

ALMA PEARL

Cullinan Richards: Retrospective

27 September – 2 November 2024

Opening Reception

Alma Pearl (Unit T, Reliance Wharf, 2-10 Hertford Rd): Thursday, 26 September 2024, 6 - 8 pm

Collateral Events on Sunday, 6 October (Frieze East End Day)

- **Cullinan Richards in conversation with Lisa Le Feuvre** – Alma Pearl (Unit T, Reliance Wharf, 2-10 Hertford Rd): 11am - 12pm (RSVP only)
- **Social Sculpture with Spaghetti & Ice Cream** – Cullinan Richards Studio (4COSE, 7 Vyner Street, London): 1pm - 6pm (RSVP only)

Alma Pearl is pleased to announce *Cullinan Richards: Retrospective*, the first solo exhibition with the gallery since announcing their representation. In the last two decades, this pioneering artist duo has created an extensive body of work that breaks down traditional boundaries and approaches to painting, exhibition-making and social sculpture. Their practice, which is avowedly feminist, defies categorisation and embraces instability, surprise, and mystery producing work that goes beyond literal object conditions and reductive interpretations.

Their medium is in the main context. History–personal, familial, geopolitical, socially and culturally shared, or fictitious–is their primary material. The art that results, a fusion of documentation with fiction, lived personal histories, and live performance, is often deployed, even when built from paintings, as a sculptural scenario and structural support for the incorporation of other work and documentation. The exhibition will spread across the entirety of the gallery and will feature new and historical work, some of which is shown for the first time outside of its initial institutional context. A text written by Sophia Yadong Hao, Director and Curator of Cooper Gallery, Dundee, will accompany the exhibition.

Opening the show, a 1921 leap of faith by a girl rider in Atlantic City is celebrated by the iconic *Collapse into abstract (black)* (2007), marking 14 years since it was displayed in the travelling exhibition 'British Art Show 7: In the Days of the Comet'.¹ The metaphor is striking. The reference draws on the personal (the young woman who performed the stunt was Jeanine Richards' grandmother) on to grand narratives of art history.

A clipping from a newspaper article lends a title to *Competition for women's team pursuit is turning into a clash of generations* (2011). Appearing as if frozen in time, a paint tin sits alongside these archival remnants. News clippings, often extracted from the sports pages of popular British newspapers, coexist alongside art technician's tools and paraphernalia—from tape to plastic sheeting. There is, in the assisted readymades of Cullinan Richards, a sublimation of high and low, but also a desire to question where aesthetic value may reside and to challenge the gendered and never neutral politics of display.

Also on view is *Ghost Technology* (2018) first displayed in the exhibition 'Shadowed Forms' at Andersen's Contemporary in Copenhagen, Denmark. Angled mirrored panels stand in balance aided by folded linen cloths, or tins of tuna fish. Drawing on the re-use of materials from previous exhibitions, the making of something that is both useful and re-usable is a crucial aspect of Cullinan Richards' practice. These human-sized sentinels existed previously in a different form: as display shelves first included in the exhibition 'Of Other Spaces: Where Does Gesture Become Event?', Cooper Gallery in Dundee, UK, which, on that occasion, supported the work of Georgina Starr, Rose

¹ *British Art Show 7: In the days of the Comet*, New Art Exchange, Nottingham Castle Museum, and Nottingham Contemporary, Nottingham; Hayward Gallery, London; Centre for Contemporary Art, Gallery of Modern Art, and Tramway, Glasgow; Peninsula Arts, Plymouth Arts Centre, Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery, The Slaughterhouse, and Royal William Yard, Plymouth (UK), (2010-2011). Curated by Tom Morton and Lisa Le Feuvre.

Finn-Kelcey, and Alexis Hunter, amongst others. Here, at Alma Pearl, *Ghost Technology* functions as both support structure and a work in its own right.

