

Narelle Jubelin
Flamenca Primitiva
The Commercial Gallery, Sydney
22/04/16 – 21/05/16

It is with great pleasure that The Commercial presents *Flamenca Primitiva*, the first solo exhibition of Narelle Jubelin's work at the gallery. The deliberately ungrammatical labeling of the Sydney show in the feminine derives from a more obedient sibling, *Flamenco Primitivo*, the title of her exhibition recently held in London. Working in her signature miniature *petit point* renderings of found images, in the London exhibition Jubelin constructed a subtle constellation of modernist works by other artists – some canonical, some relatively obscure, more-or-less male and female respectively – which had recently been exhibited at various international venues and thus had a particular currency in the collective conscience. In her exhibition at The Commercial, Jubelin continues the thread with her “transmission of cultural narratives” but brings together eight renditions of other artists' works and one of her own along with a new series of cast bronze wall sculptures, to build a cluster of a different magnitude, the immediate significance of which is sometimes both more obscure (darker, veiled) and closer to home.

Referring to the particularly personal associations of the works in *Flamenca Primitiva*, the author of a forthcoming interview with Jubelin observed that the artworks to which these works point, at least in reproduction in one format or another, have ‘passed through Jubelin's hands’. This observation emphasises Jubelin's practice of working from photographic reproduction the publication specifics of which are themselves significant and contributing to the work, almost always several times removed from the original the way much art is disseminated and consumed. For example, the charming and well-thumbed cover of a favourite book – in French translation – by the theorist John Berger that depicts a photograph of a carved wooden figure where the documentary photographer is credited but not the sculptor, or a postcard produced by the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia of a text work in their collection by artist, Newell Harry, a dumbed-down rhyme with parental pronouns which situates the viewer back in the childhood home and in which the artwork itself, perhaps incorrectly installed on the day of photography, appears somewhat syntactically garbled, transposed.

In addition to the eight renditions of other artists' work, Jubelin revisits her own self-portrait – of which two other versions exist – and its metallic, coin-adorned frame from her 1989 *Trade Delivers People* series presented at the Venice Biennale the following year. Indeed frames figure prominently in *Flamenca Primitiva* where Jubelin has gone to great lengths to develop bespoke copper frames (interpretations of a Joseph Albers, in fact) to house her miniature sewings. The copper frames point back to her early work as well as to her primal encounters with material – copper – via her own dad's trade. The paternal material is also more obscurely present in the exhibition as part of the alloy of Jubelin's black-patinated bronze casts of throwaway cardboard pulp packing buffers whose brooding forms suggest many things (including the physical make-up of the cities from which their titles derive) but whose purpose as mere supports, escorts for more valuable products in transit (e.g. trade between hemispheres) have been enriched with new currency.

Jubelin's extraordinary rendition of Magdalena Abakanowicz's monumental sisal sculpture from 1978 that heads this announcement leads us into *Flamenca Primitiva* along more maternal lines. Abakanowicz, the matriarch of art that presents fibre as an end in itself rather than as a support for paint, has particular salience for Jubelin linked by both a material insistence (ethical) and curatorial countenance (familial). Largely through the early career efforts of Mary Jane Jacob (who has worked deeply with both artists over many years), Abakanowicz's work was exported (exiled) from the politically oppressive frame of Poland and brought to the US. This particular ‘Abakan’ from 1978 resurfaces in 2015 in a solo exhibition – and its catalogue – of Abakanowicz's work curated by Jacob at Marlborough, New York, the sibling of Jubelin's London gallery.

Flamenca Primitiva is Jubelin's first solo exhibition at The Commercial and her first solo commercial exhibition in her mother country for over a decade.