

Anton Kern Gallery

Richard Hughes *The Great Perhaps*

For Immediate Release

November 7 – December 21, 2019

Opening reception Thursday, November 7 from 6–8pm

“I go to seek the great perhaps” were the last words of French philosopher François Rabelais. An optimism pervades this sentiment: a sense of wonder in the unknown and the beyond. This forms the core of Richard Hughes’ fourth solo exhibition at Anton Kern Gallery, a mature and evolutionary turn in his practice and works. Hughes hails from Birmingham, a large post-industrial city in the UK. His younger years spent skateboarding around the city inform his visual sensibility—his sculptures involve making extraordinarily meticulous facsimiles of objects that most would consider detritus. Hughes instead finds wonder and magic in these discarded objects, and their newly cast objecthood likewise instills a kind of marvel in the moments when a viewer looks at the overlooked.

Hughes has been thinking recently about foreground and background; the ways a setting may ground an object and change our perception of it; how a two-dimensional scene affects and shapes the space of the third. A number of works in the exhibition play with this idea—in one piece, Hughes recreates a novelty decorative cat sculpture that he found in a junk shop, and arranges it before a large-scale fabric replica of a small paper eye test—also featuring a cat—that was used to train people on how to adjust their eyesight after emerging from a nuclear bunker. The curious history of these two original objects, and their careful recreation by the artist, resonate on a larger level; their essential origin, juxtaposed in this way, changes our own perception and eyesight. This play on vision is precisely what Hughes has developed so keenly in his studio—taking everyday objects and transforming them into something that is neither this nor that, and in which subtle new elements or visions peek out in unexpected ways—such as in *Dblvsn*, where two astonishingly replicated tree trunks appear also to have eyes.



A centerpiece of the exhibition is a large mobile of the solar system, in which the planets are swapped out for varying sizes and colors of cast sports balls, carefully recreated in their varying degrees of inflation and deflation. The cosmic and the rubble of an average backyard are merged—discarded balls and pipes become the foundation upon which to contemplate and reflect the infinite and unknown.

The Great Perhaps is Hughes at an apex of both continuity and change. Themes and ideas that have pervaded his work and practice are present, with a resolute evolution. Materials, parts, and ideas that he has spent years contemplating are allowed to decide for themselves in the works, rather than giving deference to an idea or the fundamentals of the source materials. The works prod the viewer to imagine and envision beyond the quotidian; to find play, humor, and mystery in the everyday—and even something greater, perhaps.

Richard Hughes (b. 1974) is a British artist lives and works in Ledbury, UK. He received his BA from Staffordshire University in 1995 and an MFA from Goldsmiths College, London in 2003. Recent solo exhibitions include *Field Trip*, The Modern Institute, Glasgow (2014); Anton Kern Gallery, New York (2013); *Where it All Happened Once*, Tramway, Glasgow (2012); *Endless Bummer*, Gladstone Gallery, Bursells (2011); and *Keep On Onnin*, Tate Britain, London (2006). Recent group exhibitions include *Colours that no-one knows the name of*, Recent Activitiy, Birmingham (2018); *The Laughable Enigma of the Everyday*, Arquipelago Centro de Artes Contemporaneas, Portugal (2017); and *The Noing Uv It*, Bergen Kunsthall, Bergen (2015).

Gallery Hours

Tuesday through Saturday
10am – 6pm

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