

SEPTEMBER

THE ARMORY SHOW

FOCUS BOOTH F23

A.K. BURNS

NICOLE CHERUBINI

SEPTEMBER is thrilled to present a conversation between A.K. Burns and Nicole Cherubini as a two-person exhibition showcasing new bodies of sculptural works. United by methods of molding and firing as a way to approach nonconformist world-building, Burns' wall works and Cherubini's benches, vessel and wall panels disrupt and subvert conventions and expectations.

A.K. Burns' hand-ladled glass works, featured in their survey exhibition, *A.K. Burns: Of space we are...*, at the Wexner Center for the Arts (2023), are compositions of material distress. The artist refers to this series as "disturbed mirrors." The glass is punctured and punctuated with various materials, trapped gasses and negative spaces left from burn-outs, that are then coated with silver-nitrate—a material traditionally applied to thin sheets of glass to create the reflective surface of mirrors. These mirrored reliefs are created through an interaction between molten glass and materials that combust (such as leather gloves, old jeans, rope, pine cones, and paper bags) leaving a ghostly imprint. Other materials (such as copper, rocks and sand) become embedded in the glass as they tolerate the extreme heat. Exploring the material and metaphorical potential of mirrors, the silvering has been applied partially or entirely across the rear surface of the glass works. They emerge as compositions of distress, as the process of their making puts immense pressure on the combined materials. At times this results in fractures within the glass that are repaired, often to emphasize these stresses, disrupting the mirrors traditional function as a reflective surface. These mirrors are actively working against their reflective potential as the material compositions obscure, amplifying refractions and luminosity of a volatile interior cosmology.

Using the vast history of ceramics as a lens, Nicole Cherubini examines a long-standing exploration of value hierarchies. Cherubini's geometric clay benches, originally made for her exhibition, *LOOT Garden* (2023) at Tufts University Art Galleries, are the culmination of her research into the University's antiquities collection. Foregrounding systemic cultural and institutional neglect, Cherubini democratically gathered and displayed works that have been stolen and orphaned from their own histories. The surface imagery on the Tufts artifacts were enlarged and printed by Cherubini onto the cubic bases of her single and double benches. Meeting these amplified and layered patterns, Cherubini finished her stools with lush chromatic backrests built with densely colored clay. Inherent within the functionality of these sculptures, the viewer is invited to sit and pause rather than look and move through the space. Cherubini is proposing a more empathetic relationship to made objects by encouraging contact, and a deeper awareness of the implications and responsibilities of ownership by honoring orphaned

antiquities. In contrast to her benches, Cherubini's opulent and towering pot, *Pinkterra, 2*, is devoid of literal function and stacked with rich aesthetics. Her deeply embedded love of painting, abstraction, and collage is on full display here, lifting her structured form with exuberant spontaneity. Cherubini's new wall works, which began through a collaboration with artist Montserrat Albores Gleason, continues her line of questioning through a feminist revision with references to Medusa, the Venus de Milo, and the decorative. Their maximal surface "adornment" and their aesthetic entanglement, is itself an act of defiance as Cherubini attempts to upend hegemonic structures.

Collectively, Burns' and Cherubini's objects propose an active space in which to consider the work of transformation by each artist, particularly the work of building highly engaged forms and forefronting marginalized perspectives.

