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AN EXCESSIVE ELLIPSE, A SORT OF DISTRIBUTION

ANDREA BÜTTNER, CYNTHIA HAWKINS, MITCHELL KEHE, LIZ MAGOR, JOSEPHINE PRYDE

Exhibition: 30 June - 5 August 2023

Hollybush Gardens presents *An excessive ellipse, a sort of distribution*, a group exhibition which brings together work by **Andrea Büttner**, **Cynthia Hawkins**, **Mitchell Kehe**, **Liz Magor** and **Josephine Pryde**. The presented artworks bring into view the way in which objects, matter, energy and language might be distributed through different systems. In paintings and works on paper by Kehe and Hawkins, abstract forms are reminiscent of cellular, organic structures and natural elements in the landscape as seen from the stratosphere, which coalesce to create a distinct visual syntax. An etching by Büttner contains a series of abstract shapes which are ciphers of her gestural actions, and reference the accumulation and dissemination of knowledge facilitated by technology. Pryde's photographs, titled as though they refer to an original circuit or current transformer, consider invisible, yet all-pervasive networks of communication. Elsewhere, two moving image works by Büttner and three floor-based sculptures by Magor, including both discarded and readymade materials, consider the agency and circulation of objects in commodity culture.

Mitchell Kehe's abstract paintings explore both the biological and cosmic nature of life. Two of the works, on Kehe's signature stretched polyester on canvas, are executed in a combination of media-PVA glue, enamel, flocking and oil paint-which together enable an exploration of the limits of transparency. One appears to be painted from an aerial perspective, as if looking through a microscope at a magnified cellular ellipse. Organic forms recur throughout Kehe's works and are often contained within rigid, asymmetrical supports, such as an irregular hexagon or in this case, an upside-down L-shape, on which an aggregation of yellow ovular amoebic forms tessellate against a grey panelled background, some of which appear to have burst or mutated, while others are floating off the surface. This contrast between porous forms and unyielding supports might speak to the way in which organisms navigate the strangeness and hostility of urban environments.

Cynthia Hawkins' longstanding investigation into the language and potential of abstraction, informed by her work as historian and curator, is evident in two vividly coloured works on paper from her 2007-10 series *Signs of Civilization*. The works depict a succession of views from above, but from a macroscopic vantage point, unlike Kehe's. Motifs such as triangles, squares, grids and spiralling arrows are suggestive of gravitational forces and recur throughout the series to create a vocabulary of forms, which Hawkins describes as a 'toolkit'. Speaking about the works, which evolved from an earlier series *Natural Things*, Hawkins states that they depict 'naturally occurring forms at 30,000 feet: the shapes of the landscape, the way the land has been divided up... I was not interested in making landscapes or copying nature at all, but taking these shapes and forms to create something different, to make them behave differently.'

Three works by **Andrea Büttner** all carry the trace of her gesture, through photography, film and printmaking. *Monobloc chairs* (2010-12) is a digital slideshow which explores the repetition of human-made objects, comprising 44 portraits of white plastic Monobloc chairs taken on her travels across the world over a two year period. Its name deriving from mono and bloc, meaning an object made from a single piece, the Monobloc is a mass-produced, affordable item of furniture, found wherever there is a need for temporary yet durable seating. In Büttner's photographs, which show the social potential of the chairs across the shifting landscapes, some are pristine and stacked for sale, arranged in rows ahead of large public gatherings or around restaurant tables, while others - in makeshift playgrounds, cafes, parks and on the balconies of budget hotels - are more weathered.

Minerva (2011) is a short video which Büttner filmed in a Michoacana Meat Market. Taking its title from the Roman goddess of justice, wisdom, commerce and patron of the arts, trade, and strategy, the video-which is sometimes shaky and shifts in and out of focus- captures the hands of a cashier as they ring up and pack the groceries passing along a conveyor belt and tap their fingers against a checkout divider. The close framing calls the viewer's attention to both the repetition of mundane actions, and the endless

cycle of food production and consumption. Büttner's *Phone Etching* (2012) is an abstract depiction of an everyday gesture: evidencing the traces of her greasy fingers after scrolling on her smartphone over the course of a number of Google searches. These gestural marks are transposed and vastly enlarged into etchings. The immediacy of Büttner's onscreen touch contrasts with the slowness of the manual printmaking process.

