

Karl Haendel

Unwinding Unboxing, Unbending Uncocking

Opening: 27 February 2016, 4– 9 pm

Exhibition: 1 March – 16 April 2016

A man swallows his father's glass eye. He fails to tell his doctor this when he goes into his office to have it removed. As the doctor approaches the man's behind with a proctoscope, he is taken aback with what he sees: an eyeball staring back at him from inside the man's clenched rectum. For a second the disoriented doctor feels as though he is inside the anus looking out at a man staring back at him. Once the doctor regains his composure, he expertly removes the glass eye, unblocking a stream of shit that flows as smooth as poetry. ¹

Here we enter *Unwinding Unboxing, Unbending Uncocking*, a solo exhibition by Los Angeles artist Karl Haendel. "Un" is the common thread, connecting the boxes, the bends, the cocks and the wind. These two letters, which are the same shape bent in opposite directions, form the beating heart of the exhibition where contradictory ideas pulse simultaneously. The work is built upon fundamental questions surrounding the human body and the development of our identities; is nature tempered by nurture or vice versa? Does free will play any role at all in the filter between an interior sense of self and exterior consumption? Do cultural, commercial and social constructs close down on us or do we nestle comfortably into them? The notion of a mind-body-soul connection takes on a new meaning: is the yoga ideology, with its specific poses and assertion of a select lifestyle, rigid or malleable? Does it adapt to us or do we adapt to it? Is the frame coming down around us or are we pushing back out on it? Which side of the asshole are we on?

What better illustration of the arbitrariness of personal identity (with a whole industry ready to exploit it) than astrology? We are fire, water, air, or earth depending on the random time of year that our parents decided to consummate (or be surgically fertilized). Yet, perhaps there is merit for when our charts tell us that we will find love or travel we can become more open to dating or taking time off work. When we look in the mirror and force a smile, facial feedback theory tells us

¹ Story based on Robert Antoni's *Divina Trace* (1991), Overlook Press, New York, p 284 - 287.

that we become happier, so what's the problem? After all, we are what we eat, what we do, and whatever objects or ideas we ingest.

Text by Mieke Marple

Karl Haendel (b. New York, NY 1976) received his MFA from UCLA in 2003, and his BA from Brown University in 1998.

Karl Haendel has been included in the Biennial of the Americas: NOW!, Denver, CO (2015); Whitney Biennial, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY (2014); the 12th Biennale de Lyon, Lyon, France (2013) and Prospect New Orleans 2, New Orleans, LA (2011).

Karl Haendel had solo exhibitions at the Wexner Center for the Arts in Columbus, Ohio (2012) and at the Museum of Contemporary Art (MoCA), Los Angeles, LA (2006). He has taken part in numerous international group exhibition in institutions such as the Aspen Art Museum, Aspen, CO; Astrup Fearnley Museum, Oslo, Norway; Musée d'Art Moderne et d'Art Contemporain, Nice, France; New Museum, New York, NY; Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY; MoMA P.S.1, New York, NY; The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; Serpentine Gallery, London, Great Britain; Herning Art Museum, Herning (DK), Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, LA; Drawing Center, New York, NY et al.

Karl Haendel's works are in the public collections of the Astrup Fearnley Museum, Oslo, Norway; Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA; LACMA, Los Angeles, CA; MOCA, Los Angeles, CA; La Colección Jumex, Mexico City, MX; MOMA, New York, NY; Fogg Art Museum; Boston, MA; OCMA, Newport Beach, CA; Whitney Museum, New York, NY.