

Muscle Beach

4 - 25 September 2021

Kupfer

Monday - Friday: 10 am - 6 pm

Saturday: 2 pm - 6 pm

Kupfer is pleased to present the exhibition *Muscle Beach*¹, featuring London-based artists Ana Kazaroff and Hannah Bays. The show, which brings together a series of sculptures and furniture by Kazaroff and paintings by Bays, explores how inanimate objects tell stories of human desire. The multiplicity of this feeling runs through both artists' practices: desire as a motivational and life force for Bays and as an aspiration for value and authenticity for Kazaroff. While desire is usually associated with fantasies beyond ordinary life, the artists are interested in how it's manifested in commonplace objects and the everyday.

The anthropomorphic objects in Hannah Bays' recent paintings create a metaphor for human experience. A sentient lamp observing its surroundings and contemplating its body, a fire aware of its slow burn, fence posts nailed together in a community - these all speak of human conditions and yearnings.

Bays is interested in the panpsychist theory, a view with long philosophical traditions, which has enjoyed a revival in contemporary discussions. According to this theory, all matter is made of the same building blocks of consciousness; in a way, all things have a mind of their own. *Sentry* depicts the panpsychist view: a body, constructed by bricks, guarded by comedic looking figures, made up of the same building blocks. When looking at *Sentry*, one can be reminded of Leonora Carrington's quote: "Houses are really bodies. We connect ourselves with walls, roofs, and objects just as we hang on to our livers, skeletons, flesh and bloodstream."² Similarly to how a body can become a prison, the painting takes a darker turn when one notices the hands clutching the metal bars of the window. The work alludes to the desire to be free, including from oneself.

Another aspect of Bays' work are the different depictions of energy sources, natural and man-made: a burning fire, batteries, a lamp. The artist's view on desire is that it is a pulsating life force, a reference to energy transmission both in inanimate objects and human bodies. In Bays' process of humanising and 'energising' objects, she allows us to read and see ourselves in them.

¹ The title of the show is a worldplay. *Muscle* is phonetically similar to *muschel*, especially when followed by the word *beach*. The mussel's shape and the body muscles both have erotic connotations of desire, which resonate with Bays' and Kazaroff's work.

² Carrington, Leonora. *The Hearing Trumpet*.

Ana Kazaroff has a different take on desire: her works are objects of desire in themselves. It is hard to believe that the marble and granite surfaces of Kazaroff's sculptures and furniture are, in fact, a visual trick. The artist is interested in the status of materials, questioning the idea of authenticity. By painting her sculptures like other materials, Kazaroff reveals that things aren't always what they seem. The artist likes this unexpected effect of the fake, which she achieves by using wood, a commonplace material that is easily overlooked.

Kazaroff's approach to 'fake' materials is inspired by her own personal histories and memories. Nostalgia is ever-present in her work, as the artist spends hours on Google Maps, mapping places she remembers from her childhood in Buenos Aires. Some of these places that inspire her work are the foyers of apartment buildings, most of which have stone or faux marble walls and terrazzo floors. These reception halls are in-between spaces, private to their residents but visible from the outside. Kazaroff is interested in the human desire to show off, to maintain a facade and to establish a certain value through the different surfaces of the interior.

Some of her recent sculptures reference the trophies she used to see at small sports clubs in Argentina. For Kazaroff the sport prizes are complex symbols: on one hand, their phallic shapes are related to the local macho culture, but on the other, they are also connected to communities and belonging. In a similar way she questions the hierarchy of materials, the artist also challenges the ranking of prizes, placing them at different heights and incorporating unexpected and playful elements.

While both Bays and Kazaroff are interested in the complex relationship between human emotions and everyday objects, their visual analysis of desire is quite different. The artists show us the vast complexities of this emotion, and offer us a new way to experience empathy - to find the human by looking at the inanimate.

