

HOLLYBUSH GARDENS IS DELIGHTED TO PRESENT:

KNUT HENRIK HENRIKSEN

THE STORY OF A MAN WHO LOST INTEREST IN HIS JOB AND STARTED WALKING IN CIRCLES

I was walking very fast when my foot caught on something that sent me stumbling a few meters away, I wanted to know the cause. In a dream I had built a palace, a castle or caves, I cannot express it well... I told no one about it for fear of being ridiculed and I felt ridiculous myself. Then fifteen years later, when I had almost forgotten my dream, when I wasn't thinking of it at all, my foot reminded me of it.... I found more stones, even more beautiful, I gathered them together on the spot and was overcome with delight... It was a sandstone shaped by water and hardened by the power of time. It becomes as hard as pebbles. It represents a sculpture so strange that it is impossible for man to imitate, it represents any kind of animal, any kind of caricature. I said to myself: since nature is willing to do the sculpture, I will do the masonry and the architecture...
(Ferdinand Cheval)

Le Palais Idéal is a site specific work made in the gallery inspired by the story of Ferdinand Cheval. For 33 years, the French postman collected stones during his daily rounds and carried them home with the intention of building his palace. At first, he carried the stones in his pockets, changing up to a basket and eventually a wheelbarrow. Cheval's *Palais Idéal* fuses different styles with inspirations from Christianity to Hinduism. Henriksen's *Le Palais Idéal* is in homage to Cheval, but it also holds a reflection on labour in general and art and craft in particular, as well as how society's value system renders certain forms of labour useful and others useless.

For Henriksen there is a definite intent and interest in the social potential of material. The pebble dash used to surface his post-minimalist interpretation of *Le Palais Idéal* is a material known initially as a basic form of protection for houses. Made first from shells it can still be seen in seaside towns. An ocean of meaning separates the quaint vision of these early versions and the pebble dash blight that is still very much in evidence in large swathes of housing in the UK. Coated houses up and down the country protected from themselves, hiding failing bricks and providing insulation against damp, became the norm during the 1920s as the demand for cheap housebuilding became critical. Pebble dash is found in a register of different colours dependent on the geology of its source, but the practical application has, like wood chip wall paper (another Henriksen favourite), moved from its initial signification of modernity and suburban sophistication to a harbinger of poverty, class and lack of choice.

Infinity, history and modernity; different registers of time play out across the exhibition through a matrix of references to manual labour, mythology, architecture and experience. The Greek mythological figure Sisyphus, caught in the endless task of rolling a boulder up a mountain only to watch it roll down again to hit him in the head, represents a nightmare of eternal labour with maximum effort for minimum gain. Henriksen seeks an inversion of this, to maximise an idea with minimal effort. Alongside *Le Palais Idéal*, the sculpture *Tick Tock* looks to measure space with two stationary quasi measuring sticks, articulating and relating to the curve of the gallery's ceiling. A fallen number 8 becomes an infinity sign in stainless steel, reflecting the space, setting in motion the idea of an endless repetition, a 'poetification of space' as Henriksen would have it.

Gert, 2017, a wooden column stands tall at the entrance to the gallery. The title refers to Gert Postel, an infamous German postman who faked his qualifications, practising first as a doctor and eventually elevating himself to the position of director at a hospital. Henriksen read that a psychiatrist referred to Postel as "a man walking in circles around a column feeling locked in." The column is made of basic shiplap wood, a material commonly used in building interiors in Henriksen's native country of Norway. Playing with the psychological state found in Postel, Henriksen turns the inside into an impenetrable outside, whilst the circular form of the column places the viewer in an orbital space.

Henriksen's approach is born out of the legacy of minimalism and echoes of these gestures can be found within his practice. However, rather than the grand standing of much of the industrial scale and attitude of some of these forms, Henriksen's sculptures rely on the meaning detected and generated in the fabric of the everyday. Appropriating construction methods and materials used to make life practical and safe, Henriksen confronts us with pebble dash, tongue and groove wood with the intention of sharing the potential of overlooked materials, habits and forms. These materials, formed through innovative modernities, have produced derivatives, like imposed interiors in rented accommodation and the building projects of mass housing provision, that evidence how their use slide between that which separates those with choices and those without.

The engagement with building supplies and their lyrical potential is at the heart of this project, speaking of and subverting the aesthetics that govern taste, but also the politics of their use. The value system that Henriksen chips at upholds systems of class but he is invested in transformation, displacing these pre-given notions of the ugly and turning them into gold. He interacts with architecture and predetermined formats in a way that impacts on our bodily experience of space, teasing a feeling from it that chimes with much of our felt estrangement and alienation, refracting the conditions found in daily life.

Notes:

Knut Henrik Henriksen lives and works in Berlin. He was born in Oslo in 1970.
This will be the artist's forth exhibition at the gallery.

He is currently shortlisted for the Lorck Schive Art Prize in Norway which carries with it an award of NOK 500 000.
The exhibition of the shortlisted artists can be seen at Trondheim Art Museum from October 1, 2017.

Architectural Doubts is a major survey monograph examining 20 years of Knut Henrik Henriksen's practice. The book looks in detail at his central concepts of 'architectural doubts' and 'architectural frustrations'. It is published by König Books with essays and texts by Knut Henrik Henriksen, Karl Holmqvist, Lars Bang Larsen, Ellef Pretsaeter, Alexander Scrimgeour, Amy Sherlock. ISBN 9783863355241

Notable Permanent public works include *Full Circle*, 2009, Kings Cross Station, Northern line, London, and *Facade Charade*, 2008, University Hospital Akershus, (N), *L'heure Bleue*, 2009, Høgskolen i Vestfold (N) and *Poème de l'angle droit*, 2014, Greåker Videregående skole, (N).

Notable public commissions and exhibitions: *Echoes & Notes to Stones*, Bergen Kunsthall, (N), 2014 & 2012, *Opelvillen*, Rüsselsheim, 2013, *Squares and Rectangles*, Kunstmuseum, Bern, 2011, *Momentum - Nordic Biennial of Contemporary Art*, 2013 & 2006, *Poor Thing*, Kunsthalle Basel 2006, *DUO: Hans Arp / Knut Henrik Henriksen*, Galleri Würth, Nittedal (N) cat, 2008, *All that is solid melts into air*, Frac des Pays de la Loire, Carquefou (F), cat, 2006, *Berlin North*, Hamburger Bahnhof, Museum für Gegenwart, Berlin (D), cat, 2004

Please contact karin@hollybushgardens.co.uk for images and further information.

Gallery open:
Wednesday - Friday 11 - 6 pm
Saturday 12 - 5 pm
or by appointment

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