



Beth Frey, *A song of two cities and everyone's awkward*, 2023

### ***Nose-Thumbing***

Julie Béna, Hans Bryssinck & Christoph Hefti, Jacob Bullen, Cole Denyer, Beth Frey, Brian Griffiths, Amanda Kyritsopoulou, and Milly Peck

Curated by Antoine Schafroth

19 October - 10 November 2023

Opening: 18 October, 6 - 9 pm

Kupfer

3 Scrutton Street, EC2A 4HF

Opening hours: Monday - Friday, 9 - 5 pm

Saturday: by appointment, please email [contact@kupfer.co](mailto:contact@kupfer.co) to arrange a visit

*Nose-Thumbing* brings together works by nine artists – **Julie Béna, Hans Bryssinck & Christoph Hefti, Jacob Bullen, Cole Denyer, Beth Frey, Brian Griffiths, Amanda Kyritsopoulou and Milly Peck** – whose diverse practices explore the human condition through a lens of humour and theatricality.

Drawing inspiration from Nuar Alsadir's book *Animal Joy*, a reflection on the disarming power of humour, in this group exhibition, the artist is seen as a "late-night comedian": a type of clown "who rather than impose a fake reality on the one before them, pursues truth as un-concealment". <sup>1</sup>

Julie Béna's tragic clown show explores the difficulties of combining family life with an artistic career, while Hans Bryssinck and Christoph Hefti's video is an absurdist nightmare on the quest for an unattainable career in showbiz. Cole Denyer's portrait of an undercover agent infiltrating the Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army, speaks of fantasies of an anti-hero emancipation.

Beth Frey delves into a fictional urban landscape cohabitated by humans and cartoons and Milly Peck's building facades seem stuck in a constant slip from three dimensionality to flatness and back. Amanda Kyritsopoulou's miniature shoe boxes speak of a sense of longing trapped in product packaging while Jacob Bullen's performance and the props of its aftermath, speak of the commodification of the human body. In the meantime, Brian Griffith's stick figures, used and abused, seem to be driving back from some sort of collision.

Featuring a range of works, including painting, sculpture, video and AI-generated imagery, exploring themes of personal life drama, existential worry, architecture and history the exhibition addresses the incongruity between materiality, purpose and meaning of material production, but also looks back at its own reflection and is confronted with the moment when the work of art betrays its creator, leaving us to ponder: who is nose-thumbing whom?

<sup>1</sup> Nuar Alsadir, «Animal Joy», *Fitzcarraldo Editions (2022)*, p. 28.

## About the artists

**Julie Béna**, (b. 1982, Paris, FR) her work is made up of an eclectic set of references, combining contemporary and ancient literature, high and low art, joking, and seriousness, parallel times and spaces. Comprising sculpture, installation, film, and performance, her work often seems to float in an infinite vacuum, unfolding against a fictional backdrop where everything is possible.

Béna had solo exhibitions at Villa Arson, Nice (2021); Kunstverein Bielefeld (2020); Kunstraum, London (2020); Jeu de Paume, Paris (2019); CAPC musée d'art contemporain, Bordeaux (2019); the Amparo Museum, Puebla, Mexico (2019); and CAC Passerelle, Brest, FR (2017). Her work has recently been exhibited at the Biennale de Rennes, FR; Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris, FR; Polansky Gallery, Brno, CZ; 1646, The Hague, NL; C art C Madrid, ES; Bozar, Brussels, BE; Kadist Art Foundation, Paris and San Francisco; Protocinema, Istanbul, TR, and Chapter NY, New York, US. Béna has staged numerous performances, including at the Centre Pompidou, Paris, FR; ICA, London, UK; M Leuven, BE; Palais de Tokyo, Paris, FR; and Performa NY, US.

**Hans Bryssinck** (b.1977, Brussels, BE) is a pluri-disciplinary artist, polifacetic pedagogue and a life-long learner. He is a founding member and co-director of S P I N. He teaches at KASK / School of Arts in Ghent, Belgium. He recently became a student of Narrative Practices at UCI Red (Rural Indigenous University) in Puebla, Mexico. He works on a feature length narrative film whose story takes place in Mexico. He leads a double life: one in Belgium and another one in Mexico.

