

CATHARINE CZUDEJ



Catharine Czudej  
Born 1985, Johannesburg, South Africa  
Lives and works in New York

#### EDUCATION

2015 MFA, University of California, Los Angeles, USA  
2007 BFA, New York University, New York, USA

#### **Solo Presentations**

- 2023 *Happy Birthday*, Josh Lilley Gallery, London, UK
- 2022 *come to daddy*, von ammon co, Washington DC, USA
- 2020 *HOMEOWNER*, von ammon co at Helena Anrather, New York, USA
- 2019 *HOMEOWNER*, von ammon co, Washington DC, USA
- 2019 *Imagine all the People*, Benevento, Los Angeles, USA 2018  
*Not books*, Ginerva Gambino, Cologne, Germany
- 2017 *Ball Polisher*, Jeffrey Stark, New York, USA
- 2016 *SHHHHHH*, Kölnischer Kunstverein, Cologne, Germany
- 2015 *GUESS WHO'S COMING TO DINNER*, Office Baroque, Brussels, Belgium  
*Belly-up Dead*, Chewday's, London, UK  
*NO SOAP RADIO*, Peep-Hole, Milan, Italy
- 2013 *Bite into that soft ass*, Ramiken Crucible, New York, USA

## Group Exhibitions

2022 *FOCUS GROUP 3*, von ammo co, Washington, DC, USA

2021 *ALIEN NATION*, von ammon co, Washington, DC, USA

2020 *FOCUS GROUP*, von ammon co, Washington, DC, USA

2019 *SMILE* (curated by Todd von Ammon), Halsey McKay Gallery, East Hampton, USA

2018 *The Party*, Anton Kern Gallery, New York, USA

*Pine Barrens*, Tanya Bonakdar, New York, USA

*Das Verflixte 7. Jahr*, Fürstenberg Zeitgenössisch, Donaueschingen, Germany

2017 *The Commodification of Love*, Kamel Mennour, Paris, France

*A Spaghetti Dress for World Peace*, Park View, Los Angeles, USA

*Dead Horse*, JTT, New York, USA

*Concrete Island*, Venus Over Manhattan, Los Angeles, USA

2016 *Dolores* (organized by Todd von Ammon), Team Gallery, New York, USA

*The Discovery of a Leak in the Roof of Marcel Breuer's Wellfleet Summer Cottage on the Morning of September 16, 1984*, Off Vendome, New York, USA

*Inside Out* (curated by Alexandra Economou), Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zürich, Switzerland

2015 *Rum, Sodomy and the Lash* (organised by Ed Atkins and James Richards), Eden Eden, Berlin, Germany  
*EAGLES II*, Galeria Marlborough, Madrid, Spain 2014  
*Next*, Arsenal, Toronto, Canada  
*MFA 2015 Exhibition* (Curated by Christine Robinson), UCLA New Wight Gallery, Los Angeles, USA  
*TOP COAT* (curated by Roger Herman), The Pit, Los Angeles, USA  
*Nuit Américaine*, Office Baroque, Brussels, Belgium  
*ARSC km15.1 simulation*, Ramiken Crucible, New York, USA  
*Chat Jet - sculpture in reflection Part 2*, Künstlerhaus, Graz, Austria  
*Everything falls faster than an anvil*, Pace Gallery, London, UK  
*Imitatio Christie's (partoftheprocess6)*, Zero, Milan, Italy  
*Depression* (organized by Ramiken Crucible), François Ghebaly Gallery, Los Angeles, USA  
*Hephaestus*, Office Baroque, Brussels, Belgium

2014 *Next*, Arsenal, Toronto, Canada  
*MFA 2015 Exhibition* (Curated by Christine Robinson), UCLA New Wight Gallery, Los Angeles, USA  
*TOP COAT* (curated by Roger Herman), The Pit, Los Angeles, USA  
*Nuit Américaine*, Office Baroque, Brussels, Belgium  
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*Imitatio Christie's (partoftheprocess6)*, Zero, Milan, Italy  
*Depression* (organized by Ramiken Crucible), François Ghebaly Gallery, Los Angeles, USA  
*Hephaestus*, Office Baroque, Brussels, Belgium

2013 *Beer Show*, Green Gallery, Milwaukee, USA  
*Pizza Time*, Marlborough Gallery, New York, USA  
*Darkside Massage & Heat Therapy*, Benrimon Contemporary, New York, USA

2012 *Curatorial Exchange*, Irvine Fine Arts Center, Irvine, USA  
*Short Term Deviation*, Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts, New York, USA



*Happy Birthday*  
Josh Lilley Gallery,  
London, UK  
26 January - 11 March  
2023

















*Scratch 19, 2022*  
Bismuth and aluminium  
20.86 x 14.17 x 2.36 in / 53 x 36 x 6 cm



*Scratch 18, 2022*  
Bismuth and aluminium  
20.86 x 14.17 x 2.36 in / 53 x 36 x 6 cm

*Scratch 20*, 2022  
Bismuth and aluminium  
20.86 x 14.17 x 2.36 in / 53 x 36 x 6 cm





*Fat Man with Flowers 1*, 2022  
Aluminium

66.93 x 44.10 x 4.72 in / 170 x 112 x 12 cm

*Man Kneeling with Flowers*, 2022  
Bismuth and aluminium  
51.97 x 31.89 x 31.89 in / 132 x 81 x 81 cm







*Fat Man with Flowers 2, 2022*

Aluminium

66.14 x 29.92 x 75.98 in / 168 x 76 x 193 cm

*Big Scratch 2*, 2022  
Bismuth and aluminium  
49.21 x 38.19 x 1.97 in / 125 x 97 x 5 cm





*Big Scratch 4, 2022*  
Bismuth and aluminium  
49.21 x 38.19 x 1.97 in / 125 x 97 x 5 cm



*Big Scratch 5, 2022*  
Bismuth and aluminium  
49.21 x 38.19 x 1.97 in / 125 x 97 x 5 cm



*Big Scratch 3, 2022*  
Bismuth and aluminium  
49.21 x 38.19 x 1.97 in / 125 x 97 x 5 cm



*Big Scratch 6, 2022*  
Bismuth and aluminium  
49.21 x 38.19 x 1.97 in / 125 x 97 x 5 cm

**Catharine Czudej***HOMEOWNER*

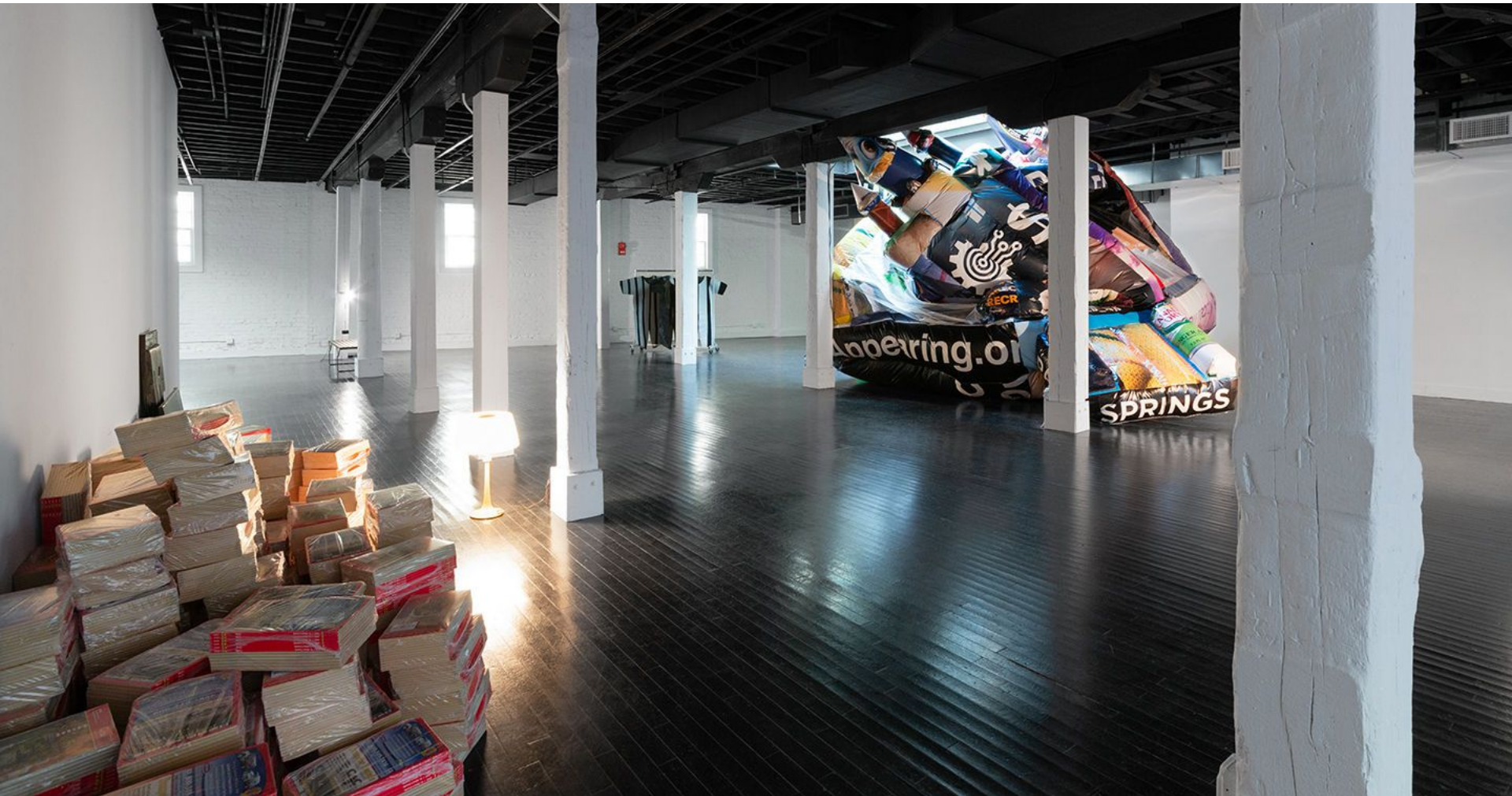
08 February - 18 April 2020

Washington DC: Catharine Czudej's project involves the study and disfigurement of American metaphysics. By examining the contours of national pastimes, Czudej's work typically denatures some familiar pattern of suburban life. Each work by Czudej is a pseudomorph: a flat screen television—the focal point of any household living room—molded in black resin; a lava lamp—the keystone of any teenager's bedroom—made of pantry jars and prone to explosion; or, in the case of this show, a full-scale bounce castle—the centerpiece of many birthdays, family reunions, and picnics.

While retaining its shape and pattern, Czudej has reversed engineered every panel of the bounce castle and replaced each with a segment of a salvaged vinyl billboard. The familiar patchwork of primary colors becomes a fractured and schizophrenic bricolage of adulthood: retirement accounts; job recruitment offers; personal injury lawyers; alcoholic beverages; and so on. Traditionally reserved as a sanctum for play, this immersive sculpture teleports the juvenile subject into a concrete representation of the contemporary American psyche.

The exhibition's title is HOMEOWNER, and represents one of the cruelest and least trustworthy pieces of American metaphysics: the mortgage. HOMEOWNER examines the punishing discourse of young adulthood, and the nation's unwavering faith in good debt.

HOMEOWNER, von ammon co, Washington, DC, 08 February - 18 April 2020







AREA

Are you ready?

SPEC



DIET



Beer

CR

UNITE



Are you ready?

SPRINGS



RECRUIT  
866.585.5033  
rmgrp.net

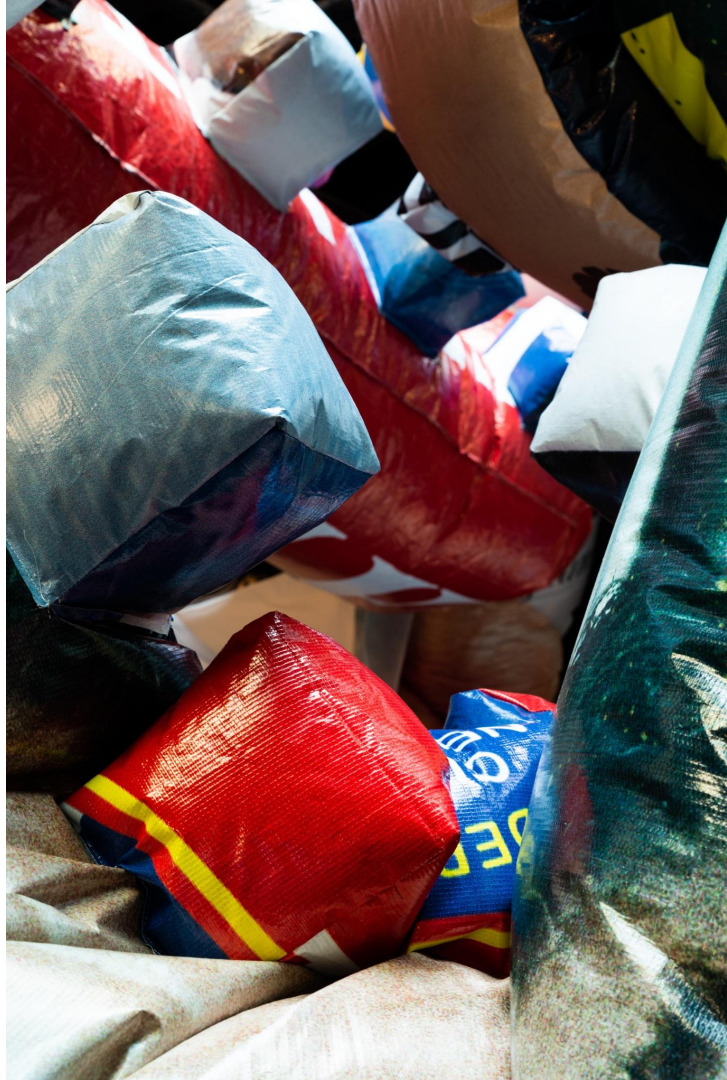
bearing.PALM



*Homeowner*, 2020  
salvaged vinyl, thread,  
blower  
dimensions variable

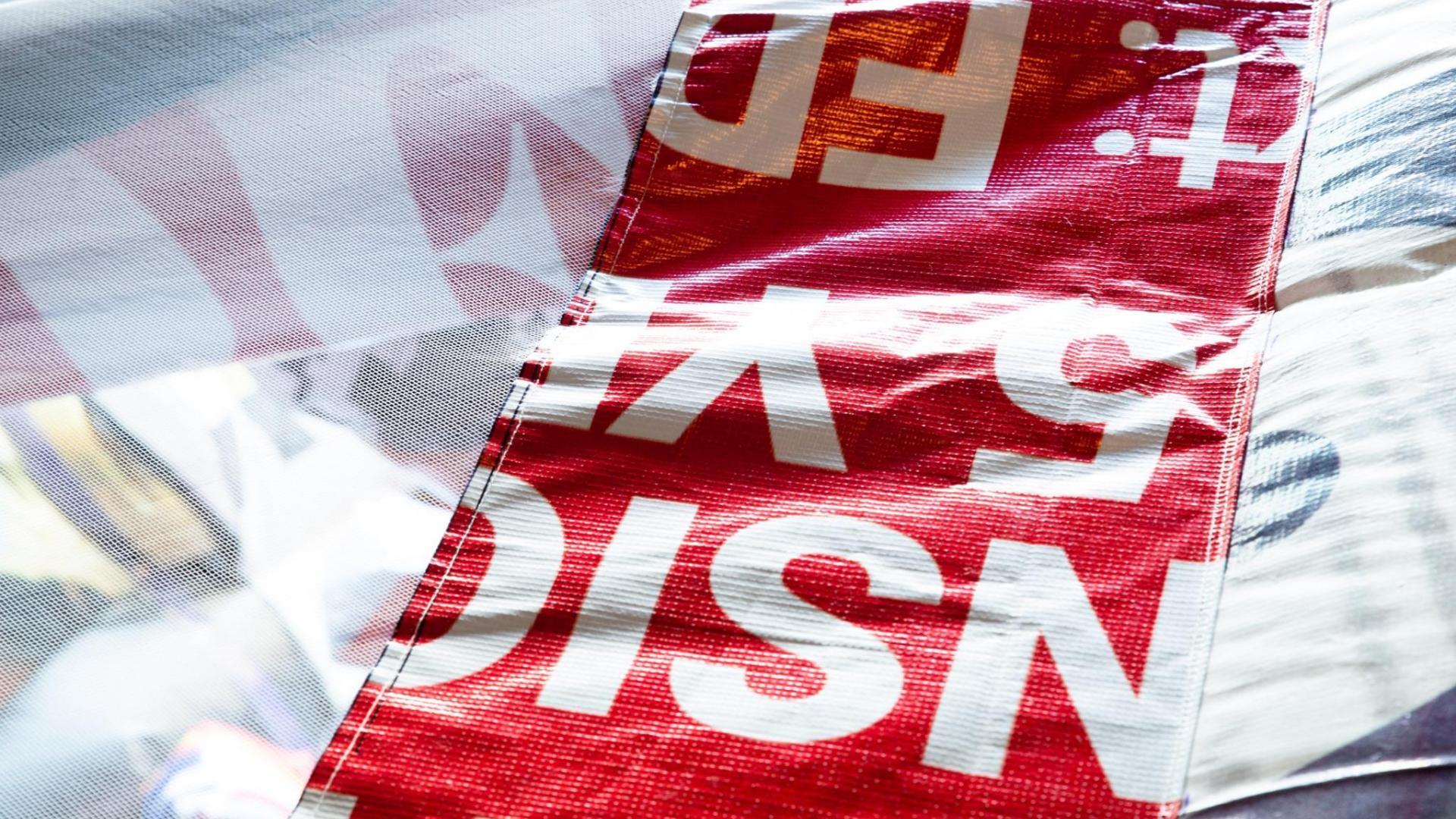








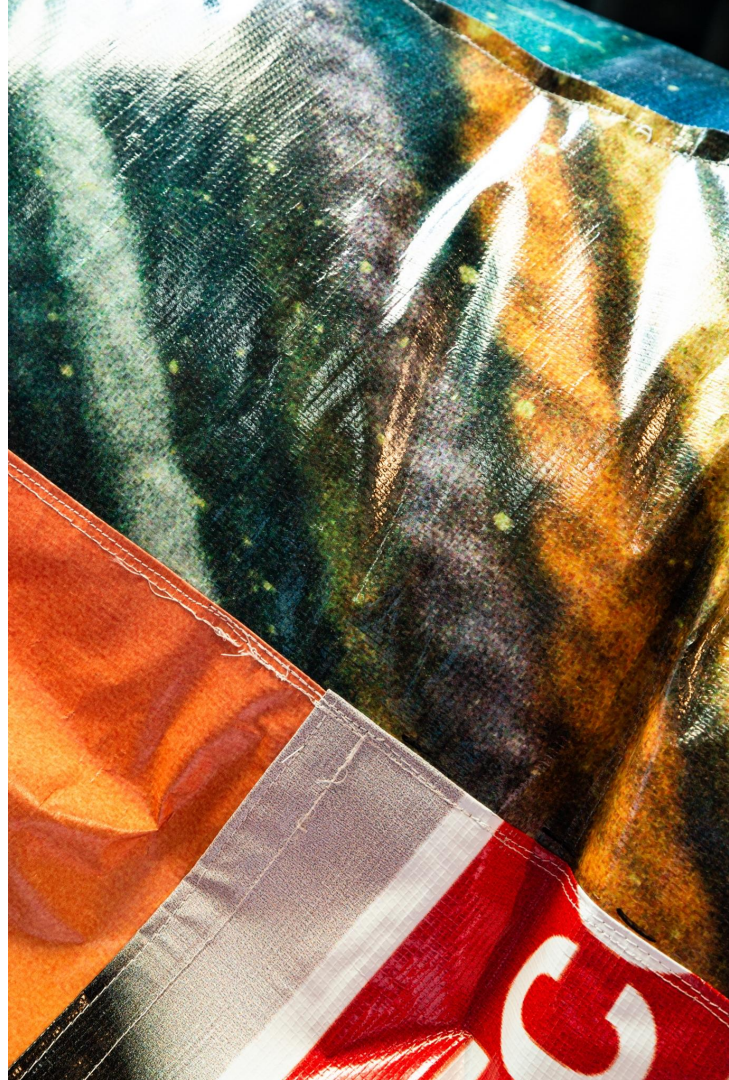




DISNEY

DISNEY

DISNEY



















*TV*, 2019  
polyurethane resin, hardware  
25 x 41 x 3 in.  
63.5 x 104.1 x 7.6 cm







*White Board*, 2020  
aluminum, oil based  
marker, enamel  
48 x 72 inches  
121.9 x 182.9 cm



*White Board*, 2020  
aluminum, oil based  
marker, enamel  
48 x 72 inches  
121.9 x 182.9 cm



*Don't let the computer get on you, 2020*

Velcro, vinyl, steel

64 x 62.5 x 24.25 in

162.6 x 158.8 x 61.6 cm

55 x 27 in (each suit)

139.7 x 68.6 cm

## Catharine Czudej

*Come to daddy*

17 September - 16 October 2022

Washington DC: von ammon co is pleased to announce *come to daddy*, a solo exhibition by New York based artist Catharine Czudej. *come to daddy* is the nineteenth project at the gallery's current location, and Czudej's second solo exhibition with von ammon co.

Czudej's work frequently based its premises on the archetype of the sins of the father, or the ripple effects of 'boomer culture' as it passes through the various stages of decomposition and meme-ification. *come to daddy* continues a meta-narrative within Czudej's exhibition history that is specifically concerned with the pseudo-ecclesiastical tropes embedded within populist culture.

The title is a reference to the seminal Aphex Twin track from 1997. Richard D. James (Aphex Twin) describes the track as an exaggerated pastiche of a death metal riff. After its phenomenally successful release, James claimed that he removed the record from circulation for one week, hoping to prevent it from reaching number one; it peaked at 36. "Come to Daddy" was widely interpreted as a parody of the Prodigy's hit single "Firestarter." A signature cultural artifact from the late '90s, *come to daddy* embodies the gradual adoption of the previous decade's satanic panic into a lucrative staple at any Hot Topic or Spencer's Gifts nationwide—the feigned resistance of the artists notwithstanding.

Featured prominently on the gallery façade and reflected throughout the gallery on black and red vinyl is R. Crumb's famous keep on truckin' cartoon, which was originally created as an homage to jazz musician Blind Boy Fuller, only to later proliferate without Crumb's consent as a sigil for Hippie nonchalance, and then idiosyncratically subsumed by the shipping and logistics industry as a sort of corporate meme for perseverance irrespective of stress and fatigue.

In Crumb's own words: "There was a DJ on the radio in the seventies who would yell out every ten minutes: "And don't forget to KEEP ON TR-R-RUCKIN'!" Boy, was that obnoxious! Big feet equals collective optimism. You're a walkin' boy! You're movin' on down the line! It's proletarian. It's populist. I was thrown off track! I didn't want to turn into a greeting card artist for the counter-culture!"

A frieze of jumbo-scaled big screen televisions (casted in polyurethane) line the walls of the gallery, barely detectable in the darkest of gray light. This intervention directly quotes the patterned tapestries in Leonardo's *The Last Supper*—the scene of a betrayal, but arranged using our era's most common, black plastic wall decoration. At the base of the gallery's plentiful black pillars are modified night lights, meant to reassure the visitor's steps through an undefined space, like those lodestars on the floors of airplanes and cinemas—two places where safety was never or is no longer guaranteed. To emphasize this sense of reverence and paranoia, of counterculture subsumed by consensus—and to create connective tissue with the eschatology of Christianity and the agnostic mysticism of erstwhile Hippie Consumerist culture—the space is infused with the smoke of Nag Champa brand Frankincense.



*come to daddy*  
von ammon co,  
Washington, DC  
17 September - 16  
October 2022







TEAMLAB 100





*TV*, 2022  
polyurethane resin, hardware  
diptych: 38 x 66 inches per panel  
96.52 x 167.64 cm per panel

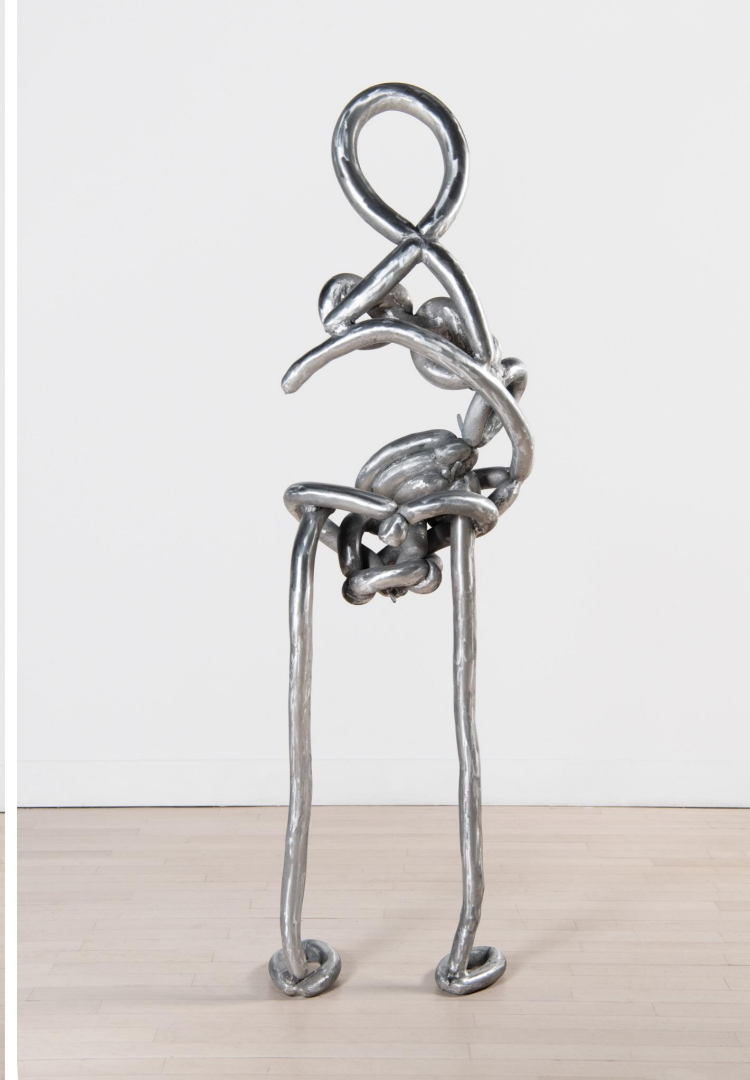
TV, 2022

polyurethane resin, hardware

diptych: 38 x 66 inches per panel

96.52 x 167.64 cm per panel





*Mother and Child*, 2022  
steel  
66.5 x 19 x 11.5 in  
168.91 x 48.26 x 29.21 cm



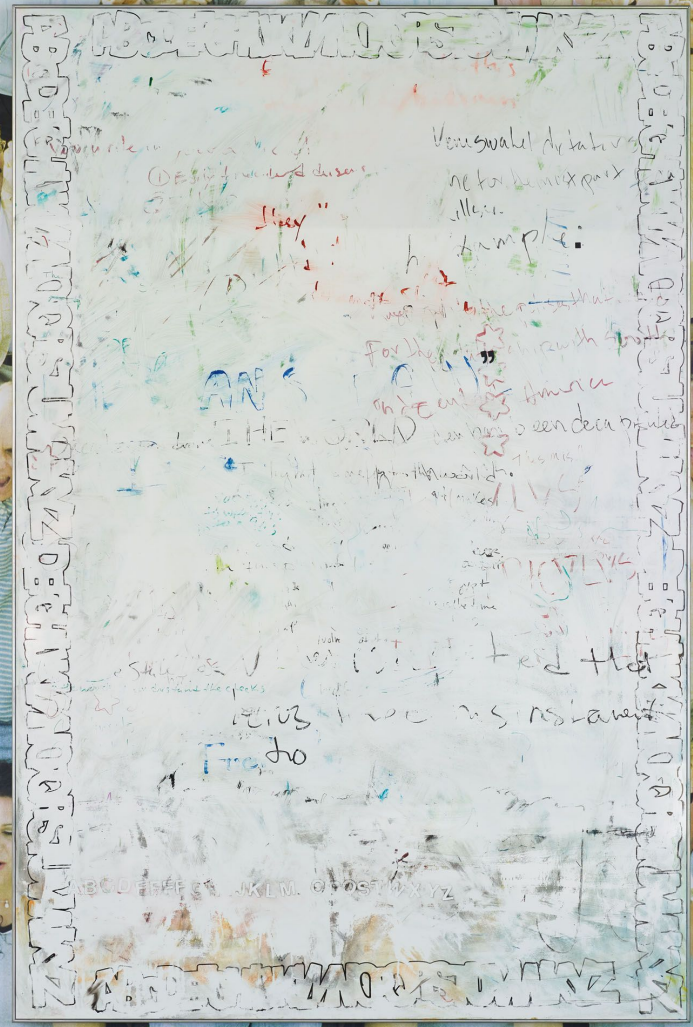
*Imagine all the People*  
Michael Benevento, Los Angeles  
21 April - 08 June 2019

*Waiting for Jimmy Hoffa [Double Fall-Down]*, 2019  
plastic, steel  
70.50 x 20 x 12 in / 179.07 x 50.80 x 30.48 cm

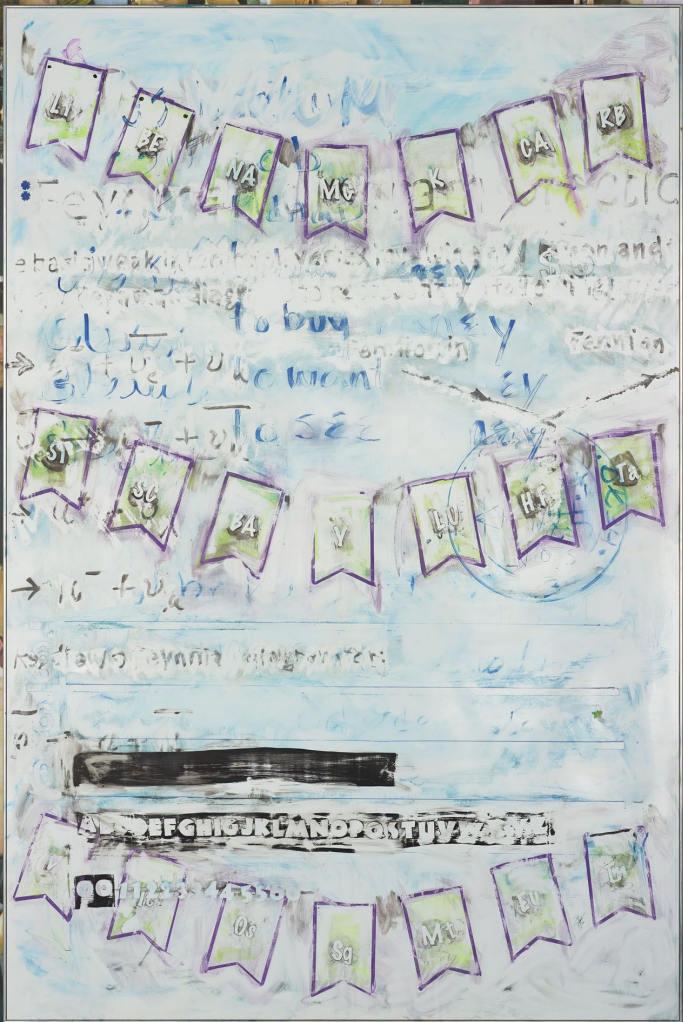








Whiteboard 6, 2019  
aluminum, oil based marker, enamel  
72 x 48 in / 182.88 x 121.92 cm



Whiteboard 2, 2019  
aluminum, oil based marker, enamel  
72 x 48 in / 182.88 x 121.92 cm





TV 2, 2019  
polyurethane  
66 x 38 in / 167.64 x 96.52 cm





TV 7, 2019  
polyurethane  
66 x 38 in / 167.64 x 96.52 cm

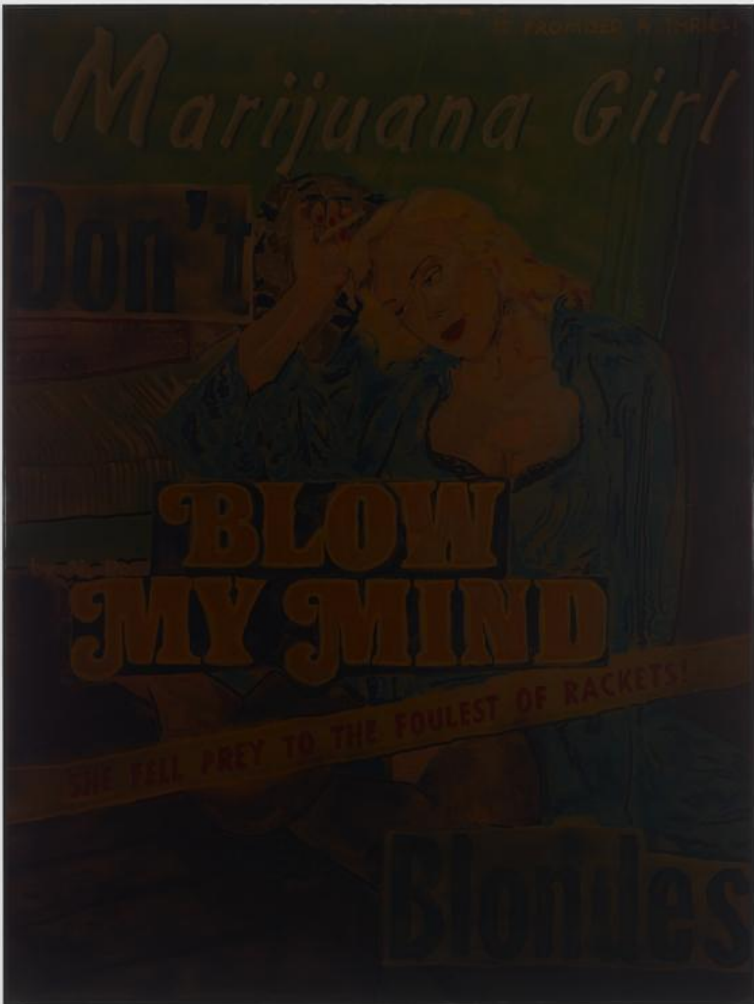


*Waterworks*, 2019  
buckets, pumps, silicon, plastic, change,  
phone books, water  
Dimensions Variable





*Not books*, Ginerva  
Gambino, Cologne, 14  
April - 09 June 2018



*Marijuana Girl*, 2016

Spray paint and gouache on canvas, plexi glass  
64.65 x 48.63 x 0.71 in / 164.20 x 123.50 x 1.81 cm





*Roughneck by Rubbermaid I, Roughneck by Rubbermaid II & Roughneck by Rubbermaid III, 2018*  
trap, clay  
Dimensions variable



*Ball Polishers II*, 2018  
group of 4 home-made pool  
table ball polishers and  
generator (outside)  
Dimensions variable





*Ball Polisher*  
Jeffrey Stark,  
New York  
14 May - 18 June 2017



















*Rust Face Fist*, 2015  
cast iron  
17 × 16.14 × 16.14 in / 44 × 41 × 41 cm



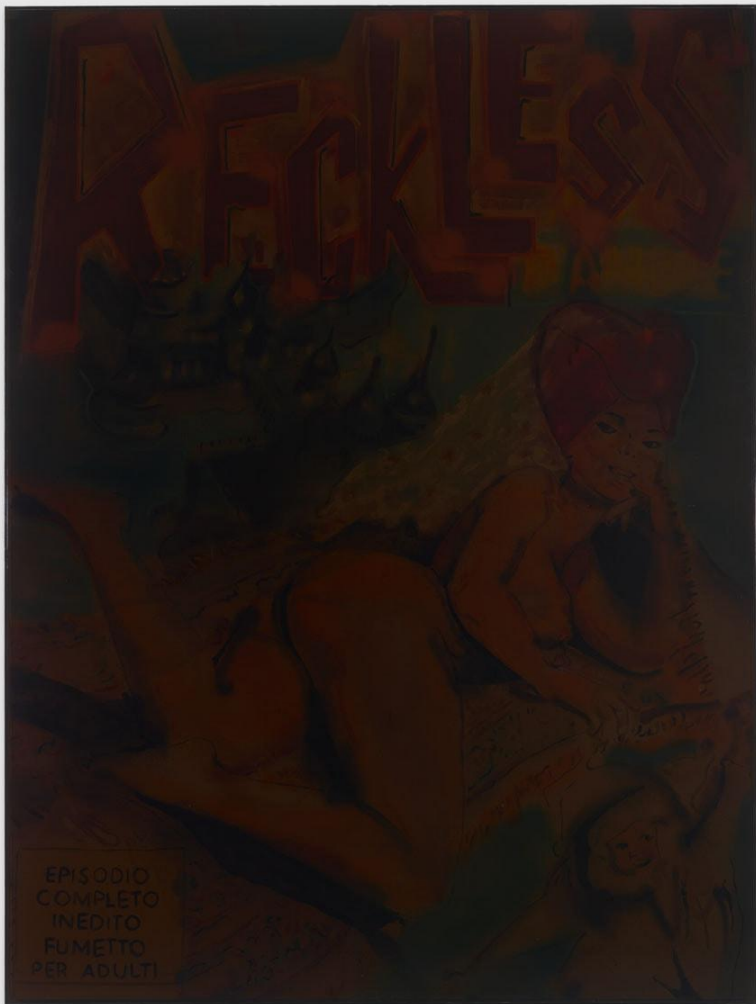




*Guess Who's Coming To  
Dinner*  
Office Baroque, Brussels,  
04 June - 16 July 2016







*Reckless*, 2016  
spray paint and gouache on canvas, plexi glass  
64.65 x 48.62 x 1.81 in / 164.20 x 123.50 x 4.60 cm



*Cotton Tramps*, 2016

spray paint and gouache on canvas, plexi glass

64.65 x 48.62 x 1.81 in / 164.20 x 123.50 x 4.60 cm



*Man in Repose / Death  
Couch, 2016*  
wood, cloth, foam, flash  
paint, aquaresin,  
aluminum  
31.10 x 84.75  
79 x 215.20 cm



*Guess Who's Coming To Dinner*, 2016

canvas, paint, plexi glass, lamp

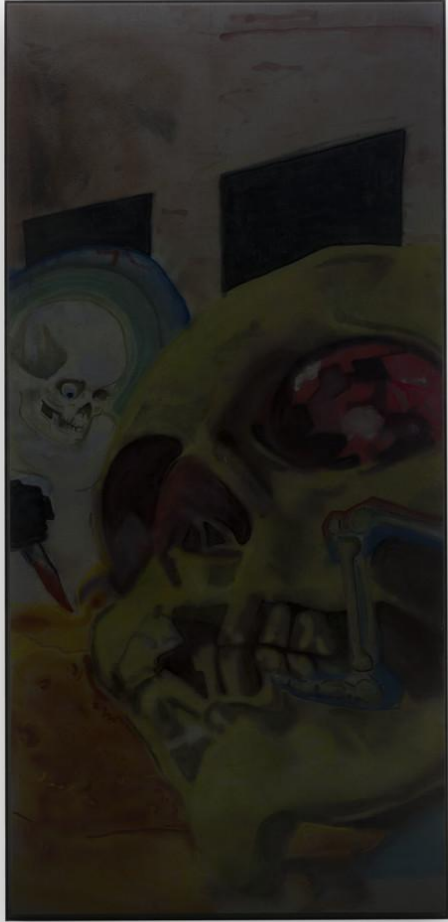
83.46 x 402.76 x 1.90 in

212 x 102.30 x 4.90 cm

each total frieze:

83.46 x 281.93 x 1.90 in

212 x 716.10 x 4.90 cm









*Dolores*  
Team Gallery  
New York  
08 September - 09  
October 2016

*Trap 1*, 2016

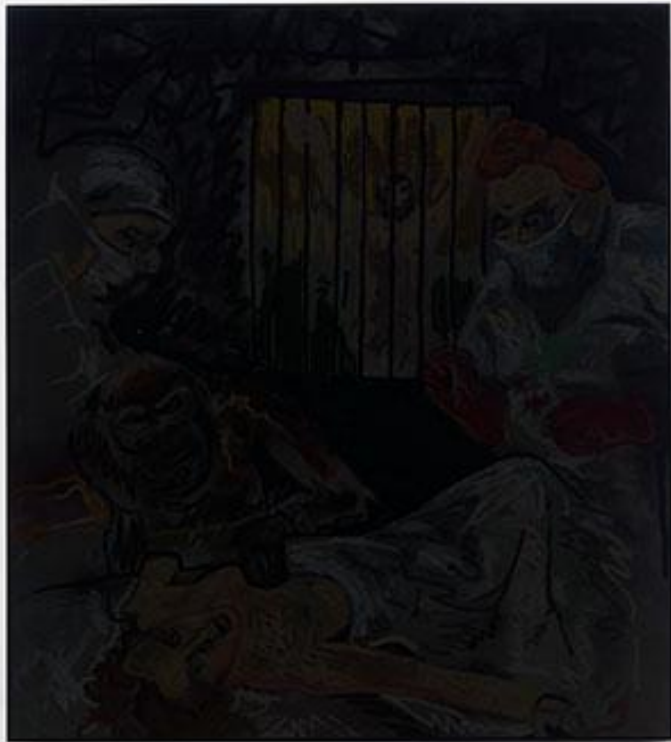
motion sensing lamps, wood, fabric, sand, animal traps, wax  
45 x 48 x 10 in / 114 x 122 x 25 cm





*Belly-up Dead*  
Chewday's, London  
26 September - 06  
November 2015





*Satan's Scalpel*, 2014  
linen, gouache, spray-paint,  
plexiglass  
36.75 x 40.75 in  
93.3 x 103.5 cm



*From Behind*, 2014  
linen, gouache, spray-paint,  
plexiglass  
60 x 60 in  
154.94 x 154.94 cm



*NO SOAP RADIO*  
Peep-Hole, Milan  
March 28, 2015







*Soap Paintings*, 2015  
Soap  
Dimensions variable



*Untitled*, 2015  
sink, gallon bucket, soap, drain  
45.70 x 35.60 x 10 in  
116.10 x 229.67 x 3.94 cm



*Smash 3*, 2015  
Iron  
241.3 x 132.1 x 132.1 in  
95 x 52 x 52 cm



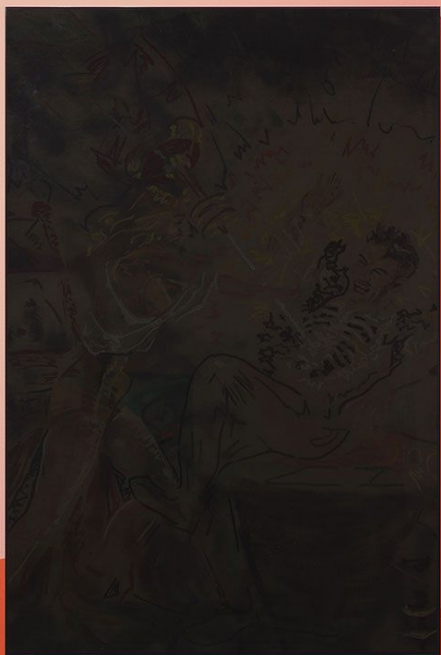
*Beater Barrow: labour of  
punishment, 2014  
mixed media*



*Everything falls faster than an anvil*, Pace Gallery, London, UK  
*Incredible Hulk*, 2014  
foam, wood, wax  
70.87 x 26 x 24 in / 180 cm x 66 cm x 61 cm



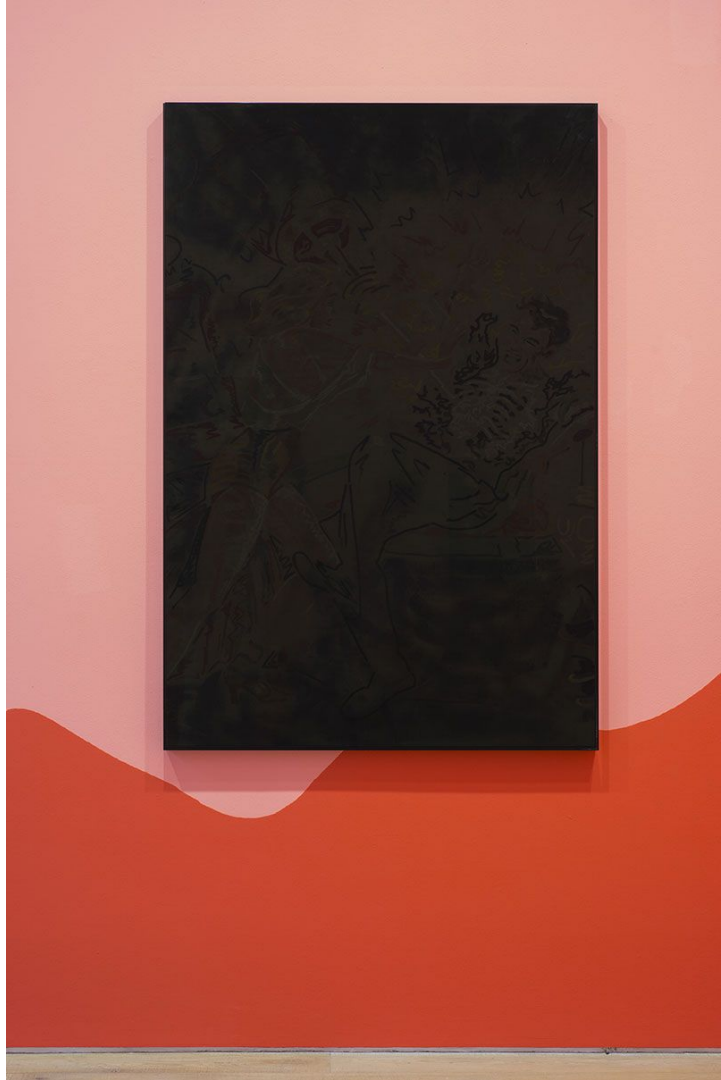
*Empire of Women 1 + 2*, 2014  
linen, gouache, spray paint, plexi  
60.63 x 40.60 x 1.97 in  
154 cm x 103 cm x 5 cm each



*Empire of Women*, 2014  
linen, gouache, spray paint, plexi  
60.63 x 40.60 x 1.97 in / 154 cm x 103 cm x 5 cm



*Empire of Women*, 2014  
linen, gouache, spray paint, plexi  
60.63 x 40.60 x 1.97 in / 154 cm x 103 cm x 5 cm





*Bite Into that soft ass*  
Ramiken Crucible  
10 November - 22 December  
2013















#, 2013  
soap, wood  
75 x 55 in / 190 x 140 cm





*Lamp*, 2013  
rebar, aquaresin, acrylic, salt  
59 x 18 x 20 in / 150 x 46 x 51 cm



*Couch*, 2013  
steel, aquaresin, acrylic, salt  
37 x 75 x 32 in / 94 x 190 x 81 cm



*Chair*, 2013  
rebar, aquaresin, acrylic, salt  
52 x 14 x 14 in / 132 x 36 x 36 cm





*Untitled*, 2013  
gouache, india ink and dyes on canvas  
66 x 84 in / 213 x 168 cm



*Untitled*, 2013  
gouache, india ink and dyes on canvas  
78 x 48 in / 198 x 122 cm







*Untitled*, 2013  
gouache, india ink and dyes on canvas  
96 x 48 in / 244 x 122 cm





# ARTFORUM



*Catharine Czudej, Not Yet Titled, 2020, phone books, polyurethane resin, lamp. Installation view, Von Ammon Co., Washington, DC. Photo: Vivian Doering.*

On February 8, 2020, I took the Amtrak from New York to our nation's capital to look at art. This was pre-lockdown, obviously, so everything ran along smoothly, as planned. My first order of business was to see an exhibition at Von Ammon Co. in Georgetown of works by the sculptor Catharine Czudej, a close friend who used to keep a studio across the hall from mine in Brooklyn. Owing to the fact that it was one of the last shows I saw before life went to hell, this is an exhibition I have thought back on with fondness as one of the year's very few highlights.

The show was also memorable for the correctness in general of its various attitudes—the dark wit, the faux grandeur—as well as its eerily prescient anticipation of where we find ourselves now.

Czudej named her show “HOMEOWNER,” a self-explanatory honorific that would soon prove itself extraordinarily relevant, as far as titles go. A little more than a month after her exhibition opened, home became a vitally important stronghold for fending off the sickness outside. Especially in densely populated metropolitan areas, where most people rent. But if home was, and is, a means for staying alive, it was just as often transformed into something like a site of house arrest: a locus of boredom and idleness, loneliness, fear and anxiety, resource scarcity, domestic abuse and threats of eviction—an arena for a battle against loathsome despair.

Placed inside Czudej's installation were a number of household objects including some nice lamps and a heaping pile of phone books, which I remember thinking was fun at the time, since there's nothing quite like a list of names and numbers. Now, however, that sort of thing could read just as easily as a book of the dead. Thinking of all the defunct strangers I will never get to call is dispiriting, to say the least, and the enormity of the loss I feel for an outmoded utility such as citywide telephone directories is perverse.

The gallery perimeter was scattered with a series of severe black rectangles, which on closer inspection revealed themselves as resin molds of flat-screen televisions, the likes of which are commonly installed in private dwellings. Yet Czudej's screen casts have remained with my imagination ever since I laid eyes on them. One was hung on its mount, while the rest were leaned against walls, mute and unmoving, like dead entertainment systems. As objects, or even paintings, they are conversant in the language of any other black monochrome à la Ad Reinhardt, except that Czudej's screens seem to haunt the shelter in place, as if to show what the corpse looks like when you Kill Your TV. And why on earth would I do that if all I seem to do anymore is watch Netflix at home by myself? It was a chilling proposal.

## THE COME DOWN; OR, HOW I LEARNED TO STOP WORRYING

Sam McKinniss on the art of Catharine Czudej, Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin, and Luke O'Halloran

The exhibition centerpiece was less macabre and yet still somewhat gothic, in its way. A homemade jumbo-size bouncy castle filled a large portion of the floor beneath the gallery's vaulted cathedral skylight. An electric air pump sat next to it, keeping the balloon building semi-inflated, as leaks in the seams made it less than airtight. It was glorious. Czudej had constructed this garden folly from reclaimed vinyl billboard signage; each sewn panel came pre-embazoned with found logos and snippets of ad copy for various services, products, or lifestyles. Its surface was colorfully graphic in a manner recalling the work of postwar artists like Mimmo Rotella or Tom Wesselmann, both of whom also used commercial detritus as materials for collage. Claes Oldenburg's *Giant Fagends*, 1967, seems appropriate to mention here as well for historical precedence, if not also for ambience. But Czudej brought newly added bonuses, such as medieval-fantasy backyard-birthday-party architecture as well as the amateur shoddiness of bounce engineering by hand, so that if your child were to be invited inside the castle and start jumping around, the entire construction would depress and crash down like a house of cards, or what I would call a literal housing crisis.

Czudej's installation succeeded in giving form to some of our most hollowed-out precepts for attaining personal wealth and stability in this country, the American dream remade as farce for the weary and worn. It was spectacular without being sensational, sobering without being teetotaling. Per the gallery press release, "The exhibition . . . represents one of the cruelest and least trustworthy pieces of American metaphysics: the mortgage. 'HOMEOWNER' examines the punishing discourse of young adulthood, and the nation's unwavering faith in good debt." It was 2008 all over again, with very little illusion and a big emphasis on lampoon. There we were, looking at it in the young year 2020; we were just getting going without knowing toward what.



# The Washington Post



Installation shot of "Homeowner" (2020) by Catharine Czudej. Vinyl billboards, thread, air blower.  
(Photo: Vivian Doering/von ammon co)

A man's home is his castle, says a maxim coined back when women rarely had property rights. The adage posits a sense of security, a feeling that's decidedly lacking from Catharine Czudej's "Homeowner." There's a castle at the center of the Von Ammon Co. show, but it's not a place to feel at ease.

Czudej's edifice, also titled "Homeowner," is of the inflatable, flexible sort designed for bouncing children. But its plastic panels have been replaced with pieces of vinyl billboards that advertise commercial products and services marketed to adults. Cut together haphazardly, the advertisements would be hard to read even if the bounce castle were completely filled with air, which it isn't. Czudej, a South Africa-born New Yorker, prefers things that are saggy, lumpy or otherwise imperfect.

She's also keen on apparent hazards. The show includes piles of phone books, covered in polyurethane resin and placed next to a lamp. The assemblage seems ready to erupt into flames and incinerate the whole Gutenberg era. Nearby, black polyurethane is molded into the shape of a large, flat-screen TV, placed on the wall near another lamp. A clothing rack holds three handmade Velcro jumpsuits, hung closely so they can stick to each other. Whether such entanglements are desirable or dangerous is unclear.

A gallery note calls Czudej's fabrications "pseudomorphs" designed to "denature" mainstream U.S. culture. The artist also tweaks mid-20th-century American abstract painting with two blotchy pictures made on whiteboards with oil-based markers. They look like the work of some inadvertent Cy Twombly at a corporate retreat. Which, come to think of it, might be the ideal site for a bouncy castle festooned with the sort of promotional messages Czudej stitched together to make "Homeowner."

In the galleries: Disrupting and denaturing the concept of comfortable at home



# Los Angeles Times



*Catharine Czudej's installation features homemade fountains, cast-resin TV-paintings and stacks of obsolete telephone books. (Michael Benevento Gallery)*

Review: In Catharine Czudej's land of leaky fountains, enter at your own risk

CHRISTOPHER KNIGHT | 21 MAY 2019

Each of five rooms in a purposefully tatty installation by Catharine Czudej is wallpapered, floor to ceiling, with a stock photo of a bleacher filled with cheering crowds.

On their feet, fists pumped, smiles broad, enthusiasm juiced — the pictured crowds, repeated and sometimes flopped in a printed mirror-image, lend a suitably creepy tone to the New York-based artist's solo L.A. debut. The wallpaper delivers a contrived show of wild support for the artist and her exhibition at Michael Benevento Gallery, just as it applauds our own good sense for having shown up to see it.

That all this popular zeal is faked and its phoniness obvious means little in Trump's America, where barefaced lying is a proven strategy for success and shamelessness is the new norm. Czudej makes no partisan observations in her savvy show, titled with the old John Lennon lyric, "Imagine All the People;" but that Vietnam-era inverse of a call to arms resonates with the way we live now.

Stacks of telephone books (mostly commercial Yellow Pages) dot the floors, the obsolescence of a paper record for how people might connect a key to our tumultuous, ongoing transition from an industrial to a digital era. Imagine all the people, indeed.

The gallery's small spaces, laid out in a ring, are linked by garden hoses fueling rudimentary fountains. The basins are made from plastic buckets, the spigots adorned with blank face-masks and pointing fingers fed by sloppy PVC pipes.

Fountains are age-old signs for continuity and life, but these are a desperate, broken-down mess. (Water leaks and puddles all over the floor.) Marcel Duchamp's "Fountain" from 1917 — that infamous store-bought urinal — gurgles in the work's conceptual ancestry. Indoor plumbing was once heralded as a popular sign of wondrous modern civilization, but here it has all gone awry.

Finally, Czudej installed two groups of nominal paintings.

Eight are white dry-erase boards, the instructional kind found in classrooms and corporate boardrooms. Covered in smeared and illegible diagrams, charts, alphabets and lists, they evoke gesturally obliterated memories of paintings. Her work's elegant eulogy to inevitable ruin and decay has been pushed over a no-return cliff.

Eleven are crummy black or blue panels. Their repeated rectangular shape slowly reveals itself to be a sleek, flat-screen television here memorialized in lumpy cast-resin.

It's worth quoting Abstract Expressionist painter Ad Reinhardt, whose black and blue geometric abstractions from the 1950s are the clear reference. His dream of "a pure, abstract, non-objective, timeless, spaceless, changeless, relationless, disinterested painting — an object that is self-conscious (no unconsciousness), ideal, transcendent, aware of no thing but art" has come undone. How could a post-World War II ideal not be swamped by a society in which perpetual war holds sway?

Tellingly, a sculpture near the entry is made from a plastic pair of toy android boxers standing atop a pedestal.

The original children's game of Rock 'Em Sock 'Em Robots was won when one player knocked the head off the opponent; but these two are unplugged — out of order. I wouldn't call Czudej's work cynical, but I would describe it as harsh yet sober — necessarily so, given the current state of things.



# THE DIAMONDBACK



*Photo courtesy of Von Ammon Co.*

Down a short brick and cobblestone alley, parallel to the C&O Canal in Georgetown, the Von Ammon Co. art gallery props its door open to welcome visitors into an otherwise seemingly closed showroom.

Cloaked windows shroud the room in darkness as the coated black flat-screen televisions lining the walls suck the light from the room. The exhibit posed as a void into the darkness that is the decomposition of the American household.

Casting the oversized centerpieces of most American living rooms in polyurethane, artist Catharine Czudej loosely references the patterned tapestries in the background of Leonardo da Vinci's *The Last Supper*. Where the supper itself is absent, the reimagined, modern-day tapestries rewrite a scene of betrayal while pulling focus to this era's most popular plastic wall decoration.

"As you view the TV and how the light from your phone reflects on the TV, it's more of a motif as to how the TV in the American household really eats the light around it," said Kamryn Dillon, a University of Maryland junior studio art major employed at the gallery. "[The TV] really suffocates the space within the family."

Come to Daddy is Czudej's second solo exhibition at the Von Ammon Co. gallery in Washington, D.C. The New York-based artist was also a part of the gallery's previous exhibition, *Focus Group Three*, which displayed a collection of work from 15 artists.

Based on the ripple effects of "boomer culture," Czudej's current installation draws on the pseudo-religious tropes embedded within populist culture and the numinous feeling of suburban metaphysics she experienced growing up in the Midwest.

"I hope that the extreme environment—almost pitch black, scented with frankincense, and the vague presence of the night lights and the looming televisions—puts the viewer into a space that evokes memories of religious sites," Czudej wrote in an email. "But [I] also [hope] perhaps [the exhibit reminds viewers of] the darker zones of exception in the American household, whether that be the garage, basement, or apartment hallway."

'Come to Daddy' art exhibit prompts a critical look at pop(ulist) culture



“It made me think about the saying, ‘see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil,’” BreAna Bell-Freeman, a university alum who visited the exhibit twice, wrote in a text message. “If you cannot see it, it will do no harm to the receiver, but the art was presented in such a way where even though you cannot see it too well, the pop culture and the advertisement industry will find other ways to stimulate and grab you.”

Taking on an extended meaning from its namesake, the exhibit references the 1997 Aphex Twin track “Come to Daddy” to embody the previous decades’ gradual adoption of satanic panic as a lucrative staple of rebellion.

Aside from displaying how televisions can both disconnect and overstimulate a household, the exhibit furthers the notion of the title through its subversive commentary on how popular culture and entertainment industries have mastered the art of persuasion, according to Bell-Freeman.

“American society has either intentionally or unintentionally submitted themselves to pop culture,” Bell-Freeman noted. “American society gives their attention in exchange for their ability to effectively exercise their free will to make choices on their accord.”

Saliently featured on the gallery’s facade, an outlined black figure thrusting himself forward with an oversized foot ready to step to work provides another popular culture idiosyncrasy. Robert Crumb’s famous cartoon of jazz musician Blind Boy Fuller from his Keep on Truckin comic is blown up to recognize the proletarian, corporate pressure to keep moving and continue working despite stress and fatigue.

“These pieces, and overall components of slight eeriness, screamed OVER-STIMULATED SOCIETY in a way where society doesn’t fully realize how television and advertisement is effing us over,” Bell-Freeman wrote. “Our minds are being flooded with everything all at once... [but] the power can be in our hands if we want it to, all it takes is filtering what we allow ourselves to see, hear, and thus consume.”

Infusing Nag Champa frankincense smoke into the showroom, Czudej pays homage to senses of reverence and paranoia within popular culture. Rooted in the apocalyptic spook of religion and agnostic mysticism of hippie consumerist culture, the calming and undertone aroma recognizes popular culture’s invisible influence on unsuspecting participants.