

**HUMAN IS A FIVE
LETTER WORD**

SEPTEMBER 12TH
- NOVEMBER
7TH

2020

The exhibition **HUMAN IS A FIVE LETTER WORD** brings together eleven figurative artists who, in their collective selection, reveal disharmonies in order to create complex perspectives and to rethink the nature of figuration.

The title of this exhibition makes use of a contra-intuitive play on words. It aims to create a problematic binary form between the familiar and the ambiguous, in order to introduce cognitive dissonance into the exhibition from the very beginning. From one point of view, the title evokes expressions that typically describe "four-letter words" (aka "curse" words), thus presenting the title as both problematic logic and confrontational. From another perspective, it marks a simple fact: human is in fact only a simple five-letter word. By addressing more specifically how we think about the word, we can begin to creatively rethink the way we understand being human, humans and humanity.

The special feature of the exhibition is not only the choice of artists but also the material used. All participants show works on paper only, some of them are very minimal and roughly drawn, repetitive and abstract, highly refined and allegorical, others conceptual, dull and poetic. Brian Lotti, for example, shows the wonder and reverence of human existence in his painterly oil and acrylic drawings. He captures the lovely visions that define his very own environment in expressionist paintings. Jesse Mockrin, on the other hand, recreates some of the most famous fables of human history in order to put them into contemporary references and ultimately to renegotiate them. Denise Kupferschmidt uses rhythms and patterns of human movements and thoughts and draws them corresponding to the content, static or expressive, still or roaring. The simple stroke of Brent Holland Baker's graphic drawings, on the other hand, precisely brings out the humorous and abstruse nature of human existence.

Each of the artists in the exhibition uses the human figure in a way that aims to question what we think we know about ourselves, both as individuals and as a collective. For them, this means celebrating, lamenting, sensualizing, or radicalizing. The exhibition is about beauty and frustration, about negative cycles that need to be broken, about artistic effort as human effort. It is about humans being human and about thinking and doing about humans being human.

Artists: Lydia Maria Pfeffer (US), Loretta Mae Hirsch (US), Faris McReynolds (US), Jesse Mockrin (US), Chris Johanson (US), Devendra Banhart (US), Alida Cervantes (MEX), Denise Kupferschmidt (US), Brent Holland Baker (US), Brian Lotti (US), Louis M. Schmidt (US).

The exhibition **HUMAN IS A FIVE LETTER WORD** was curated in collaboration with the artist Louis M. Schmidt.

The opening will take place on September 12, 2020 from 12 - 7 p.m. and on Sunday, September 13, from 12 - 5 p.m. in the Galerie Droste, Katernbergerstr.100, 42115 Wuppertal. The exhibition can be visited until November 7, 2020.

Please note that you must wear a protective mask, keep a distance of 1.5 meters and that no more than 15 persons are allowed in the gallery premises at the same time.

BRENT HOLLAND BAKER (1983,USA)

Brent Holland Baker is based in Washington, D.C. He makes humorous, occasionally disturbing, sensitive paintings and drawings that evoke an ambiguous and symbolic poetic language through an intentionally crude aesthetic. He has shown throughout the US, including solo shows in New York, Seattle and Baltimore.

DEVENDRA BANHART (1981, USA)

Devendra Banhart is an LA-based singer-songwriter and visual artist. Born in Texas and raised in Venezuela and Los Angeles, Banhart has released 10 albums and toured the world extensively, including performances at Bonnaroo and Coachella music festivals. Ranging from minimal to conceptual, from "folksy" to surreal, Banhart's contemplative paintings, drawings and mixed media works have been shown in Italy, Spain and New York, and elsewhere, including the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, MOCA Los Angeles and the Centre for Fine Arts in Brussels.

ALIDA CERVANTES (1972, MEX)

Alida Cervantes lives and works between San Diego, CA and Tijuana, Mexico. Her dynamic and complex work grapples with the countless intersections of our various power systems- social, political and sexual hierarchies are contextualized within the colonial and post-colonial histories of both Mexico and the United States, resulting in beautiful, sensuous, often violent glimpses into the many struggles for balance that plague us still today. Cervantes received her MFA (2013) and BFA (1995) from the University of California, San Diego. She has had solo shows in Los Angeles, Tijuana, Boston and San Diego.

