

## Herald St | Museum St

Herald St is pleased to present Jessi Reaves, *Going out in style*, the artist's second solo exhibition at the gallery. Reaves presents works that are contradictory, oscillating between sculpture and furniture while never quite fitting squarely into either category. A piece of fabric resembling a slipcover, typically intended as a protective sheath, is here gaping with holes and draped over a deep rust-coloured container; wooden salad bowls are placed as supports underneath a glass table-top literally folding the role of the table under its hood like an engine.

'Scrap jacket chair' plays with this notion, employing the platform as a museological device which, in most instances, prohibits the viewer from interacting with the object on display, elevating it, quite literally, above and beyond the status of a functional object. Here, Reaves transforms this into a gesture of invitation as the platform is used to raise the chair to the proper height for sitting. The platform is put to work again as a dramatic architectural intervention in the gallery space; creating a carpeted ziggurat structure reminiscent of the lush sunken interiors of Paul Rudolph. The platform acts as an elaborate framing device, surrounding the gallery's walled-in fireplace and drawing our attention to its obsolescence. In its prior iteration, the fireplace would have represented the functional core of the household, now blocked off it is rendered useless.

Reaves often hijacks iconic forms from the design tradition and redistributes them across her works, manifesting as recurring motifs that become absorbed into her own vernacular. In doing so, the boundary between stylistic fad and avant-garde design is kept playfully porous. Various modifications of Isamu Noguchi's seminal Akari lamps, for example, are often used as the skeletal forms across which more ephemeral contemporary design objects, in this case cheap statement T-shirts, are stretched - adorned with forcefully peppy slogans like "Killin it" and "Stop and smell the rosé". In other works, pre-existing design forms such as the Adirondack chair, found in practically every back yard across the United States, are simply inserted into the works as readymades.

Reaves' complex assemblages leave us with a persistent feeling of cognitive dissonance; her seemingly glamorous silhouettes, with their elaborate detailing, eventually reveal themselves to be roughly hewn and formed of a mottled, crusty wood- glue and sawdust mixture. Consider the elegant, trumpeting form of the datura flower, a motif repeated in Reaves' work, seen here suspended, up-side down, from complex grid-like structures and cascading over the wiry frame of the lampshade - a seductive plant that grows uncontrollably like a weed and, if breathed in, may give you nightmares.

Text by India Nielsen

Jessi Reaves (b. 1986, Portland, US), lives and works in New York.

In 2020, Reaves will have a two-person show at Contemporary Arts Museum Houston. Recent exhibitions include: *Once Upon a Time in the West*, Frac Nouvelle-Aquitaine MECA, Bordeaux; *Slant Step Forward*, Verge Center for the Arts, Sacramento (2019); *Kitchen Arrangement*, The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, Ridgefield; *Carnegie International*, 57th Edition, Pittsburgh; *Eckhaus Latta: Possessed*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; *The Phantom of Liberty: Contemporary Works in the RISD Museum Collection*, RISD Museum, Providence (2018); *Whitney Biennial*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; *31 Candles Jessi Reaves Featuring Bradley Kronz & Jessi Reaves (Waiting for Boots)*, Dorich House Museum, London; *Ginny Casey & Jessi Reaves*, Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia (2017).