

ROB TUFNELL

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**47 BEDFORD STREET
LONDON WC2E 9HA**

**RUTH EWAN, PEARL BINDER & THOMAS SPENCE
28 APRIL - 18 MAY 2024**

Ruth Ewan's first show at the gallery in London brings together a series of new screen prints, editioned jewellery and sculpture alongside metal tokens minted by Thomas Spence (1750 – 1814) and a selection of books written or illustrated by Pearl Binder (1904 – 1990).

Ruth Ewan's work is largely concerned with the dissemination of radical, political ideas. She has previously explored this process through music, botany, pedagogical systems and horology. In this exhibition she has produced prints that quote the folklorist Sylvian Trébuçq (1857-1930) and the political radical Thomas Spence. Trébuçq's ideas are articulated graphically by Ewan's daughter while Spence's are translated into his Krusonean, his phonetic version of the English language.

An accompanying sculpture, 'Everlasting Peace and Happiness' (2024) echoes a description of Thomas Spence's funeral procession up Tottenham Court Road in 1814. The entourage were led by an acolyte holding a set of scales bearing soil to symbolise Spence's belief in 'equality in land'. Spence was buried at St James Burial Ground in an area designated for 'paupers' (later cleared to make way for the building of Euston Station in the 1870s).

'Mourning Ring for Thomas Spence' is produced in both recycled silver (from discarded National Health Service x-ray film) and recycled 9ct gold. These rings bear the inscription 'NOT LOST BUT GONE BEFORE' translated into Krusonean. Alongside are pendants cast from Spence's original tokens.

Thomas Spence (1750 – 1814) was a self-taught political radical who was repeatedly imprisoned for sedition. As a school teacher in Newcastle upon Tyne he developed a revised alphabet and published a phonetic dictionary believing that correct pronunciation would dissolve class distinctions and change society. As a bookseller and publisher in London he produced pamphlets and tokens to campaign against the monarchy, demand the end of slavery, argue for the rights of women, children and animals and propose the introduction of a system of social security payments.

Pearl Binder (1904 – 1990) was an artist, illustrator, writer and a founder member of the left-wing Artists' International Association. Amongst the numerous books she produced were children's stories inspired by her extensive travels in the Soviet Union and China, a book exploring 'the interrelation of dress and decency', a study of the Banaban islanders lengthy legal disputes with the British Phosphate Company, a compendium of 'Magic Symbols of the World', a 'social record' of London's Pearly Kings and Queens and a biography of the prominent courtesan Cora Pearl.

Ruth Ewan (b. 1980) has previously exhibited at the Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle upon Tyne and the Collective, Edinburgh (2022); the Cooper Gallery, Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design, University of Dundee (2021); CAPC Musée d'Art Contemporain de Bordeaux; Yorkshire Sculpture Park, Wakefield and the High Line, New York (2019) Camden Arts Centre and Tate Britain, London (2015); the Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw (2013); Kunsthall Charlottenborg, Copenhagen and Badischer Kunstverein, Karlsruhe (2012); Dundee Contemporary Arts and CAAC, Seville (2011); the ICA, London (2008) and Studio Voltaire, London (2006). Her work was included in the São Paulo Biennial (2016); Folkestone Triennial (2011); the New Museum Triennial, New York; the Tate Triennial, London (2009) and East International, Norwich (2006). She lives and works in Glasgow.

Opening reception Sunday 28 April, 14.00 – 16.00
Exhibition open Saturdays 12.00 – 17.00, and by appointment
for further information: mail@robtufnell.com