

PRISMATIC MINDS

MISLEIDYS FRANCISCA CASTILLO PEDROSO,
EDWARD DUTKIEWICZ, RACHEL HELLER,
KEISUKE ISHINO, SUSAN TE KAHURANGI KING,
MAKOTO OKAWA

21 Cork Street
London
W1S 3LZ

T: +44 (0)20 7439 7766

press@flowersgallery.com
www.flowersgallery.com

Tuesday - Saturday, 11am - 5pm or by appointment

21st July - 28th August, 2021

Flowers Gallery is pleased to announce *Prismatic Minds*, an exhibition looking at highly stylized visual languages featuring repeated figures and characters, curated by Jennifer Gilbert (Director of the Jennifer Lauren Gallery) and actor, writer, and co-presenter of art podcast *Talk Art* Russell Tovey.

Bringing together six mainly self-taught international artists, each with intensely personal and imaginative styles, *Prismatic Minds* presents a new discourse on the act of repetition and the desire to surround oneself with others, real or imagined. Original, raw and energetic, the works on view introduce a carnival of contemporary characters through repeated imagery that has recurred in the artists' work over many years. The exhibition questions the boundaries of the figure, exploring the deep-rooted personal compulsion to build a cast of characters through ideas of solidarity, family and companionship. Often theatrical or performative, and created without expectations from others, the paintings, drawings and sculptures of *Prismatic Minds* demonstrate practices of masterful storytelling and image-making.

Self-taught Cuban artist **Misleidys Francisca Castillo Pedroso** (b.1985) creates larger-than-life cut out characters, often bodybuilders, with powerful, muscular physiques. Made using construction paper, their features are delineated with striking black outlines, and their outside edges are characteristically fringed with evenly spaced

brown tape used by the artist to fix them to the walls of her home. Ranging from several inches to eight feet tall, Pedroso's archetypal repeated figures appear to represent male, female and non-binary characters, differentiated by variations of colour and individual style. In recent years, they have evolved to often incorporate window-like apertures revealing interior sections of the body. Pedroso was born with a severe hearing impairment and does not speak. Living in relative isolation, it is said that the artist has built her voice, personal expression and sociality through her artwork, and those close to her claim that Pedroso can be seen in 'conversation' with her works using hand gestures. Since the discovery of her work in 2014, Pedroso has been featured in numerous international exhibitions including *Flying High: Women Artists of Art Brut* at the Kunstforum in Vienna; and the Independent Art Fair in New York; and she is represented by Christian Berst Art Brut in Paris.

Japanese artist **Makoto Okawa's** (1976-2016) vibrant felted figures suggest the full spectrum of human emotions, often with a mischievous humour. The felted dolls, which Okawa made over the course of a decade, are known as 'Makoots', with forms ranging from the human figure to symbolic creatures such as worms and octopuses. Okawa was a prolific self-taught artist who also created vibrant, expressive paintings of the dolls. He developed his felting technique at Atelier Corners, an art studio in Japan supporting disabled artists, which he attended



Misleidys Francisca Castillo Pedroso, *Untitled MIS514*, c.2018, gouache on paper, 172x111cm

from 2005. Okawa's work has appeared in several exhibitions around the world, including the touring exhibition *Nama Ato: Japanese Outsider Art* which took place at Pallant House Gallery, Chichester, UK; Attenborough Arts Centre, Leicester; and the Unlimited Festival at the Southbank Centre and Tramway, Glasgow from 2016-17. His work is represented in a number of collections including the abcd collection in Paris.

Inspired by anime cartoons, self-taught Japanese artist **Keisuke Ishino's** (b.1987) bright, bold origami figures combine the influences of Japanese popular culture and traditional craft. Ishino's figurines represent a key focus of his prolific output, completing as many as 300 a year. Constructed from two-dimensional drawings made with colourful markers, their transformation into three-dimensional forms suggests a powerful physical presence. Ishino has created his paper figures since childhood. Recently, he moved to an institution with a studio for disabled artists in Japan and has started to create drawings and three-dimensional artworks featuring numbers and Chinese lettering. Ishino's work has appeared in many exhibitions of Japanese Outsider Art across Japan and throughout Europe. In the UK, his work featured in the exhibition *Souzou* at the Wellcome Collection in 2013.

New Zealand artist **Susan Te Kahurangi King** (b.1951) shares much of her world through her drawings. The works in this exhibition, dated around 1965-67, feature complex compositions, almost encyclopedic in content. An abundance of human figures, rich in facial expressions, gesture and costume, emerge, interplay or escape from their fellow paper dwellers. Cats, birds and all manner of characters, objects, settings and happenings are conducted into position through the artist's singular perspective. King is a self-taught artist who has been drawing prolifically since her childhood in the mid-1950s. She stopped speaking entirely at a young age and cannot read or write. In the absence of being able to verbally communicate directly with others, she expresses her thoughts, feelings, understandings, observations, fears and fascinations through her skilful and innovative drawings. In the early 1990s, King stopped drawing for more than fifteen years, resuming her practice fully in 2008. King's talent was recognised by her family at an early age and has been carefully archived throughout her life, initially by her grandmother. King's work first came to public attention in 2009 and has been presented over the following years in solo exhibitions in Sydney, New York, New Zealand and London; the Outsider Art Fair; and two solo museum exhibitions at the ICA Miami in 2016 and at Intuit: The Center for Intuitive and Outsider Art in Chicago in 2019. King has works in a number of international collections including The Philadelphia Museum of Art; the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) New York; The American Folk Art Museum in New York; and the Chartwell Collection in Auckland.

