

The approach

Under the Spell of the Image

Kushana Bush, David Kettner and Susan Te Kahurangi King

Curated by John Stezaker

4 July – 4 August 2019

Opening preview: Wednesday 3 July, 6-9pm

Predominantly contemporary art is issue-based, driven by conceptual strategies and aimed at intervening within the contemporary social world. It communicates within a culture of communication. There is, however, another way. Some artists do not accept the burden of representation in art and prefer to escape the responsibilities of communication for the freedom of play and have turned their back on the conceptual in pursuit of the image and imagination. Maurice Blanchot describes such artists as “exiles from life in the illusory world of images”. The three artists in this exhibition are, in different ways, such exiles refusing a conceptual or instrumental connection with images for personal reverie and fantasy.

No one embodies this withdrawal from the conceptual world into the world of images more extremely than Susan Te Kahurangi King, who has refused to speak or communicate in any other way than through her drawings since the age of ten. In the fifty years since then there has been a continuous outpouring of drawings. Derived initially from Disney graphics they evolved into an abstract language of her own.

Kushana Bush’s sense of separation from mainstream culture is less pathological and unambiguous. From her geographically remote home in New Zealand, a sense of exile is the given and essential part of her relationship with the images which inspire her work. Out of the distance of communication, from images of images, she has created her own mythic universe – a parallel world of cultural mutations. It seems to take a distance from the image to free it to its full imaginary potential. Interestingly none of the exiles in his show have made this necessary separation entirely voluntarily.

David Kettner’s seclusion from the world may not be chosen either but, as with Bush and King, it is a separation which has set him free to play with the image and probe the limits of his imagination within the necessarily limited parameters of a (collage) game of his own invention. There is a strongly regressive element in this retreat into the image. All attempts to throw off the shackles of conceptual thought and instrumentality to engage freely with the image involve a desire to re-enter the world of the child. Kettner’s collages are deliberate transgressions of this threshold between the world of the adult and child. “If childhood fascinates, it is because it is the moment of fascination”.* And it is a fascination for the image which these three artists have in common.

* Quotes from ‘The Essential Solitude’, Maurice Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*. First published 1982. Trans Ann Smock 1989.

Kushana Bush (b. 1983, Dunedin, New Zealand) lives and works in Dunedin, New Zealand. Awards include the Art and Australia Contemporary Art Award (2009); University of Otago Frances Hodgkins Fellowship (2011); and Arts Foundation New Zealand New Generation Award (2013). In 2014, she exhibited at the Edinburgh Art Festival. In that same year, she viewed medieval manuscripts and miniature paintings at The Chester Beatty Library in Dublin and the resulting exhibition *The Burning Hours* at Dunedin Public Art Gallery toured to Christchurch Art Gallery, Te Uru Waitakere Contemporary Gallery and Whangarei Art Museum from 2016-18. In 2018, Bush participated in the NGV Triennial, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia. Her work is held in public collections throughout Australasia including The Art Gallery of New South Wales, Dunedin Public Art Gallery, Hocken Collections Uare Taoka o Hakēna, University of Otago, The Michael Buxton Collection, Monash University Collection and the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne.

David Kettner (b. 1943, Sunman, Indiana, USA) lives and works in Melrose Park, Philadelphia, USA. Kettner studied at Cleveland Institute of Art, Cleveland, OH (BFA) and Indiana University, Bloomington, IN (MFA). In 2006, he was awarded the Richard C. Von Hess Faculty Prize. Recent exhibitions include Gross McCleaf Gallery, Philadelphia, PA (2015); Gallery of the Episcopal Cathedral, Philadelphia, PA (2014); Gallery 817, UArts, Philadelphia, PA (2013); Hamilton Hall Galleries, University of the Arts, Philadelphia, PA (2012). Kettner’s work is held in various public collections including Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL; Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Philadelphia, PA; Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, PA; Rutgers University, Camden, NJ; University of California/Berkeley, History Department, Berkeley, CA.

Susan Te Kahurangi King (b. 1951, Te Aroha, New Zealand) lives and works in Hamilton, New Zealand. Recent solo exhibitions include Intuit Art Center, Chicago (2019); Pah Homestead, Auckland, New Zealand; Marlborough Contemporary, London, UK (both 2018); Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami, Florida (2016). Group exhibitions include American Folk Art Museum, New York, USA (2018); Kirk Hopper Fine Art Gallery, Dallas, Texas, USA; White Columns, New York, USA (both 2017) and Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, PA, USA (2015). King’s work is in the following public collections: Chartwell Collection, Auckland Art Gallery, Toi o Tāmaki, New Zealand; James Wallace Arts Trust, New Zealand; The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY, USA; Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, PA, USA.

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15 May - 23 June 2019

Kushana Bush

Mad Bull, 2019

Gouache and watercolour on paper
62.3 x 43cm | 24 1/2 x 16 7/8 in.

David Kettner

Dinner Music, 2019

Paper collage mounted on
acid free antique white foam
45.7 x 50.8 cm | 18 x 20 in.

Susan Te Kahurangi King

Untitled, c 1985-89

Coloured pencil and
graphite on paper

30.5 x 45.7 cm | 12 x 18 in.

Susan Te Kahurangi King

Untitled, c 1985-89

Ink and graphite on paper

30.5 x 45.7 cm | 12 x 18 in.

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Coloured pencil and
graphite on paper

30.5 x 45.7 cm | 12 x 18 in.

David Kettner

Last Testament, 2017

Paper collage mounted on
acid free antique white foam
40.6 x 40.6 cm | 16 x 16 in.

David Kettner

The Pescetarian, 2019

Paper collage mounted on
acid free antique white foam
50.8 x 40.6 cm | 20 x 16 in.

David Kettner

Leda's Besroom, 2019

Paper collage mounted on
acid free antique white foam
40.6 x 40.6 cm | 16 x 16 in.

David Kettner

Bird Feeder, 2018

Paper collage mounted on
acid free antique white foam
40.6 x 40.6 cm | 16 x 16 in.

David Kettner

Artist and Model, 2017

Paper collage mounted on
acid free antique white foam
40.6 x 40.6 cm | 16 x 16 in.

David Kettner

At the Cottage Door, 2017

Paper collage mounted on
acid free antique white foam
50.8 x 40.6 cm | 20 x 16 in.

Susan Te Kahurangi King

Untitled, c 1970

Graphite on paper

16.9 x 29.6 cm | 6 5/8 x 11 5/8 in.

Susan Te Kahurangi King

Untitled, c 1961

Graphite on paper

18.5 x 13.3 cm | 7 1/4 x 5 1/8 in.

Susan Te Kahurangi King

Untitled, c 1963

Coloured pencil and
graphite on paper

13.5 x 11.9 cm | 5 1/4 x 4 5/8 in.

Kushana Bush

The Small Mask, 2019

Gouache and watercolour on paper
62.3 x 43cm | 24 1/2 x 16 7/8 in.

In the office:

Helene Appel

Spilled Water, 2017

Watercolour and acrylic
on linen

46 x 34 cm | 18 x 13 3/8 in