Josephine Pryde's work looks at the processes by which we come to understand the material world. In *N-CT-W 1 (Ø-E) - N-CT-W 6 (Ø)* five from a series of fourteen photographs (2022), included in her recent exhibition *The Vibrating Slab* at the Art Institute of Chicago, Pryde considers the ways in which smartphones permeate everyday life. The images capture the interplay between a smartphone as it vibrates in fluid against a spherical prism; both objects are optical devices that filter the way in which we see the world. But the phone is also for speaking and listening into, for using language through. While 'vibrate' might seem close to the 'do not disturb' setting, as if less disruptive than a ringtone, it could also be that the vibrations disturb us more intensely than a ring, perpetually reminding us of an emotional pitch we may have been attuned to for thousands of years, since the first exchange of messages. In bringing together these objects, Pryde also prompts a consideration between organic matter and the human-made: a huge number of minerals are used in the manufacturing of smartphones to make chips, microprocessors and touchscreens.

Liz Magor also explores our relationship with objects and the material. She explains, 'my work has been about the material world that I walk through, primarily the built or manufactured environment, as opposed to the natural material world. I'm interested in the material things that we produce and live with.' Magor is drawn to objects which have been in circulation for long periods of time, are often unremarkable and have been discarded. The three sculptures, *W*, *Woollen Blanket* and *Paradise Bird* (all 2019) all feature secondhand woollen blankets, which have been folded and encased in silicone, as if preserved in time. The 'plinths' that they rest on are mass-produced flatpack Arkelstorp Ikea tables, ubiquitous as Büttner's plastic chairs, still housed in their original cardboard packaging, as though they might be returned following the close of the show. The wrapped blankets and yet-to-be-built furniture suggest a kind of latent desire.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Andrea Büttner (b. 1972, Stuttgart, Germany), lives and works Berlin, Germany, and is Professor for Art in the Contemporary Context at Kunsthochschule Kassel. She received a PhD from the Royal College of Art, London, and prior to that studied at the Humboldt University of Berlin and Berlin University of the Arts. Solo exhibitions include *The Heart of Relations*, Kunstmuseum Basel (2023); *Shepherds and Kings*, Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein at the Johanniterkirche, Feldkirch, Austria (2022); *Andrea Büttner*, Hollybush Gardens, London (2021); *What is so terrible about craft?*, Kunstverein München, Germany (2019); *The Heart of Relations*, Hollybush Gardens, London (2019); *Shepherds and Kings*, Bergen Kunsthall, Norway (2018); *Hammer Projects: Andrea Büttner*, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, USA (2017); *Beggars and iPhones*, Kunsthalle Wien, Austria (2015); *Andrea Büttner*, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, USA (2015), *BP Spotlight: Andrea Büttner*, Tate Britain, London, UK (2014); and *Andrea Büttner*, Museum Ludwig, Cologne, Germany (2014).

Group shows include *The Return: New collection exhibition*, Musée Régional d'Art Contemporain Occitanie / Pyrénées-Méditerranée, Sérignan, France; *Aimless: Confronting Imago Mundi*, Es Baluard Museu d'Art Contemporani de Palma, Palma, Spain (both 2023); *The Remains of 100 Days...*, Lenbachhaus, Munich, Germany; *YOYI! Care, Repair, Heal*, Gropius Bau, Berlin, Germany; *Fluxus Sex Ties / Hier spielt die Musik!*, Nassauischer Kunstverein Wiesbaden, Wiesbaden, Germany; *Here After*, Bridge Projects, Los Angeles, CA (all 2022); *The Botanical Revolution*, Centraal Museum, Utrecht; *Donation Outset – KW Production series*, Museum Abteiberg, Mönchengladbach, Germany; *The Roaring Twenties*, Guggenheim Bilbao, Spain; *The Displacement Effect*, Capitain Petzel, Berlin, Germany (all 2021); *Parliament of Plants*, Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein; *Smoke and Mirrors*, Kunsthaus Zürich; *Amish Quilts Meet Modern Art*, Staaliches Textil-und Industriemuseum Augsburg, Germany; and *The Botanical Mind*, Camden Art Centre, London (all 2020); *On Vulnerability and Doubt*, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne, Australia (2019); 33rd Bienal de São Paulo (2018); *Turner Prize*, Ferens Art Gallery, Hull, UK (2017); *Broken White*, Van Abbe Museum, Eindhoven, the Netherlands (2016); *British Art Show 8*, UK touring exhibition (2016); and *dOCUMENTA (13)*, Kassel, Germany (2012).

