

CAMPLE—LINE

**LOTTE GERTZ
LAYERS OF SILT
29.06 – 31.08.25**





We have come to cover you with wool (orange), 2025

Lotte Gertz: A Bag of Stars
– Martin Clark

‘...how can I tell that a story is a story... What am I relying on there? I suspect I’m relying on specific instinct. On the one instinct that tells you something is missing, not that something is there.’¹

‘Every story tells of a ghost. At the centre of the story is a Black Hole, but it isn’t black, and it isn’t dark. In the best case, it might gleam.’²

– *Judith Hermann, We Would Have Told Each Other Everything*

I’m sat at my desk in London, squinting at the screen. I’m looking at a painting by Lotte Gertz, pinned to the wall of her studio in Glasgow. It’s difficult to make out at first, but I’m piecing it together, letting the forms settle, come into focus. A woman stretches out her hand, a loose fist grasping half a dozen slender stems. It’s a modest bouquet, thrust forward in a gesture that, whatever its object, already feels inadequate – too little, too much. Gertz tells me that she’d been looking at a picture of another painting, ‘Reparation’, made some 80 years earlier by another artist, Louise Bourgeois. She has used it as a kind of model, a starting point, made a painting of the painting. Or perhaps, more accurately, made a painting of the memory, or the feeling of it – of what persists, of what remains.

In the Bourgeois work, a similar figure, a woman again, stands in profile, arm outstretched. She too clutches flowers, not a bouquet this time but a single stem – an olive branch perhaps. And rather than that thrusting arm, that act of offering, she holds it aloft, raised before her like a torch or a candle, a talisman or knife. Behind her there’s a large rectangular object. When I saw it at first, I thought it was a shelter or a telephone box. Gertz mistook it, she tells me, for a cabinet or cupboard. Later, reading about the work, she discovered it’s a tomb – the painting, a picture of a cemetery or graveyard.

A woman alone in a graveyard, holding her flowers. A story familiar over centuries. A story of absence, of loss – of what is gone and what is left behind. And so much to unpick in that language of gestures – of offering, grasping, discarding, protecting, provoking, repairing or throwing away. So much held in that hand – the weight of a million memories, conversations, connections, misunderstandings, sleights, consolations, triumphs and hurt.

In Gertz's painting it's harder to read the space. It's less defined, looser. There are shapes coalescing unsteadily in the background – figures, vessels, trees, faces? And the place of that grave and looming architecture is occupied here by a little drawing, printed directly onto the surface of the paper – a soft-ground etching of a wobbly jam jar, empty but for the outline of a squashed frog. For all its brevity, it's a curiously concrete image. The frog an abrupt and unsettling presence, as flat as a pancake, splayed and displayed, stamped into a picture of itself, absurd and incongruous. Its presence only amplifies the emptiness of the vessel – all that space, all that air, all that absence, all that nothing.

But it's a fact, nonetheless – cold, hard, clear – inscribed like a sentence onto the liquid space of the picture. A fact, in fact, not unlike those delicate stems that have been pulled from the ground and gathered into this little posy. The woman, on the other hand, is barely there at all; more like a ghost or phantom, more like a memory or a dream.

*

Gertz's work is like a kind of dreaming, dreaming itself just another way of being in, and with, the world. It's not that her work is drawn from dreams. Rather that the act of dreaming is analogous to the work somehow. Or perhaps, better to say, the work is a way to keep dreaming in the world.

When I was talking to her about writing this text during our first 'studio' meeting – online, on Zoom, in that awkwardly staged in-between space, itself a kind of waking dream when I think back to it,

where distance and proximity are collapsed into an image, both of us watching as the conversation played out in front of our eyes – she told me about a book she was reading, *We Would Have Told Each Other Everything*, by the German author, Judith Hermann. A book about writing and remembering and dreaming.

In her book, Hermann writes about family, childhood, her life, her past. She writes about how a story begins and how it ends. About what is said and what remains unsaid. About how the absent, hidden or omitted object is always, paradoxically, the energetic, enigmatic centre of every story. And in writing all of this, she writes about how her own work occupies and draws on and shapes her life. How it weaves through her existence as a kind of dreaming.

