

## Press Release *Queer Ecology*

With “Mika Rottenberg: *Queer Ecology*,” the Lehmbruck Museum presents the most comprehensive exhibition to date in Germany of the work of artist Mika Rottenberg, who was born in Buenos Aires in 1976 and now lives in New York. Her surreal and fantastical work enjoys cult status in Europe, yet her exhibitions are extremely rare in this country.

With a keen sense of the comic in the serious, Mika Rottenberg brings the working conditions of today to our attention and reveals the excesses of our consumer society. Her art makes us smile, irritates us, and surprises us. With more than 30 works, the exhibition provides a representative overview of her work from the last two decades: from walk-in video installations and interactive works that visitors can operate themselves to her latest luminous sculptures, the *Lampshares*.

For her production, Mika Rottenberg is setting up her own circular economy in her studio for the first time: she is making colored lampshades from collected plastic and combining them with an invasive climbing plant that has become a real nuisance in the forests of upstate New York. Mika Rottenberg plays with supposed opposites and shows that both the natural and the artificial can be harmful and destructive, yet beautiful and productive at the same time.

Rottenberg's works disrupt familiar categories of thought. They highlight the absurdity of production and precarious working conditions, especially for women, in a humorous, sometimes biting, and sarcastic way, as in her seminal work *NoNoseKnows*, which celebrated international success at the Venice Biennale in 2015. Here, Rottenberg shows female workers at a pearl farm in China and an office worker in a Western metropolis. Two realities and two forms of work that could hardly be more different collide, showing us that both are mutually dependent.

With her seemingly inexhaustible inventiveness, the artist combines film, installation, and sculpture to create opulent works. The result is colorful worlds that captivate us and, despite their fantastical nature, feel familiar. The artist coined the term “social surrealism” to describe this: “Reality is so much more absurd than any of my videos.” It is this extraordinary combination of pointed analysis of the present and surreal humor that makes Rottenberg's art unmistakable within the international art world.

The exhibition title *Queer Ecology* refers to the overlap between the artificial and the natural that characterizes our present day. It is a plea to recognize the complexity of nature and to free ourselves from habitual human assumptions. The term stands for a new relationship between humans, the environment, and technology. Using the medium of the grotesque, Rottenberg's works succeed in freeing our thinking from entrenched polarizations. She shows that nothing is inherently “good” or “evil,” destructive or productive. In this new freedom of thought, moments of human possibility open up.

## BIOGRAPHY

“Flirting with functionality and absurdity,  
or maybe dysfunctionality,  
is kind of in the core.”

The artist Mika Rottenberg was born in Argentina and lives in New York.

She earned her Bachelor of Arts degree from the School of Visual Arts in New York and graduated with a Master of Fine Arts degree from Columbia University in 2004. In 2018, she was the winner of the James Dicke Contemporary Artist Prize from the Smithsonian American Art Museum, which honors artists under the age of 50. In 2019, she received the Kurt Schwitters Prize from the Sprengel Museum Hannover.

Rottenberg's works are in numerous important museums and public collections, including the Brooklyn Museum, New York; the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston; the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington DC; the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco; the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; the Moderna Museet, Stockholm; the Tate, London; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

Her work has been exhibited at major institutions including the Museum of Modern Art, New York, the Venice Biennale (2015), and the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Seoul. She has had solo exhibitions at the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk; the New Museum, New York; the Palais de Tokyo, Paris; the Goldsmiths Centre for Contemporary Art, London; and the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, among others.