

Tanya Leighton

Press Release

Nicole Ondre
'TORSION'

27 April – 15 June 2024
Preview: Friday 26 April, 6–9pm

Tanya Leighton, Berlin is pleased to announce 'Torsion', a solo exhibition by Nicole Ondre, presenting a continuation of her work that investigates the intersection of ceramics and theoretical knots.

The knotting and twisting clay of Ondre's sculpture derive from her study of mathematical knot theory. In the field of topology, theoretical knots are constructs used to study the properties and behaviour of form in a purely abstract sense, divorced from physical materiality. Ondre brings the hypothetical into the real, transforming simplified, two-dimensional diagrams into complex, entangled configurations of clay.

The clay's material transformation references Ondre's interest in textile patterns. The forms are folded, stretched, and distorted and express the physical realities of gravity, compression, and extension through the sculptures' curves. This is not only evident in the stitch-like sequences of certain works and the haptic process of creation but also in the draped, coiled pieces that fold over themselves. The works contain the heaviness and gravity of fabrics depicted in Renaissance painting, such as pleated velvet curtains that frame a Biblical scene or brocade robes that drape over the Virgin Mary. They harken back to a painting tradition that Ondre practised prior to ceramics. The coiling, hanging sculptures demonstrate a sort of sprezzatura – to borrow a term from the 15th century. There is an effortlessness in the draped forms that masks the tension of twisted clay and the material's metamorphosis in the kiln.

Ondre's serpentine sculptures undulate in glossy varnishes and deep hues, some in a dark metallic, others in a bright teal, which derive from her adoption of copper in several glazes. Using this mineral engenders a form of contingency or chance, opening a liminal space where there is intention and control (and the release of both). Copper, in this equation, reacts to heat, time, and the atmospheric conditions of the kiln, which can result in either a dusky pink or a vivid turquoise.

The ancient, or the primordial, is physically embedded in the works. It is not just metaphorical but rather an intrinsic part of the material itself. Clay contains particles that are millions of years old. Ceramic shards and figurines are amongst the oldest human records. Clay remembers. A bump or dent, even if apparently fixed, may reappear in the firing process. Firing, then, is a sort of alchemical magic. It is a combination of temperature, glaze chemistry, time and oxygen in the kiln. It is the tactile sculpting of the practitioner and the memory of the clay itself.

Ondre's practice expands the vocabulary of abstraction and invites contemplation on the interplay of chance and intention, evoking a transitional realm where both control and spontaneity find expression.

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Nicole Ondre (born in 1986 in Salt Spring Island, British Columbia) lives and works in Vancouver.

Recent solo exhibitions include 'Global Warmth and Global Cooling' at Broadway Gallery, New York in 2021 'Pirl' at CSA Space in 2022, 'Global Warmth and Global Cooling' at Broadway Gallery, New York in 2021, and 'Blood Knot' at Unit 17 in 2018, both in Vancouver.

Ondre's work was included in a two-person exhibition, 'The Eyes Have Walls', with Mina Totino at the West Vancouver Art Museum in 2020, curated by Hilary Letwin. Other recent exhibitions include 'High Anxiety' at Monica Reyes Gallery, Vancouver in 2021; and 'School of Chairs' at 500 Capp Street Foundation, San Francisco in 2018. Since 2010, Ondre has co-directed the collaborative project Feminist Land Art Retreat with Vanessa Disler.

For more information please contact info@tanyaleighton.com or telephone +49 (0)30 21 972 220.

The gallery is open Tuesday – Saturday, 11–6pm and by appointment.