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# Kasper Akhøj

## ***Bichos***

06.09.—19.10.2024

In his new series of works *Untitled (Bichos)* (2024), Kasper Akhøj documents the weekly conservation protocol for Lygia Clark's *Bichos*—also known as *Critters*—a series of hinged, unstable sculptures created in aluminum by the Brazilian artist beginning in 1959. *Untitled (Bichos)* includes a series of analogue, black and white photographs, hand printed by the artist, taken over the summer of 2024 in the conservation laboratories of Pinacoteca de São Paulo, where Clark's *Bichos* were on show in the exhibition *Lygia Clark: Project for a Planet*.

With *Untitled (Bichos)*, Akhøj continues his practice of complicating the history and theory of mid-twentieth century modernism by documenting the processes of preservation, displacement, replication and alteration through which works of art, architecture and design are transmitted over time.

In *Welcome (To The Teknival)* (2008-2017), Akhøj traced the transformation of the villa E.1027 by architect Eileen Gray over a nine year period as it undergoes comprehensive conservation work, including the removal of graffiti and the restoration of murals painted on the white walls of Gray's building by Le Corbusier. Yet, whereas previous works, such as *Welcome (To The Teknival)*, revolve around themes of replication and authorship, *Untitled (Bichos)* focuses on the use of things as an object in itself.

The *Bichos* mark a moment in Clark's career when she had abandoned conventional forms of painting and sculpture turning instead to an art of participation. Intended to be handled and manipulated by exhibition goers, the *Bichos* prepare the evolution of Clark's practice, after her move to Paris in the 1970s, into a form of psychotherapy centered on group interactions and the use of relational objects.

In *Untitled (Bichos)* Akhøj contraposes the reparatory process that the sculptures may or may not have been intended for with the maintenance work on the sculptures themselves that is necessitated by their constant handling while on display. Thus, the work brings to our attention the ways in which the functions of collection, conservation, and display are

negotiated in modern art museums as well as how those negotiations often boil down to a distribution of care.

In the gallery's adjacent space, Akhøj presents *Abstracta* (2007–), a slide projection documenting his research on the socio-economic and political history of the display system by the same name. *Abstracta* was conceived by the Danish designer Poul Cadovius (1911–2011) for the 1960 International fair in Brussels as a modular system that could be expanded almost infinitely. While only moderately successful in the West, unlicensed versions of *Abstracta* unknown to its designer, were produced in China and later found a market in Yugoslavia where they became ubiquitous across retail and public institutions over a 30-year period beginning in the 1970s. While *Abstracta*'s modularity and reproducibility may have appealed to either socialist economic principles or the communist imaginary, or both, the patent for *Abstracta* has since been purchased by an American corporation thus inaugurating a new chapter in the history of the system.

**Kasper Akhøj** (born 1976 in Copenhagen, Denmark) studied at the Städelschule in Frankfurt, Germany and at The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen. Kasper Akhøj completed the Whitney Independent Study Program, New York in 2009. Kasper Akhøj's often essayistic works are characterized by what might be called conceptual storytelling. They are based on his consistent documenting of objects from forgotten art, design and architecture histories, as well as the institutions that harbour them. Akhøj's investigations cover long periods, and often his processes have an almost organic relationship to time. He borrows from anthropologists' and historians' tools but his commentary targets today's conditions, and sometimes allows elements of fiction to penetrate the documentary. He emphasises the specific and the personal – concrete lived history – and avoids geopolitical simplification. The works become subjective statements, relying on but also challenging historical occurrences.

Future and recent solo exhibitions include *Faena Prize* (in collaboration with Tamar Guimarães), Faena Foundation Miami and Buenos Aires (2025); *Kasper Akhøj & Luke Fowler*, Stereo-Exchange, Copenhagen (2023); *Welcome (To The Teknival)*, Ivorypress, Madrid (2018), and *Nouveau Musée National de Monaco* (2017); *I Blew on Mr. Greenhill's Main Joints with a Very 'Hot' Breath* (in collaboration with Tamar Guimarães), De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill-On-Sea (2018).

Recent group exhibitions include *Landlines/Linhas Fixas*, 2112 Gallery, Copenhagen (2024); *Free Hands*, Den Frie Centre for Contemporary Art, Copenhagen (2023); *Høst – en kontrafaktisk udstilling*, CHPEA Museum, Herning, and Den Frie Centre for Contemporary Art, Copenhagen (2023); *Architecture Sculpture*, BOZAR, Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels (2021); *Lejour des esprit est notre nuit*, Centre Regionale d'Art Contemporain CRAC Alsace (2019); *Survival Kit Biennial*, Riga (2019); *Children of Saturn*, Musée D'Art Contemporain de Rochechouart (2019).

The work of Kasper Akhøj is found in public collections such as Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid; Frac des Pays de la Loire, Nantes; NMNM-Nouveau Musée National de Monaco; Norman Foster Foundation, Madrid; Musée d'Art Contemporain de Rochechouart.