About the artists

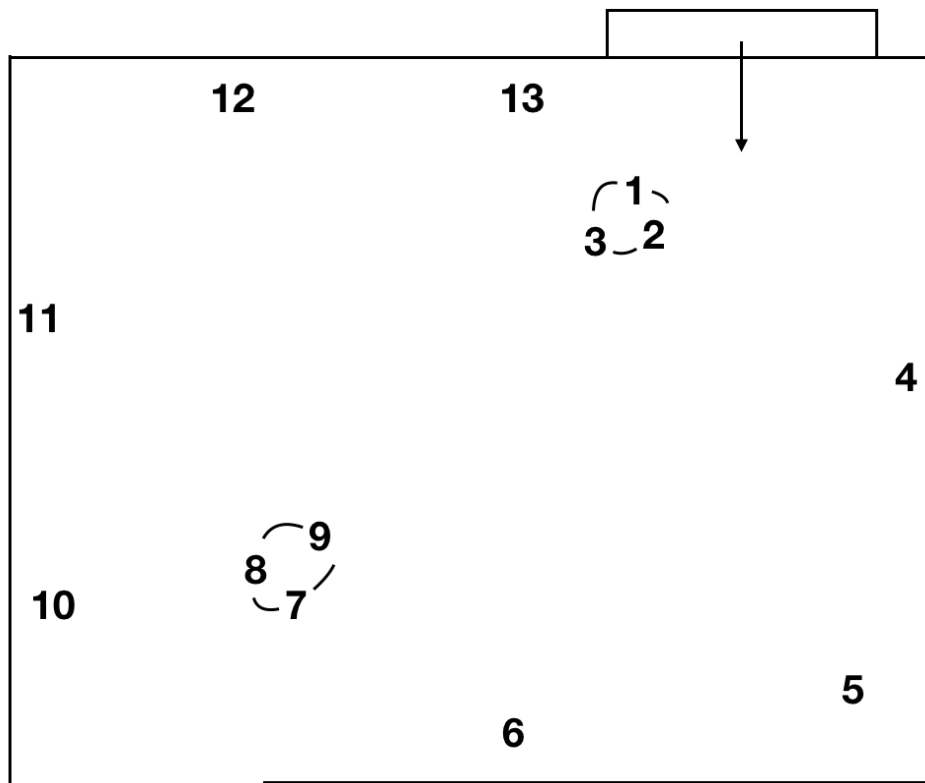
Ana Kazaroff was born in Argentina and lives in London. She makes sculptural paintings and salami architecture for installations where she explores ideas of stereotypes, authenticity and cultural mistranslations. She is currently specialising in marbling as part of a Decorative Surfaces Fellowship at City & Guilds of London Art School, where she also graduated from an MA in Fine Art. Her work was recently exhibited at Deptford X, b.Dewitt Gallery and Eastside Projects.

Hannah Bays is a London-based painter and printmaker who graduated from the Royal Academy Schools in 2015.

Recent exhibitions include *The End*, Chalton Gallery, London, 2020; *Modern Love Vol. 4*, Mexico City, 2020; *The People's Mandate*, Metro Auditorio, Mexico City, 2020; *Where we are*, Mercer's Hall, London, 2020.

Hannah has completed a number of residencies, most recently at the Dover Arts Club Drawing Room in London. She has works in a number of collections including Jerwood and Hiscox.

List of works



1. Ana Kazaroff, *El Pailer*, 2021, Copper leaf and oil on wood, 9.5 x 6.5 x 6.5 cm
2. Ana Kazaroff, *Vulcano*, 2021, Oil on wood, 16 x 9 x 9 cm
3. Ana Kazaroff, *The Lobby*, 2021, Oil on wood, 13.5 x 8 x 8 cm
4. Hannah Bays, *Scaffold*, 2020, Oil on canvas, 115 x 90 cm
5. Ana Kazaroff, *La Nueva Covadonga*, 2021, Oil paint, silver leaf, wood and plaster, 50.5 x 16 x 14 cm
6. Hannah Bays, *Slow Dance*, 2021, Oil on canvas, 170 x 120 cm
7. Ana Kazaroff, *Russian For Free*, 2021, Oil on wood, 22 x 10 x 19 cm
8. Ana Kazaroff, *Paradisa*, 2020, Acrylic on wood, 25.5 x 19 x 19 cm
9. Ana Kazaroff, *Santa Fe 5073*, 2021, Oil paint, wood, silver leaf, 24 x 21.5 x 16 cm
10. Hannah Bays, *The Strangling Tendrils of Self Doubt*, 2021, Oil on canvas, 70 x 60 cm
11. Hannah Bays, *Terminus*, 2021, Oil on canvas, 130 x 160 cm
12. Ana Kazaroff, *Anna C*, 2021, Oil paint, silver leaf and wood, 30 x 30 x 63 cm
13. Hannah Bays, *Sentry*, 2020, Oil on canvas, 50 x 40 cm