LORETTA MAE HIRSCH (1979, USA)

Loretta Mae Hirsch was born in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and currently resides in Cologne. She is known for her drawings and life-size figurative paintings, which are simultaneously fierce yet whimsical, sensuous and dangerous, magical and matter-of-fact. Hirsch's work has recently been featured in group shows in New York, Cologne and London. She received her MFA from the New York Academy of Art (2011) and BFA from Savannah College of Art and Design (2001)

LYDIA MARIA PFEFFER (1976, USA)

Lydia Maria Pfeffer populates drawings and paintings like a ringleader hires for a circus. Her fantastic, often crowded images teem with human and anthropomorphized beings that frolic and cavort in ways carnal and mysterious, searching for those safe spaces for our public and private rituals. Pfeffer received her MFA from the Art Institute of Chicago (2016) and BFA from the Fashion Institute of Technology (2013), and has had solo shows in Los Angeles, Chicago and New York. She was born and raised in Austria, and currently resides in New York.

DENISE KUPFERSCHMIDT (1979, USA)

Denise Kupferschmidt lives and works in Queens, NY. Her elegant, studied paintings, drawings and sculptures abstract and repeat human rhythms and patterns, and capture with nuance and grace the balance between stillness and motion, chaos and the contemplation. Kupferschmidt received her BFA from the Massachusetts College of Art (2002). She exhibits frequently in NY, where she is represented by Halsey McKay Gallery in NY.

BRIAN LOTTI (1972,USA)

Brian Lotti is a New York-based artist whose observational paintings and drawing gently capture, in both private and public settings, a genuine fascination with people and landscapes. Lotti transforms the everyday into colorfully seductive, optimistic visions of our best lived moments. An influential (formerly professional) skateboarder, Lotti earned his BFA from San Francisco State University in 1998, and has had recent solo exhibitions with HVW8 Gallery in Berlin and Los Angeles.

FARIS MCREYNOLDS (1977, USA)

Faris McReynolds makes complex and coded oil paintings that pull the viewer into the puzzling logic of human power dynamics then leaves them there, stranded amidst the dark, humorous, demanding quandary. His work has been exhibited internationally for many years, including solo shows in Los Angeles, New York, Antwerp, Berlin and Tokyo. McReynolds received his BFA from Otis College of Art and Design in 2000. He lives in Los Angeles, CA.

JESSE MOCKRIN (1981, USA)

Jesse Mockrin is a Los Angeles-based painter. Her exquisite, masterful oil paintings pull apart ancient, misogynist metaphors and reassemble them as upheavals; a profound questioning of power and position of the the 21st century. Mockrin has had solo exhibitions at Night Gallery, Los Angeles; Nathalie Karg Gallery, New York; and Galerie Perrotin, Seoul. Her work is in the collections of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), the Dallas Museum of Art, and the Hans-Joachim and Gisa Sander Foundation, among others. Mockrin received her M.F.A. from the University of California, San Diego in 2011, and her B.A. from Barnard College, New York in 2003.

CHRIS JOHANSON (1968, USA)

Chris Johanson has shown his paintings, drawings and sculptures to widespread acclaim for many years. Rife with insights equally sharp and sincere, Johanson elevates everyday observations to truly spiritual conundrums, often centering figures that share lessons learned through their/his personal journeys. Represented by Mitchell-Innes & Nash in New York and Altman Seigel in San Francisco, Johanson's work is in many museum collections, including the Whitney Museum of American Art (NY), the Schunck Collection (the Netherlands), New Museum of Contemporary Art (NY), San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (San Francisco, CA), the Hammer Museum (Los Angeles, CA), and many others. Born in California, Johanson now divides his time between Portland, Oregon and Los Angeles.

LOUIS M. SCHMIDT (1974, USA)

Louis M Schmidt works primarily in drawing and self-publishing. His concerns revolve around pattern and routine, surrender and escape. The evidence of the hand, in a simple mark; the repetition of shapes or figures into allegories about collective and/or personal ideological collapse; a fragment of a poem hinting at the iceberg we just ran into. He earned an MFA in Visual Art from the University of California, San Diego (2010) after earning a BFA in Studio Art and a BA in Art History from the University of Colorado, Boulder (2004). He has exhibited for many years at galleries and art book fairs in New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Tokyo, Basel and elsewhere. He lives in Los Angeles, CA.