

Meredith Rosen Gallery

Meredith Rosen Gallery is pleased to present *Squeeze*, a site-specific installation of new work by Catharine Czudej. The exhibition opens on June 28 and remains on view through August 12.

Catharine Czudej's materially driven practice hones in on late-capitalist consumerism to examine the violent ways it collides with a nostalgia obsessed culture. For *Squeeze*, Czudej pinpoints the moment of late childhood when consumer consciousness and groupthink takes hold. The immersive exhibition intervenes in the gallery architecture by enveloping the space in vinyl parachutes to display new bismuth works and aluminum sculptures. Used for team-building and cooperation, the parachute transforms the gallery architecture into a disorienting environment to view Czudej's metallic works.

Czudej symbolically and physically melts down commonplace objects and conventions into an absurd soup, rebuilding an alternate reality from the raw materials of our own. A high-density, silvery, pink-tinged metal, bismuth was originally used to decorate caskets and is used today in cosmetics, fire sprinklers and pepto bismol. Czudej melts down this dense, colorful metal and recasts it into crude painting-like forms through a vigorous process of heat, destruction, removal and addition until a shimmering landscape emerges. Faces, symbols, and suggestive constellations recede and reappear in Czudej's metallic abyss. The sparkling artifice provokes a hallucinatory investigation into the mechanisms of transforming raw materials into the surplus objects of contemporary American cities. Surrounded by a gallery saturated in colorful plastic, the bismuth works take on connotations of whimsy, playfulness, and utopian world building. Czudej fractures the boundary between the elemental and artificial. The bismuth works lie somewhere in a destabilized middle ground, their material autonomy heightened, fixed in an unsteady becoming.

Aluminum sculptures resemble balloon animals typically created by child entertainers but rather than offering colorful inflatable fun, they are frozen still, their whimsical curves petrified in dense metal. Inspired by youtube tutorials the playful forms they take on - flowers, and a lady in recline - become stoic. In the lineage of Jeff Koons, or Haim Steinbach, Czudej's sculptures interrogate the mechanisms of commodity saturation and human desire. The aluminum works like the parachute structure, reroute our attention to the surface, the sheen we come to acquire and desire so as to be participants in a world of cooperative consumption.

Catharine Czudej (b. 1985 Johannesburg, South Africa) lives and works in New York. Czudej holds a BFA from New York University (2007) and an MFA from University of California, Los Angeles (2015). Her work has been shown extensively in the United States and Europe, including presentations at MoCA, Los Angeles, California, Vleeshal Centre for Contemporary Art, Middleburg, Netherlands and Peep Hole, Milan, Italy. In 2015 Czudej received the Pirelli Prize, Art Brussels, Belgium; followed by the Fürstenberg Fellowship, Heiligenberg, Germany in 2017.