



Karen Stewart at Candice Berman Contemporary

7 – 22 August | Women's Month 2019

Series 6

The Dotty Series

The dotty series celebrates the menstrual cycle. The ink dots in the two large works are a pictorial representation of the days of my cycle, as tracked by my app. The coloured dots mark the actual days of menstruation. The works display a map of consistencies and quirks of my cycle. I intend the works as a celebration that challenges some of the patriarchal attitudes towards menstruation in particular and women's bodies generally.

In early 2000 I was working with body politic, in particular the attitudes to women's bodies are manipulated by patriarchy. When Candice Berman Contemporary invited me to make some new work for Art Ladies, held during women's month, this was an opportunity to reconnect with this theme.

In these works I wanted to explore the idea of rhythms and cycles. I have an app which keeps track of my menstrual cycle. I have been observing how my body changes through my cycle. It has been really an amazing process. I have noticed that my most creative time is in the follicular phase

which follows menstruation, menstruation is a disaster when it comes to measuring and accuracy – I tend to make lots of mistakes. I recall how good the stages of pregnancy were when the progesterone was running high. I have really enjoyed connecting with my body in this way. I think we often disassociate from our cycle, it is in many ways still a taboo subject which often provokes a strong reaction, often a negative one.

It has taken me a long, long time to really appreciate my menstrual cycle and celebrate it as a source of feminine power and not as a 'curse'. I am able to connect with the ebb and flow of my creativity through the cycle. Now that I am approaching 50 there is poignancy I am feeling, that sometime in the future I will stop menstruating, making the end of my fertility, but not the end of my potency as a woman. I do feel apprehension about what this new phase of life will mean for me, but for now I try to live on the present and celebrate the rhythms of my body.

In a society that is still pretty dominated by men, women are often left feeling ashamed of their bodies. As Northup says:

"Western civilization sees the female body and female sexuality in the person of Eve a responsible as the downfall of mankind."¹

Indeed English women only achieved the vote in 1918 and even only women who had property were allowed to vote. Nowadays women are stronger and much more active in all spheres of life, however the shame and disgust many women feel about their menstrual cycles persists. I have had to make a conscious decision to accept that my body is in flux; that my emotions are not always under control; that I experience pain and discomfort and that I can become angry and irrational, but that this is actually normal! It was an important turning point for me in my twenties to see menstruation as normal instead of as some kind of shameful monthly curse. Women celebrate the creative power of your body!

¹ Women's Bodies, Women's Wisdom Dr Christiane Northrup, Pg 5, 2002, The Bath Press.

To explore more of Stewart's art:

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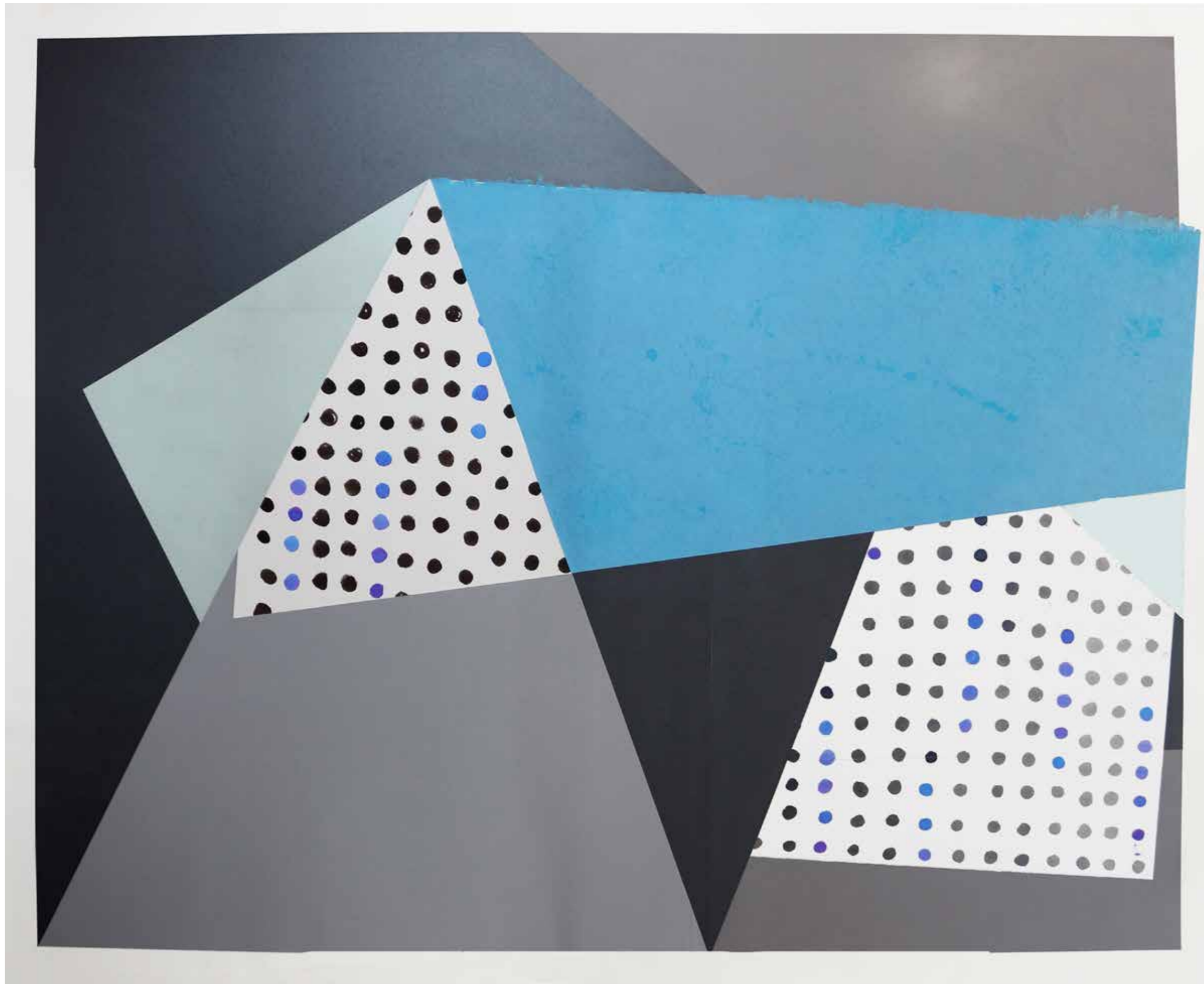


