

Francis Upritchard: Wetwang Slack

November 18 - December 18, 2021

For Immediate Release

The exhibition of New Zealand-born and London-based artist Francis Upritchard brings together large stone and bronze sculptures, painted glass vessels, and works on paper, presented in a museological display. Drawing from the history of figurative sculpture, craft traditions and design, blended with references from literature and history, Upritchard pushes these practices into new directions, bringing them together to create a striking and original visual language. Upritchard's work resists easy categorization, coalescing its elements into a melting pot of traditions where no dominant culture persists. *Wetwang Slack* is her fourth solo exhibition at Anton Kern Gallery.

Wetwang Slack, a version of which was originally presented at the Barbican Centre in London in 2018, is named after the archaeological site of three Iron Age chariot burials in Yorkshire, UK. Playing with scale, color and texture, and a variety of references, Upritchard populates the gallery with large stone and bronze sculptures cast from balata (a wild rubber harvested in Brazil) prototypes, and a wide range of eccentric objects, casting her net of inspirations far wider than any one particular reference. Her figures – half man, half horse – are inspired both by the Parthenon frieze depicting a *centauromachy*, the fight between Greeks (the Lapiths) and Centaurs at a wedding feast, and rest upon stone slab reliefs from the so called “Wonder of Tramin,” in which a giant boulder rolled down a mountain in the Italian Alps narrowly missing a farm house, mirroring similar stories of divinely found objects and godly intervention. As the centaurs invite the viewer to make connections with Classical high-relief sculptures, “LLLA Go Eealing in New Zealand”, alternatively, alludes to the Japanese folklore characters of *Ashinaga-tenaga* (Long Legs and Long Arms). The two creatures, one with short arms and long legs, the other with long arms and short legs, combined their physical assets to work as a team to catch fish by the seashore, and together they were able to thrive. The exhibition unfolds on the second floor with two metal and glass vitrines displaying small experimental versions of the bronze figures found below and a group of glass vessels painted with Centaurs and Sea Creatures. Drawings depicting Centaurs round off the exhibition.



Francis Upritchard, *LLLA go Eealing in New Zealand*, 2019-2021
Bronze
90 1/2 x 35 3/8 x 21 5/8 inches (230 x 90 x 55 cm)

In a curious case of consistency, Upritchard had all of the bronzes cast in a foundry in Northern Italy. The prototypes used were the creatures she made of balata molded in a labor-intensive process that requires at least two people at this scale,

a craft taught to her by Darlindo José de Oliveira Pinto, the master of balata in Belém. The rubber gives the bronzes an almost leather-like finish, like a body preserved in peat. Like *Ashinaga-tenaga* is a story celebrating mutually beneficial working relationships, *Wetwang Slack* feels like a celebration of the comparatively non-hierarchical nature of craft and the rewarding exchange taking place between the worlds of contemporary art and craft. Ultimately, Upritchard's works traverse cultures and time periods.

For additional images and information, please contact: press@antonkerngallery.com.

Francis Upritchard was born in 1976 in New Plymouth, New Zealand. After graduating from Ilam School of Art, Christchurch, she moved to London in 1998 where she co-founded the Bart Wells Institute, an artist run gallery. Upritchard's work has been featured in solo exhibitions at the Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens, Sint-Martens-Latem, Belgium (2020); Barbican Centre, London (2018-19); LUX Art Institute, Encinitas, CA (2018); the Dunedin Public Art Gallery and Christchurch Art Gallery, NZ (2017); the Monash University Museum of Art (MUMA), Melbourne, Australia; the City Gallery Wellington, Wellington, New Zealand (both 2016); The Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Whitechapel Gallery, London (both 2014); the Marugame Genichiro-Inokuma Museum of Contemporary Art, Japan; The Douglas Hyde Gallery, Dublin, Ireland (both 2013); Nottingham Contemporary, UK (2012); Cincinnati Contemporary Art Center, Cincinnati (2012); Vienna Secession (2009); and in international group exhibition such as the 57th Venice Biennale (2017) and the 53rd Venice Biennale, Italy (2009). She lives and works in London and New Zealand.



"Wonder of Tramin", Südtirol, Italy

Gallery Hours

Tuesday through Saturday
10am – 6pm

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