

EDWARD & NANCY KIENHOLZ



THE MERRY-GO-WORLD OR BEGAT BY CHANCE AND THE WONDER HORSE TRIGGER

24 OCTOBER 2019 – 18 JANUARY 2020

RELATED EVENTS AT L.A. LOUVER – 24 OCTOBER 2019

Life Celebration for Nancy Reddin Kienholz: 5pm / Remarks 5:30pm

Opening reception: 7-9pm



Venice, CA -- L.A. Louver is proud to present Edward and Nancy Kienholz's *The Merry-Go-World and Begat by Chance and The Wonder Horse Trigger* (1988-92). Having been exhibited 15 times throughout the US, Europe and Asia, this is the first time the work will be shown in Los Angeles since it first debuted at L.A. Louver in 1992.

Considered one of the artists' most ambitious tableaux, the large-scale, multi-media assemblage environment examines what Ed described as "the random accident of birth, the mystery involved, and the importance of all life." The impetus to create the work came from Nancy, who developed the concept after an incidental encounter with a woman beggar on the streets of El Paso, Texas. Nancy recalled, "She disgusted me. I did not give her any money. The memory of this woman preyed heavily on my mind. I was ashamed of my reaction... Over the next years, this image kept coming back to me, and the thought of the accident of birth and one's destiny because of it, took shape in my mind."

With their mission firmly established, the Kienholzes chose to construct a stationary carousel, complete with the customary trappings of a carnival attraction – calliope music, dancing lights, mirrored panels, baroque ornamentations; along with atypical inclusions – household objects, wooden chairs, various gewgaws and plush monkeys – that ornament the brightly colored procession of animals that circle the merry-go-round. Assembled from taxidermic parts and fabricated forms, the hybridized creatures are equal parts horrifying, comical and endearing – a chimeric union of a tiger's head on the body of a lynx, a gilded giraffe held aloft with crutches, a roaring lion dressed with a serape and a western saddle, a leaping pig with the head of a boar, a show pony swathed in saccharine hues.

With its grandiose façade, the thrust of the work lies at its interior core. When encountering *The Merry-Go-World*, the viewer is asked to spin a wheel of fortune and enter the tableau, only to be immersed in one of eight lives, each born into different cultural and socioeconomic realities. You can be placed in the life of an impoverished Oglala Sioux couple in South Dakota, a chairmaker in Egypt, a street barber in Bombay, a young Maasai woman in Kenya, a Houston child living in abject poverty, a Chinese taxi cab driver in Beijing, a wealthy woman in Paris, or a little girl from a hillside favela in Rio de Janeiro. To distribute the fortunes of the individuals in the tableau, Ed and Nancy "determined that if you divided the world into eighths by monetary considerations, you would end up with one section wealthy, two parts middle class and five sections poor or extremely poor."



Created over a four-year period (1988-92) in their Berlin and Hope, Idaho studios, the couple traveled to the extreme ends of the world and across five continents, meeting people and collecting the materials, photographs, stories and experiences required for the creation of the tableau itself, as well as the prototypes, drawings and monoseries (published by Gemini G.E.L.) – a selection of which will be included in the exhibition.

In confronting and illustrating the “chance of birth,” *The Merry-Go-World* harnesses the power of empathy to orient one’s personal experience within a larger understanding of humanity. Although we may choose to define ourselves by means of border, nation, economy, culture, tribe or family, we are everyone together, and we could also be anyone. It is also a call for humility, to understand the randomness of our fortune and misfortune as human beings on an increasingly crowded and taxed planet.

The Merry-Go-World and Begat by Chance and The Wonder Horse Trigger is one of the Kienholzes most deeply personal works, one that they could only execute together, as a full expression of their intimacy and creative partnership.

Edward Kienholz (1927-94) and **Nancy Reddin Kienholz (1943-2019)** have been the subject of numerous major exhibitions worldwide. In 1995, the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York organized a retrospective which traveled to the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; and Berlinische Galerie, Berlin (1996-97). Recent museum exhibitions include *Kienholz: Five Car Stud* at Fondazione Prada (2016-17); *Kienholz: The Signs of the Times* at Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt and Museum Tinguely, Basel (2011-12); *Edward Kienholz: Five Car Stud Revisited* at the Los Angeles Museum County of Art, Los Angeles and Louisiana Museum, Humlebaek (2011-12); *The Hoerengracht* at The National Gallery, London and Amsterdam Historical Museum, Amsterdam (2009-10); *KIENHOLZ* at the BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead, UK and Museum of Contemporary Art Sydney, Australia (2005-06). Their work can be found in public collections internationally. Select institutions include Berlinische Galerie, Berlin, Germany; Centre Pompidou, Paris, France; Fondazione Prada, Milan, Italy; The Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, CA; Museum Ludwig, Koln, Germany; Menil Collection, Houston, TX; Moderna Museet, Stockholm, Sweden; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA; Museum of Modern Art, New York; National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; Francois Pinault Collection, Venice, Italy; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands; and The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY.

A catalogue, with a preface by Peter Goulds (Founding Director, L.A. Louver) and an introduction by Lisa Jann (Managing Director, L.A. Louver) and color illustrations, will be published on the occasion of the exhibition.

Concurrently on view at L.A. Louver (6 November 2019 – 18 January 2020)

R.B. Kitaj: Collages and Prints, 1964-75

While R.B. Kitaj’s prints have been seen widely over the past five decades, this exhibition is the first time the artist’s collages are on public view.

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Third Eye

images: *The Merry-Go-World or Begat By Chance and the Wonder Horse Trigger*, 1988-92, mixed media tableau, 115 x 184 in. (292.1 x 467.4 cm) (front); Interior detail view of *The Merry-Go-World* (above)

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