'What exactly is the difference between making up, dreaming and exaggerating. The actual thing about a dream is not the content or plot; it's the feeling with which we dream it, the material in the sentient, haptic sense. That material remains when we wake up.'³

Gertz's work, her painting, weaves through her life in a similar way. She is always making – drawing, painting, printing – but also gathering, looking, keeping, thinking. Things are put away and taken out again, sometimes months or years later. Fragments are returned to, reassembled, revisited. Pictures are stacked like geological strata, like layers of silt settling gently one on another, piled up on shelves, in drawers or cupboards – like sheets, or clothes, or the pages of a book.

Some art seems to stand apart from the world, to create a kind of distance or space around itself, but Gertz's work seems to both assimilate and occupy the world in a very direct and straightforward way. Maybe it's to do with the time in their making, the time already held in those surfaces – the literal cuts and traces of previous prints still etched into the wood block, or the muted pigments long-soaked into a scrap of canvas or jute. Or maybe it's to do with the way they are worked on and handled, the way they're moved and stored, pinned up and taken down, lived with and lived in.

For many years she painted and printed onto fabric, her more recent works are on hand-made Japanese papers. Both are a way to

undermine painting's hierarchies and patriarchies. Privileging the indeterminate, the soft, the provisional and the humble, she uses gouache and watercolour, etching and woodcut, paper and textiles, the denigrated, feminised languages of pattern, design, the domestic, the decorative. Like Hermann's stories, her works also have this curious sense of absence at their centre; something obscured, out of focus, or hidden in plain sight – something they circle, enclose, entangle, contain, but never quite touch on, never quite define.

*

In her 1988 essay, *The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction*, Ursula K Le Guin also reflects on the act of writing, again from a defiantly female perspective. In this brief but extraordinary text, she argues that rather than the spear, the dagger, the axe or the arrow, the first 'tool' employed by early humans, was instead the sack, the net, the bag or the vessel. Rather than a bone or a stick with which to strike and stab, it was a container with which to gather, to hold, to preserve and to store.

For Le Guin, this revelation becomes a way to challenge and disrupt our long history of patriarchy and violence, a history reinforced and reiterated through the stories we told, and continue to tell, that shape our culture and societies. Those stories all have a hero (male). They have action, battles, danger, death. We were told they were the story of what it was to be human, what it is to be alive. But as Le Guin writes,

'I'm not telling that story. We've heard it, we've all heard all about all the sticks and spears and swords, the things to bash and poke and hit with, the long, hard things, but we've not heard about the thing to put things in, the container for the thing contained. That is a new story. That is news.'⁴

This act of gathering and holding is central to Gertz's work, as is the act of nurture, of care and repair. It's there in the practice as it is lived and performed – slowly, incrementally, a day-by-day

process of collecting and keeping, of arranging and tending, of looking and making – but also in the structure and operation of the works themselves, the way they accumulate various thoughts, feelings, insights and impulses across their surfaces. They act as nets, or baskets, or buckets or bags, to hold and catch and contain these images.

In another new painting, in another corner of the room, a flimsy greenhouse shelters a vine, heavy with fruit. Again, there is an allusion to an earlier painting, an Egyptian mural painted on the wall of a tomb that she found in the pages of an old book. It's a picture of shelter and home, of cultivation and care, of sustenance and growth. I'm trying to take it all in as it floats on the screen, as she moves the camera on the iPhone closer. Underneath the vine sit two shallow pots filled with seedlings, new life sprouting from the dark soil. It's an image of origins, beginnings – of abundance, vitality, innocence, life. As it swells on the screen I'm swallowed into the blackness, a universe of tiny shoots, a cosmic nursery, like nothing so much as pieces of a dream. '...and still the story isn't over. Still there are seeds to be gathered, and room in the bag of stars.'⁵

Martin Clark is a curator and writer. Director of Camden Art Centre since 2017, he was previously Director of Bergen Kunsthall, Norway, Artistic Director of Tate St Ives, and Exhibitions Curator at Arnolfini, Bristol.

