

Andrea Bowers

You must not turn your head away in grief

kaufmann repetto is pleased to announce *You must not turn your head away in grief*, Andrea Bowers' third solo exhibition with the gallery in which she presents a multi-media body of work centered around the theme of eco-grief, the sense of loss that arises from experiencing or learning about environmental destruction or climate change.

You must not turn your head in grief is a show that began with the artist traveling to northern California during the beginning of the Covid pandemic to document the important actions of the Redwood Forest Defenders, a group of young tree-sitters in the ancestral lands of the Tsurai village, also called Trinidad in Humboldt County. They were defending a rainforest from logging by Green Diamond Resource Company for "environmentally friendly" toilet paper, among other greenwashing products. It was a time of sadness and fear throughout the world, and Bowers was looking for hope. She found it in these tree-sitters who committed their lives to "disrupting industrial logging as a way of resisting colonialism, capitalism, and the looming existential crisis of climate change [by] using creative nonviolent direct-action tactics with a commitment to healing the land and each other from the heart of restorative social justice." It has been two years since Bowers' visit and their constant presence to defend this forest has kept it standing as the Redwood Forest Defense continues to mobilize against turning the forest ecosystems into timber plantations. The resulting video, "Landscapes We Call Home," (2022) continues the artist's interest in documenting important activists of our time.

For the past three years, Bowers has been investigating Ecological Feminism, a theoretical and political movement that critiques patriarchal science for its simultaneous degradation of nature and its oppression of women and gender diverse communities. Ecofeminist poetry and ideology are infused throughout the exhibition, including three new recycled cardboard works. In the largest of these paintings, the artist used an 1897 illustration of a musician with his muses portrayed as women's faces in trees. Bowers removed the male musician and focused on the relationships between women and nature and included a quote from German ecofeminist and Green Party founder, Petra Kelly. In 2021, 23 species were declared extinct. The other two cardboard works reflect on eco-grief as a newly extinct bird and plant are each combined in similar scale with an image of a woman, the pairings seen from a bird's eye view. Each has a line of poetry from the healer and poet Deena Metzger.

The Rights of Nature movement, which is gaining recognition throughout the world, elevates human and ecosystem rights above corporate greed by attempting to pass laws that ask that the sphere of nature have the right to "exist, flourish and naturally evolve". Bowers has been strategizing with two activists from Ohio, Markie Miller of Lake Erie Bill of Rights (LEBOR) and Tish O'Dell from the Community Environmental Legal Defense Fund (CELDF). They have been helping

different communities organize and write these declarations. Inspired by their work, the exhibition includes two new drawings from the series, "Rights of Nature and Bodily Autonomy." These two-toned, intricately colored pencil drawings on paper pay homage and manifest a literal representation of eco-feminism. Rather than just re-printing the texts themselves, the layout is aestheticized and designed with elements of letterpress, with thoughtful attention to the fonts and colors to encourage a deeper reading of these important documents and the alliance building between the rights of nature and women.

At the core ethos of ecological feminism is the embodiment of moral decisions based on community, responsibility, and care; this is further felt in a series of sculptural chandeliers made with recycled iron and neon. These sculptural line drawings entwine with poignant messages detailed in branches, as the curves of Sycamore branches curl in, almost as if in a gesture of embrace towards the viewer reminding us of our interconnectedness. The last work in the show is a video collaboration by Bowers and Suzanne Lacy, honoring the work of eco-feminist poet Susan Griffin in a collective reading by artists and activists from the 1978 book, *Woman and Nature, The Roaring Inside Her*.

While the images of the destruction of our planet flash through on all forms of popular media, and in front of our own eyes, Bowers' pays tribute to—and amplifies the voices of—those who are not afraid to look away, and at times place their own lives at risk (as is the case with these tree-sitters). It is said that denial is a common reaction to grief; yet through Bowers' practice and work, she asks to not look away.

Andrea Bowers' recent solo exhibitions include: The Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago (2021/2022); Museum Abteiburg, Mönchengladbach (2020); Weserburg Museum, Bremen (2019); Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (2017); Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati (2017); Bronx Museum, New York (2016); Espace Culturel Louis Vuitton, Paris (2014); Pomona and Pitzer College Museum of Art, Claremont, (2014); Wiener Secession, Vienna, and The Power Plant, Toronto (2007). Her work has been featured in recent group exhibitions at OGR Torino (2021); Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive (2021); Walker Art Center, Minneapolis (2020); moCA Cleveland, Cleveland (2020); The Henry Art Gallery, Seattle (2019); Migros Museum Für Gegenwartskunst, Amsterdam (2019); The Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C. (2019); Kunstverein, Hamburg (2019); MAXXI, Rome (2018); Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, Warsaw (2018); The High Line, New York (2018); Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt, Frankfurt (2018); Elizabeth A. Sackler Center For Feminist Art, Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, NY (2018); The Getty Center, Los Angeles (2018); San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco (2018); The Museum of Modern Art, New York (2017); Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (2017); among others. Additionally, her work has been featured in international biennials and art events including DOCUMENTA 14, curated by Adam Szymczyk, Fridericianum, Kassel (2017); The Biennial of the Americas, Denver (2015); and La Biennale de Montréal, curated by Gregory Burke and Peggy Gale, Lesley Johnstone and Mark Lanctôt, Montréal (2014); The 10th Gwangju Biennale, Gwangju, South Korea (2014); and The Whitney Biennial, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, curated by Chrissie Iles, Shamim Momin, and Debra Singer (2004). Bowers' work is held in the collections of the Hammer Museum of Art, Los Angeles, MoMa, New York, The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, The Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Center, Washington D.C., The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, and Museum Abteiburg, Mönchengladbach, Germany, among others.