

Make

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Press Release

Katie Spragg: Natural Practice

Make Hauser & Wirth Somerset

2 December 2023 - 18 February 2024

Opening Reception: Saturday 2 December 2023, 10 am – 4 pm



Over the course of 2023, Katie Spragg has immersed herself in a multi-site residency, travelling from Braemar in Scotland to Menorca and concluding in Somerset. Throughout this year-long project, the focus of Spragg's ceramic practice has been as much about gathering, observation and investigation as producing the finished sculptures for exhibition. Reflecting on her creative process, she considers how her artworks are themselves works in progress, markers in time along the way to the next idea or outcome. The accumulations of the three residency and research trips—plants, pottery fragments, drawings, stones, photographs and the resulting ceramic 'tests'—have occupied and enriched both her studio and thinking.

Drawing upon the reoccurring themes of care, community and the universality of plants, her experiences have brought new and vivid insight into local ecology and the life of flora. With this knowledge, Spragg has developed a unique and site-specific narrative that incorporates social engagement initiatives and the particularity of peoples' stories. She has explored planted gardens and natural landscapes, benefiting from many insightful conversations with people working and living with plants across the three locations she has visited. Spragg's interactions with herbalists, florists, landscapers, local families, school children and carers, combined with her own exploration of plants, have built upon her existing knowledge. These plants, and their stories, are woven into the sculptures she has made, layering new stories, names and uses. Works developed across this period, alongside outcomes made by primary school children and carers through community engagement workshops, will be featured in this exhibition.

Each residency and research trip has influenced different aspects of Spragg's creative process. Braemar was an opportunity to investigate and explore, and it was here that Spragg established the overriding themes of the residency: the exploration of distance versus detail, using both clay and plants as a route to conversations with people, gathering and collating their stories and exploring plant life as indicators of climate and time. Themes explored in Scotland were then reframed by the landscape and climate of Menorca. Gardeners and landscapers brought new knowledge and understanding of how a radically different climate to the UK changed the timing and length of plants' growth cycles and the care and nurture they required. Returning to Somerset for the final residency was an opportunity to reconnect with the familiar countryside and draw upon her accumulated research, working to a larger scale in the expanse of The Maltings studios in Bruton. Here, Spragg completed

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the final artworks while continuing conversations with local flower growers and herbalists, drawing together common themes and explorations. Works have emerged that consider the micro, with a hyperfocus on mosses and lichens juxtaposed with interpretations of expansive landscapes, almost too vast to capture.

Colour has become increasingly important as Spragg has navigated the challenge of reflecting the vibrant and shifting light on a landscape using the permanence and unpredictability of clay. Spragg's sketchbook slowly filled with a new palette of pinks, pale greens, lilacs and the shades of Menorcan cream-coloured stone, contrasting with the inky blacks, burgundies, greys, greens and burnt ochre of Scotland. The project has been an opportunity to move beyond methods of making that Spragg has been refining over the past seven years, drawing upon an expanding material knowledge to capture the essence of the plants and places she has encountered.



About Katie Spragg

Katie Spragg is an artist working predominantly in ceramics. Her work explores our interconnected relationship with nature, questioning the evolving patterns in which humans and plants co-exist. She is interested in how plants behave and how their behaviour can help us reconsider our own approach to communities, care, landscape and our place in the world. Spragg often creates work in response to participation of other people. Recent projects include 'Lambeth Wilds' (2019 – 2020) at the Garden Museum, created with Lambeth Young Carers and Clay for Dementia group; 'Plants, Porcelain People' (2021), a collaborative exhibition with Norwich International Youth Project' and 'Sowing the Seed' (2022), workshops for children at a community allotment in partnership with GROW Eastbourne and Towner Gallery, which was nominated for a HAF government award.

Spragg's catalogue of work includes a piece in the V&A collection, a permanent installation at the Garden Museum and commissions for the British Ceramics Biennale and Sotheby's. She has exhibited with the Craft Council in London and Miami (2017), at Make Hauser & Wirth (2018, 2020, 2022) and with solo shows at Blackwell, Arts and Crafts House (2018), the Garden Museum (2018) and Pi Artworks (2019). Spragg is a tutor in the Ceramics & Glass department at the Royal College of Art and a founding member of Collective Matter, an outreach group pioneering collaborative practice through clay.

About Make Hauser & Wirth

Make Hauser & Wirth is a dedicated space for contemporary making and the crafted object, committed to showcasing some of the world's best emerging and established artist-makers. Make is a natural extension of the wider Hauser & Wirth gallery ethos, embracing art, craft, gardens, food and architecture. Since launching in 2018 in Somerset, UK, Make has presented work by over eighty artist-makers and provided valuable insights into material-led processes and the rich narratives of their practices. In addition to presentations in London and Zurich, Make continues its international programme in Southampton, NY.

Works exhibited by Make embrace material truth, provenance, sustainability and the value of emotional engagement with the handmade. In addition to a varied exhibition program, Make has hosted practical workshops, discussions and studio visits to expand learning and engagement with makers and global craft organisations.

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About Hauser & Wirth Residencies

Since 2013, Hauser & Wirth Somerset has supported an immersive artist-in-residence programme, facilitating 44 residencies in total, including 31 individual artists alongside a breadth of learning initiatives and return visits. Residencies are the outcome of Iwan & Manuela Wirth and Marc Payot's unique approach to fostering new opportunities for artists, both emerging and established, in addition to the gallery's broader creative community. The location specific residency has no prescribed outcome but instead provides artists, makers, curators and students with time and space for reflection, research and production. This extended period of time allows for a deeper connection with the local community, surrounding landscape and unique history of the area. All participants are encouraged to contribute to a continuous creative hub, including collaborative community events and learning workshops that allow for broader access to their work and wider practice.

To coincide with the opening of the exhibition, Katie Spragg will be in conversation with local herbalist Jane Wallwork from 4 - 5 pm on Saturday 2 December at the artist residency studios in Bruton, Somerset.

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Make Hauser & Wirth Somerset

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Make opening hours:

Wednesday – Sunday
10 am – 4 pm

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Katie Spragg, *In the Studio*, 2023
Photo: Catharine Garcia

Katie Spragg, *'Beyond Nature'*, Installation view, 2022. Photo: Dave Watts

Katie Spragg, *In the studio (detail)*, 2023
Photo: Catharine Garcia

Katie Spragg, *In Oudolf Field*, 2023
Photo: Catharine Garcia