1. Judith Hermann, *We Would Have Told Each Other Everything*, Granta, London, 2025, p.52.

2. Ibid, p.132.

3. Ibid p.193.

4. Ursula K Le Guin, *The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction*, 1988, Ignota, London, 2019, p.29.

5. Ibid p.37.

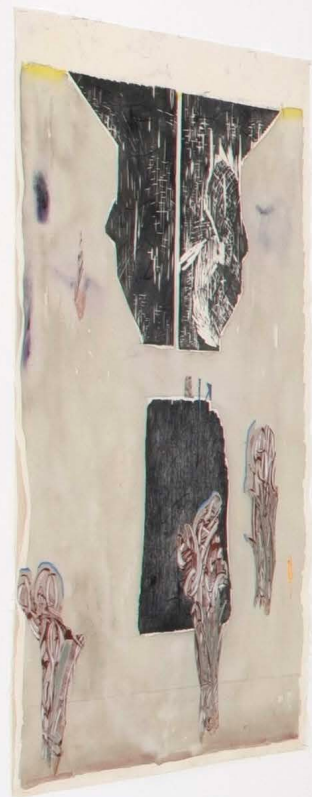


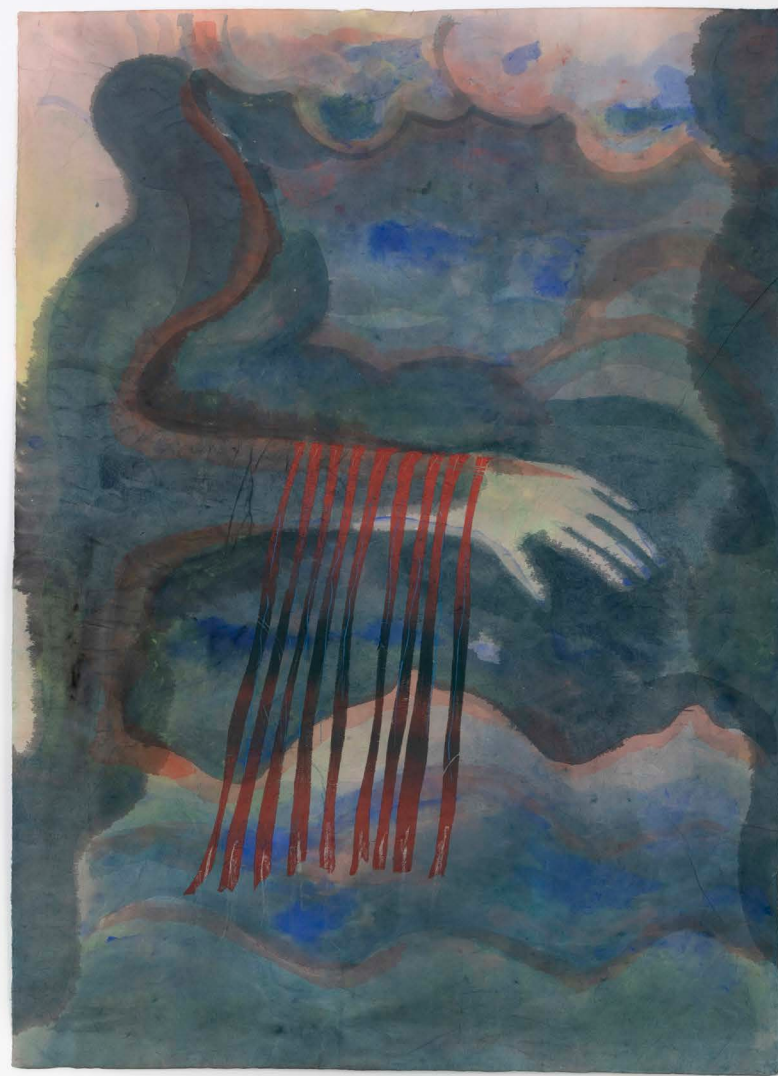


We have come to cover you with wool, 2025



Children, compost, seedlings (detail), 2025







List of works

1. **We have come to cover you with wool (orange)**, 2025
Softground etching and watercolour on Japanese paper
23 x 15.5 cm
2. **P. Somniferum (fragment of a bigger piece)**, 2025
Relief print and gouache on mulberry paper
50 x 37.5 cm
3. **Landscape time**, 2025
Relief print, acrylic, gouache and collage on calico
131 x 112.5 cm
4. **We have come to cover you with wool (pink)**, 2025
Gouache and relief print on mulberry paper
140 x 100 cm
5. **Seedheads**, 2025
Gouache and relief print on mulberry paper
140 x 100 cm
6. **Caregiving as resistance**, 2025
Gouache and relief print on mulberry paper
140 x 100 cm
7. **Milk splash**, 2025
Gouache and relief print on mulberry paper
100 x 82.5 cm
8. **The Mountains holding themselves up**, 2025
Acrylic on cotton
16.5 x 14 cm
9. **At the bottom of the river holding still**, 2025
Gouache, relief ink and softground etching on mulberry paper
140 x 100 cm
10. **Watching us**, 2025
Softground etching on hahnemühle paper
20 x 24.8 cm
11. **Pain relief with torn cloth**, 2025
Softground etching on hahnemühle paper
25.3 x 20 cm
12. **We have come to cover you with wool**, 2025
Softground etching on awagami paper
26.3 x 22.3 cm
13. **Seahorses with pregnant male**, 2025
Softground etching and aquatint on hahnemühle paper
22 x 17.5 cm
14. **Children, compost, seedlings**, 2025
Relief print and gouache on mulberry paper
140 x 100 cm
15. **Repair**, 2025
Stone lithograph and watercolour on mulberry paper
35 x 50 cm

