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Anna-Sophie Berger

The Fool at Sea

March 4 - April 14, 2018

JTT is pleased to present *The Fool at Sea*, Anna Sophie Berger's second solo exhibition with the gallery. Berger, who is based in Vienna and New York, embraces a diverse range media to engage with issues related to the cycle of production, distribution, and consumption. Where previous work addressed these issues through food, images and clothing, this exhibition focuses on ways in which a municipality can produce and distribute public spaces for its citizens to consume. The exhibition's title implies that there is a fool at large, and relates to Berger's recurrent use of a jester figure in her work. Historically the jester is a figure who is able to transcend hierarchical structures and speak truthfully to those in power on behalf of their community, but in doing so risks death. On view will be new sculptures, photographs, found objects, and site-specific interventions, each featuring useful items stripped of their utilitarian value and modified for interests that seem at once playful and diabolical.

On the north wall of the gallery Berger has silk-screened the NYC Parks and Recreation logo to the upper corners of the gallery walls, mirroring the way it is painted on handball courts throughout the city and on signs that designate city park space. Titled *sick leave*, the leaf logo here is deteriorating. In New York, where certain public spaces are supported by private interest and others terribly neglected, the logo serves as a marker for city-designated common space. Like many of the works on view in *The Fool at Sea*, the leaves imply that the balance between a functioning state and its constituents has been disturbed.

Two steel boxes attached to chains and filled with plastic toy eyes rest on the gallery floor. Titled *left* and *right* these are Berger's recreations of coal boxes similar to those at the Isar River in Munich, designed for the disposal of coal after grilling in a public space. Their recent implementation followed a green space restoration initiative in the city. As Berger writes about her interest in these structures: "What makes a clean city? A functioning administration or people that love tidiness? Their placement stems from a desire to keep a public commons proper. I am interested in care - who can afford such care and what comes with it." In Berger's version of these coal boxes, they are filled with a display of hundreds of the same cheap plastic eyes, the kind that end up on children's stuffed animals.

Tucked away in the back room of the gallery is *The Mule*. For this piece, Berger has custom-made slipcasses for the existing gallery conference table and chairs out of cheap, polyester satin in bright yellows, pinks, greens and pale blues - colors associated with traditional harlequin costumes. The title is a reference to a fictional character in Isaac Asimov's Foundation series who uses his ability to control the minds and emotions of others in order to conquer vast territories throughout the galaxy. Referred to as "the mule," he often disguises himself as a clown. Berger's slipcasses serve as an intervention on the "back room," a space in the gallery reserved for sales meetings and business, set apart from the front-facing exhibition space.

Anna-Sophie Berger (b. 1989, Vienna AT), was awarded the Ars Viva Prize in Germany in 2017 and the first Kapsch Contemporary Art Prize in Austria in 2016. Her work is currently on view at S.M.A.K in Ghent and the Contemporary Art Center in Vilnius, Lithuania. Recent solo exhibitions include the mumok in Vienna, Galerie Emanuel Layr in Rome, Studio for Propositional Cinema in Düsseldorf, and the Kunsthaus Bregenz. Berger's work was also recently on view at the Kunstverein in Munich, The Austrian Cultural Forum in New York, the 4th Ural Industrial Biennial in Russia, and the Salzburger Kunstverein.