

Support Structures

22 June - 29 July 2023

Opening Thursday 22 June 6-8 pm

Gathering is pleased to announce *Support Structures*, a group show bringing together artists exploring the 'fixed instability' of the human condition. The exhibition provides a meditative space centering the notions of care and fragility as a collective responsibility. This mode of relationality evades linear time, avoids contractual relationships and instead embraces reciprocity and responsiveness, assembling works which elicit an affectual response. As opposed to adapting a representational approach, the exhibition stems from the experience of relatives and loved ones, the support networks.

Contextualised by the experience and materiality of care, the artworks contest the political rationalisation of the body as an individualised, self-standing unit, instead focusing on dismantling the dichotomy between the mechanical, man-made and the natural. Robert McCruer's *Crip Theory*¹ offers an intuitive framework for the exhibition, deepened by the perception of the body as inherently reliant on support systems and additive structures. The continuous developments in biotechnology enforce the ambivalence of corporeal subjects. These advancements have driven the move from defining prostheses by their reparative effect, in favour of a hybrid embodiment, as theorists David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder expressed it, "the prostheticized [sic] body is the rule, not the exception". The concept of prosthesis can thus be expanded to mean a much broader and less tangible notion of the networks of care. The nature of the human experience is defined by its interconnectedness to others and the potentiality of a shared sense of vulnerability. With tender fortitude, the artworks reflect the moments of realising one's limitations, needs, achievements, failures, and reliance on others. Works by Alina Szapocznikow and Louise Bourgeois focus on the moment of intuitive, reconstructive shift towards the interest in frailty, both in terms of the choice of materials and the visual language. For Szapocznikow in particular, cancer diagnosis has profoundly shaped her artistic efforts, leaving a legacy inherently bound to the ineffable physical and psychological experience. The precision of Maren Karlson's paintings abstracts the mechanical nature of organisms, suggestive of ribcages, spines or car engines. The approach of quietly marrying the technological and organic are expanded by other artists included in the exhibition, such as Geumhyung Jeong, whose video reclaims a subtle but transformative dance of a complex mechanism.

Direct references to physicality of the body are highlighted in Berenice Olmedo's delicate sculptures, evoking an invisible human form through metal skeletons, an effect of Olmedo's work as a volunteer art teacher at the CRIT (Teleton Children's Rehabilitation and Inclusion Center in Mexico City) attended by children with neuromuscular disabilities. Her research-based practice relies on close collaboration with others in order to best communicate their experiences and opinions. The language of Rafal Zajko's sculptures builds on witnessing his grandparents working in Soviet-era factories: merging ceramic plates with silicone prosthetics and metal elements, Zajko juxtaposes the innate tenderness and intimacy of manual labour with the mechanical manufacturing. Zajko frequently collaborates with medical silicone technician Dalton Desborough, their mode of working recalling that of Olmedo, emphasising shared experience. Jack O'Brien's sculpture, as well as photographs by Bernd & Hilla Becher and Peter Fischli and David Weiss, offer eerie encounters with familiar elements of architecture and furniture, thus rendering the idea of 'support' as ubiquitous within the elements of one's surroundings and suggestive of both protective and obscuring quality.

Exhibited artists: Phyllida Barlow (b. 1944), Ivana Bašić (b. 1986), Bernd & Hilla Becher (1931 – 2007; 1934 – 2015), Louise Bourgeois (1911-2010), Emanuel de Carvalho (b. 1986), Peter Fischli (b. 1952) & David Weiss (1946 – 2012), Geumhyung Jeong (b. 1980), Maren Karlson (b. 1988), On Kawara (1932 - 2014), Martin Kippenberger (1953 – 1997), Jack O'Brien (b. 1993), Berenice Olmedo (b. 1987), Nam June Paik (1932 – 2006), Alina Szapocznikow (1926 – 1973), Rafał Zajko (b. 1988).