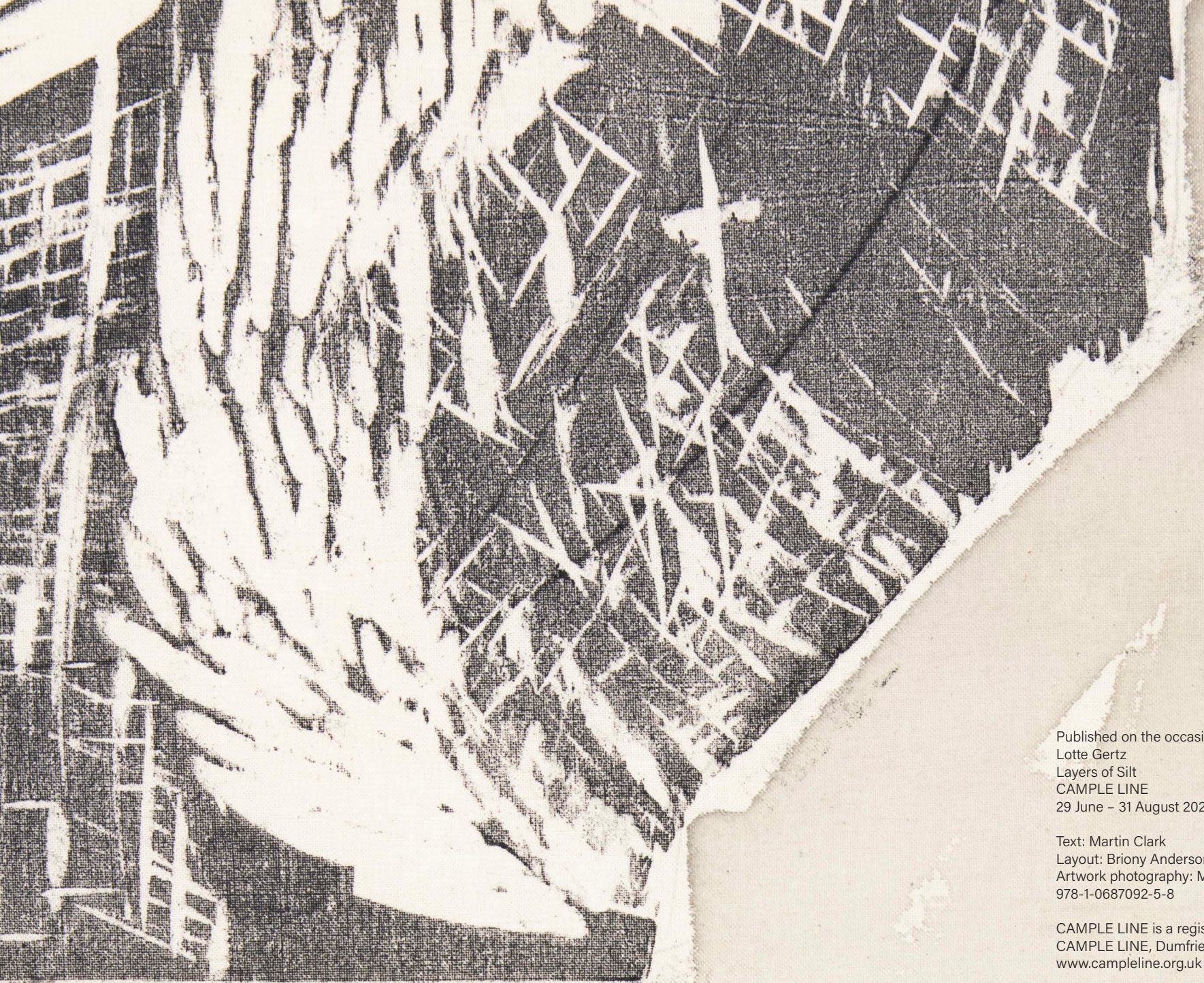
Dimensions are given H x W x D



P. Somniferum (fragment of a bigger piece), 2025

Lotte Gertz was born in Denmark in 1972 and studied first at the Rietveld Academy in Amsterdam before attending the Glasgow School of Art. She has lived and worked in Glasgow since graduating from The GSA in 2002. Her practice uses drawing, painting, collage and assorted printing techniques to gather a mix of abstracted and identifiable fragments that seem both immediately familiar and yet hard to place. These images simultaneously suggest and withhold their meaning – recognisable elements such as vases, caps, clouds, breasts, poppies, musical instruments, t-shirts and tents – offer a hint of narrative, but resist easy interpretation.

Gertz has exhibited widely in Scotland and in Europe. She presented a body of recent work as part of the 'Instalments' series at Ingleby Gallery, Edinburgh in 2022. She has held an RSA Residency for Scotland award (2024-25) at Edinburgh Printmakers. Solo shows include *Weaver's Nest*, Danske Grafikeres Hus, Copenhagen (2022) and *Migrating Eye*, Intermedia, CCA, Glasgow (2019). She has published two monographs with Good Press