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Let Her Rave: Zoe Buckman on Feminism and the Fight for Gender Equality in the Art World

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Artist Zoe Buckman is known for how she addresses feminism, the maternal experience, and the role and strength of women in her practice. Buckman's works are strong, yet fragile—arresting (like *Champ*), beautiful, and elegant. In “Every Curve” and “Present Life” she's incorporated text through embroidery or neon. Coming-of-age in the '90s in East London Buckman used rap lyrics about women to explore her complicated feelings of being a feminist and loving hip-hop.

Her latest series, “Let Her Rave,” gets its title from Keats' *Ode on Melancholy* and is an examination of social constructs designed to keep women hemmed in. She spoke with us about exploring the space between opposing forces and gender equality in the art world.

WHITEWALL: When did you first realize you wanted to become an artist?

ZOE BUCKMAN: I can't remember exactly, but it was a Tuesday.

WW: What first inspired you?

ZB: My mother's creativity and world view has been a source of profound inspiration for me and planted a seed that is still growing. As a child, Giacometti and Rodin mesmerized me. And as I grew up I remember

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being blown away by the works of Cindy Sherman, Sophie Calle, Grayson Perry, and Carrie Mae Weems.



Installation view of "Let Her Rave" at Project For Empty Space. Photo by by Anthony Alvarez, courtesy of the artist.

WW: How would you describe your practice?

ZB: I strive with my artwork to respond subtly to issues I grapple with or find problematic. Most of these topics are centered around the female experience and I would define most of my art as sculpture or installation, however with political works that are a quick response to a brief, I will often use photography or graphic design.

WW: Your work is intense in message but delicate material in materials like lace or vintage silk. How do you give strength to your sculptures?

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ZB: I really love to explore the space between two opposing forces—masculine/feminine, hard/soft, transient/permanent. When it comes to the literal material quality and forms of my pieces, I'll often use delicate textiles reworked with something harsh, like metal chains, boxing gloves, or aggressive text.



Installation view of "Let Her Rave" at Project For Empty Space. Photo by by Anthony Alvarez, courtesy of the artist.

WW: What do you think about the place of female artists in the art world?

ZB: I think the art world needs to foster and celebrate the work of women, whether that's the art itself or the many other professional roles in the industry. We are nowhere near gender equality within the art world.

WW: Do you think female artists still need to fight to be taken more seriously?

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ZB: Without a doubt.

WW: What's next?

ZB: I have a public sculpture going up in L.A. next year with Art Production Fund. It will be a giant neon on the Sunset Strip. I'll also open a solo show at Gavlak Gallery at the same time, of my new series "Let Her Rave."