

# Capitain Petzel

ANDREA BOWERS

Cultivating the Courage to Sin

Capitain Petzel, Berlin September 19 - November 9, 2013

Opening: Friday, September 20th, 6-8.30pm

Capitain Petzel is pleased to announce the first solo exhibition by Los Angeles based artist Andrea Bowers entitled "Cultivating the Courage to Sin" and that Andrea Bowers is now represented by the gallery.

## Artist Statement by Andrea Bowers

"Cultivating the Courage to Sin" focuses on climate justice and feminist subjectivity in art and activism. Particularly it focuses on a non-violent act of civil disobedience that I was involved in. In 2011 I was arrested, with three other activists, for climbing into the trees of a native oak woodland habitat in Arcadia, CA and trying to save a pristine forest of 250 trees from being clearcut by the county of Los Angeles. One of the horrible and unanticipated outcomes of this action was that all of trees were ripped out of the forest around us as we were tied to the canopies of two of oaks. All of the destroyed trees were then put in woodchoppers. Ultimately I was arrested on three misdemeanor charges and placed in jail for two days. I videotaped the entire experience until the sheriffs took my camera into evidence. The result is a new video, "I Plan to Stay a Believer" (2013) that includes my footage, news footage and the sheriff department's recordings.

The show's title comes from a quote by the controversial pioneering feminist Mary Daly from an essay about her personal history, called "Sin Big". Although I do not agree with some of her positions, this particular text, published originally in the New Yorker, has been very influential. She explains that, "Ever since childhood, I have been honing my skills for living the life of a Radical Feminist Pirate and cultivating the Courage to Sin." The word "sin" is derived from the Indo-European root "es-," meaning "to be." When I discovered this etymology, I intuitively understood that for a woman trapped in patriarchy, which is the religion of the entire planet, "to be" in the fullest sense is "to sin." Cultivating the Courage to Sin has become my battle cry. One of the activists from the Arcadia tree sit is a veteran tree sitter at the age of 29. He has spent the last six years living in old growth redwoods throughout Humboldt County in Northern California. Tree sitting is a form of environmentalist civil disobedience in which a protester sits in a tree, usually on a small platform built for the purpose, to protect it from being cut down. I asked him what his fantasy tree sitting platform would be. All of my frustration, insecurities and inequalities of living in a patriarchal culture flooded over me with his two words: Pirate Ship. I was immediately annoyed and unamused, of course. A typical man, I thought. Somehow it was so obvious yet, I would never have thought of that. For years I've been negotiating the gender imbalances in both art and activism. Together the Humboldt activist and I built a 25 foot "Radical Feminist Pirate Ship Tree Sitting Platform" (2013).

Also included in the exhibition is a large hanging sculpture made from the ropes and materials commonly used by tree sitters. Immediately upon release from jail I returned to the site of the clear cut. Mountains of wood-chips were all that remained from the once majestic trees. It was intellectually and emotionally devastating for me to witness this. I decided to save as many of the wood-chips as possible. I filled a pick-up truck with the wood before I was served with a restraining order to stay off the land. I have been saving the wood for over two years. I knew I wanted to attempt to memorialize the destroyed trees as well as find a sculptural way to re-monumentalize them, even as a representation. Bundles of the wood chips hang at the bottom of the sculpture using the formal quality of gravity to speak to the weight of the subject matter.

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Two large drawings made on collaged recycled cardboard with black marker monumentalize environmental activist fliers and graphics. "Justicia Climatica" (2013) enlarges a Rising Tide political graphic illustrating the statue of liberty drowning in water. "I Am Nature: Champion International Clearcut; West Flank of the Cabinet Mountain Wilderness" (2013) reproduces a photocopied flier of a clearcut forest from an Eco-Defense zine, that enlarged, fluctuates between abstraction and representation. I have also made a series of drawings on Gagosian gallery cards which, like most materials used in the show, are recycled. Drawn on top of the cards' images are political poetry and accompanying graphics. Using colored pencil, I have meticulously rendered my mug shot in a photo-realist manner.

Until now I have mainly avoided making work about my own subjectivity not wanting to model my practice after the barrel chested men of the art world. In this exhibition I celebrate my subjectivity as a woman, a feminist and an artist as an act of defiance.

Andrea Bowers received her MFA at the California Institute of the Arts in 1992. Selected solo exhibitions include: Tang Museum, Saratoga Springs, NY, USA (2013), ZKM/ Zentrum für Kunst- und Medientechnologie, Karlsruhe (2008); Secession, Vienna, Austria (2007); REDCAT, Los Angeles, USA (2006); Santa Monica Museum of Art, Santa Monica, USA (1998). Her work has been included in exhibitions at Sammlung Goetz at Haus der Kunst, Munich (2011), Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, USA (2010); New Museum, New York, USA (2010), Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, USA (2008); Kunsthalle Basel, Switzerland (2005); Frankfurter Kunstverein, Frankfurt (2002); Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst, Gent, The Netherlands (2001); Kunstmuseum Bonn (1999).

## Art Berlin Contemporary - **Magical Misogyny and the Economic and Financial Crisis**

A conversation with Lisa Monz (political activist) and Andrea Bowers (artist)

Saturday, 21st September 2013, 2.30 pm at Miss Read Stage, Art Berlin Contemporary,

Location: Luckenwalder Str. 4-6, 10963 Berlin

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Opening hours: Tuesday - Saturday 11am to 6 pm