

Elga Wimmer PCC is pleased to announce the exhibition "SOFT POWER" with artists Aisha Bell, Sharon Lockhart, Kerri Scharlin, Carolee Schneemann, Anita Sieff, Carol Szymanski and Nicola L. The exhibition opens on December 1, 2017 and goes through January 27, 2018

(closed December 22 to January 9), www.elgawimmer.com

Opening reception Nov 30, 6-8 pm. Gallery hours, 12 – 6pm or by appointment.

In his 2004 publication "Soft Power" Joseph Nye asserts that, "Seduction is always more effective than coercion, and many values like democracy, human rights, and individual opportunities are deeply seductive." According to Nye, soft power rests on several resources, one of them being its culture (in places where it is attractive to others), which is clearly demonstrated by artists in this exhibition. The underlying socio/political messages of seven contemporary artists in this show are visually communicated with strong concepts, and power, while presented in a poetic, symbolic and mythological way.

Aisha Bell

"De crown." These crowns explore our shared histories as perpetrators, victims and beneficiaries of imperialism, colonialism, and fascism. A symbol for the shifting face of power dynamics, these heavy fragile and uncomfortable headpieces invite the viewer to wear the crown and metaphorically redistribute the balance of power.

This installation is part of an ongoing project to make art accessible using social media as the point of access. The artist suggests: If you would like to participate in this project, please stand underneath the crown and place it upon your head. Rise up slowly: it is heavy. Take a photo and post to Instagram with the hashtag #DEcrown (Aisha Bell, 2017)

Sharon Lockhart

In June 1997, Sharon Lockhart, Laura Owens, and Frances Stark mounted a group exhibition at Blum & Poe Gallery in LA. The three artists offered works in distinctly different media — a photograph, a painting, and a drawing; yet, through an intense, often daily conversation involving discussion and examination of each other's work, they influenced each other in varying ways.

In the photograph by Sharon Lockhart the three artists (Lockhart, Stark, Owens, left to right) pose in sack-dresses that collectively spelled out "California Republic" from the state flag. Facing sideways from the camera, pieced together from strips of cotton and felt, they stood, disengaged, highly bored. The conceptual spin of Lockhart's picture, it seemed, was to turn down the charm on the very notion of the "publicity" photograph. The portrait, a very different vision of the young "LA woman artist" spawned on the pages of *Harper's Bazaar*, also reads as a pointed declaration of independence by three women confronting a male-dominated, New York-centered art world.

Kerri Scharlin

"Marina Adams titled her first solo show at Salon 94 'Soft Power,' a term she borrowed from political scientist Joseph Nye, which refers to a strategy of seduction over coercion. Soft power is getting others to want what you want, not by dictating, but by influencing desires. When I encounter an artist's work for the first time, I bring to it everything I've seen and learned over the years. Am I seduced? Do I love it? My paintings of women artists in their studios start when I succumb to an artist's body of work. In 'Marina Adams in Her Studio' the artist is shown sitting in her studio, a place of dreaming, freedom, play, creation, birth, anger, love; an enveloped world. From my studio I can imagine her in her studio, and while I can be enticed by her work, I can also commune with her in the raw, fertile warmth of her studio." (Kerri Scharlin, 2017)

Carolee Schneemann

The work "Devour/Goya" is built upon the juxtaposition between what Schneemann terms the "ecstatic normal" of quotidian moments and atrocities. "Evanescence, fragile elements" of domesticity are contrasted with "violent, concussive, speeding fragments" of "political disasters" and "ambiguous menace." As in "Precarious," the momentum of the visual vocabulary belies the horrific subject. The architecture of the grid and the recurring relationship of the body to social politics are present throughout the artist's work. (Soyoung Yoon)

Like Goya, Schneemann presents a socio/political critique, softened with personal, intimate and poetic imagery.

Anita Sieff

"This is a photograph I asked my friend Ilaria d'Atri to take while I was shooting last July in Naples. The location is called 'Solfatara.' It is a volcano upside down: the top is underneath the earth and on the surface boiling lava holes emanate sulfur vapors. Right now the location has been sequestered due to a major incident where three people died. I wanted to represent a new beginning, a sort of portal into a new stage of humanity. I consider it a self-portrait where my power is apparently nonexistent (and my figure is the

smallest curled up on the right) but through such power I create this vision of mainly powerful women presences pointing to a new era." (Anita Sieff, 2017)

Carol Szymanski

"These prints come from a larger body of work called 'The Redundancy Project.' The project (an offshoot of my email project *cockshut dummy*) took off from a text I wrote using words, phrases, and expressions used for referring to someone being fired from a job—whether from the point of view of the one being fired or the one doing the firing. This language often registers the discomfort the subject causes, even when trying to sustain a tone of distance or indifference, or a pose of bowing to necessity, in order to mask the emotional intensity experienced not only by the person being fired but by the person firing them as well as by others in the workplace who are always affected by the firing. There always seemed to be a sort of dance around the subject, a kind of indirectness, reflecting embarrassment, humility, or alienation, as well as a certain level of secrecy or euphemism in speaking about it. Of course that was before we found ourselves with a President who found fame as the man who liked to bellow, "You're fired!" But then he doesn't seem to believe in soft power." (Carol Szymanski, 2017)

Nicola L

Nicola L's oeuvre has always included the shape of the head, and the thoughts emerging from it in the form of words. In the series of works on paper in "Soft Power," Nicola L's heads spit out words of destruction, war and death – one part of this series titled "Rire" ("Laughter") is missing. The artist's favorite expression – despite gloomy social or world politics – is as always: "Il faut rire" ("we have to laugh"). The banner "Same Skin for Everybody" refers to the artist's series of performances with a coat for 12 people. The performers – moving under the direction of the artist – are all equal once underneath the same coat. The underlying socio/political message is always prevalent in Nicola L's work, but it is never forceful or "in your face," a perfect example for "Soft Power."

The viewer physically and emotionally interacts with art, and by doing so moves art into life. When you move art into life, you move into politics.