

## PRESS RELEASE

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Photo: Seymour Rosen, 1972. ©SPACES Archives—Saving and Preserving Arts and Cultural Environments

### ***Kathi Hofer and Preserve Bottle Village Committee 23rd Iteration of Garage Exchange Vienna—Los Angeles***

Thursday April 18 — Sunday June 16, 2024

Mackey Apartments Garage Top, 1137 S. Cochran Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90019

Public Opening Reception: Thursday, April 18, 2024, 06:00 PM — 08:00 PM

*Grandma Prisbrey:* Mary... they call me an artist. What do you think?

*Mary (a friend):* I don't know —I guess so— what else would you call it.

*Grandma:* (pause) Junk, I guess.

To understand Bottle Village is to understand its creator, Tressa "Grandma" Prisbrey (1896–1988), most notably: her unbiased appreciation of things. An artist, collector, builder, writer, entertainer, caretaker, and retired factory worker, Prisbrey's many roles are inseparable from her resulting life's work, a village of bottle-constructed houses that served as her artwork, home, and attraction for

visitors in Santa Susana, present day Simi Valley, CA. From the first structure she built to house her 17,000 pencils in 1956, Bottle Village would eventually become a collection of 16 buildings and structures made out of bottles and other materials, almost entirely discarded items sourced from a local dump. Her assemblage artworks were situated throughout the site and prominently featured her pencil collection along with found dolls and other objects from 1950s and 1960s era American throwaway culture.

*Garage Exchange* presents Vienna and Berlin based artist Kathi Hofer and Preserve Bottle Village Committee, a non-profit organization formed in 1979, to protect and preserve the legacy of Tressa "Grandma" Prisbrey. Prisbrey began building Bottle Village when she was in her 60s, and continued to work on it, host guests, and live in it until late in her life. Severely damaged in the 1994 Northridge earthquake, it has not been rebuilt or restored to this day due to political opposition and the lack of funds.

This exhibition brings together original bottles from collapsed Bottle Village structures, Prisbrey's assemblage artworks, and works by Hofer, placing them in a "magic circle" at the Mackey Apartment Garage Top Gallery where the objects and artifacts relate and resemble one another (ex)changing their value and meaning. Additionally, the exhibition brings Rosa Lowinger and Christina Varvi from RLA Conservation into the context of the gallery to restore works by Prisbrey that have deteriorated due to damage and age. Over the course of the exhibition, a small number of Prisbrey's works will be professionally restored and exhibited in their changing form, tuning the perception of the artwork to conceptual questions of preservation and material realities of art conservation.

Tressa "Grandma" Prisbrey's Bottle Village has a unique position as a nationally recognized landmark and one of the few existing female built "folk art" sites worldwide. Even with this distinction, questions surrounding the need to gain attention, scholarship, and resources sit at its center as a physical site and conceptual ground for reframing art history and architectural preservation. Prisbrey's medium was the village: a "social sculpture". To preserve it is not only to preserve the architecture and artworks, but to preserve an aesthetic and social practice—work that exceeds the property lines.

### **About the Artists**

**Kathi Hofer** (b. 1981, Hallein, Austria) works conceptually across media. She is interested in forms of everyday creativity and their specific freedoms and constraints as well as in the relationship between artistic work and socio-economics. In her installations she integrates found objects, images, stories, and practices that have strongly determined the roles and values within the environments she grew up in or moves within today. In addition to her installation-based work, she has recently turned to immaterial practices and experimental forms of storytelling. In this context, she has initiated improvised encounters between actors from different cultural fields or backgrounds in public or semi-private space staging unannounced performances that took place in the absence of an audience. Of these unrehearsed, unnoticed actions photographic evidence remains that is open for further interpretation. Recent exhibitions include Continental Baths (London, UK), the MAK Center for Art and Architecture (Los Angeles, US), Winona (Brussels, Belgium), Tokyo Arts and Space (Tokyo, Japan), Austrian Cultural Forum (Warsaw, Poland), MAK – Austrian Museum of Applied Arts (Vienna, Austria), and mumok – Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien (Vienna, Austria). Her book "*Grandma Prisbrey's Bottle Village*" was published by Spector Books, Leipzig (2021).

**Preserve Bottle Village Committee** is a non-profit organization formed in July 1979 to acquire and restore the privately-owned historic property. In the intervening decades, dedicated members have

been responsible for ensuring the protection of Bottle Village. The long-term objective of the organization is to allow public access on a regular basis to the fully improved and restored Bottle Village. In 2012, the organization initiated a comprehensive restoration approach for the entire one-third acre site and its historic components. For the Garage Exchange exhibition, Preserve Bottle Village Committee board member Katherine Weisman collaborated closely with Kathi Hofer, the MAK Center, and RLA retrieving and selecting artifacts.

## **ABOUT GARAGE EXCHANGE**

*Garage Exchange Vienna—Los Angeles* seeks to foster relationships, conversations and collaborations in the arts between Los Angeles and Austria. In order to expand the cultural exchange at the core of the Artists and Architects-in-Residence program, the Austrian Federal Chancellery and the MAK Center invite Austrian and Vienna-based alumni residents to collaborate with L.A. artists and architects of their choosing at the Garage Top at the Mackey Apartments for the Garage Exchange Vienna-Los Angeles exhibition series.

*Kathi Hofer and Preserve Bottle Village Committee* is organized by Seymour Polatin, Exhibitions and Programs Manager with Brian Taylor, Curatorial Assistant, and Maeve Atkinson, Education and Engagement Coordinator.

This exhibition series is made possible by The Austrian Federal Chancellery.

## **About the MAK Center for Art & Architecture**

The MAK Center for Art and Architecture is a multidisciplinary, experimental center for art and architecture that operates from a constellation of historic architectural sites and contemporary exhibition spaces. Offering a year-round schedule of exhibitions and events, the MAK Center presents programming that challenges conventional notions of architectural space and relationships between the creative arts. It is headquartered in the landmark Schindler House (R.M. Schindler, 1922) in West Hollywood; operates a residency program and exhibition space at the Mackey Apartments (R.M. Schindler, 1939) and runs more intimate programming at the Fitzpatrick-Leland House (R.M. Schindler, 1936) in Los Angeles. The MAK Center encourages exploration of practical and theoretical ideas in art and architecture by engaging the center's places, spaces, and histories. Its programming includes exhibitions, lectures, symposia, discussions, performances, music series, publication projects, salons, architecture tours, and new work commissions.

## **For More Information**

[makcenter.org/](http://makcenter.org/)  
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## **Press Inquiries**

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