British artist **Edward Dutkiewicz** (1961-2007) is known for his exuberant use of colour and energetic compositions, which can be seen in the large-scale works on paper in this exhibition. Dutkiewicz spoke of "*possessing*" his subjects, often recording his own varying moods in painted self-portraits. A self-taught artist, Dutkiewicz lived and worked in the East End of London. Born in Tamworth, Staffordshire, he was the son of Polish immigrants who came to Britain during the Second World War. Despite being diagnosed with multiple sclerosis at the age of 21, he continued to pursue his artistic career and had his first London exhibitions at Flowers Gallery in Hackney. He exhibited internationally, in Paris, Cologne, Stockholm and San Francisco, and undertook several notable commissions to create large-scale sculptures for the Chelsea and Westminster hospital, the Estorick Collection, and wall paintings and murals for the borough of Tower Hamlets. His work is in several public collections, including the Estorick Collection in London; and the charity Paintings in Hospitals, to which Dutkiewicz bequeathed all the works from his studio.

Characterised by an energetic and assured use of line and kaleidoscopic palette, British artist **Rachel Heller's** (b.1973) inventive style conveys the innocence and honesty of her characters within a sincere and natural expression. Artist Maggi Hambling CBE has said of Heller's work that it "*reveals*



Makoto Okawa, *Untitled (169)*, hand felting, 32 x 89 x 6 cm, photo by Ellie Walmsley

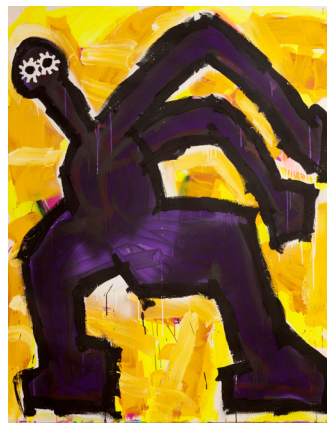
human truth in an eye-opening way." Although Rachel Heller was born with Down's Syndrome, she found within her art a compelling means of self-expression from an early age. Her work has been championed by leading British contemporary artists including Peter Blake, who opened her first exhibition. In contrast to the other self-taught artists in this show, Heller studied at The Prince's Drawing School in Hoxton and has attended summer schools at Slade School of Art, as well as completing a foundation course and diploma at Byam Shaw. She has exhibited in solo exhibitions at Flowers Gallery and group exhibitions including the Royal Academy *Summer Exhibition*, London, where she won the Hugh Casson Drawing Prize in 2006; and the *Discerning Eye* exhibition, Mall Galleries, London.

ABOUT THE CURATORS

Russell Tovey is a London based award-winning actor, writer, collector and presenter of the hit art podcast *Talk Art*, which he presents alongside gallerist Robert Diament. *Talk Art* is growing rapidly in popularity having reached almost three million downloads and they have recently released their first book *Talk Art: Everything you wanted to know about contemporary art but were afraid to ask* published by Ilex Press, which is in the Sunday Times Top 10 Best Seller list. Russell is also one of the judges for the Turner Prize awards 2021 this year.

Jennifer Gilbert is a Manchester-based gallerist, freelance producer and curator, working with self-taught, disabled and overlooked artists. In 2017 she launched the Jennifer Lauren Gallery to internationally showcase these artists, having previously spent years managing a national arts charity for under-represented artists. Jennifer is passionate about showcasing the voices and artworks of these artists to wider audiences, allowing their true artistic language to shine. Through her work Jennifer hopes to demystify what is regarded as art; to continue to challenge the stigma surrounding this field; and to re-look at how this work is displayed and written about within contemporary arts.

A video walk-through will be available online for those unable to visit the gallery, and BSL interpretation for information about the exhibition and artists will be available on the Flowers Gallery website. For more information and images please contact Hannah Hughes: press@flowersgallery.com



Captions left to right, from top: Keisuke Ishino, 2018, paper, coloured felt pen and sellotape sculptures, photo by Ellie Walmsley; Susan Te Kahurangi King, *Untitled*, c.1965, graphite and coloured pencil on found paper, 20.6x18.7cm, photo by Sam Hartnett; Rachel Heller, *Sleeping Woman*, 2006, pastel and charcoal on paper, 43 x 59.5 cm; Edward Dutkiewicz, *Untitled IV*, 1995, mixed media on paper, 154 x 123cm



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