

CRISTIN TIERNEY

Malia Jensen: Out West (Back East)

June 7 – July 13, 2018

Opening Reception: Thursday, June 7, 6:00 to 8:00 pm

Cristin Tierney Gallery is pleased to present ***Out West (Back East)***, an exhibition of new works by **Malia Jensen**. Featuring ceramic and bronze sculpture, *Out West (Back East)* examines themes of identity construction, human nature, and perception, especially as they relate to two places Jensen has called home: Oregon and New York City. The exhibition opens on Thursday, June 7th with a reception from 6:00 to 8:00 pm. The artist will be present. *Out West (Back East)* continues through Friday, July 13th.

A box full of snakes. Crumpled pieces of fabric. Soft dough enveloping a drooping rolling pin. A mule deer skull. The works in *Out West (Back East)* are part of a highly personal narrative. They tell the story of Jensen's artistic and individual growth, which began in rural Oregon and followed her bicoastal moves from Portland to New York and back. Some sculptures—like *Deer Skull*, *Pork Chop*, and *Box of Snakes*—embody romantic notions of The West as a place of struggle, rugged individualism, and perseverance; while others point to an interest in the body, sensuality, and aging (see *Dough Situation*, *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Pill Bug*, and *Old Bag*). Emphasized in each are the myriad ways we define our humanity: pinched and folded drapes of fabric evoke the physicality of time passed; a bowl of fruit is both a testament to the simple pleasures of being alive as well as a *memento mori*; a twisted yet beautiful mass of snakes represents our fears and obsessions; the convoluted tale of “elk tracks” found by the artist's mother but later discovered to be her mother's own footprints reference family history and the translation of memory.

Jensen has long been concerned with commemorating that which is overlooked. Her works unearth beauty in the mundane, humor in the dark and absurd, and redemption in failure. Underscoring this is the artist's virtuoso marriage of form and content. Commonplace objects such as a flashlight and a dish of plums are elevated and monumentalized. The slippage between reality and the spoken word is celebrated, as seen in a bronze purse (with silver patina) seemingly plopped down on a counter and titled *Old Bag*. The fragility of life, alluded to in several sculptures, is further suggested by the exhibition's prominence of salt- and raku-fired ceramics. These methods are prized for the spontaneity of patterns and color made possible by chance elements in the firing. In embracing these dualities of splendor and ordinariness, past and present, and even life and death, *Out West (Back East)* offers homage to the things that have shaped us.

Malia Jensen (b. 1966, Honolulu, HI) lives and works in Portland, OR. This is her second solo exhibition at Cristin Tierney Gallery. Her work has been exhibited nationally and internationally at venues and institutions including the Melbourne International Arts Festival (Melbourne, Australia), Schneider Museum of Art (Ashland, OR), Portland Institute for Contemporary Art (Portland, OR), Tacoma Art Museum (Tacoma, WA), Milwaukee Institute of Art and Design (Milwaukee, WI), Holter Museum

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of Art (Helena, MT), Portland Art Museum (Portland, OR), Mesa Arts Center (Mesa, AZ), Marian Goodman Gallery (London, England), Richard Gray Gallery (Chicago, IL), and Elizabeth Leach Gallery (Portland, OR). She has been an Artist in Residence at the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation (Captiva, FL), Ucross Foundation (Clearmont, WY), Headlands Center for the Arts (Sausalito, CA), and the Portland Garment Factory (Portland, OR); and a visiting artist and speaker at Whitman College (Walla Walla, WA), Southern Oregon University (Ashland, OR), Pacific Northwest College of Art (Portland, OR), and Massachusetts College of Art and Design (Boston, MA). She has completed numerous public commissions in the Northwestern United States, and her work is held in many public and private collections. The artist wishes to thank the Oregon College of Arts and Crafts (Portland, OR) and Ash Street Projects (Portland, OR) for their generous assistance with this work.

For more information please contact Candace Moeller at +1.212.594.0550 or candace@crisintierney.com.