

ED & NANCY KIENHOLZ



American Exceptionalism

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 2023

L.A. Louver at Frieze Los Angeles 2023
17 - 19 February 2023

Santa Monica Airport,
Santa Monica, CA
Barker Hangar | Stand G10

L.A. Louver is pleased to participate in the fourth edition of Frieze Los Angeles with a powerful presentation of rare works by the American artists Edward and Nancy Kienholz. Titled *American Exceptionalism*, this focused exhibition of works created between the years of 1961 and 2008 platforms the couple's aesthetic criticisms of American ideology, society, and government.

Edward Kienholz (1927-1994) began his artistic career in Los Angeles in 1952. Central to the LA art scene, Kienholz founded the seminal Ferus Gallery with Walter Hopps in 1957, which became a creative force in the city and in the contemporary art world at large. Ed met Nancy Reddin Kienholz (1943-2019) in 1972; they married and began a lifelong studio collaboration. As an artist couple, Ed and Nancy Kienholz co-created some of the most striking and notable largescale assemblage sculptural works and immersive tableaux of the 20th century.

Kienholz: American Exceptionalism presents a question: What is so exceptional about the United States? Is it our success as a democracy, or does hubris challenge our national identity, considering the serious and unresolved issues deeply imbedded in our country's foundation?

A historical solo work Ed Kienholz created before his partnership with Nancy, *It Takes Two to Integrate (Cha Cha Cha)* (1961) provides a contemporaneous commentary on racial integration in the United States. Consisting of two baby dolls, one painted black and the other white, the assemblage indicates that the only difference between the two infant figures is visual. The imprints of the inverse colors show the influence of each color upon the other – a painterly gesture that evokes questions about how racial integration was enacted. This artwork was created as a radical statement prior to the 1964 Civil Rights Act and remains an important artifact of that historical moment.

Two human-scaled assemblage works are featured in this presentation. *The Potlatch* (1988) comments, severely through literal representation, on the unjust historical foundations of the United States. Standing behind a table, the deer-headed Chief Seattle figure is surrounded by photographs of Native Americans; metaphors for the immeasurable theft and genocide suffered by indigenous peoples. *My Country 'Tis of Thee* (1991) conducts an unambiguous interrogation of United States leadership as four politicians circle a pork barrel, a tongue-in-cheek reference to governmental profiteering. An American flag flies stiffly above the figures as they engage in a never-ending act of lascivious reciprocity.



Edward Kienholz
It Takes Two to Integrate (Cha Cha Cha), 1961
painted dolls, dried fish, glass in wooden box
31 1/4 x 22 1/2 x 7 1/2 in. (79.4 x 57.2 x 19.1 cm)



Edward & Nancy Reddin Kienholz
My Country 'Tis Of Thee, 1991
mixed media assemblage
101 x 56 1/2 x 37 in. (256.5 x 143.5 x 94 cm)

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Media Contact:

Darius Sabbaghzadeh
darius@hellothirdeye.com

Kyle Hinton
kyle@hellothirdeye.com

45 N Venice Blvd
Venice CA 90291
info@lalouper.com
310 822 4955
lalouper.com

Still Dead End Dead II is a formalistic work which incorporates many emblematic Kienholzian elements. In a dark yet beautiful composition, a disappearing American flag waves above a graveyard while a baby doll head appears affixed to a piece of metal in the sky. Cookie cutter crosses speak to the empty yet pervasive Christian symbols and rhetoric in American society, an idea echoed by the hollowness of the baby's eyes.

Also presented here are smaller assemblages by Kienholz. *Drawing for Still Live* (1985) is a study for a major tableau (*Still Live*, 1974) in which viewers took part in an existential game of chance. After signing a waiver, viewers could sit in a chair within the aim of a machine which could randomly fire a bullet. *Drawing for Still Live* references this larger work, and the subject of random violence, as a pistol points at a box filled with bullet-stopping medium.

In the same vein, Nancy Reddin Kienholz's dual image lenticulars *Paved Streets* (2008), a gold-bricked road and one paved with firearms, and *Soldier's Cross* (2008), a hoisted automatic weapon and Battlefield Cross, frame the presentation on the outer walls of Booth G10. Shifting and transforming with the perspective of the viewer, these works are overt criticisms not only of gun violence but also the societal narratives which valorize tragedy and romanticize combat to the monetary benefit of weapons manufacturers.

The Heartland (1996-98) is another artwork created solely by Nancy Reddin Kienholz. Depicting a somber-faced family of eleven – a mother, grandmother and nine children on a Midwestern homestead – this evocative tableau asks us to consider deeply the American Dream. The mother's face, longsuffering, is rendered in sharpest relief in a tribute to the toughness of women and the hardships endured.

Edward Kienholz (1927-1994) and Nancy Reddin Kienholz (1943-2019) have been the subject of numerous major exhibitions worldwide. In 1996, 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 (1996-1997). Recent museum exhibitions include *Kienholz: Five Car Stud* at Fondazione Prada (2016-2017); *Kienholz: The Signs of the Times* at Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt and Museum Tinguely, Basel (2011-2012); *Edward Kienholz: Five Car Stud Revisited* at the Los Angeles Museum County of Art, Los Angeles and Louisiana Museum, Humlebaek (2011-2012); *The Hoerengracht* at The National Gallery, London and Amsterdam Historical Museum, Amsterdam (2009-2010); *KIENHOLZ* at the BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead, UK and Museum of Contemporary Art Sydney, Australia (2005-2006). 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, Los Angeles, CA; Museum Ludwig, Cologne, Germany; The 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.

Scenes from a Marriage: Ed & Nancy Kienholz – the first museum exhibition featuring their work in Southern California in over a decade – will be on view at the Santa Barbara Museum of Art, 29 January – 21 May 2023.



Edward & Nancy Reddin Kienholz

The Potlatch, 1988

plaster cast, deer head, wool blanket, galvanized sheet metal,
bobcat skin, rawhide, other mixed media

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Nancy Reddin Kienholz
The Heartland, 1996-98
mixed media assemblage
94 x 96 x 12 1/2 in. (238.8 x 243.8 x 31.7 cm)

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Edward & Nancy Reddin Kienholz

Still Dead End Dead II, 1987

mixed media assemblage

33 3/4 x 36 3/4 x 11 1/4 in. (85.7 x 93.3 x 28.6 cm.)