

"Fiona Connor, Sydney de Jong, Audrey Wollen"
Fiona Connor, Sydney de Jong, Audrey Wollen

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Press Release #2:

In the last days, the prophet Joel writes, God will pour her Spirit on all people. This outpouring, for Christians, begins with a gesture of material reconfiguration: The curtain, which separates the most holy place of the temple from the courts of priests, women, gentiles, is torn from top to bottom. Some interpreters have suggested that in this moment God moved out of the temple, never to return. The supposedly redemptive event of the death of Christ on the cross enacts a troublesome vision of spiritual independence from the material world.

The *superiority of the Christian religion*, for writers like Hegel, lies in the ideological emphasis on precisely this spiritual independence. It is intrinsic to Hegel's thoughts on the End of Art: A point in time when the potential for the progress and revelation of the World Spirit is exhausted in the object. Yet, the works presented of "Fiona Connor, Sydney de Jong, Audrey Wollen" present a different account of this movement: instead of focusing on narratives of progress and regress, here the holy is immanently present.

Firstly, Sydney de Jong has asked that her cups, plates and bowl might be allowed to exist as useful objects. In doing so she offers us a different account of the holy. Holiness, in its most basic definition, refers to objects put aside for ceremonial use. If one were to introduce such an object into common circulations, it would be considered defiled and would consequently need to be destroyed.

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This redefinition of the holy is similar to the manner in which particles and minerals that make up the clay from which de Jong's objects are made, or the pigments which saturate the clay completely, can never be understood separately from the earth from which they are derived. Use value is holy!

Secondly, in sketching an idea of the holy that is not contingent on languages of progress, Audrey Wollen draws our attention to other potentials for agency in embodiment. The character of the Rokeby Venus, Mary Richardson and Wollen herself, share in a more complicated and fruitful understanding of agent action: While the majority of academic theologians - in one way or another - have interpreted the suffering of Christ as the redemptive event in salvation history, they largely have disregarded the lived actions of Christ as redemptive in themselves. In contrast to these dominant interpretations, Wollen believes in 'a philosophy of deeds, not words.' This is a liberatory theology! Her work performs the messianic characteristic of mediation: becoming both image and iconoclast simultaneously.

Lastly, Fiona Connor enacts for us a speculative, secular account of Good Friday. Her doors are not simply broken in, but instead removed and exalted! In Connor's work *the curtain is not torn*, instead the doors of the gallery are placed as objects of adoration itself. Rather than illustrating the divine withdrawal, we find a secularly divine material expansion. This is not the trite universalism of the moderns, but a true object oriented eschatology!

—Hans-Jacob Schmidt

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