

KÖNIG GALERIE

KATHRYN ANDREWS

CIRCUS EMPIRE

8 JUNE - 4 AUGUST 2019

ST. AGNES | NAVE

OPENING: 7 JUNE, 7-9 PM

König Galerie is proud to announce *Circus Empire*, a large-scale installation of new sculptures and wallworks by Los Angeles-based artist Kathryn Andrews.

Andrews' work explores histories of dominance and ways in which latent or normalized social power structures influence culture. Her sculptures and 2-D works often incorporate the images and artifacts of hegemonic cultural production, such as mass media, commercial products, advertising, the entertainment industry, as well as citations from canonical Western art history. Andrews employs the strategies of pop art and minimalism to interrogate these modes of production, in an effort to highlight how aesthetics, namely image presence and materiality, are used to influence perception and, in turn, consumption tendencies.

At the center of the exhibition, both occupying it and housing it, is a massive custom circus tent that obfuscates the gallery's historic architecture. 7,5 m in height, the tent blocks from the view the overwhelming verticality of the former church nave space. Seen from the outside, the tent is immediately recognizable as a trope of joy and exuberance, while inside, one finds an environment that is darker or at least more ambivalent.

All but one of Andrews' works are installed inside the tent, and include a total of four sculptures and five diptych "tondos," each titled *Wheel of Foot in Mouth*, referring to the act of impolite conversation. Scattered throughout the space, these interactive works feature diverse images of faces or busts, some borrowed from museum antiquity archives and others from free internet repositories of futuristic models. Built as 2-layered "wheels," each one has an adjustable bottom layer that can be rotated so that a changing set of images and phrases appear through holes cut out of the surface of the top layer. Depending on the position of the rear panel, simple questions or statements such as *Did you get an invitation?* or *You remind me of my ex.* become visible, along with images of crowns or hand grenades, creating a playful way for the inanimate faces to carry on a conversation by choosing from a limited amount of predetermined exchanges, as if they possessed a rudimentary or primitive form of artificial intelligence.

A prominent sculpture consisting of a Plexiglass cage filled with found objects greets visitors near the tent entrance. Also featuring a head, the work grips a plastic mask of the American President Richard Nixon, but it is simply one among a large assortment of stuffed animals and certified film props filling the vitrine, similar to the way toys fill up a claw-crane machine in an arcade. The sculpture's title includes a long list of American movie names, referring to the films where the props had been used, such as *Point Break*, a 1991 feature about a group of surfers who wore masks of American ex-Presidents and robbed banks. Loosely associative, the work sets up a narrative about corruption and greed, ranging from governmental-sanctioned violence and colonialism to personal folly. Once again, Andrews creates a complex mix of messages about the excitement of amusement parks and Hollywood glitz while pointing to the

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corruption of the American dream and a proliferation of kitsch that informs American pop culture.

Heads make one final appearance in *Encounter*, a larger-than-life sculpture of two immense busts, made of black wax, facing each other on a concrete table. While they seem to be at rest, or close enough together to instill a sense of intimacy, both have a large steel tube piercing through their foreheads. This adds an ominous tone to the coupling, creating the impression that the figures are less human than they appear to be, perhaps referring to the shape-shifting abilities of the man-robot that stars in the *Terminator* franchise, where man is impossible to distinguish from machine and where good is easily confused with evil. The reference to *Terminator* is more explicit in the sculpture *Looking for John Conner*, which refers, by name, to the character in the movie that the deadly robot is looking to kill. Here, a replica of the Terminator's arms is holding up a steel tube, creating a link to the scene in *Encounter*.

Finally, the one sculpture installed on the perimeter of the tent rather than inside it is *Picasso Trace Buzzer*, an interactive game. Here, Andrews places an art historical icon within the form of the arcade or state fair attraction. The outline of Picasso's signature "bull" drawing is produced as an active element, and when traced by a viewer, lights go off and a loud electric horn sounds, transforming the line of the famous artist, and the symbol of masculinity he represents, into an unruly and even obnoxious party trick.

Taken together, the works open up new ways of looking at how culture has normalized historically accepted forms of power and proposes a timely alternative. Text Juana Berrío

Kathryn Andrews was born in 1973 in Mobile, Alabama, and lives and works in Los Angeles. She holds an MFA from Art Center College of Design, Pasadena, CA and a BFA from Duke University, Durham, NC. Her work has been exhibited at numerous institutions, including Field Station: Kathryn Andrews, Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI (2017); Kathryn Andrews: Run for President, the Nasher Sculpture Center, Dallas, TX (2016) and the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, Chicago, IL (2015), Sunbathers I & II, The High Line, New York, NY (2016); Kathryn Andrews, TC: Temporary Contemporary, Bass Museum of Art, Miami, FL (2014) and Special Meal Occasional Drink, Museum Ludwig, Cologne, Germany (2013). Recent group exhibitions include The Sensation of Space, The Warehouse Dallas (2019), In Plain Sight, Mills College Art Museum, Oakland, CA (2019), Reconstruction, LAXART, Los Angeles, CA (2017); Good Dreams, Bad Dreams: American Mythologies, Aishti Foundation, Beirut, Lebanon (2016); NO MAN'S LAND: Women Artists from the Rubell Family Collection, Rubell Family Collection, Miami, FL (2015); Collecting Lines: Drawings from the Ringier Collection, Villa Flora Winterthur, Switzerland (2015) and The Los Angeles Project, Ullens Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing, China (2014).