



ELLA SUTHERLAND
STILL LIFE WITH ARGOT

SUMER, TĀMAKI MAKĀURAU
2 FEBRUARY – 2 MARCH 2024

Sumer is pleased to present *Still Life with Argot*, an exhibition of new work by Aotearoa New Zealand-born artist Ella Sutherland. A reworking of the artist's exhibition at Künstlerhaus Bethanien, which took place in July of last year, it showcases various works that were produced during her time there, as the 2023 Creative New Zealand Berlin Artist-in-residence. This exhibition is the artist's fourth solo presentation with Sumer, and her first in the gallery's new space in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland.

It is easy to be in the presence of Sutherland's work, with their bold, simple, and rhythmic forms, and vibrant yet harmonious palette. However, such simplicity belies the challenge in making sense of them; in attempting to decode and correlate the labyrinthine threads of reference that the artist weaves within her works. If one looks to the origin of the word *argot*, they will see its basis in the French, as "the jargon of Paris rogues and thieves (for purposes of disguise and concealment)"¹. And that the artist chose to use an image of dominos² to advertise her show in Berlin is something of a ludic tell. These are meant as games, or puzzles.

An artist, designer, and academic, Sutherland's practice possesses a deep engagement with the archive. Her research, broad and discursive, connects the archaic and modern with the present. Recent bodies of work feature far ranging subjects, including modern politics, economics, meteorology, print technology, among many others. And such references, as wide as they might be, are always situated in relation to a set of key subjects, nay luminaries, which inform or reflect her own identity as a queer woman³.

In her ostensibly abstract works, Sutherland uses borrowed text and images. Obfuscated, they serve principally as compositional devices for the artist, yet a spectral presence remains. Playfully, they interrogate the presentation and dissemination of information; and pull apart the formal, material, and technological conditions of language. Or the artist herself would have it, they "consider the possibilities and the vulnerabilities of communication"⁴.

Ella Sutherland (b. 1987, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand) lives and works in Sydney, Australia. Her work has been shown widely throughout New Zealand, Australia and international venues. She was the recipient of the 2023 Creative New Zealand Berlin Artist-in Residence at the Künstlerhaus Bethanien. Recent highlights include exhibitions at Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin; Monash Museum of Art, Melbourne; FUTURES, Melbourne; Christchurch Art Gallery; City Gallery Wellington; Sumer, Tauranga; UNSW Galleries, Sydney; 12th Gwangju Biennale, Gwangju.

¹ 'Argot', *Online Etymology Dictionary*, https://www.etymonline.com/word/argot#etymonline_v_16986, (accessed 26/01/2024)

² An image, I have been told, which was lifted from the cover of a children's book which the artist found on a Berlin Street.

³ Significantly, key works within this exhibition draw heavily from *Die Freundin*. Produced in Berlin between 1924 and 1933, this publication is widely considered the first lesbian magazine. (It was discontinued shortly after the National Socialists came to power in January, 1933.)

Copies of the periodical are held in the collection of Schwules Museum, Berlin. Schwules Museum (in English: Gay Museum) is a museum and research centre with collections focusing on LGBTQ+ history and culture.

⁴ Quoted from the artist's written notes.





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Ella Sutherland
Fanfare at Work (AM), 2023
Acrylic on canvas
120 x 100 cm
(ES-000045)



Ella Sutherland
Fanfare at Work (PM), 2023
Acrylic on canvas
120 x 100 cm
(ES-000056)



Ella Sutherland
Devil's Printer, 2023
letterpress on paper
42 x 29.7 cm
Edition of 8 plus 2 artist's proofs
(ES-000044)



Ella Sutherland
A Letter, a litter II, 2023
letterpress on handmade paper, spring steel tape measures
80 x 97 x 12.5 cm
Edition of 4 plus 2 artist's proofs
(ES-000055)



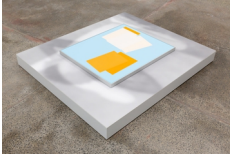
Ella Sutherland
Still Life with Back Issues I, 2023
Acrylic on canvas, aluminium frame, pigment print, lacquered wood plinth
82 x 67 cm painting; 140 x 120 x 15 cm overall
(ES-000053)



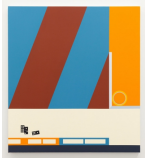
Ella Sutherland
Still Life with Back Issues II, 2023
Acrylic on canvas, aluminium frame, pigment print, lacquered wood plinth
82 x 67 cm painting; 25 x 140 x 120 cm overall
(ES-000051)



Ella Sutherland
Still Life with Back Issues III, 2023
Acrylic on canvas, aluminium frame, pigment print, lacquered wood plinth
82 x 67 cm painting; 19 x 140 x 120 cm overall
(ES-000049)



Ella Sutherland
Still Life with Back Issues IV, 2023
Acrylic on canvas, aluminium frame, pigment print, lacquered wood plinth
82 x 67 cm painting; 15 x 140 x 120 cm overall
(ES-000052)



Ella Sutherland
Studio Still Life I, 2023
Acrylic on linen
100 x 90 cm
(ES-000048)



Ella Sutherland
Studio Still Life II, 2023
Acrylic on linen
100 x 90 cm
(ES-000047)



Ella Sutherland
Studio Still Life III, 2023
Acrylic on linen
119 x 124 cm
(ES-000046)



Ella Sutherland
Death at the Printers, 2023
Biro on paper, Weimar Republic hyperinflation stamps in artist's frames, three parts
50 x 40 cm each; 50 x 120 cm overall
(ES-000054)