In Room 4, a version of the 'chandelier' that originally inhabited the grand staircase of the Nottingham Castle Museum in 2010, where it was installed on large scaffolding, is here supported by one of the artists' 'table paintings' and surrounded by acrylic mirrors. The visual and semiotic vocabulary of a support structure here takes on a manifold of forms, ranging from allusions to the materials adopted by construction workers to iconic features of 1960s Italian design. The common thread running through these approaches to display and exhibition making is the absolute lack of neutrality inherent in gendered contexts.

A short walk east along the Grand Union and Regents Canal brings one to a parallel exhibition at Cullinan Richards' studio at 7 Vyner St. This reciprocal presentation, opening on Sunday, 6 October (1-6pm), showcases work by artists who are part of a broader conversation that has supported their practice and are an integral part of their artistic community. The opening of this satellite exhibition will follow a conversation between Cullinan Richards with curator, writer, editor, and public speaker Lisa Le Feuvre at Alma Pearl (11am – 12pm). Those attending the talk will walk together along the canal to the artists' studio where spaghetti and ice cream will be served from 1pm. Cullinan Richards, here in the role of hosts, will enact a staged event where the artists and participants constitute the artwork through their sociability, conversation and collectivity.

Exploring the politics of display and the production of art in a post-studio context, Cullinan Richards deploy the very act of exhibition making as their medium where the studio is transformed into a social space of display. Their art is a site, stage and platform on which to engage in social acts of reading, imagination, conversation and exchange. The tempo of the experience—albeit driven by what are, on first sight, sculptural objects and paintings—is that of cinema with its slowed and immersive flow of time; imagine a movie house relocated to an abandoned petrol station: a cinema en plein air configured as social sculpture.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Charlotte Cullinan and Jeanine Richards have worked collaboratively since 1998. Within their large-scale installations, Cullinan Richards explore themes including history, family, and shared social and cultural experiences. The resulting works are a mix of documentation that melds with fiction and lived personal histories to question the position of the artwork and the structure of an exhibition. Their work was featured in *Artforum*, *The Guardian*, *Art Monthly*, and more. They were amongst the selectors of *New Contemporaries 2012* and in 2013 they established *4Cose* Italian grocery store and art installation with Andrea Sassi at the front of their studio on Vyner Street, London.

Exhibition include *6th Sharjah International Biennial*, Sharjah Art Foundation, Sharjah, UAE (2003); *Independence*, South London Gallery, London (2003); *Edge of the Real—A Painting Show*, Whitechapel Gallery, London (2004); *British Art Show 7: In the Days of the Comet*, Nottingham Castle Museum, Nottingham; Hayward Gallery, London; Tramway, Glasgow; Royal William Yard, Plymouth (2010); *Recent British Painting*, GRIMM, Amsterdam (2012); *Wide Open School*, Hayward Gallery, London (2012); *Goodbye Charles*, Charles H Scott Gallery, Vancouver (2017); *Being Sassy*, Dispari&Dispari Project, Berlin (2018); *Shadowed Forms*, Andersen's Contemporary, Copenhagen (2018); *ENDGAME*, Secci, Pietrasanta (2023); and *Bitch Magic*, Alma Pearl, London (2024), amongst others. Cullinan Richards's work is in important private and public collections including the Arts Council Collection UK; Erich Marx Collection, Berlin; Sassi Collection, Italy; Imago Mundi Collection, Italy; amongst others.

ABOUT LISA LE FEUVRE

Lisa Le Feuvre is a curator, writer, editor, and public speaker. She has curated more than seventy exhibitions, edited over thirty books and journals, spoken at 150 museums and universities, and published more than 125 essays and interviews with artists. Le Feuvre is currently the inaugural Executive Director of Holt/Smithson Foundation, the artist-endowed foundation dedicated to the creative legacies of Nancy Holt and Robert Smithson. Located in Santa Fe, New Mexico the Foundation works in partnership to develop research, exhibitions, publications, public programs, collections, and artist commissions globally from its headquarters in New Mexico.