

**GITTERMANGALLERY**

# KLEA McKENNA

## GENERATION

September 12 – November 10, 2018

Gitterman Gallery is proud to present an exhibition of contemporary work by Klea McKenna. The exhibition opens on Wednesday, September 12th from 6–8 p.m. and continues through Saturday, November 10th.

This exhibition marks her first solo show in New York and the beginning of her representation by Gitterman Gallery. It is presented in association with Von Lintel Gallery in Los Angeles where McKenna will have a concurrent exhibition from September 7th through October 20th.

The exhibition presents McKenna's most recent work *Generation* alongside work from two of her previous series *Automatic Earth* and *Web Studies*. With each series, McKenna uses the photogram process innovatively to create unique gelatin silver prints that contain both vivid detail and ethereal abstraction. She pays homage to her subject's histories while re-animating them through her engagement, revealing nuance, depth and energy.

Unlike a photograph created with a camera, a photogram is a one-of-a-kind object that involves physical contact between a subject and the light sensitive printing surface, representing the mark of that interaction. McKenna emphasizes the physicality of this process and builds on it by forcing the paper to record texture as well as light. Working in near darkness she applies pressure on her subjects to physically imprint their texture into the photographic paper and then selectively exposes the paper to light creating what the artist calls "photographic reliefs."

With *Generation*, McKenna applies this method to textiles and women's clothing that is rich in the legacy of touch: from the labor of their making, to the textures of the designs, to the marks of continual wear. She chooses objects from different cultures that have often gone through transformations from generation to generation. Her choices are guided by the histories of these textiles and the stories they reveal of migration, cultural appropriation, and women's labor and sexuality. For McKenna, her process "is driven by my desire for haptic communication with women from a time and place different than my own...With each alteration, mending, and use, someone has inscribed themselves onto these textiles. Just as each garment was made through the patient labor of one woman's body, so is it undone that way, worn-down slowly, deconstructed, or cannibalized to make something new." With this in mind, the work fully embodies the dual meaning of its title, *Generation*, as both a reference to the passing of time and the creation of things.

McKenna's previous subjects – plants, rain, spider webs, wood and rock – reflect her ongoing dialogue with nature, which has always been an emotional force in her life. She is the daughter of renegade ethnobotanists, Kathleen Harrison and Terence McKenna, and was raised in the wilds of Hawaii and Northern California. Works from the *Automatic Earth* series are hand-embossed imprints of cross-

sections of trees that are made in darkness then exposed to light. These “photographic rubbings” are more than just a record of a tree’s age; their luminosity reminds us that it was alive and it was a part of other's lives. *Web Studies* are unique gelatin silver photograms of rain caught in the webs of orb-weaver spiders. Remarkable feats of engineering built each day to catch prey, the webs are also delicate and damaged and feel like artifacts of a magical realm. Like the patterns found inside trees and in our own lives, the webs follow a particular form yet each is unique and exquisitely flawed, marked by a specific series of complex interactions. Now a mother with a young daughter, McKenna is making work that references her daily life as a woman, artist and mother as well as her place in a continuum of generations.

McKenna was born in Freestone, CA in 1980 and received a BA from the University of California in Santa Cruz and an MFA from the California College of the Arts. McKenna's work has been exhibited over the past decade in numerous museums across the United States and is included in public collections including the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Mead Art Museum at Amherst College, Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Santa Barbara Museum of Art and the United State Embassy Collection. McKenna lives and works in San Francisco.