

## Karl Haendel

### *Unwinding Unboxing, Unbending Uncocking*

**Opening:** 27 February 2016, 4–9 pm

**Exhibition:** 1 March – 16 April 2016

Karl Haendel's figures bend their arms and legs, curl and uncurl their backs, tense muscles and stretch resistance bands, sitting, lying down or standing. His new life-size graphite drawings show young people in training outfits, midribs often exposed, and, apropos the medium, in black and white. Haendel's drawing is meticulous and rigorously detailed, yet his photorealistic rendering of the protagonists is situated against colorful backgrounds of enamel paint. In *Brahmos* (2014) for instance, a young woman assumes a yoga pose, composing herself into a position resembling a triangle. She's looking at a gray ground; behind her, black and green fields open out as an abstract window.

It's not only on paper that the life-size figures stretch, contract and extend themselves –Haendel's protagonists also push their frames, seeming to brace their feet or backs against them. Or do the uniquely shaped multi-sectioned frames determine which movements the body is able to carry out? At this point it becomes clear that Haendel's drawings pose questions that mirror problems in the current zeitgeist: How much individuality and spiritual freedom really lies behind weekly visits to the yoga studio, and how much of the motivation to do so is imposed by compulsive self-optimization and/or by society's external framework?

It is therefore only consistent that Haendel moves from the drawings by way of the frames into the space to create installations. From painted walls, areas of color continue on the floor. Not unlike the Japanese Zen garden, Haendel delineates distinct basic geometrical forms in the exhibition space using tiny blue bits of packing material, for instance, or he covers an area of several square meters with orange foam chips. Haendel builds an artificial and unusually colorful Zen garden in which we do not just encounter yoga students as features in the landscape. There is also a second series of drawings depicting a tapeworm or a carrot, a set of needles, a pacemaker, a dildo or a cucumber: all things that get introduced into the body in the most disparate ways and for different reasons. In addition, each of them is accompanied by an astrological symbol, sometimes also a

book such as Don DeLillo's *The Body Artist*. Here at the latest, it becomes clear that Karl Haendel is primarily bent on interrogating what physical, emotional and above all spiritual inner spaces our contemporary society dictates, promotes or produces. In his exhibition at WENTRUP, Karl Haendel ponders the issue in a room enveloped in drawings and plastic elements that, significantly enough, looks a lot like a colorful playground for grown-ups.

Karl Haendel (b. New York, NY 1976) received his MFA from UCLA in 2003, and his BA from Brown University in 1998.

Karl Haendel has been included in the Biennial of the Americas: NOW!, Denver, CO (2015); Whitney Biennial, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY (2014); the 12th Biennale de Lyon, Lyon, France (2013) and Prospect New Orleans 2, New Orleans, LA (2011).

Karl Haendel had solo exhibitions at the Wexner Center for the Arts in Columbus, Ohio (2012) and at the Museum of Contemporary Art (MoCA), Los Angeles, LA (2006). He has taken part in numerous international group exhibition in institutions such as the Aspen Art Museum, Aspen, CO; Astrup Fearnley Museum, Oslo, Norway; Musée d'Art Moderne et d'Art Contemporain, Nice, France; New Museum, New York, NY; Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY; MoMA P.S.1, New York, NY; The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; Serpentine Gallery, London, Great Britain; Herning Art Museum, Herning (DK), Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, LA; Drawing Center, New York, NY et al.

Karl Haendels works are in the public collections of the Astrup Fearnley Museum, Oslo, Norway; Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA; LACMA, Los Angeles; CA; MOCA, Los Angeles, CA; La Colección Jumex, Mexico City, MX; MOMA, New York, NY; Fogg Art Museum; Boston, MA; OCMA, Newport Beach, CA; Whitney Museum, New York, NY.