

Anton Kern Gallery

John Bock: *PARA-SCHIZO, ensnarled*

October 26 – December 16, 2023

After a five-year hiatus, German artist John Bock is returning to New York to inaugurate his eleventh exhibition at Anton Kern Gallery with a “lecture” (performance) on the night of the opening. Bock’s universe is a bold, even daring synthesis of different genres including sculpture, performance, and film. In it, material objects, language, and the human body are given equal value; their interactions are powered by the logic of the collage principle, the combination of disparate entities to create a new thing. Bock extends the traditions of Dada, Surrealism, Fluxus, and of performative sculpture (as exemplified by artists such as Franz Erhard Walther and Mike Kelley), with his sculptures and films demonstrating that an artwork does not remain static but rather comes into being through the interplay of body and material. Bock’s sculptures, lectures, and films bear witness to the idea of the activated sculpture. The body, the artist suggests, becomes a medium in that it can transform life processes into images.

The exhibition at Anton Kern Gallery consists of four distinct parts:

The first is a 40-minute film entitled *Im Stelldichein des Phantoms* (Inside the Phantom’s Rendezvous), projected onto the back wall of the main gallery. The film follows the three protagonists in a Rube-Goldberg-like cyclical vision of dissolution and fusion of the physical world and the human body. A gallows song to eternal transformation and permanent metamorphosis.

Three colorful, wall-mounted glass vitrines containing sculptures in miniature stage settings that suggest diagrammatic narratives, featuring grimaced Punch-and-Judy-esque puppet heads carved from wood or cast in aluminum, engaging in a struggle to redeem Minimalist sculpture à la Donald Judd.

Above the Point of Glowing Silence, a video installation in the front of the gallery, encapsulates the artist’s project for the 2013 Venice Biennale. It includes the video of John Bock’s protagonist Lisa activating the sculptures displayed inside the Giardini, in addition to: a vitrine containing the objects created by Bock and Lisa, the small-scale model of the structure built for the Giardini, and a caterpillar sculpture. The film combines scenes from the actual performance from the Biennale, with images of Lisa roaming the narrow streets of Venice while enacting a complex narrative of memories and the loss of identity.

PARA-SCHIZO, ensnarled, a 50-minute, two-channel video projection, filmed and produced in Korea, and complemented by an installation, held together by a curving fabric sculpture occupies the entire second floor. This is the first exhibition of *PARA-SCHIZO, ensnarled* outside its original 2008 presentation at the Arko Art Center and Insa Art Space in Seoul. *PARA-SCHIZO, ensnarled* is the story of Thomas and Jytte, who, after studying the Kraken and the Noodle-Diagrams, become ensnarled in a chase through the Korean capital having to overcome numerous manifestations of elasticity and fluidity. For this exhibition, Bock has revived the film props by transforming them into distinct sculptures that are connected by a fabric diagram. These colorful additions to the original elements function as three-dimensional drawings and are hand-sewn soft sculptures in the tradition of Claes Oldenburg or A.R. Penck’s seldom seen “Felt Works.”

John Bock (born 1965 in Gribbohm, Germany) is a sculptor and multimedia artist who lives and works in Berlin. He studied at the Hochschule für Bildende Künste (HfBK) in Hamburg in 1997 under Franz Erhard Walther. His work is included in the public collections of the Carnegie Museum, Pittsburgh; the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; the Louisiana Museum, Copenhagen; Museum Ludwig, Cologne; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Museum für Modern Kunst, Frankfurt; Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam; Tate Modern, London; and the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, among many others. Recent solo exhibitions include: *Peer Gynt*, stage production at Schaubühne am Lehniner Platz, Berlin (2020); *LiquiditätsAuraAroma*, Kunsthalle Mannheim, Mannheim (2019); *The Next Quasi-Complex*, Prada Foundation, Milan, Italy (2018); *Dead + Juicy*, The Contemporary Austin, Austin (2017); and *In the Moloch of the Presence of Being*, Berlinische Galerie, Berlin (2017). He has participated in major international exhibitions including the Salzburger Festspiele, Salzburg (2020); Venice Biennale (2013 and 2005); Performa, New York (2007); Lyon Biennale, Lyon (2005); Carnegie International, Pittsburgh, (2004); and Documenta 11, Kassel (2002).



John Bock, *Im Stelldichein des Phantoms*, 2022, Video, 40:08 min.