

SOMETHING WHERE BEFORE THERE WAS NOTHING

HANNAH LEES

31 MAY – 7 JULY

OPENING 30 MAY

TACO!

2 Cygnet Square

Thamesmead

London

SE2 9FA

www.taco.org.uk

Something where before there was nothing is an exhibition of new works by the British artist **Hannah Lees**. Working across sculpture, writing, and sound, Lees's practice works with the latent personal and cultural meanings of materials, objects, words, and forms.

In the process of her making Lees employs a speculative and intuitive approach selecting and 'finding' of materials, producing works that have distinct aesthetic qualities with enigmatic, poignant, or alluring affect.

Something where before there was nothing is a constellation of works that take as the basis for their material enquiry the concept of the 'parent'. Though informed directly by her recent experiences as a mother with a young child, Hannah has sought to position her enquiry beyond just reflecting biological reproduction and societal norms. Instead, the works in the exhibition give consideration to 'parent' as an expansive concept, one that includes processes of care, nurture, kinship, surrogacy and dependence.

Central to the exhibition are a series of large free standing sculptural forms, that appear to possess swollen, pregnant bellies. These maternal protagonists are formed from antique, wooden, bread kneading bowls that Lees has collected over many years. Lees has used plaster to fill the cavity of each bowl.

Previously these bowls supported yeast, flour and water to be hand-kneaded and formed into life-giving bread. Now, each cavity contains plaster embedded with small, beach-combed objects collected by Lees on her drifts and walks along the Kent coast and Thames estuary.

Whilst these pregnant forms act as a vessel or petri dish for found materials, each of the objects thrown up by the sea is in turn home to microscopic life and tidal matter.

Presented alongside these pregnant sculptural works are a series of 'skins' seemingly tattooed with images of microscopic forms. These are prepared pieces of *Amadou Mushroom*, a spongy fungi material derived from *Fomes fomentarius* – a parasitical fungi that grows on Pine Trees. *Amadou* has long been associated with human domesticity and craft having been used since the mesolithic as tinder for kindling fire, medicine, clothing and food.

Printed on these skins are images of *malassezia* – a fellow parasitical fungus, but one that grows on human skin. These works stem from Lees reflection on cultivation and symbiosis, where parasitical forms in nature are host parents to other forms, or where mutual supportive host environments are created by different species.

Played throughout the duration of the exhibition are a series

of spoken narratives in which a speaker reflects on their everyday, often hidden, acts of care. The protagonist describes caring for a pet, house plants, and gut bacteria, and shares unfiltered thoughts and feelings about what this care might be and muses the nature of their physical relationship to living forms outside or within their own body.

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Hannah Lees currently lives and works in Margate, UK. She studied Fine Art at UCA Canterbury (2006) and Chelsea College of Art (2011) and been exhibited with galleries, and project spaces across the UK including Turner Contemporary, The Sunday Painter, Kingsgate Project Space, Kupfer Project Space, Quench Gallery, Sim Smith, and Roland Ross.

www.hannahlees.com

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TACO! is an artist-led space for research, production, and exchange located in Thamesmead, SE London. **TACO!** is engaged with its local context and centres the work and role of artists in all the work it undertakes, supporting a dialogue between artists, audiences, community and place.

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