**Christoph Hefti** (b. 1967, Lausanne, CH) studied fashion and textiles at the Zurich University of the Arts and at Central St. Martin's, London. Since 2015 he has dedicated himself to textiles, carpets and ceramics as a freelance artist. Major exhibitions include Dries Van Noten in Los Angeles; Joyce in Hong Kong; galleries and at design fairs.

**Jacob Bullen** (b.1996, Stockport, UK) looks to weirdness, and object-things that catch his attention; through obsessive overworking, stretching and embodying he takes these disparate objects to a point of ridiculousness. Often he plays with theatrical forms of comic pseudo-functionality, working as or otherwise becoming this thing - leveraging awkwardness and the uncomfortable to explore questions of position, identity and neurodivergence.

Bullen is based in London, having graduated from Central Saint Martins in 2019, completed the Associate Studio Programme in 2021 and currently studies as part of School of the Damned.

**Cole Denyer**, (b. 1994, London, UK), is an artist & poet. Recent solo projects include SDS, Technoship, London 2023 & The Common Place, Serf, Leeds, 2022, BRITISHARTSHOWREDUX (I & II & III), Blue Labour, Disland Paris, Melbourne (2022), Meet Ends, Peak Gallery (2019), & Party

Politics, Lima Zulu 2 (2018). He organises Rest Breaks, a poetry and performance event series since 2019 and is the co-founder of scatologicritesofallnations since 2021.

**Beth Frey** (b. Calgary, CA) a Canadian artist who works in a variety of media, including drawing, painting, video, sculpture and installation. Through her wry, absurdist sense of humour, Frey playfully draws out contradictions in her subject matter, be it gender, the body, or social media, often integrating representations of herself into her chromatic cartoon-like world. Frey has an MFA in Painting and Drawing from Concordia University and a BFA from the University of Victoria. She has exhibited her work in a number of solo and group shows across Canada, Mexico and the US. Frey currently divides her time between Montreal and Mexico City.

**Brian Griffiths** (b.1968, Stratford-upon-Avon, UK) lives and works in London and Colchester. He has had solo shows at Camden Arts Centre, London; BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead; Tramway, Glasgow; Grimm Gallery, Amsterdam; Arnolfini, Bristol; Vilma Gold, London; Galeria Luisa Strina, São Paulo, The Breeder, Athens. He has shown work at numerous museums including The Groninger Museum, Netherlands; Tate Britain, London; The Mattress Factory Museum, Pittsburgh; CAPC museum, Bordeaux; Royal Academy of Arts, London; Mostra D'Arte Contemporanea, Milan; Jeu De Paume Museum, Paris; Belém Museum of Modern Art, Brazil.

**Amanda Kyritsopoulou** (b.1989, Athens, GR) lives and works in London. She received her postgraduate diploma in Contemporary Fine Art Practice from the Royal Academy Schools, (RA London), in 2021 and her BA in Fine Art and History of Art from Goldsmiths University in 2017. She has shown her work in the UK and Greece and had her first UK solo show at Flatland Projects in Hastings in 2019. Recent group shows include Stilled Images, at Tube Gallery curated by Ahren Warner, Brewers Towner International show at Towner Eastbourne, curated by Noelle Collins, Reduction to Satire curated by Fatos Ustek, organized by the New Art Dealers Alliance NY, Doomed Companions Unsubstantial Shades, curated by Akis Kokkinos and organized by NEON Greece. Recently awarded Scholarships and Grants include the Selina Cheneviere Travel Award (2021 RAS,UK) the Gilbert Bayes Sculpture Scholarship(2021, UK), The Ivor Ray Award (2019,RAS UK-FR) and the NEON Scholarship for Postgraduate Studies (2018-2020, GR)

**Milly Peck** (b. 1990, London, UK) lives and works in London, UK. She holds a BFA in Fine art from Ruskin School of Art, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK (2012) and an MA in Sculpture from The Royal College of Art (2016). Awards include: Jerwood Visual Arts Artist Bursary (2018); David Troostwyk/Matt's Gallery Studio Award (2016); Gilbert Bayes Charitable Trust Grant (2016); Villiers David Travel Award (2015); Peel Award (2011).