

Liz Craft
Just Say Nein
04.05-21.06.2025 • GROTTO, Berlin

I.
No text in the room
soft dialogue traces thought,
intimate exchange.

II.
Logic floats mid-air,
suspended in golden forms
faces, words, and shape.

III.
A riddle shines bright
metal glints, mystery hums.
Ancient whispers laugh.

IV.
Goddess or alien?
Pyramids dream in still light.
Cult or comedy?

Through the large shop window in front, passersby are drawn to curious artifacts. A golden sculpture commands the centre of the space. Aluminium pyramid-shaped reliefs line the back wall. I overhear someone on the street asking if this is a reference to a New Age cult or ancient Egypt?

This is an exhibition without explanatory text. It invites the viewer to read it like a riddle. Clues to logic or origin are embedded in the materials, forms, and associations that emerge from the works themselves.

The installation consists of eight physical elements. At its centre stands a small bronze-cast figurative sculpture covered in gold leaf, titled *Just Say No*. The sculpture stands on a white pedestal shaped like a pyramid, measuring 114 x 114 cm. Each of the pedestal's four sides features handball-sized animal faces that gaze into the room. Along the longest wall, a horizontal installation features clusters of vertical, pyramid-shaped aluminium forms arranged in increasing numbers from one to nine, moving left to right.

On the windowsill rest three objects. First, a golden pyrite stone, known as Fool's Gold, roughly the size of a child's fist, is said to "talk." Pyrite symbolizes warmth, abundance, and mystical energy. On the window glass, a drawn speech bubble contains information about the exhibition. Second, a souvenir card featuring an Area 51 alien bell chotchki. Third, a growing folder with photos of visitors wearing a green enamel pin with the sentence *Just Say Nein™* in white letters, which references Nancy Reagan's well-known 1980s U.S. anti-drug campaign.

The centrepiece of the show, *Just Say No*, is both humorous and intriguing. This gold-leaf-covered bronze sculpture has a curvy female body and wears the alien bell chotchki on her head. Despite its modest scale (about the length of a lower arm), it dominates the space with assertive presence. The figure stands in a power pose: right arm stretched horizontally, wrist flexed upward in a stop sign. The head, encased in the bell helmet, turns in the same direction. The left arm rests on the hip, elbow jutting out, feet placed in a V-shape. Positioned on the pyramid pedestal, centered in the space, the sculpture directs its alien gaze, and stop signal, toward the gallery entrance. Or is the hand flipped and the palm facing its head?

The work is created in a collage-like manner, drawing from the world around the artist. Some elements come directly from life, such as the Area 51 alien bell chotchki, while others emerge from memory or automatic drawing methods. Regardless, the pieces are reassembled to form a narrative, one that can be visual, formal, or conceptual, unfolding naturally as if unearthing something already present but unseen.

Just Say Nein invites viewers into a playful space where meaning unfolds through discovery, association, and the unexpected interplay of form and symbol.

Text by Maria Helena Konttinen Nerhus

#2 Under the Skin: Liz Craft

MH: If we invite you to introduce Just Say No to the world-what would you share?

LC: The work was made in Berlin, while I was living there in 2022-2024, I imagine this had an impact on the work. I had to come up with solutions on how to make work with small elements. Because I was not in the position to make anything big. I see the figurine as a model for a monumental statue. And I wove in the wall piece and just say nein, into the installation.

MH: Your practice sometimes feels like a fictional documentation of your own lifepath, symbolism, patterns, logic, and humour interweaving into a self-referential universe. Can you walk us through how your memory, observations, and interests shape your process?

LC: Hmmm, I can't tell you that it's too complex of a process, and can't really be explained in words anyways. But yes basically you are already mentioning all the things that go into the work as well as materials, form, space and logic.

MH: Reading about your work, I was struck by the idea of representing an idea mode rather than a subject. Could you elaborate on that, and how this methodology is traceable in Just Say Nein?

LC: I guess this is another way of asking about how the work is made. Yes, you are correct - I think if you are referring to the work being about a process or way of thinking rather than about subject matter. There is subject matter within the work but the idea mode or way of working if that's what you mean, is more consistent or is what continues through the work over the years. There is a start which doesn't always get arrived at by the same method. It also often takes years to fully realize something. There are fragments that float around, and slowly come together, when the time is right. I had that alien bell for years, just say no, was from my teens, as well as those metal studs I guess. The installation was very improvisational at the same time, so there are years put into things not just the ideas but the actual making but also very quick in other aspects, even the buttons were last minute and Simon's idea, and turned into a major part of the show.