Gallery, Glasgow: *Lotte Gertz* (2016) and *Migrating Eye* (2022). She has held residencies at Cove Park, Scotland (2018) and SVK: Statens Værksteder for Kunst/The Danish Art Workshop, Christianshavn, Denmark (2021). Her work is currently featured in *Conversations with the Collection | Surface Detail* at the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh.



Published on the occasion of
Lotte Gertz
Layers of Silt
CAMPLE LINE
29 June – 31 August 2025

Text: Martin Clark
Layout: Briony Anderson and Tina Fiske
Artwork photography: Mike Bolam
978-1-0687092-5-8

CAMPLE LINE is a registered Scottish Charity no. SC047031
CAMPLE LINE, Dumfriesshire, Scotland, UK, DG3 5HD
www.campleline.org.uk

Printed on recycled paper by Solway Print, Dumfries, Scotland, UK

CAMPLE—LINE

WITH THANKS TO:

CAMPLE LINE, Tina Fiske, Briony Anderson, Charlie Hammond, Martin Clark, Al Gow, Emma Dove, Kevin Reid, Kate Davis, Ciara Phillips, Mia Fryland, Albert Gertz, Annie Gertz, Lisbet Gertz, Di Hammond, Glasgow Print Studio, Edinburgh Printmakers and RSA

FIND US —

CAMPLE, NEAR THORNHILL
DUMFRIESSHIRE, DG3 5HD

VISIT US —

11:00 - 16:00, THURS - SUN
FREE ENTRY, ALL WELCOME



ALBA | CHRUTHACHAIL