

Parallel Phenomena

Works on Paper by Carroll Dunham, Susan Te Kahurangi King, Gladys Nilsson and Peter Saul
Curated by Damon Brandt

May 13 – July 2, 2021

Parallel Phenomena compares and contrasts the distinct yet related worlds these four artists have constructed and woven into being with graphite, colored pencil and watercolor. Every paper surface becomes the territory for a series of eccentrically fueled and compulsively composed narratives, each distinguished by a level of figurative distortion that bears the unmistakable signature of its author. By exploring the compositional and conceptual connective tissue among the works of Carroll Dunham, Susan Te Kahurangi King, Gladys Nilsson and Peter Saul, one can trace the mysterious phenomena of unorchestrated communal responses to deeply held individual impulses or needs. Through this clarifying process one can simultaneously highlight individual inspiration and celebrate the shared instincts and aesthetic parallels.

A premeditated subtext to this exhibition is the inclusion of the self-taught King with her credentialed and academically trained contemporaries. There is a storied legacy of more comprehensive exhibitions that have examined the complex intersection between artists on the periphery and those in the mainstream, including Lynn Cooke's *Outliers and American Vanguard Art* (National Gallery of Art, Washington DC, 2018), Massimiliano Gioni's *Encyclopedic Palace* (Venice Biennial, 2013) and Maurice Tuchman's *Parallel Visions: Modern Artists and Outsider Art* (Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1992). Resulting questions abound: Who are Insiders or Outsiders? What, if any, is the relationship between self-imposed solitude versus genetically driven isolation, and ultimately, how does one activate a curatorial consciousness that, to quote Cooke, is not subservient to "the determination of the socially empowered agents, institutions and discourse that evaluate, legitimate and promote." That King never had access to university instruction or knowledge of art historical conventions yet creates work that stands in the company of renowned contemporary artists is testament to the need to further dismantle an ill-informed hierarchy.

Susan Te Kahurangi King (b. 1951) is from New Zealand and began to draw at the age of four with an extraordinary sense of purpose that continued around the same time she lost her ability to speak. Surrounded by a large immediate family, she worked under a nurturing umbrella of support, producing hundreds of works on paper before enduring a painfully long and mysterious period of inactivity that lasted sixteen years. When King again resumed her creative output, which she continues to this day at seventy, she virtually picked up where she had left off. With a newfound gravitation to brightly colored felt pens a stylistic shift ensued, her works becoming less labyrinthian in content, and even more abstract in nature, almost exuberant, and awash in vibrant color. This exhibition will feature a fresh trove of works produced from 1965 to 1984 along with a cache of more recent drawings made between 2008 and 2016.

From the intimacy of Dunham's diaristic multiple datings of his creative process to Nilsson's topsy-turvy matrix of intersecting worlds; from Saul's bug-eyed manic testimonials on the vagaries of human behavior to King's exquisite tumble of twisted cartoon characters moving through space, each of these artists speaks actively and equally to each other's authenticity and shared internal geography.

In an effusive *Vulture* review, art critic and writer Jerry Saltz described his discovery of King at the 2014 New York Outsider Art Fair, where Chris Byrne presented her work alongside Peter Saul's, and noted King's "strange abstract combinations or knitted-together landscapes of cartoon parts... arranged in ways that echo Willem de Kooning, Jim Nutt's meticulous piecing together of body parts and distortion, Roy Lichtenstein's stylized cartooning, and Carroll Dunham's deft space and line." Peter Saul and Gladys Nilsson have thus been recruited along with Dunham in this comparative playground of figurative angst and personal fantasy. Nilsson has an interesting association with Outsider Art as the preeminent collector of the drawings of Martín Ramirez. Her work was also included in the aforementioned exhibitions *Outliers* and *Parallel Visions*.

Whether trained or untrained, quiet or boisterous, a re-imagined world is the province of all artists. *Parallel Phenomena* celebrates both the organically channeled and the strategically engineered and identifies the intersecting language between the two. While each artist merits careful individual consideration, it is within the company of these kindred spirits that potent connections can be wrought and respectfully illuminated.

