



Procession (detail), 2015-2018.



Top: *Book Puppet*, 2017, from the series *Parade of the Fearful*, 2008-2018. Middle: *Procession*, 2015-2018. Bottom: *Deny*, 2017, and *Lampshade Puppet*, 2017, from the series *Parade of the Fearful*, 2008-2018.

# PROCESSION

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Jetten, Saskia  
[Prints. Selections]  
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Front Cover: *Living up?*, 2017, from the series *Parade of the Fearful*, 2008-2018.



**PROCESSION**  
SASKIA JETTEN



# PROCESSION

Presented in two separate galleries at The Reach, this exhibition is comprised of several distinct but related bodies of work by Saskia Jetten. Collectively, they represent a culmination of the artist's most recent explorations into materials and processes as they relate to the concept of "procession" and its many interpretations: the act of moving forward; a succession of people or objects; an ordered arrangement. The notion of procession resonates powerfully with Jetten's practice as a printmaker, given the medium's inherently sequential nature.

Chronologically, almost all of the works in the exhibition are bracketed by two significant relocations: Jetten's immigration to Canada in 2012 when she settled in the community of Hatzic, near Mission, BC, and her more recent move to the Sunshine Coast, which coincided with the opening of this exhibition. *Procession* is thus somewhat of a time capsule of the six years Jetten spent living and working in the Fraser Valley, with the works on display embodying a discrete period of artistic production in the trajectory of her creative practice.

Originally from the Netherlands, Jetten studied fine arts with a special focus on printmaking at the Royal Academy of Art in The Hague. Before immigrating to Canada, she established a robust exhibition history as a print artist in Europe. When she relocated to the rural Fraser Valley, she committed to shipping her enormously heavy lithographic stones with her and established a print studio on her property where she continued creating work that explores the inherent qualities of a range of printmaking media. Jetten is a master of a variety of techniques and processes including lithography, drypoint, chine-collé, collagraphy, woodblock, and monotype printing. Each of these media has its own unique expressive and material qualities, which Jetten expertly manipulates to achieve subtle variations in the way her images communicate.

The artwork Jetten produced after settling in Canada was materially and technically related to the work she had been producing in Europe, but the complex experience of immigration had a marked effect on the themes and conceptual underpinnings that she explores more recently. In work created since 2012, Jetten has increasingly been interested in the transition from one psychological or physical state to another, as well as the capricious nature of identity—how one's sense of self and the way one's identity is performed can be both utterly transitory yet somehow also remain stable. In many ways,

printmaking is the ideal vehicle for Jetten to explore this phenomenon; each print is utterly unique while also being analogous to all the others in a related series. Printmaking's inherent ability to make in multiple allows the artist to explore what it means for an artwork, or personal identity, to exist concurrently across many iterations, and to question how each print in a series (or each version of oneself) can be at once the same and different from all the others.

Masks—and the wearing of them—are of recurring interest in this body of work. Evoking a range of associations from clowns to fairytales, from comic books to ceremony, Jetten's masks draw attention to the precarious and unstable nature of identity and the ways that we perform our various selves in response to changing contexts. Certain masks and faces recur throughout the exhibition, appearing in new materials and combinations in ways that appear familiar but also peculiar. Some of the masks and faces display recognizable facial features while others are much more abstracted and seemingly unknowable. Figures in the exhibition are characterized by a juxtaposition of playfulness—often suggestive of cartoons or puppets—and a subtle unnerving or anxious quality that seems to rest just below the surface.

This opposition of playfulness and anxiety is apparent in the installation of images and objects Jetten has assembled for the intimate space of the Grotto Gallery. The space has been transformed by a teeming combination of drawings, soft sculpture, book works, and prints whose impish characters are belied by the installation's title: *Parade of the Fearful*. For Jetten, these clownish figures represent the anxiety that accompanies the requirement to shift and adapt our behaviours to suit varying circumstances. This constant transitioning becomes socially innate over one's lifetime, but begs uncomfortable questions about the nature of identity, the essence of self, and the potential trauma of sociability.

There is a similar tension at work in the installation Jetten has assembled in the larger gallery nearby. Sharing its title with the exhibition as a whole, *Procession* is a sequence of nine figures whose fragmented forms are comprised of a variety of materials and are assembled from a wide range of printmaking processes. The figures' limbs are completely two-dimensional, printed on delicate paper and pasted directly onto colour-matched walls. As a result, the gestural and curvilinear limbs appear to be rendered on the walls themselves.

The artist has built garments for these figures by printing on specialist Tengujo tissue paper. Paradoxically delicate and strong, this paper can be bent, curled, and sewed just as fabric. Suspended from the ceiling by fine filament, the resulting garments appear to float in the space just in front of the walls, their relationship to the two-dimensional limbs more suggestive than materially grounded. The garments are also eerily empty, with no physical bodies occupying them. Like the non-existent emperor's new clothes, Jetten's empty garments point to the stories we tell the world about ourselves through performance of ego and/or the assemblage of identifying wardrobes.

Advancing her exploration of masks, the treatment of faces in this installation reinforces the inconstancy of outward countenance as a barometer for inner conditions. Some faces are comprised of soft sculpture, others are painted ceramic plates. Some figures have no faces, others have two. In some cases two-dimensional printed hands function as stand-ins for facial features. Faces are also printed on many of the garments, with the repetition of features becoming a decorative pattern in larger or smaller scale.

Arranged in a line, these nine fragmented figures appear to travel forward in a sequence of repeated imagery across the gallery walls. At times, the insistent recurrence of shapes, motifs, and forms makes it difficult to determine whether the combination of body parts are actually intended to be read as several distinct individuals, or as a time-lapse rendering of one person occurring several times in different versions of itself. The sense that Jetten is playing with the representation of motion through still image is reinforced by a short digital video also on display in this gallery. In *Moving Image* the viewer once again encounters the composite parts that make up *Procession*, this time animated through the use of stop-motion video. Jetten has long been interested in pushing the traditionally two-dimensional limits of printmaking into sculptural forms that occupy physical space. In *Moving Image* she adeptly introduces the possibility of the fourth dimension into her printmaking practice.

Throughout *Procession*, we encounter a coterie of unsettling figures whose fragmented forms articulate a range of personalities and attitudes. Like the variety of selves that we present in our outward lives, these artful assemblages—with their repeated patterns and layers of imagery—are a thin veil for the deeper psychological undercurrents they mask.

- Adrienne Fast & Laura Schneider



*Procession* (detail), 2015-2018.

## LIST OF WORKS

### ***Parade of the Fearful*, 2008–2018**

Comprised of the following individual works: *Figure*, 2017; *Book Puppet*, 2017; *Inner Turmoil*, 2008–2018; *Corner Figure*, 2017; *Living Up?*, 2017; *How to Start the Conversation*, 2018; *Puppet*, 2017; *Lampshade Puppet*, 2017; *Deny*, 2017; *Corner Drawing*, 2008–2018  
Installation of drawings, prints, and sculpture, including combinations of pencil, charcoal, pastel, fineliner, linocut, lithograph, collagraph, drypoint, and monotype on paper, cotton, chiffon silk, and organza; fibre fill, paper maché, bookbinding, stone, thread, frame, pins

### ***Procession*, 2015–2018**

Installation of lithographs, linocuts, woodblocks, drypoints on paper, chiffon silk, paper maché, wool felt, porcelain dish, mylar, fibre fill

### ***Moving Image*, 2018**

Stop-motion animation  
Concept, prints, realization, photography: Saskia Jetten  
Editing: Dirk Plante