

Lara Schnitger: 10 Feet High and Rising

April 21 – May 27, 2023

Anton Kern Gallery is pleased to announce Lara Schnitger's seventh solo exhibition with the gallery, featuring larger-than-life dancing sculptures, heroically-posed fabric collages, and a series of portraits inspired by songs. In the new works, the artist draws from her personal biography, social history, current events, and pop culture to reflect on experiences of womanhood. As is characteristic throughout her thirty year practice, the Dutch-born LA-based artist uses over-the-top imagery and levity to counterbalance the seriousness of her concerns.

In *10 Feet High and Rising*, Schnitger positions two dynamically-posed freestanding sculptures in the center of the third floor gallery. The wooden armatures covered in sheer stretched fabrics give form to bodies dancing in their underwear. This boisterous duo continues in the spirit of the artist's monumental *Warts and All* sculpture installation recently presented at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles. Here in the gallery setting, however, the relationship between the figures and the surrounding space is tight, achieving both a new intimacy and intensity. At twelve feet tall, the dancers nearly burst through the ceiling. While fragile and delicately crafted, these towering women, entitled *Leader of the Pack* and *Niagara*, command attention and are forces to be reckoned with.

Highly-patterned fabric collages surround the sculptures and line the length of the space. In her large-scale collages, Schnitger explores new formal techniques such as merging foreground and background, and using foreshortening and a low angle perspective to emphasize scale. The active poses of the figures depicted in the compositions are inspired by those of superheros, manga characters, and sheela-na-gig, an ancient architectural symbol. Schnitger uses the semiotics of fashion and references to folk sayings to play with the portrayal of feminine power. One of the figures, entitled *Cosmic Dancer* in reference to the T. Rex song, is the artist's vision of giving birth on the dance floor. (In the song, Marc Bolan sings "I danced myself right out of the womb.") Schnitger dons this mother figure with a contorted facial expression, making a parallel between the ecstasy experienced in both dance and in childbirth.

The smaller-scale collages are the first of an ongoing series of individual portraits depicting women referenced in pop songs, ranging from Cat Stevens' *Sad Lisa* to Alex G's *Mary*. In creating each work, Schnitger used the song lyrics as a starting point for inspiration, and slowly the women began to take on their own lives, dictating what their portraits needed. Schnitger followed an intuitive process, parallel to the poetic rhyming involved in songwriting, to turn fantasies into unique embodiments. The artist sees the gesture of giving faces to the names as a way to give these characters their own agency, to let them shine as individuals with their own stories to tell.



Lara Schnitger, *Leader of the Pack*, 2023, Nylon, wood, string, lace, fake fur, latex, cotton, ink, hooks, pins and hardware, 130 x 112 x 75 inches (330.2 x 284.5 x 190.5)

Lara Schnitger (b.1969 in Haarlem, Netherlands) is a Dutch-American artist living and working in LA. Schnitger has exhibited internationally since 1996. Her work is featured in the permanent collections of Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, PA; the DZ Bank Kunstsammlung, Frankfurt, Germany; FRAC Champagne-Ardenne, Reims, France; KW, Berlin, Germany; Rubell Family Collection, Miami, FL; Perez Art Museum, Miami, FL; The Saatchi Gallery, London, UK; Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, Netherlands, among other highly-regarded public and private collections. In 2021, Stroom Den Haag, the Netherlands, permanently installed the artist's bronze *This princess saves herself* in their outdoor Sculpture Gallery. Recent notable groups exhibitions include: *Protest Procession Parade*, Zeeuws Museum, Middelburg, The Netherlands (2023); *The Medium is the Message: Flags and Banners*, Wende Museum, Culver City, CA (2022); *New Time: Art and Feminisms in the 21st Century*, UC Berkeley Art Museum & Pacific Film Archive, Berkeley, CA (2021); *Witch Hunt*, ICA Los Angeles and Hammer Museum at UCLA, Los Angeles, CA (2021); *NGV Triennial*, Sydney, Australia (2020); *En Plein Air*, High Line, New York, NY (2019); *OFF THE WALL*, Hudson Yards, New York, NY (2019). Another important aspect of Schnitger's practice is her ongoing protest-procession, *Suffragette City*, which debuted at Art Basel Parcours in Basel, Switzerland (2015) and traveled to FRAC Champagne-Ardenne in Reims, France (2016); the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (2016); Palais de Tokyo, Paris; Kunsthaus Dresden, Germany; the Maxim Gorki Theatre, Berlin, Germany (all 2017); Frieze Live, New York (2018); San José Museum of Art, San Jose (2019); 22nd Biennale of Sydney, Sydney (2020); and The Hague, Netherlands (2021).