

TAMMI CAMPBELL

*Bring ice, thanks*

presented by Anat Ebgi

22 January - 24 February

Arsenal Contemporary is pleased to announce a solo exhibition by Canadian artist Tammi Campbell. The exhibition opens 22 January and runs through 24 February.

Tammi Campbell works in the long shadow cast by the modernist tradition, imbuing the visual tropes of this legacy with affectionate subversion and personal narrative. Based in Saskatchewan, the artist invokes the history of the province's Emma Lake Artist's workshop, which hosted many of modernism's key players, such as Frank Stella, Barnett Newman, and critic Clement Greenberg, with the aim of exploring how hegemony influences the creation of a stylistic community. Within the oscillation between influence, convention and interpretation is where Campbell strategically nests herself, wrestling with the seduction of the supposed cultural center and the innate desire to break free of a prescribed system.

Campbell's paintings are often fixed at the interrupted moments framing their transit—still packed in bubble wrap, tape, and corrugated cardboard. Upon closer inspection the protective layers are revealed to be composed entirely of paint themselves, molded from the same acrylic material the artist applies to her canvas. These envelopments underscore both to the preciousness of the cargo they contain, as well as the invisible network of labor that goes into their viewership, from their movement between studio and exhibition and, later, in the gesture of their removal from view into storage.

The artist's latest body of work duplicates the selection of Josef Albers paintings found in the Guggenheim's permanent collection, meditating on the greater act of collecting, caring for, and bestowing value through this tacit form of appreciation. In pulling our attention towards the astonishing trompe l'oeil effect that negates our access to what is assumed to be the actual work of art, Campbell, in effect, points us to the oft-invisible matrix where value is ascribed.

Other series of new works playfully evoke Lucio Fontana, Yves Klein, and Morris Louis, three monumental figures of modernity. Campbell forefronts alternative realities in these men's recorded practices; for example, presenting an acrylic reduplication of the safety net that lay hidden outside the frame of Klein's now iconic *Leap Into the Void* photograph. The artist ekes out room to question the archive which has hitherto suggested the completeness of supposed male projects, like modernity itself. These interventions call to mind the "discovery" of the female contemporaries of male "geniuses", while highlighting that all of history is undergirded with narratives that have the power to dislodge dominant accounts.

Also on view in the exhibition is a series of drawings-cum-letters entitled *Dear Agnes* which sees Campbell effectuating a taciturn correspondence with another Saskatchewan native, Agnes Martin. Beginning almost a decade ago, Campbell has generated grids on Japanese rag paper, addressing each to "Dear

Agnes," folding them in thirds, and continuing this effort until nearly 1000 drawings accumulated. This exercise recalls Martin's own project *On a Clear Day*, constituting thirty silkscreens exploring the seemingly infinite variations offered by grids and which, in turn, ruptured the artist's seven year art hiatus. Bridging the practices of two artists working in disparate times, but sharing anachronistically in locales, *Dear Agnes* reflects Campbell dedicated meditation on the complexity of homage and the circumscription of reverence for the original, affirming in lieu the communities through which they were formed.

Tammi Campbell (b. 1974) lives and work in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. Solo exhibitions of her work have been held in institutions across Canada including the Esker Foundation, Calgary; MacKenzie Art Gallery, Regina; Mendel Art Gallery, Saskatoon; the Justina M. Barnicke Gallery, Toronto; the Dunlop Art Gallery, Regina; Mercer Union, Toronto; the Galerie de l'UQAM, Mont- real. She has participated in Canadian Biennale at the National Gallery of Canada.