



Kate Ericson & Mel Ziegler "Peas, Carrots, Potatoes", 1994-1996  
364 jars, peas, carrots, potatoes 76,8 x 148 x 5,7 cm / 30 1/4 x 58 1/4 x 2 1/4 inches 1/1. Courtesy of the Artists.

## **KATE ERICSON & MEL ZIEGLER**

**July 8 - August 22, 2014**

Opening reception: Tuesday, July 8, 5-8pm

Galerie Perrotin, New York presents a selection of iconic works by Kate Ericson and Mel Ziegler whose collaboration, beginning in the late 70s, continued uninterrupted until Ericson's premature death in 1995. Two decades after showing their work in his first Paris location in 1992, Emmanuel Perrotin is proud to revisit the full span of the couple's career in the gallery's inaugural year in New York. In addition to the major works on display here, such as "Give and Take" (1986), "Dark on That Whiteness" (1988), "Feed and Seed (Gelsing Farm, Buckwheat)" (1989), "Peas, Carrots, Potatoes" (1994-1996), "From the Making of a House" (1995), "A long Line" (1995-96), Perrotin is pleased to offer a collection of never before exhibited sketches and drawings, essential to the artists' practice.

Synthesizing conceptual, land-art, and interventionist strategies, Ericson and Ziegler developed a distinctly American community-based art outside the orbit of New York. Working directly with local iconography, sites, and communities across America, the pair produced works and staged interventions with and for these communities as much as the works themselves informed onlookers back in the institutionalized art world. As Bill Arning puts it in his introductory essay to *America Starts Here*, the companion catalogue to the traveling 2005 retrospective of their work:

"When their collaboration began, conceptual art practices were consigned to the past, belonging to the previous generation... New York's art world marked the focus of international art discourse... The rest of the United States—with the possible exception of Los Angeles—remained virtually invisible as artistic producers, receivers, collaborators, and subjects. Americana-based iconography could only appear ironically, if at all. Political art limited itself to a confrontational mode most appropriate for crisis situations, and artists rarely worked within communities to achieve political or ethical goals" (Berry and Arning, 11).

Indeed, an ethical engagement with the various communities, occupations, materials, and locales, combined with an acute awareness of the potential pitfalls that a well-intentioned artist faces when trying to engender social or political discourse in a community not his own, is the common thread throughout the duo's practice. This is particularly evident in "Camouflaged History" (1991), for which Ericson and Ziegler, presenting themselves as artists, approached the owners of a house that needed painting in Charleston, South Carolina. The house was located just outside a line demarcating the more affluent "historic city", where building codes were more stringent, more costly to meet, and for which the local Board of Architectural Review had prescribed a list of approved house colors. Organizing meetings to establish the consent of the neighborhood, and offering a tangible service to the owners of the house in exchange, the artists, with the aid of a nearby military base, had the house painted and labeled in a camouflage pattern composed with the full board-approved palette. Perhaps surprisingly, the owners and their immediate neighbors were pleased with the end result. The house punctuated the neighborhood with flair, color, and wit, showing cheerful irreverence for such comically solemn things as Boards of Architectural Review with historical mandates. Of course, comically solemn things can also be of significant political, social, and economic consequence. It was perhaps less surprising then that more affluent members of the community, across the line in the "historical city," objected to the camouflaged "eyesore."

The kind of locally sensitive, pragmatic intervention of "Camouflaged History" is exemplary of Ericson and Ziegler's practice. Mechanisms like consent, consensus, community meetings, classified ads in regional newspapers, the exchange of labor and proceeds with participants in the production of an artwork or intervention characterized the artists' ethics. It is worth noting that by no means are these radical or revolutionary tactics; they do not seek to upend communities under the assumption that the artists have a superior social arrangement in mind. Rather, the ethics at work here are

largely in keeping with the democratic ideals of self-governance and self-determination which, though often ignored, forgotten, or violated, underpin the American political enterprise. Whether this is the result of patriotic commitment or mostly a matter of pragmatism is a question better left to the artists. But perhaps it goes some way towards seeing what is American about not just the material and locales of Ericson and Ziegler's work, but more integrally, what is inimitably American about their methods and the entirety of their innovative practice.

