

## ***A Beach for Me (and maybe you)***

Chantal Wnuk  
Curated by Elizabeth Lalley

Ignition Projects  
3839 W. Grand Ave.  
Chicago, Illinois 60651

November 15 – December 22, 2019  
Opening Reception: November 15, 6-8pm

All too soon (it's always too soon) it'll be winter in Chicago again. We steel ourselves as best we can, but the days are getting shorter and the months ahead are long. Winter's never easy. It's an awkward season; we squeeze together in our down coats on buses and on trains, forgetting we have bodies under all the layers of clothes. Winter is a mood. We're cooped up and restless, and the cold stings our skin.

The works of San Diego-based artist Chantal Wnuk appear, at first, like sun-soaked fantasies. Her paintings are filled with bare limbs, ocean waves, and heat. The colors swelter. Her arrangements of small sculptures are like strange beaches, strewn with piles of tiny stones and glass: flotsam that we pocket and arrange back home on our windowsills, giving it our own quiet meaning.

Beyond the particularities of place—a life lived close to the ocean and to stretches of beach—Wnuk's works poke more deeply at feelings of human vulnerability, desire, and tender awkwardness. Her figures are often isolated and only partially visible; a hand or shadow may be all we see. In certain works, hands are caught in familiar acts, applying sunscreen or tying back hair, reaching out to touch another's skin. While skin often appears in moments of discomfort (a raw sunburn, for instance, or salt water in a wound), there is always a lingering desire to touch and be touched, to be together and to be alone—or both, perhaps, all at once. Like the quiet aside within the show's title, Wnuk's works gently dance in the messiness between solitude and companionship.

Maybe so much is the same for everyone; we're all here, trying to see things as clearly as we can, always needing more sleep, trying to understand and be understood, learning how to give (and what to give). Wnuk's paintings feel like kindnesses, enacting our vulnerabilities and longings out in the open, with humor and tenderness. We're in it together, they whisper. They wink, and warm us.

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Chantal Wnuk is a painter and sculptor currently living and working in San Diego, CA. She was born in Houston, TX and received her BFA in 2012 from the University of Texas at Austin. Using found materials and imagery, she focuses on the vulnerability of being alone versus that of being bound to another human or object. Recent exhibitions include Not Quite Nothing at the San Diego Art Institute, First to Blush at Helmuth Projects, Being Here with You/ Estando aquí contigo at the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, and A Show About Touching at Bread

& Salt. Chantal has been awarded residencies at ACRE, Bread & Salt, 1805 Gallery, and The San Diego Art Institute.

<http://www.chantalwnuk.com/>

Elizabeth Lalley is a Chicago-based writer, curator, and the assistant director of Goldfinch Gallery. She received an MA in museum & exhibition studies from the University of Illinois-Chicago, and a BA in literature from the University of Michigan. She has worked for the Chicago Artists Coalition, the Smithsonian Center for Folklife & Cultural Heritage, and the University of Michigan Department of English. She is a curatorial fellow with ACRE (Artists' Cooperative Residency and Exhibitions) and a contributor to Newcity and Chicago Artist Writers.