A.K. BURNS is an interdisciplinary artist and educator based in New York, born in Capitola, California in 1975. Using video, audio, installation, sculpture, writing and collaboration Burns works at the nexus of language and materiality to trouble systems that assign and enforce value. Burns earned their MFA from Milton Avery Graduate School of the Arts at Bard (Annandale-on-Hudson, NY), and their BFA from Rhode Island School of Design (Providence, RI). Burns has exhibited internationally including recently at Wexner Center for the Arts (Columbus, OH), Palais de Tokyo (Paris, France), MMK Museum of Modern Art (Frankfurt, Germany), FRONT International: The Cleveland Triennial for Contemporary Art (Cleveland, OH), The New Museum (New York, NY), Julia Stoschek Foundation (Dusseldorf, Germany), The Harvard Art Museums (Cambridge, MA), and Portland Institute for Contemporary Art (Portland OR). As a frequent collaborator; Burns was a founding member of *W.A.G.E (Working Artists in the Greater Economy)* in 2008—an artists' advocacy group that remains active as a non-profit certification organization for Arts Institutions nationally. Created in collaboration with A.L. Steiner, *Community Action Center*, a video re-imagining pornographic cinema for queer womxn, trans and non-binary bodies was released in 2010 and has screened widely including at The Centre Pompidou, Paris, France; Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; and TATE Modern, London, UK. A.K. Burns is currently the John P. Birkelund Fellow at the American Academy in Berlin. In 2021, they were a Guggenheim Fellow, and a recipient of the American Academy of Arts and Letters 2021 Art Purchase Program. Additionally, they were a 2018 NYSCA/NYFA Fellow in Interdisciplinary Art, a 2016 Radcliffe Fellow at Harvard University, and a 2015 Creative Capital Foundation Visual Arts Award recipient. A.K. Burns is an Associate Professor at Hunter College, CUNY, Department of Art & Art History.

NICOLE CHERUBINI is an artist and educator based in New York, born in Boston, MA. Her sculptures explore systems of hierarchy in relation to gender, ownership, and socio economics. In doing so, she seeks to subvert and challenge ideas of purpose, labor, material, and aesthetics. Cherubini earned her MFA from New York University (New York, NY), and her BFA from Rhode Island School of Design (Providence, RI). Her work has been featured in solo exhibitions at institutions including the Institute of Contemporary Art (Philadelphia, PA), the Jersey City Museum (Jersey City, NJ), the Nassau County Museum of Art (Roslyn Harbor, NY), the Pérez Art Museum Miami (Miami, FL), the Santa Monica Museum of Art (Los Angeles, CA), The Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery (Saratoga, NY) and University Art Museum (Albany, NY). She has participated in numerous group exhibitions at institutions including the Cranbrook Art Museum (Bloomfield Hills, MI), the Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston (Boston, MA), the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art (Kansas City, MO), MoMA PS1 (Long Island City, NY), Museo de Arte Raúl Anguiano (Guadalajara, México), the Museum of Fine Arts (Boston, MA), the Rhode Island School of Design Museum (Providence, RI), the Rose Art Museum (Waltham, MA), Sculpture Center (Long Island City, NY), the Studio Museum in Harlem (New York, NY), Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery (Saratoga, NY), The University of Arkansas Museum (Fayetteville, AR), the Walker Art Center (Minneapolis, MN), Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art (North Adams, MA), and Permanenten: The West Norway Museum of Decorative Art (Bergen, Norway). Her work is held in numerous private and public collections, including Cranbrook Art Museum (Bloomfield Hills, MI), Massachusetts Institute of Technology (Cambridge, MA), Museum of Fine Arts (Boston, MA), Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston (Boston, MA), Museum of Arts and Design (New York, NY), Pérez Art Museum Miami (Miami, FL), Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery (Saratoga, NY), Progressive Collection (Mayfield Village, OH), Tishman Speyer Collection (New York, NY), Tufts University Permanent Art Collection (Medford, MA), and University Art Museum (Albany, NY). Cherubini has been an artist in residence at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum (Boston, MA). She is a recipient of the Art Matters Foundation Grant, New England Foundation for the Arts Fellowship in Sculpture, National Endowments for the Arts Fellowship, The Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation Award, among others. Cherubini has lectured and taught at numerous institutions including Rhode Island School of Design (Providence, RI), School of the Museum of Fine Arts (Boston, MA), Cranbrook Academy of Art (Bloomfield Hills, MI), Corcoran College of Art (Washington, DC), Pratt Institute (Brooklyn, NY), Hunter College (New York, NY), and forthcoming University of Pennsylvania (Philadelphia, PA).