

THE UNCERTAINTY OF KNOWING

Written by Suzanne Close

The fact that meaning is never produced in isolation or through isolating processes but rather through intricate webs of connectedness.

- Irit Rogoff ¹

The Uncertainty of Knowing proposes that the unknown is a catalyst for boundless possibilities that can prompt new meanings, solutions and alternative ways of experiencing the world. The exhibition questions if knowledge can ever fully be acquired. It alludes to the gaps in our comprehension within established systems of knowledge, but also the transformative space between knowing and unknowing that is required to form ideas and gain new insights.

Art is a way of knowing that encompasses uncertainty. When making art or encountering an artwork for the first time, we step into uncharted terrain. The emerging artists Izabella Shaw and Inneke Taalman both embrace the unknown in their practice as a transformative state of discovery. They play with our pre-existing knowledge and the associations we bring to seemingly ordinary objects, materials and spaces. It is only on further contemplation that we realise that the tangible has transformed into visceral and elusive possibilities.

Izabella Shaw finds meaning through the physicality of making, but in doing so, must journey into the unknown. Her practice requires risk as well as serious play, and this is perhaps why her sculptural works hold a delicate balance between materiality and the intangible poetics of form. Shaw reassembles found objects so that they carry encoded suggestions of their previous function, but only to disrupt and make strange what we thought we already knew.

In Shaw's *Modified blow, 2020*, a mass of surgical gloves enthusiastically applaud in an absurd gesture that is at once humorous and unsettling. Inflated by an industrial fan, the fingers threaten to fondle playfully or menacingly grope. The title is a reference to the statement, 'every touch is a modified blow'.² The nature of touch is fraught. There is a risk of transgressing boundaries and an uncertainty in the intention in which a touch is given and received. The use of gloves dull the sensation of touch and Shaw has drawn attention to the impersonal in-between state they enable. The global pandemic has imposed another reading to this work, with the heightened awareness of issues surrounding distance ¹ that has made the act of touch problematic. Without air, the hands in *Modified blow* are left empty, highlighting an aching absence of human connection.

A longing to grasp that which is beyond reach is also suggested in Shaw's moving image work *Propositional arrangement, 2020*. Two walkie-talkies come in contact only to be repelled by their wailing feedback. The yearning and disconnect between the communication devices enact an agonising love song. The story of Leon Theremin inspired this work. Theremin's musical invention, that takes his name, produces ethereal sounds made by the musician's hand moving through the air. Leon was enamoured with Clara Rockmore (née Reisenberg) who was a virtuoso of the instrument. She turned down Theremin's numerous proposals before eventually marrying another. Through the drama of unrequited love played out by Shaw's handheld transceivers, it references the ill-fated notion that similar poles could attract. Shaw has used the medium of radio waves to reveal that information flows in a seemingly empty space between things.

Ramp, 2020, acts as a bookmark for the latent potential within the gallery space. The ramp Shaw has constructed paradoxically obstructs our access while proposing a bridge or path to that which is beyond our perception. *Ramp* is the conceptual metamorphous of Shaw's previous work *Untitled (ladders), 2019*. Her entwined ladders have been mulched and compressed into this equally inaccessible form. In its current state, the wedge holds open an in-between space where possibility can enter.

The same potentiality is suggested in the work of Inneke Taalman. Through the moving image work *being double, 2020*, we view the vacant gallery space with a lone projector beaming from a plinth. The emptiness has become potent with promise as we glimpse

the bustle of energy from the traffic and neon signage outside. Set at night, when thoughts multiply and make trouble for the restless mind, there is a Lynchian duality created by the mirrored room reflected in the window.

In viewing the work, we circumnavigate the illuminated lens, as if being continually asked to reposition our corporal and cerebral selves. It appears that our points of view are not only altered by great seismic shifts but in the earth's subtle rotations. On closer inspection, we realise that the projector is both protagonist and the source of the moving image. Time and space appear to loop around each other as we experience the gallery from the outside and within. The boundaries between our inner selves and the outside world have been called into question.

Taalman's work creates room for uncertainty to exist. As an artist, they elicit spatial encounters that are concerned with the construction of knowledge through embodied experiences. Through Taalman's tactile and physical interventions of the gallery space, she disrupts our preconceived notions to create a new layered and nuanced understandings of how we inhabit ourselves. This is a sensitively observed response to the physical and psychological site of the gallery.

The exhibition itself interrogates the role of the gallery as a space of knowledge formation. The site at Floating Goose alludes to the process of constructing meaning in a space of uncertainty. The studios are areas of experimentation with unknown outcomes. When the gallery is seen as an extension of this, it becomes a site where the artists and audience are active participants in the construction of meaning within the space.

The Uncertainty of Knowing creates encounters that challenge the viewer to consider how ambiguity can prompt alternative ideas and new interpretations. In this time of socio-political uncertainty, art can function as a reminder to think critically about the spaces we inhabit and consider how we can find comfort in the unknown.

¹ Rogoff, I., 2006. 'Smuggling'—An Embodied Criticality. European Institute for Progressive Cultural Policies, 2.

² Crawley, E. quoted in: Carson, A., 1990. 'Putting Her in Her Place: Women, Dirt, and Desire', *Before sexuality: The construction of erotic experience in the ancient Greek world*, Princeton University Press, p. 135.



Cover:

Inneke Taalman, *being double* (still from moving image), 2020, image courtesy of the artist

Izabella Shaw, *Modified blow* (detail), 2020, image courtesy of the artist

Left:

Izabella Shaw, *Untitled* (ladders), 2019, image courtesy of the artist

Below:

Inneke Taalman, *being double* (still from moving image), 2020, image courtesy of the artist

Izabella Shaw graduated with a Bachelor of Contemporary Art from the University of South Australia and is a 2020 recipient of the George Street Studios Residency supported by the Helpmann Academy.

Inneke Taalman is an emerging artist currently based in Adelaide, Australia. Inneke grew up in Melbourne and also lived in Sydney and Singapore. Their practice is situated in the field of sculpture, looking at video, installation and performative practices as a way of considering subtle embodied experiences and spatial relationships. Inneke recently completed an Honours degree at Adelaide Central School of Art (ACSA). They also have a Bachelor in Visual Art, ACSA, and a Bachelor in Linguistics and Drama, Deakin University. Inneke has a background working for performing arts organisations until returning to study visual art.

Suzanne Close is an emerging curator based in Adelaide. In 2019, she completed a Master of Art in Curatorial and Museum Studies at the University of Adelaide. Her curatorial practice is concerned with investigational models of exhibition making that examine alternative ways of encountering art and creating active and immersive experiences. Suzanne is a visual arts educator has previously received a Graduate Diploma in Art History and in Education, as well as a First-Class Honours Degree in Visual Arts.

As the 2020 recipient of the AHCAN & Floating Goose Early Career Curator Program, Suzanne has curated this exhibition with the generous support of the Art History and Curatorial Alumni Network (AHCAN), the City of Adelaide, Floating Goose Studios Inc. and SALA.



INNEKE TAALMAN

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IZABELLA SHAW

