

# HALSEY MCKAY GALLERY

SMILE curated by TODD VON AMMON

**SMILE** curated by TODD VON AMMON / MARCH 30 – APRIL 28, 2019

**KATHRYN ANDREWS, ASHLEY BICKERTON, CATHARINE CZUDEJ, MATT KENNY, AJAY KURIAN, HELMUT LANG, MEGAN MARRIN, TABOR ROBAK, JULIA WACHTEL**



Julia Wachtel, Picnic, 2017, Oil and acrylic ink on canvas, 60 x 118 inches; (152 x 300cm)

Halsey McKay is thrilled to present *SMILE*, a group exhibition curated by Todd von Ammon, featuring works by Kathryn Andrews, Ashley Bickerton, Catharine Czudej, Matt Kenny, Ajay Kurian, Helmut Lang, Megan Marrin, Tabor Robak and Julia Wachtel. This exhibition, in short, is based on the *SMiLE Sessions*, which Brian Wilson, Van Dyke Parks and the Beach Boys developed over the course of ten months between 1966 and 1967.

The objective of *SMiLE* was, according to Wilson, to create a “teenage symphony to God”. It would espouse the cardinal virtue of the Beach Boys worldview: American exceptionalism, which concerns itself with physical fitness, mental health, and a secular worship of national traditions. Attempted in 1966 and shelved in 1967, *SMiLE* is extant only as an unfinished document, and is widely considered to be the catalyst for Brian Wilson’s descent into mental illness and addiction and the dissolution of the Beach Boys. Wilson’s vision of American exceptionalism, which was originally conceived as a *rondo*—one musical theme that develops through various episodes—is a disjointed and labyrinthine rumination with interludes of the nonsensical, the startling and the uncanny. The *SMiLE* that Wilson sought to give proved to be impossible at that point in history, wherein economic

prosperity and the spectre of nuclear annihilation had to share equal space in the collective conscience.

The smile of this exhibition generally signifies electability, salability, or seduction—how the smile is indicative of the same myth of American exceptionalism that Wilson espoused. The exhibition seeks to examine the smile in a new context where sovereignty, economy and sex are all in direct cognitive conflict with the chicanery and waste of contemporary political economy and subsequent threat these pose to the survival of the human species.

**Todd von Ammon** is an independent curator and art consultant based in New York and Washington DC. Recent group exhibitions include *PARADISE* at the Westport Arts Center, *100 Sculptures* at Anonymous Gallery, and *Wormwood* at Ellis King. He will open his own temporary project in April in Washington DC, von ammon co, with a solo show by Tabor Robak.

**Kathryn Andrews** (b. 1973, Mobile, Alabama) was the subject of the solo exhibition *Kathryn Andrews: Run for President*, which originated at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago (2015) and traveled to the Nasher Sculpture Center, Dallas (2016). Other solo exhibitions include *Field Station: Kathryn Andrews*, Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum, Michigan State University, East Lansing (2017); *Sunbathers I & II*, High Line, New York (2016); *Kathryn Andrews, TC: Temporary Contemporary*, Bass Museum of Art, Miami (2014); and *Special Meat Occasional Drink*, Museum Ludwig, Cologne (2013). Among her recent group exhibitions are *Mad World*, Marciano Art Foundation, Los Angeles (2018); *Reconstitution*, LAXART, Los Angeles (2017); *Good Dreams, Bad Dreams: American Mythologies*, Aishti Foundation, Beirut (2016); *NO MAN'S LAND: Women Artists from the Rubell Family Collection*, Rubell Family Collection, Miami (2015); *The Los Angeles Project*, Ullens Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing (2014); and *Made in L.A. 2012*, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (2012). Andrews lives and works in Los Angeles and is represented by David Kordansky Gallery.

**Ashley Bickerton** (b. 1959, Barbados, West Indies) received his BFA from the California Institute of the Arts in 1982 and continued his education in the independent studies program at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. Solo shows of his work have been organized at Newport Street Gallery, London (2017); The FLAG Art Foundation, New York (2017); and Palacete del Embarcadero, Autoridad Portuaria de Santander, Spain (1997). Select group exhibitions featuring his work include *Brand New: Art and Commodity in the 1980s*, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC (2016); *Human Interest: Portraits from the Whitney's Collection*; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2016); *L'Almanach 16*, Le Consortium, Dijon, France (2016); *Painting 2.0: Expression in the Information Age*, Museum Brandhorst, Munich, Germany (2015); *Ileana Sonnabend: Ambassador for the New*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York (2013); *Aquatopia*, Tate St Ives, Cornwall, United Kingdom (2013); *The Living Years: Art after 1989*, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN; *This Will Have Been: Art, Love & Politics in the 1980s*, Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, traveled to Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN and Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, MA (2012); *Postmodernism: Style and Subversion 1970-1990*, Victoria and Albert Museum, London (2011); *Skin Fruit: Selections from the Dakis Joannou Collection*, New Museum, New York (2010); *Pop Life: Art in a Material World*, Tate Modern, London (2009); *Allegories of Modernism: Contemporary Drawing*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York (1992); *Word as Image: American Art 1960-1990*, Milwaukee Art Museum, WI (1990), traveled to Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston (1991); and the *Whitney Biennial*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (1989). His work is in numerous international public and private collections, including The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; Hara Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo; Vancouver Art Gallery; Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN; and the Tate Britain, London. He is currently included in the show *Drawn Together Again* at the FLAG Art Foundation in NY. Bickerton is represented by Lehman Maupin Gallery.

