

The Kitchen is proud to present artist Nikolas Gambaroff's first solo exhibition in New York, which takes early 20th-century Austrian satirist/playwright Karl Kraus's theatrical work *The Last Days of Mankind* as its point of departure. Penned during World War I, the political piece was notoriously impossible to perform, consisting of 213 scenes and, more pointedly, steeped in satirical, expressionistic writing verging on the grotesque—underlining Kraus's sense that the language of his time was being torn from its indexical grounding in order to fuel blind nationalism and bigotry. Such dystopian themes are disarmingly resonant in our own cultural moment, when public discourse is forced to grapple with questions of “fake news” and click-bait, and when distributive algorithms on social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter are continually disrupting language's stable relationship with reality. In this exhibition of painting, sculpture, and video—in addition to mobile telepresence robots that mimic and mirror the behavior of viewers—Gambaroff considers anew the question of language in jeopardy, and explores how art (in all its potential ambiguity) might place itself when the very possibility for coherent, shared meaning in the public sphere seems tenuous at best.

Since the early 2010s, Gambaroff has frequently engaged the power of media infrastructures to shape culture, taking textuality as his connective theme and medium: The artist's painting and sculptural objects have often included frenetically overlapping bits of newspaper that swell and tear into altered forms. For this new work at The Kitchen, Gambaroff expands on this practice, turning his thematic gaze specifically toward social media's role as a polarizing carrier of information that impacts both discursive and physical space. His gallery installation of painted collage and sculpture features two areas separated by a painted theatrical backdrop, effectively creating doubled renditions of a single scenario, between which viewers can move. Many paintings still employ the artist's nonfigurative style—with newspaper used pervasively as material—while his new figurative sculptural work summons the characters and modernist context of Kraus's play. Yet the seeming remoteness of that cultural moment from our own is closed by Gambaroff's mobile devices, which perambulate the space and, in an accompanying video, *The Kitchen theater*.

As Gambaroff says, he is interested in how different mediations of the same thing can split the world into binary camps, given that “language is tied to the systems we use, which start, over time, changing our behavior.” Indeed, this idea originally drew him to Kraus's scathing fifteen-hour play, which opens with a meticulous media satire before depicting a fantastical societal landscape. (Notably, Kraus envisioned his day's popular press as opportunistic facilitator of war, and the militaristic attitude of populist media would become central to Kraus's apocalyptic critique.) In such passages, the author used the words of media outlets against them, with *The Last Days of Mankind* largely composed of found text. Yet if Kraus would suggest that language's dislocation from

meaning in such contexts necessarily dislocates our sense of reality, here Gambaroff offers an aesthetic proposition for such dislocations in real space, acknowledging parallels between Kraus's time and the Trump era at the same time as suggesting the degree to which such binary realities are already apparent in everyday life.

Who in every place they impose their presence  
Despoil creation's very essence;  
Who torment beasts and enslave humanity;  
Who honor shame and shame morality;  
Who gorge the bad and butcher the good;  
Who despise the very virtue in their blood,  
But use it to cover up greed and excession;  
Who violate intellect, reason, expression,  
And language itself just by speaking their thoughts;  
Who have opened the hereafter up to exports;  
Who send art, God, the Devil, the dead earth itself  
To hawk products on a department store shelf.  
Who hide what life means with the means of subsistence;  
Who make mass production the end of existence;  
Who are slaves to expanding their output and sales;  
Who corrupt their being and pay with their souls;  
Who market themselves as their own market forces  
And brawl with their neighbors for natural resources.  
Who wield hatred and envy as business allies  
Until gold's toxic glitter burns out their eyes...

—Karl Kraus, from *The Last Days of Mankind*

Nikolas Gambaroff was born in Germany in 1979, and currently lives and works in New York and Los Angeles. He studied at the University of the Arts in Berlin, and received an MFA from Bard College in New York in 2007. Recent solo exhibitions include Overduin & Co., Los Angeles, Meyer Kainer in Vienna, Gio Marconi in Milan, The Power Station in Dallas, White Cube in

London. Gambaroff's work has been included in exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, the Institute of Contemporary Art in London, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, the New Museum in New York, Kunsthalle Zurich, Bergen Kunsthalle, Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo in Turin, and Künstlerhaus Halle für Kunst in Graz.

*(This document was automatically generated by Contemporary Art Library.)*