Conception

108 x 130 cm

2019

Watercolour ink on Fine Art papers and Fabriano Unica 250gsm



Corpus Luteum 108 x 130 cm 2019

Watercolour ink on Fine Art papers and Fabriano Unica 250gsm



Ovulation 1

70 x 90cm

2019

Watercolour ink on Fine Art papers and Fabriano Unica 250gsm



Follicular 1 50 x 46cm 2019
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Watercolour ink on Fine Art papers and Fabriano Unica 250gsm



Follicular 2 50 x 46cm 2019
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Watercolour ink on Fine Art papers and Fabriano Unica 250gsm



Follicular 3 50 x 46cm 2019
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Watercolour ink on Fine Art papers and Fabriano Unica 250gsm



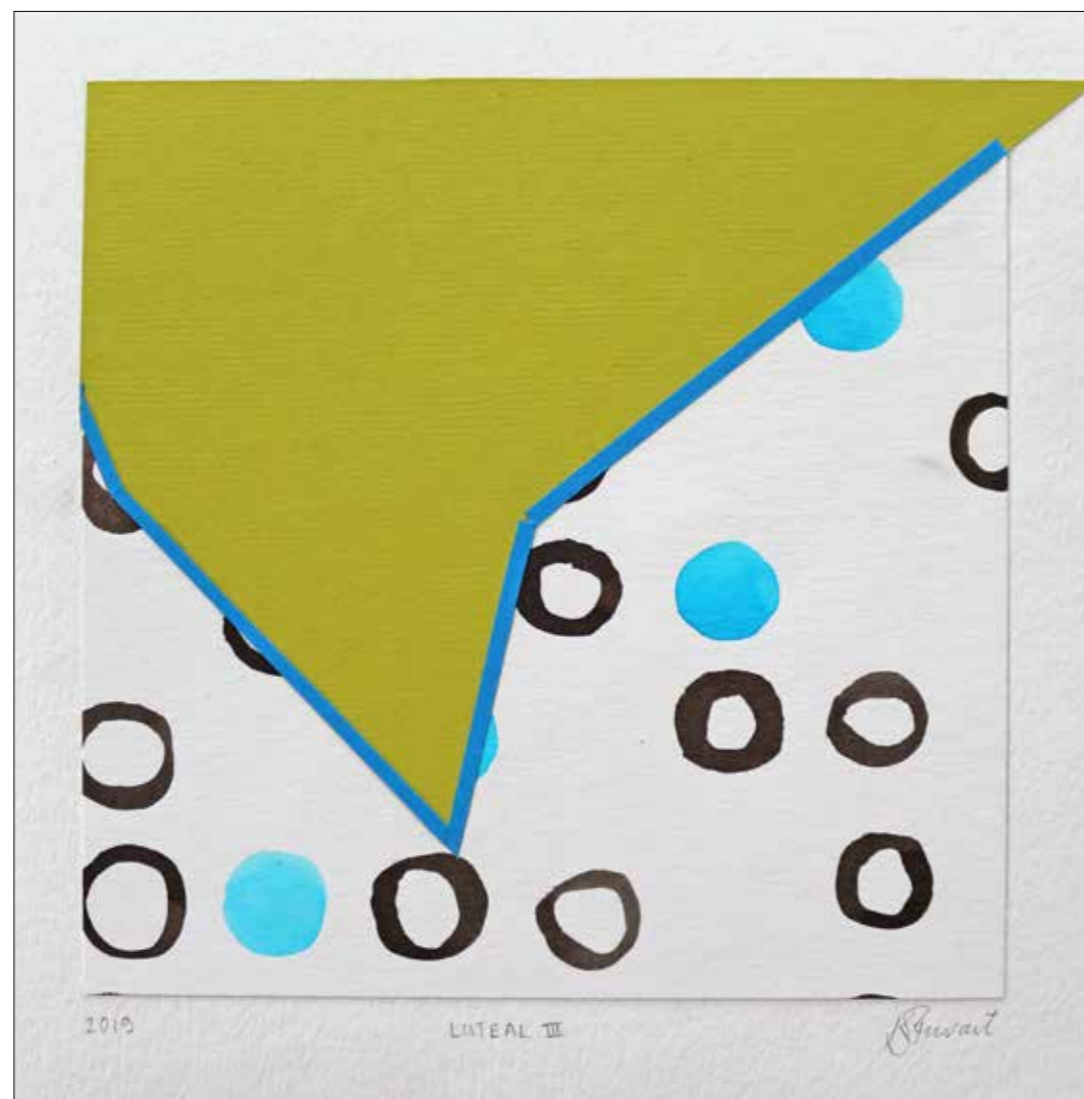
Luteal 1 68,5 x 50cm 2019

Watercolour ink on Fine Art papers and Fabriano Unica 250gsm



Luteal 2 68,5 x 50cm 2019

Watercolour ink on Fine Art papers and Fabriano Unica 250gsm



Luteal 3 20 x 20cm 2019
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Watercolour ink on Fine Art papers and Fabriano Unica 250gsm