**Catharine Czudej** (b. 1985 in Johannesburg, South Africa) lives and works in New York. Her work has been shown at the following galleries and institutions: Kölnischer Kunstverein, Cologne (2016); Office Baroque, Brussels (2016/2014); Team Gallery, New York (2016); Off Vendome, New York (2016); Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zürich (2016); Eden Eden, Berlin (2015); Chewday's, London (2015); Pace Gallery, London (2014); François Ghebaly Gallery, Los Angeles (2014); Ramiken Crucible, New York (2014/2013). Czudej is represented by Office Baroque.

**Matt Kenny** (b.1979, Kansas City, MO) Kenny earned a BFA from Rhode Island School of Design. His work has been the subject of solo exhibitions at Halsey McKay Gallery, The National Exemplar, Karma, Derek Eller Gallery and 55 Gansevoort in New York. Recent group exhibitions include *Interiors*, with Aaron Aujla, Cooper Cole Gallery, Toronto, ON; *American Sculpture*, The National Exemplar, *Urbanities*, James Fuentes, New York, NY; *Ghost Current*, V1 Gallery, Copenhagen, Denmark; *Teste*, Galleria Alessandra Bonomo, Rome, Italy among others. Kenny lives and works in Brooklyn, New York and is represented by Halsey McKay Gallery.

**Ajay Kurian** (b. 1984 Baltimore, MD) earned his B.A. from Columbia University, NY in 2006. Solo exhibitions have been at 47 Canal in New York, at White Flag Projects in St. Louis and at Artspeak in Vancouver, amongst others. His group exhibitions include *The Whitney Biennial*, Whitney Museum of American Art, NY (2017); *Greater New York* at MoMA PS1, NY (2015) and *Nature After Nature* at Fridericianum Kassel (2014). Kurian's work is held in the collections of the Whitney Museum of American Art, NY and the Aishti Foundation Collection, Beirut, Lebanon. Kurian lives in NY and is represented by 47 Canal.

**Helmut Lang** (b.1956 Vienna, Austria) lives and works in New York and Long Island. He has exhibited since 1996 in Europe and the United States, among others, at the Florence Biennale, Florence (1996); Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna (1998); The Journal Gallery, New York (2007); kestnergesellschaft, Hanover (2008); The Fireplace Project, Long Island (2011); Schusev State Museum, Moscow (2011); Mark Fletcher, New York (2012); Deste Foundation, Athens (2013); Sperone Westwater, New York (2015) and Dallas Contemporary, Dallas (2016), Sperone Westwater (2017), Sammlung Friedrichshof, Burgenland (2017) and Stadtraum, Vienna (2017). Lang is represented by Sperone Westwater.

**Megan Marrin** (b. 1982, St. Louis, MO) received her BFA from School of Visual Arts, NY. Recent solo and two-person exhibitions include David Lewis, New York; WIELS Contemporary Art Center, Brussels (with Elif Erkan); Svetlana, NY (with Nora Schultz); Renwick Gallery, NY (with Tyler Dobson). Group exhibitions include Galerie Max Hetzler, Berlin; Office Baroque, Brussels; Mitchell Aligus Gallery, NY; Bortolami Gallery, NY; Bureau, NY; Queer Thoughts, NY; Foxy Production, NY; Salon94, NY; and Rivington Arms, NY; among others. She lives and works in New York, NY and is represented by David Lewis Gallery.

**Tabor Robak** (b. 1986 Portland, OR) has been featured extensively in group exhibitions at galleries and institutions both stateside and abroad, including Serpentine Galleries, London; the 12th Lyon Biennale; Palazzo delle Esposizioni, Rome; MoMA: PS1, New York; Kunsthalle Düsseldorf; Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo; and Kunsthalle Rotterdam. His work is included in numerous public collections, including those of The Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY; DESTE Foundation for Contemporary Art, Athens; Fondazione Sandretto re Rebaudengo, Turin; KRC Collection, Amsterdam; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Migros Museum, Zurich; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; and the Yuz Collection, Shanghai. Robak will open his sixth solo show in the United States in April 2019 at von ammon co.

**Julia Wachtel** (b. 1956 New York, NY) earned a B.A. from Middlebury College in 1977, studied at the School of Visual Arts, NY in 1978, and completed an Independent Study Program at the Whitney Museum of American Art in 1979. Wachtel has exhibited internationally since the 1980s. Recent solo exhibitions have been at the Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland; Bergen Kunsthall, Bergen; and currently at Mary Boone Gallery, NY. She has been in numerous group exhibitions including at the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; the Saatchi Gallery, London; Gavin Brown's Enterprise, NY; Mauani Mercier Gallery, Brussels; Redling Fine Art, Los Angeles; and Foxy Productions, NY. Last year Wachtel was included in the exhibitions *Fast Forward: Painting from the 80's* at the Whitney Museum of American Art, NY, and *Brand New: Art and Commodity in the 80's* at the Hirschorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington D.C. Her work is in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, New York ; MOCA, Los Angeles ; The Whitney Museum of American Art ; FRAC Normandie ; Saatchi Collection, London ; Cleveland Museum of Art ; Brooklyn Museum ; Vanhaerents Art Collection, Brussels ; Zabłudowicz Collection, London

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