

Milton Keynes Gallery

Press Release

Polly Apfelbaum

Anything can happen in a horse race

31 January – 22 March 2009

Admission free

Exhibition supported by The Locks Foundation, The Henry Moore Foundation and Frith Street Gallery

Milton Keynes Gallery is pleased to present American artist Polly Apfelbaum's first solo exhibition in a UK public gallery. Her work is characterised by an exacting investigation into colour and form, mainly manifesting itself as expansive floor-based installations.

Describing her works as 'fallen paintings', Apfelbaum's practice brings together two of the legacies of twentieth century American art history: Minimalism and Pop Art. In recent years, Apfelbaum has employed imagery appropriated from Pop's father figure, Andy Warhol, in the form of dingbats and flower motifs. In addition to the floor-based installation work, these have appeared in many shapes and guises, such as vivid screen-prints, woodblocks or shapes drawn with dye on synthetic velvet. Other work is more abstract, utilising stains and blots that suggest organic form.

In a departure from her usual practice of fabricating the elements of her work first in her New York studio, Apfelbaum will be making all the new work for Milton Keynes Gallery's exhibition on-site when she arrives, over the course of five days. For the artist, it is important for the work to be 'situational' and to involve an element of performance, in direct response to the gallery space. *"I think it helps move the work away from the object, thinking of it more as a series of relationships, both in space, but also in time – the piece only exists for the duration of the show."* [Quote from an interview with writer and critic Morgan Falconer, Art World Magazine, February/March 2008]. This gives the work a more casual, impermanent feel – the artist has referred to it as an 'automatic abstraction'.

In another departure for Apfelbaum, her new works will use what appear at first glance to be simple offcuts of highly reflective, sequined fabric. These hard-edged, spidery forms will contrast with her previous work which involved the aggregation of similar shapes and sizes. Instead they will offer spatially ambiguous yet compelling colour-themed installations that evoke more calligraphic and abstract readings.

The installations in each of the Gallery's three rooms refer to three famous American gambling cities – Las Vegas, Reno and Atlantic City. In *Atlantic City*, Apfelbaum will explore the graphic possibilities of black, capitalising on the use of positive and negative shapes. *Reno*, a silver-themed room will explore silver's capacity to reflect and capture other colours while *Las Vegas* will be a multi-coloured room featuring thirteen colours in sequence (a colour system determined by the available colours from the fabric manufacturer's line).

Catalogue

An illustrated catalogue with texts by writer and critic Morgan Falconer and Lauren O'Neill-Butler, Managing Editor of Artforum.com will accompany the exhibition.

In Conversation: Polly Apfelbaum and David Batchelor

There will be an opportunity to hear Polly Apfelbaum discuss her work with artist and writer David Batchelor at Milton Keynes Gallery on 31 January at 3pm. Tickets are free, pre-booking is essential on 01908 676 900. This event is supported by The Open University.

Other exhibition-related events include 'Talkback', a free informal discussion-based tour of the exhibition at 1pm on Saturday 28 February, the regular Saturday Art Trolley activities suitable for children ages 4-12 on every Saturday morning between 11am and 1pm, exhibition themed February Half Term workshops for Parents and Toddlers, children ages 6-8 and 9-12 years. Also, Live Guides are available during this exhibition from 10am-12pm and 2-4pm every Saturday. For further details visit the gallery's website at www.mk-g.org.

Notes for Editors

Polly Apfelbaum was born in 1955, in Abington, Pennsylvania and has been exhibiting consistently in the US and abroad since her first solo show in New York in 1986. Notable solo exhibitions include *Love Sculpture*, Frith Street Gallery, 2007; Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia, 2004; *Today I Love Everybody*, Triple Candie, Harlem, New York, 2002; Karyn Lovegrove Gallery, Los Angeles, 2000. Polly Apfelbaum is represented by Frith Street Gallery, London and Locks Gallery, Philadelphia.

Frith Street Gallery, London, was founded in 1989 with the intention of showing the best work on paper by both British and international contemporary artists. In 1994, the gallery expanded, and it now shows installation work, film and sculpture alongside drawings, paintings and photography. Website: www.frithstreetgallery.co.uk.

Locks Gallery, Philadelphia, founded in 1968, represents an international group of critically respected emerging and mid-career contemporary artists working in a wide variety of disciplines. Website: www.locksgallery.com.

The Henry Moore Foundation is a registered charity, set-up and generously endowed by British artist Henry Moore in 1977 'to advance the education of the public by the promotion of their appreciation of the fine arts and in particular the works of Henry Moore'. Its main responsibilities are preserving Moore's legacy at his home in Hertfordshire and through exhibitions worldwide, funding exhibitions and research at the Henry Moore Institute in Leeds and awarding grants to arts organisations in the UK and abroad.

Milton Keynes Gallery

900 Midsummer Boulevard, Central Milton Keynes, MK9 3QA

Open: Tues – Sat 10am–5pm, Sun 11am–5pm, Thurs open late until 8pm.

Telephone: 01908 676 900 **Website:** www.mk-g.org

For further information or press images please contact Rosie Jackson on **01908 558 302** or email r.jackson@mk-g.org

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