**Boo Saville**

***Ma***

6 May - 11 June 2022

TJ Boulting is proud to present our fifth solo show with Boo Saville. Ma is her most personal show to date, incorporating her renowned colour field paintings and detailed drawings with a narrative that draws on her own reflections on motherhood and journey of involuntary childlessness.

​

‘Ma’ is a Japanese expression which describes the space in between, a deliberately empty space but one which holds its own presence and significance. It is the silence between notes, the pauses which give music meaning, and the emptiness which is full of possibilities. “I have always been fascinated by the charged nature of this negative space. It’s a metaphorical function I guess and one with which I familiarise.”

‘Ma’ also has a second meaning in the context of this work, one much more connected to her personally. It is ‘Ma’ meaning ‘mother’. “I have a strange and melancholy relationship to the role of mother in my life, losing my own mother in my thirties but also after years of fertility treatment not being able to fulfil my own role as a mother to a child. This left me feeling rather rootless, grieving and existing in a nether world not defined by these feminine tropes. In the hours after I lost my mum, an emotional severing of some invisible cord that connected me to her hit me. I have been feeling that rip again, slowly as I start to understand my childlessness. A situation I can only describe as being like a house with no roof and no floor.”

There are four large colour field paintings, each one is serene, contemplative and emotive. Colour is a vital part of her painting, the mixing of colours is a purely intuitive process from palette to canvas. Her colours became deliberately bright and uplifting after the death of her mother, which then segued into her own childlessness. At first they offered an emotional space in her work to escape and find comfort, and today this refuge has become joy. In previous series they were named after planets and the celestial but for this exhibition she decided to confront the personal and painful source of the work. Each colour field is titled by a girl’s name: Judith, Rachel, Rose, Audrey. “These paintings were made and developed through connection. Connection with myself, my past and my future but also connection with women in particular. They are about friendship. They are titled after the girls I may have had as children but also after important women in my life. I hope that people feel happy when they see them, the way I do every day at the studio.”

As such the idea of ‘Ma’ takes on this double meaning of both empty space and motherhood. “To be more reflective and positive for a moment, I started to ask myself various questions: What are the possibilities that could happen in this space? Why do I as a woman feel a need to be defined with these roles? Is gender important or relevant in the idea of mothering? As a childless woman, what possibilities could there be that I would not otherwise be presented with? How can I use my work to heal these wounds? So essentially these ideas, although originating from a place of grief have been transformative and given to the world with a huge optimism for what lies ahead.”

The second room of the exhibition moves from the colour fields to small, detailed ink drawings: an egg, a nest, weeds, an oyster, a pomegranate. These contrast visually but offer the same contemplative experience, this time through the precise representation of physical objects with their own attributes. The nest is a subject that she has visited several times, and began when she was undergoing IVF, it became something she could intensely focus on, the level of detail and concentration to use the tiny brush this time displacing her preoccupation with her thoughts on her own fertility. These objects also are suspended in white space, the emptiness around them holds and supports, giving them their own orbit and gravity as they float. We return again to this idea of Ma – space, potential, motherhood. “Neither daughter or mother, I am an island in the context of female lineage.”