Cynthia Hawkins (b.1950, New York) lives and works in Rochester, New York. Hawkins received a doctorate degree in American Studies from the University of Buffalo, SUNY with a dissertation titled, "African American Agency and the Art Object, 1868-1917," and until recently was the gallery director and curator at the Bertha V.B. Lederer Gallery, SUNY Geneseo, New York. Solo exhibitions include *Natural Things*, 1996-99, STARS, Los Angeles (2022), *Clusters: Stellar and Earthly*, Buffalo Science Museum, Buffalo (2009), *New Works: The Currency of Meaning*, Cinque Gallery, New York (1989), and *Cynthia Hawkins*, Just Above Midtown/Downtown Gallery, New York (1981). She was included in the survey *Just Above Midtown: Changing Spaces*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York (2022-3) and her work is in the public collections of The La Grange Art Museum, La Grange, Georgia; The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York; and The Bronx Museum of the Arts, New York, among others.

Mitchell Kehe (b. 1984) lives and works in Queens, New York. In 2016, he received a MFA from the Piet Zwart Institute in Rotterdam, NL. Kehe's work has been featured in recent solo and group exhibitions including *The Wheel Turns*, Edouard Montassut, Paris, France (2023); *Who's the Best at Believing* (2021), *Reassembly* (2021) at Galerie Nordenhake, Stockholm, Sweden; *All the World's Organs* (2019) at 15 Orient, New York, and *Assemble Relatives* (2016) at the Ramfoundation, Rotterdam, the Netherlands.

Liz Magor (b.1948 in Winnipeg, Manitoba) lives and works in Vancouver, British Columbia. Magor studied at the Vancouver School of Art and at Parsons School of Design in New York City. In 2021, France awarded Magor as a recipient of the Chevalier dans l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres. In 2015, she was the recipient of the Gershon Iskowitz Prize, and in 2001, she was recipient of the Governor General's award. In 1987, she exhibited at documenta 8 in Kassel, Germany, and in 1984, represented Canada at the Venice Biennale. Solo exhibitions include Focal Point Gallery, Southend-on-Sea (2023); the Carpenter Center for the Arts, Cambridge; the Renaissance Society, Chicago; the David Ireland House, San Francisco (2019); The Modern and Contemporary Art Museum of Nice, France; Kunstverein in Hamburg, Germany; Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Zurich, Switzerland (2017); Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal (2016); Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto (2015, 1986); Peep-Hole, Milan (2015); Triangle France, Marseille (2013); Henry Art Gallery, Seattle (2009). Group exhibitions include Le Crédac, Ivry sur Sein, France (2020); Musée d'art Moderne de la Ville de Paris (2019); Kunsthalle Basel, Switzerland (2017); Glasgow Sculpture Studios (2016); Marcelle Alix, Paris (2015); Orange County Museum of Art, Santa Ana; Musée d'art contemporain de Montreal (2012); Seattle Art Museum; Wattis Institute, San Francisco; Vancouver Art Gallery; Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego (2003).

Josephine Pryde (b. Alnwick, UK) lives and works in Berlin, Germany. Solo exhibitions include *Club Med*, Soccer Club Club, Chicago, Illinois and *The Vibrating Slab*, Arts Institute of Chicago (2023); *Josephine Pryde: Exterior, Night, Day*, Galerie Neu, Berlin, Germany (2020); *In Case My Mind is Changing*, Simon Lee, London, UK (2018); *lapses in Thinking By the person i Am*, CCA Wattis Institute of Contemporary Arts, San Francisco, travelling to Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, PA (2015); *Miss Austen Enjoys Photography*, Kunstverein Düsseldorf, Germany; *Miss Austen Still Enjoys Photography*, Kunsthalle Bern (both 2012) and *Embyros and Estate Agents: L'Art de Vivre*, Chisenhale Gallery, London (2011). Group shows include *Changes*, MUMOK, Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig, Vienna, Austria; *Post-Capital: Art and the Economics of the Digital Age*, Kunsthal Charlottenborg, Copenhagen, Denmark; *The Wig*, Bonner Kunstverein, Bonn, Germany (all 2022); *Post-Capital*, Mudam Luxembourg, Musée d'Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean, Luxembourg (2021); *Objects Recognised in Flashes*, MUMOK, Vienna, Austria (2020); *New Order: Art and Technology in the Twenty-First Century*, Museum of Modern Art, New York (2019); *Atelier E.B: Passer-by*, Serpentine Sackler Gallery, London (2018); and *Turner Prize*, Tate Britain, London (2016). Pryde's work can be found in public collections including The British Council; Museum of Modern Art, New York and Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; and Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam.