

PRESS RELEASE

CACOTOPIA 04

11 JANUARY – 8 FEBRUARY 2020

OPENING RECEPTION

FRIDAY, 10 JANUARY, 6 – 8 PM

PRESS PREVIEW : FRIDAY, 10 JANUARY, 5 PM

Annka Kultys Gallery is pleased to present *CACOTOPIA 04*, the fourth edition of its annual survey of leading emerging artists within the contemporary art space. This year's exhibition features the work of Nicole Coson, Bex Ilsley, Garrett Pruter and Richie Culver and follows its now traditional format of allocating each artist a solo exhibition of one week's gallery time during the month long show.

The works of the four artists in the show highlight the blurring and perhaps increasingly symbiotic relationships between the once separate disciplines of painting, photography and more recently digital art; an unambiguous counterpoint to the earlier art historical notion of medium specificity developed by Modernist critics, most notably Clement Greenberg and Michael Friedman. Greenberg in his *Modern Painting* essay of 1960, for example, explained "medium specificity holds that 'the unique and proper area of competence' for a form of art corresponds with the ability of an artist to manipulate those features that are 'unique to the nature' of a particular medium." Hence if there is a unifying theme that links the respective works in *CACOTOPIA 04* it may very loosely and imperfectly be described as one of medium unspecificity; an anti-specificity or even medium ambiguity.

For the opening reception and week one of *CACOTOPIA 04*, the work of London-based Filipino artist **Nicole Coson** (b. 1992, Manila, Philippines; BA Fine Art at Central Saint Martins, London, 2014 and MA Painting at Royal College of Art, London, 2018; lives and works in London) will be on show. Coson's work examines the economies of visibility and disappearance in the case of overlooked bodies and includes explorations of invisibility in warfare as tactical counter measures (for example, camouflage) and cultural visibility in art. For *CACOTOPIA 04*, Coson will be presenting eight large prints on paper, attached by magnets to metal sheets. Each work is derived from a single image, a photo of a tree-lined pond that the artist fell into as a young girl and had to be rescued from, being physically dragged from it by her father. Coson creates each work by building up layers of collage from the pond image (the same image but treated differently in

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each work) and then etching is used to create a camouflage effect across the work. The different treatments of the pond image reference how memory can alter over time and in iteration such that the effect of remembering is never identical, never homogenous, ever slippery and unreliable (and not unlike Heraclitus's dictum that you cannot step in the same river twice). The variations between works therefore embody the temporal distances between memories and the camouflage the capacity for memory to distort and mutate. Such distortion is reminiscent of Freud's concept of screen memory, the psychological theory of a childhood trauma being replaced by a vivid but bland memory, whereby recall of the traumatic event is blocked or screened by memory of some harmless but associated and inessential aspect of the experience. The camouflage in Coson's prints may be viewed as a Freudian screening of the traumatic image of the fateful pond the artist fell into.

Bex Ilsley (b. [1996], England; BA (Hons) Fine Art at Manchester School of Art, Manchester, 2016; lives and works in London) will show work in the exhibition's second week. Ilsley is a transdisciplinary artist working across video, photography, performance, virtual reality, installation and sculpture. Her work explores the spaces between the real and virtual and the self and the other. Ilsley looks at online trends and oddities, seeking to parody them as a form of critique. For *CACOTOPIA 04* Ilsley will present several vibrant, large digital prints on fabric from her *Splits* (2019) series accompanied by videos from the same series. The works themselves are the product of an artistic exploration of what it means to experience an 'unstable sense of self' (at both a personal and universal level) in the age of Instagram-reality and the 'Good Vibes Only' cult. In each work Ilsley can be seen performing a different version of herself, similar to the way Cindy Sherman created and performed different roles within her photography, but in a tech-stylised aesthetic featuring saturated fluorescent and neon colours.

The third week of *CACOTOPIA 04* will feature the work of American artist **Garrett Pruter** (b. 1987, Los Angeles, California; BFA at Parsons School of Design, New York, 2010 and MA Painting at Royal College of Art, London, 2020; lives and works in London). Pruter is renowned for his mosaic-style manipulations of found photographs that alter the meanings of historically and culturally important images; his work revolving around themes of memory and loss and the genesis of a photo being created and deteriorating through its lifespan. For the show Pruter has created a series of large abstract canvases by using multiple reprinted inkjet prints of the same found image as his starting point. For each work the artist prints off multiple versions of the chosen image and then, using only water as a solvent, proceeds to soften the printed ink until it makes gelatinous paste that can then be scraped off the paper and applied to the canvas. The final colour and consistency of the canvas is determined by the 'average' colour of the chosen image. *CACOTOPIA 04* may therefore be viewed as another iteration of Pruter's ongoing physical and metaphorical deconstruction of the photograph as a medium.

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The final week of the exhibition will feature works by **Richie Culver** (b. 1979, Hull, England; self-taught; lives and works in London). Culver grew up in Hull, where his interest in art expressed itself through photographing the people around him, drawing parallels with the work of artists Larry Clark and Nan Goldin, leading exponents of social, and particularly sub-cultural, documentary photographic styles. Culver began experimenting with collaging his photographs and has evolved his practice to include mediums such as painting, both of which are evident in the artist's works on show in *CACOTOPIA 04*. In *It is my ball* (2019), for example, a photograph of Robert Smith, lead-singer of the iconic eighties English band The Cure, sporting the 1986 Mexico world cup England football shirt with his trade mark big hair, is iterated in different dimensions and collaged over itself, before the language of the title is painted over in fluorescent letters. In addition to being representative of the artist's process, *It is my ball* demonstrates Culver's wry social sensibility, typically expressed through the pithy phrases in his work. Connotations of British nationalism are presented via Smith being adorned in the now retro England football shirt and the accompanying speech bubble which says "go away," both references, when read in conjunction with the work's title, that allude to the political phenomenon and its associated interpretations of Little England-ness, isolationism, xenophobia and anti-internationalism. In a similar vein, Culver's *White Straight English Male Artist* (2019) is a not-so-subtle critique of identity politics, employing the least virtuous sectionalities of race, sexuality, nationality and gender against a striking image of an elderly man in the classic 'wife beater' white singlet. Culver's work has been collected by leading art institutions.

Following conclusion of the exhibition, Annka Kultys Gallery will be awarding the annual Annka Kultys Art Prize to the successful artist participating in *CACOTOPIA 04*.

Nicole Coson: Week 1

16 January — 18 January 2020

Bex Isley: Week 2

23 January — 25 January 2020

Garrett Pruter: Week 3

30 January — 1 February 2020

Richie Culver: Week 4

6 February — 8 February 2020

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