

LIST OF WORKS

Stretch (after Sylvie Fleury), 2019

pink, yellow, and peach elastic (wide Italian cartridge pleat elastic, Italian cartridge pleat elastic with lamé, grosgrain fold over elastic, woven waistband elastic), c. 16–18th century dress pins collected from the Thames foreshore, c.16th century dress pins cast in hard brass from two originals, brass fixing s

Balaclava (+/-), 2019

inverted, greyscaled, and horizontally flipped '+/-' balaclava after Rosemarie Trockel; design translated from images and knitted by Sarah Shepherd (two shown from an edition of 10)
machine knitted donegal lambswool hand dyed with natural hair dye (ebony black) and squid ink, undyed donegal lambswool (natural chalk)

Balaclava (op), 2019

inverted 'op' balaclava after Rosemarie Trockel; design translated from images and knitted by Sarah Shepherd (two shown from an edition of 10)
machine knitted un-dyed donegal lambswool (natural chalk), lambswool hand dyed with natural hair dye (ebony black) and squid ink

Be Soft But Not Too Soft (Michelle), 2019

(series of 3, unique)
unfir ed flax fibre clay with grogged body (hand modelled); red, blue, green, and yellow iron oxides

Be Soft But Not Too Soft (Michelle with Sylvie stripes), 2019

unfir ed flax fibre clay with grogged body (hand modelled); cobalt carbonate, yellow iron oxide, porcelain slip, powdered calcium tablets

Missoni stretch (pink cast), 2019

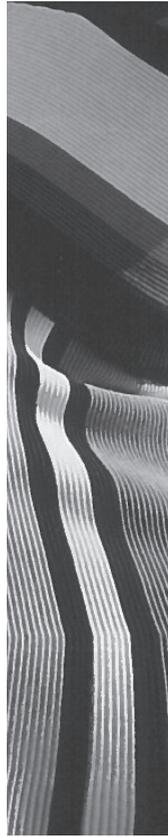
graphite powder, diamond dust, pink mica powder, and crushed calcium tablets on paper (85% cotton, 15% linen) blind embossed with Missoni knit fabric and striped lamé knit top

Missoni stretch (greyscale), 2019

graphite powder, diamond dust, activated charcoal powder, and atomised aluminium on paper (85% cotton, 15% linen) blind embossed with Missoni knit fabric and striped lamé knit top

Missoni stretch (green cast), 2019

graphite powder, diamond dust, powdered spirulina, and copper oxide on paper (85% cotton, 15% linen) blind embossed with Missoni knit fabric and striped lamé knit top



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MADELEINE PLEDGE STRETCH



FLATLAND PROJECTS

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To stretch conveys the testing (of a limit) towards a limit, a sly attempt to tease more from something, from a fabric, from a muscle, from a body, from a resource. It can be a drawing out of something previously hidden, a coaxing away, with the ever-present risk of a snap retreat. There is an elasticity even to the word 'stretch': the unlikelihood that a tongue might ever get to the single vowel that then gets dragged along the rest of the word. It splays out as it's uttered.

To stretch can imply fatness – a body squeezed. The fleshing-out of clothing, skin too quickly encountering seams sewn to counter the contours of a body. Horizontal stripes, they say, over-exaggerate one's curves; in Sylvie Fleury's *Stretch*, the flatness of striped fabric is interrupted by the bulge and swell of a bosom. It exists first as a flat image mounted on aluminium, secondly in the viewer's mind, who projects an embodiment that is not just female but feminine, not just suggesting of a form but suggestive. Connotations we know to be social and gendered fabrications are interwoven in the fabric.

Madeleine Pledge's *Stretch*, comprised of various *Stretches*, also tugs at the seams of the gallery. The edges of the space are exposed, delineated, then coaxed a little more open: a wall has been removed and moved; a work is hung on the very brink of the space, as if about to escape; boots stand along the boundaries, resolutely facing away. There are the markers of bodies everywhere. Yet here, candy-coloured pleated stripes (*after Sylvie Fleury*) reinforce the border between live (mostly male) bodies and these insinuations of a dislocated female presence. They teeter like Fleury's stretched jumper, fat with possibility, hovering at the point between movement and tautness. If touched, they resist, before returning to their state of potentiality.

Dress pins punctuate at points, like stitches in the flexed elastic. Some of these are Tudor-era, washed up in the

grit and mud along the shore of the Thames at Greenwich and Poplar. They serve as reminders of an age of bodices, sleeves and skirts, all separately fastened together – and, consequentially, of the act of shedding and loosening, a gradual peeling away of the shape of a body. Pledge has cast further pins in brass from these mudlarked originals. This cast form, a kind of afterimage of a female lineage of dressing, stretches through the other objects in the show. Works exist in an in-between state: between positive and negative space, between worn and unworn, between edible and toxic.

A cast of female artists are imprinted into the work. Surrogate balaclavas (*after Rosemarie Trockel*) mostly sit folded, well-mannered, challenging their violent history when empty of a face. Just one reveals its form, plunged through the eyehole with the heel of a clay boot. And yet, unfired, these boots are vulnerable to the touch – unwearable. Replicas of boots once worn by another artist with the accompanying caption 'artist's uniform', here Pledge suggests the impossibility of a single artistic identity, and the fiction of individual authorship.

Colour is concocted from iron oxides, diamond dust, squid ink, spirulina, crushed calcium tablets. These surfaces you can drink or ingest for health, for image, for indulgence; they are also laced with poison. Embossed reliefs of Missoni fabric appear like reptile skin: a muscular inverted abstraction that threatens. Another striped knit top floats awkwardly at different points throughout these reliefs, this time absent of a body but still smacking of capitalism – a purchased item for self-imaging that in turn embosses its wearer with supposed meaning. The status between image and object is continually manipulated, contracted and relaxed – stretched – as bodies simultaneously squeeze and haunt. Shadows from the elastic cling to the gallery wall, traces of plump flesh distended into striped linearity. ❖ PHOEBE CRIPPS