

HUNTER SHAW FINE ART

Feigning Death

Sessa Englund and Andrew Rutherfordale

Opening reception Sunday June 4, 2023

Exhibition on view June 3 - July 16



Hunter Shaw Fine Art is pleased to present *Feigning Death*, an exhibition of new works by Los Angeles based artist Sessa Englund and Montreal based artist Andrew Rutherfordale. The works on view articulate an ornate, contemporary-gothic sensibility, drawing upon specific cultural and art-historical traditions to explore liminal zones between the metaphysical and material, the sacred and profane. While calling upon diverse aesthetic lineages, Englund and Rutherfordale's works are each possessed of an architectonic sensitivity, examining how the built environment both shapes and reflects culture and its inner ideals.

In a new series of hand-carved wooden reliefs, Sessa Englund evokes the Scandinavian craft tradition of *Snickarglädje* (Carpenter's Joy). These elaborate decorative embellishments are pervasive on the wooden homes throughout rural Sweden where much of the artist's family resides. The *Snickarglädje* is meant to bring a degree of individuality to each home, making it recognizable from a distance and distinguishing it from others nearby. *Snickarglädje* are emblematic of modernity, wherein the folk tradition of Scandinavian woodworking shifted from a religious to secular modality, from the symbolic to the purely formal. Englund's reliefs draw a parallel between the assertions of individualism inherent to *Snickarglädje* and those found within popular body modification culture. The artist adorns each work with piercings or generic "tramp stamp" and "tribal" tattoo motifs carved into their surfaces. Throughout the series, Englund draws attention to how these various signifiers of individuality in fact become antithetical in their ubiquity.

In the center of the gallery, Andrew Rutherfordale has fabricated an insect habitat populated by live Death Feigning Beetles. The terrarium is outfitted with a series of black, 3D-printed towers fashioned after a mixed use shopping / residential complex. This bug city simultaneously recalls both a medieval cathedral and an arab futurist cityscape. Death Feigning Beetles get their name from exhibiting a behavior known as "tonic immobility," a deceptive defense response in which certain animals play dead in the presence of a perceived threat. Hermetically sealed-off from any predators, the denizens of the terrarium exist in a kind of bourgeois utopia of consumption and leisure. High above the megapolis a corollary afterlife is found in Rutherfordale's insect coffins which accompany Englund's reliefs along the gallery's walls. Resin-preserved specimens are set within baroque 3D-printed frames embedded with LED lights, proposing a conflation of holy reliquary and commodity fetishist display.

Sessa Englund holds a BFA from the School of Art + Design at SUNY, Purchase NY (2013). Recent solo and two-person exhibitions include *Fool's Errand*, Hunter Shaw Fine Art (2021); *All made of tender flesh, all put together*, Haul Gallery, Brooklyn NY (2019); *Wild Objects* with Alicia Adamerovich, Project Pangée, Montreal Canada (2019); *A suspended state in last*, Guest Spot at the Re Institute Gallery, Baltimore MD (2018); *Sympathy for trolls* (artist in residency presentation), East of Elsewhere Gallery, Berlin Germany (2018).

Recent group exhibitions include *Dream in Deixis*, Tufenkian, Los Angeles (2022); *Forever Mall*, Shoot the Lobster, Los Angeles (2020); *From Dallas to Baum Bridge* curated by Anna Frost, LA River, Los Angeles (2020); *Beast On Its Back* curated by Anna Frost, Canyon Canyon, Los Angeles (2020); *Banquet*, in lieu, Los Angeles (2019); and *Games of Ceres*, King's Leap, Brooklyn NY (2018).

Andrew Rutherford received an MFA in Art and Technology from School of the Art Institute of Chicago (2018) and a BA in Visual Studies from University of Toronto (2013). Recent solo and two-person exhibitions include *The Monastery*, Light Harvesting Complex, Vantaa, Finland (2022); *Gambel's Arc*, Final Hot Desert, Salt Lake City, Utah (2021); *Swamp Factory*, Sedentary Enslavement, Lahaina, HI (2021); and *Entombmentproof*, Dungeon, Detroit, MI (2021). Recent group exhibitions include *Annihilation*, Galerie Laroche Joncas, Montreal (2023); *Salon of the Rose and Cross*, Ritual Transmission Agency, Sydney Australia (2022); *Corps(e)*, Frenchrivieramer, Nice, France (2022); *The Art That Be*, 11 Newel Gallery, Brooklyn, New York (2022); *E.Olith*, Sault-au-Récollet Mill, Montréal (2022); *Klammern aus Denen Blätter Sprießen Part 2*, Hunter Shaw Fine Art, Los Angeles (2022); *Klammern aus Denen Blätter Sprießen Part 1*, Scherben, Berlin (2022); *Big Fungus*, Solo Show, Berlin (2021); *Hyperspace Lexicon Volume 5*, Hyperspace Lexicon, Los Angeles (2021); and *This is Not Our World*, Prometheus Projects, Montreal (2020).