's career. Barclay values these as parts of whole installations, first as the objects with which the installations began, and then as relics or reminders of them. The objects are titled in relation to the installations they originally animated, and are here shown under the group title *Openwide*. In place of the structures on which they were originally seen, here plinths, tables, trays and a ramp (designed by the artist but made according to museum conventions) recall the spatial arrangements of the original installations while allowing the sculptures a new life as objects in relation to one another. The plinths and structures divide the space, creating pathways for looking at the work in stages, enabling a process of gradual discovery and close-up, intimate viewing. In her decision to present these objects together, Barclay offers a glimpse into how she uses, reuses, situates and values these objects in her practice, and over the span of her career the objects seem to form a kind of community.

Another new venture for Barclay in this exhibition is the group of screenprints shown together, which include a new series *A Life Livelier*. The prints share qualities with the artist's three-dimensional work. Like the

sculptures in *Openwide*, they are forms reduced, simplified and presented in relation to other simplified forms, either overlaid or with surface edges barely touching. The colour screen prints come directly from shapes Barclay cuts out of paper, using them as templates to create the forms on the screen. After a long editing process, Barclay selected (from a much larger group of new experimental prints) the group of prints for this exhibition.

Upstairs, two new commissioned works *Subject to Habit* and *Caught in Corners* exist in relation to each other, one suggestive of a domestic environment, the other associated with the world of work, and both comprised of very different sets of materials and forms. In *Subject to Habit*, thick black vinyl gym mats press up against and cascade from an assemblage of metal bars and large wooden planks. Highly-polished, machined aluminium objects resemble barbells or parts of machinery, but resist this categorisation: the objects at either end of the metal bars are heavy, but unlike the rounded forms of barbell weights, these 'weights' have sharp edges that almost cut into the foam of the mats. An assortment of heavy objects are held high, balanced for a moment but menacing in their capacity for potential collapse. In *Caught in Corners*, the contrasting organic materials and forms – enclosures made of lime-rendered straw bales, colourful patchwork cloth and wooden frames – are resonant of a different kind of environment, one moulded by human hands, but not defined or constrained by identification or classification.

Certain themes and materials have long dominated Barclay's work. Her installations explore aspects of material culture and social groups: hunting, new age culture, domestic encampments, and the elemental relationships or oppositions within these environments (cleanliness and dirt,

formlessness and the commodification of nature). Barclay's use of everyday materials such as leather, clay, cloth, wood, wool, and metal is based on their long-term production and use throughout history, and her desire to make objects that transcend time and place. Her installations explore relationships between the material properties of her specially-made objects through their points of contact, whether pressed or placed, cut or stitched, draped or bound.

Barclay's titles offer routes into interpreting the work without confining their meanings; puns and metaphors open up possible concepts and references. Although each object is curiously dysfunctional, defying categorisation, Barclay wants the installation context to suggest some possible use. Her work is often anthropomorphised. For some viewers, some objects may appear simultaneously seductive and threatening, carrying sexual or violent connotations, while other objects may conjure up a soft, safe and homely atmosphere. Barclay's longstanding concern for audience, site, and context results in work that does not present a fixed or final meaning, work that demands close looking in exchange for an experience of discovery: work with meanings that are wide open.

*There is something inherent in human nature that needs to set certain objects apart and imbue them with special importance. This practice has become more and more complex and absurd as civilization develops. I think there is a relationship between this and the objects in my installations.*

**Claire Barclay**

*Openwide* (ex. cat.), 2009, p.146