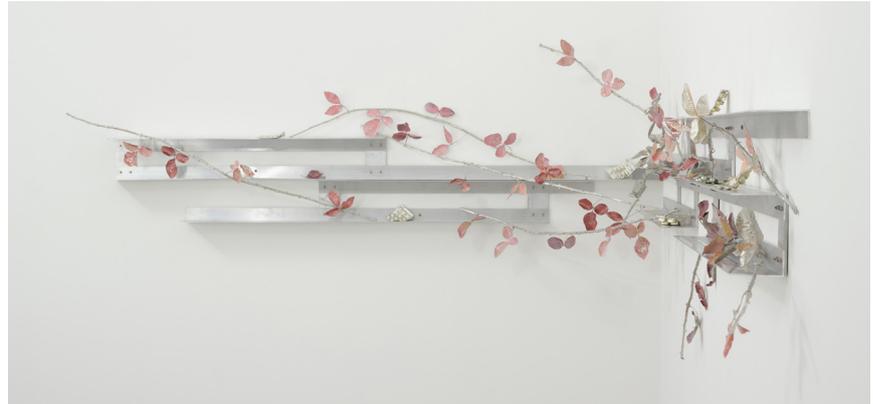


Natalie Dray

Kierkegaardian

25 July — 15 September 2018
Blain|Southern London



Natalie Dray, *I die*, 2018. Courtesy the artist and Blain|Southern. Photo: Peter Mallet

For the final exhibition in Blain|Southern's *Lodger* series, the British artist Natalie Dray has created a new series of sculptures, which flicker between rigidity and suppleness, the inorganic and the organic, geometric order and the messy chaos of living things.

Here, metal armatures – great dented grids, and what might be a modular shelving system – have become overgrown with delicate foliage, hand cast in pewter alloys using a 'home-grown' technique of the artist's own invention.

On close inspection, these fronds are composites, created from grafting the ragged leaves of one plant onto the thorny stems of another, in what appears to be a low-fi form of genetic engineering, or perhaps cosmetic surgery. Notably, Dray's flora is not green, but rather borrows its palette from the soft flesh-tones of the beauty counter, as though it has been treated by a make-up artist, or else formed from human skin. At once mineral, vegetable, and animal, we might ask ourselves what strange nutrients it feeds on, and what strange seeds it will spill.

An unruly play of horizontals and verticals that seems on the verge of resolving itself into text, the foliage is punctuated, here and there, by other hand cast objects, each of which has an intimate relationship with the human body: wound probes, sticking plasters, blister packs of over-the-counter painkillers, and glinting ribbons of foil-wrapped condoms.



Natalie Dray, *I die* (detail), 2018

The probe aside, these are everyday items, the kind of things that we might find nestling in the depths of a handbag, alongside a lipstick and a mobile phone. Arranged on Dray's shelves, however, they feel like they might almost be votive offerings, made in the hope of forestalling some unwelcome physical event – an infection, a pregnancy – or else of relief from its effects.

Splicing industrial processes with improvised making, the permanence of casting with the transience of cosmetics, and the cool rationalism of pharmacy supplies with a hot throb of spiritual yearning, Dray's sculptures (like the title of her exhibition, which is borrowed from a Twitter account that splices the sayings of a proto-existentialist philosopher with those of the Queen of reality TV) do not seek to resolve their internal contradictions. Rather, they embrace their hybrid status: their straight and crooked edges, their fleshy leaves and their sharp, metallic thorns.

A publication accompanies the exhibition, with texts by the artist and Tom Morton.

About the artist

Natalie Dray (b.1988 Brighton, UK) lives and works in London.

Previous exhibitions include *be soft/be hard*, HER, London (2017 - solo); *Lived In*, Galerie Opdhal, Stavanger, Norway (2017 - group); *No Place to Spit, Set*, London (2017 - group), *Facelift*, Studio Leigh, London (2016 - solo); *Tarantallegra*, Hester, New York (2016 - group); *Secondary Object*, David Dale Gallery, Glasgow (2016 - group); *Dray*, Cell Project Space, London (2015 - solo); *Cookie Gate*, Ellis King, Dublin (2015 - group); *RA Schools Show*, Royal Academy of Arts, London (2014 - group); *Premiums*, Royal Academy of Arts, London (2013 - group); *Palazzo Peckham*, 55th Venice Biennale, Venice (2013 - group); *Young London*, V22, London (2013 - group); *Make Your Own Opoly*, Project Number, London (2013 - solo).

About Lodger

Lodger is a series of exhibitions at Blain|Southern, conceived by the writer, curator, and Contributing Editor for frieze magazine, Tom Morton. Running concurrent to the exhibitions in the central space, *Lodger* expands Blain|Southern's programme into new territories. Previous artists participating in the Lodger series include Alex Dordoy, Sophie Jung, Brian Griffiths, Gabriella Boyd, and Erkkka Nissinen.

About Blain|Southern

Blain|Southern is a contemporary art gallery based in London and Berlin. The gallery represents an expanding roster of international artists and is the exclusive representative of the estates of Lynn Chadwick and Avigdor Arikha. Recent exhibitions include Wim Wenders, Edward Kienholz, Marius Bercea, Rachel Howard, Michael Joo, Avigdor Arikha, James White, Sislej Xhafa and Jake & Dinos Chapman.

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