Damon Brandt is a writer and curatorial consultant based in New York City. He opened his first gallery in 1984 with a contemporary exhibition program while pursuing his expertise in ancient tribal cultures. 20th century photography has become an additional area of focus. In 1992, he founded Salt Mine Projects as a natural extension of his wide-ranging collaborative activities both within and outside of the art world.

Carroll Dunham (b. 1949) was born in New Haven, CT and attended Trinity College in Hartford. His work has been featured in numerous solo gallery exhibitions including at Gladstone Gallery, New York and Brussels (2020, 2018, 2015, 2012), Blum & Poe, Los Angeles, (2017, 2012, 2010) and Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zürich (2019, 2016, 2014), as well as solo museum exhibitions at the Denver Art Museum (2014), Museum Ludwig, Cologne (2009) and the New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York (2002). His work is in the permanent collections of the Art Institute of Chicago; the Brooklyn Museum of Art; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; the Philadelphia Museum of Art; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, among others. Dunham is represented by Gladstone Gallery, New York and Brussels, and Blum & Poe, Los Angeles.

Susan Te Kahurangi King (b. 1951) is a self-taught artist from New Zealand. Her work has been featured in numerous solo gallery exhibitions including at Andrew Edlin Gallery, New York (2017, 2014), Robert Heald Gallery, Wellington, New Zealand (2019, 2015), Marlborough Contemporary, London (2017), Intuit, Chicago (2019), and ICA Miami (2016). Her drawings are in the permanent collections of the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Philadelphia Museum of Art; the American Folk Art Museum, New York; Institute for Contemporary Art, Miami; and Chartwell Collection, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki. King is represented by Andrew Edlin Gallery in the United States and Robert Heald Gallery in New Zealand.

Gladys Nilsson (b. 1940) was born in Chicago and studied painting at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, where has been a professor since 1990. She first came to prominence in 1966, when she joined five other recent Art Institute graduates (Jim Falconer, Art Green, Jim Nutt, Suellen Rocca, and Karl Wirsum) for the first of a series of group exhibitions called the *Hairy Who*. In 1973, she became one of the first women to have a solo exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art. Her current solo exhibition, *Out of this World*, is on view through June 6th at the Madison Museum of Contemporary Art, Madison, Wisconsin. She has had numerous solo gallery exhibitions including at Garth Greenan, New York (2020, 2017, 2014), Matthew Marks Gallery, New York (2020), Parker Gallery, Los Angeles (2020), Rhona Hoffman Gallery, Chicago (2019), Jean Albano Gallery, Chicago (2012, 2009, 2005, 2003, 2001, 1998), Luise Ross Gallery, New York (2008), and Fleisher/Ollman Gallery, Philadelphia (2002). Her work is in the permanent collections of numerous museums including the Art Institute of Chicago; the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; the Minneapolis Institute of Art; the Milwaukee Art Museum; the Morgan Library; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; The Philadelphia Museum of Art; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, among others. Gladys Nilsson is represented by Garth Greenan Gallery, New York.

Peter Saul (b. 1934) was born in San Francisco where he attended the California School of Fine Arts. He was also a student at the Washington University School of Fine Arts in St. Louis. Concurrent exhibitions entitled *New Paintings* are currently on view at Venus Over Manhattan and Michael Werner Gallery in New York. His solo exhibition, *Crime and Punishment*, was on view in 2020 at the New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York. Solo gallery exhibitions include Mary Boone Gallery, New York (2017, 2015, 2013, 2012), Michael Werner Gallery, New York (2021, 2020, 2016), Venus Over Manhattan, New York (2021, 2015), David Kordansky, Los Angeles (2015) and eleven shows at Allan Frumkin Gallery and Frumkin/Adams Gallery, both in New York, between 1961 and 1994. His work is in the permanent collections of numerous museums including the Art Institute of Chicago; the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; the Smithsonian Museum of American Art, Washington DC; the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. Peter Saul is represented by Venus Over Manhattan, New York, and Michael Werner Gallery, New York.