## About the Artists

During their collaboration, Ericson and Ziegler were featured in over one hundred exhibitions, including the 1989 Whitney Biennial, and three shows at the Museum of Modern Art (twice in 1988, and once more in 1990). Their work may be found in several major American collections, notably the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, and the Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco. In 2005 the pair were subject to a traveling retrospective organized by Ian Berry and Bill Arning, hosted by The Frances Young Tang Museum and Art Gallery at Skidmore College, MIT's List Visual Arts Center, the Austin Museum of Art, the Kansas City Art Institute, and the Cincinnati Contemporary Arts Center. Companion to the exhibition is the thorough and invaluable catalog, *America Starts Here* (MIT Press, 2005).

Kate Ericson, born 1955 in New York, died of brain cancer in 1995. Mel Ziegler was born in 1956 in Pennsylvania. He currently resides in Nashville, Tennessee, where he works as an artist, a farmer, and is professor and chair of the Arts Department at Vanderbilt University. Both Ericson and Ziegler received BFAs from the Kansas City Art Institute in 1978; the couple continued their studies under Michael Asher, Douglas Huebler, and John Baldessari at the California Institute of the Arts, from which they received MFAs in 1982.

## SOLO EXHIBITIONS AND PUBLIC PROJECTS

- 2008** "America Starts Here", Cincinnati Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati, Ohio, USA
- 2007** "America Starts Here", Kansas City Art Institute, Kansas City, Missouri, USA  
"America Starts Here", Austin Museum of Art, Austin, Texas, USA
- 2006** "America Starts Here", MIT List Visual Arts Center, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA
- 2005** "America Starts Here", The Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery at Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, New York, USA
- 2001** 1301 PE projects and editions, Santa Monica, California, USA  
Doug Lawing Gallery, Houston, Texas, USA
- 1994** Lisson Gallery, London, England
- 1993** "Kate Ericson & Mel Ziegler," Metropolitan Galleries, University of Manchester, Manchester, England  
"Kate Ericson & Mel Ziegler," James Hockey Gallery, West Surrey College of Art and Design, Farnham, England  
"Stir From Time to Time," Michael Klein Inc., New York, New York, USA
- 1992** Ma Galerie (former Galerie Perrotin), Paris, France  
"Anybody Can Make History," Michael Klein Inc., New York, New York, USA  
"Wall of Words," Harold Washington Library Center, Chicago, Illinois, USA
- 1991** "Peaks and Valleys," Capp Street Project, San Francisco, California, USA  
"Exported Pallet," Cultural Fundação Progresso Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
- 1990** "Feed and Seed" and "Weeds or Wildflowers," SPACES, Cleveland, Ohio, USA  
"Augustus Saint-Gaudens Fellowship Exhibition," The Picture Gallery at the Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site, Cornish, New Hampshire, USA  
"The Wellesley Method," Wellesley College Museum, Wellesley, Massachusetts, USA  
"Viaduct Gateway" (subsequently renamed "Viaduct Garden"), a design team project for The Hidden City Revealed Masterplan, sponsored by the Committee for Public Art, Cleveland, Ohio, USA  
"Proposals," Wolff Gallery, New York, USA
- 1989** "Loaded Text", Public installation, Durham Arts Council, Durham, North Carolina, USA  
"College Ivory," University Art Gallery, San Diego State University, San Diego, California, USA  
"Hollow Oak Our Palace Is," Real Art Ways, Hartford, Connecticut, USA  
"Walls Have Tongues," Wolff Gallery, New York, USA  
"The Lighting Specialists," Burnett Miller Gallery, Los Angeles, California, USA
- 1998** "Projects 14: Kate Ericson and Mel Ziegler," Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA  
"Investigations 24," Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA  
"Kate Ericson and Mel Ziegler: WORKS," Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., USA  
"Dark On That Whiteness," Wolff Gallery, New York, USA
- 1987** "If Landscapes Were Sold: An Installation by Kate Ericson and Mel Ziegler," Diverse Works, Houston, Texas, USA  
"Time The Destroyer Is Time The Preserver," Loughelton Gallery, New York, USA  
"Half Slave, Half Free," artist-initiated project with private homeowner, Hawley Pennsylvania, USA
- 1986** "Stones Have Been Known To Move," White Columns, New York, USA  
"If You Would See The Monument, Look Around," Central Park, New York, USA  
"House Monument," Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, California and Costa Mesa, California, USA
- 1985** "Garden Sculpture," project sponsored by Artists Representing Environmental Arts (A.R.E.A.), Ward's Island, New York, USA  
"Traveling Stories," project for Downtown Seattle Transit Arts Program, Seattle, Washington, USA  
"Unplanted Landscape," artist-initiated project with private homeowner, Bellport, New York, USA

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