B E N R U B I G A L L E R Y

JUDE BROUGHAN

Soap and Stones

August 24 – September 30, 2022

Benrubi Gallery is pleased to present *Soap and Stones*, Jude Broughan's third solo exhibition with the gallery, at our new space at 529 West 20th Street, floor 8, in Chelsea, NYC. The photographs and photo-based assemblages in this exhibition draw from two series that reflect the pandemic era — *Pandemic Cemetery Walks* and *Personal Care* — referencing solitary activities, repetitive hand washing, and self care rituals.

The *Pandemic Cemetery Walks* series began April 2020 in the early days of the pandemic, when Broughan started walking in a large cemetery near her home in Brooklyn, the closest green space where she could exercise. She's more philosophical than religious, and these walks became meditations on the rolling seasons, on grief and healing, and some social ideological questions. These photographs could maybe be seen as picture postcards from the pandemic, or contemporary memento mori. The artist sometimes questioningly lines up her shadow silhouette with gravestones and trees, bringing her physical presence into the photographs, or her focus rests in on the growing plants, and stones and other offerings placed by visitors.

The *Personal Care* series documents the artist's accoutrements of daily life, where she is consciously modifying her behaviors over time in order to live ecologically and avoid plastic packaging. Her artwork has long been concerned with the subversion of product packaging and advertising — as stated by New Zealand artist and critic Peter Dornauf "*Broughan was once employed in something she now grinds her teeth over. In a former life as graphic designer she was involved in the seduction of the image and manipulation of its surface glamour to sell goods. In reaction to this her oeuvre now seems to be preoccupied with a deliberate disruption of the visual lies perpetrated in the name of commerce*". But now, rather than abstracting and indexing, she is taking a more direct route, and aims to remove the product packaging altogether.

Broughan dismisses the seeming hermetically sealed perfection of commercial imagery and accepted conventions, with playful gestures like a blurry thumb showing on the corner of a photograph, some soaps resembling "tasty bites"(according to her smartphone), and the handwritten label on the homemade deodorant looking decidedly smeary. The rounded, slightly grubby stones and soaps, distressed down by water and touch, bring to mind Giorgio Morandi's still life paintings — whose everyday objects are familiar, yet purposely stripped of any identifying marks like labels, and are mysteriously ambiguous with an anonymous quality.

In *Soap and Stones*, Broughan presents her lived experience, that in recent times has often felt as rigorous and repetitious as washing clothes by hand with homemade soap, and beating the laundry against rocks in a stream. But you get the sense that she often sings while she walks, and takes things in stride.

Jude Broughan is New Zealand-born artist, based in Brooklyn, New York. She has had solo exhibitions at venues such as Benrubi Gallery, New York (2020, 2017), Marisa Newman Projects, New York (2017), Calder and Lawson Gallery, Hamilton, New Zealand (2015), Dimensions Variable, Miami (2014), and Churner & Churner, New York (2014). Her work has been included in numerous group exhibitions and projects including the MoMA Design Store, New York; Bakehouse Art Complex, Miami; Jarvis Dooney Gallerie, Berlin; Document, Chicago; Sanderson Contemporary Art, Auckland, New Zealand; Magnan Metz, New York; Dorfman Projects, New York; and the Essl Museum, Vienna. Broughan holds an M.F.A. from Hunter College, New York, and a B.F.A. from the School of Visual Arts, New York. She was awarded a Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant in 2015, and Yaddo residency in 2018. Her work has been discussed in Musée Magazine, Domino, Art in America, Blouin Artinfo, Collector Daily, Eye Contact, the Village Voice, and Whitehot Magazine, among others.