

# Anton Kern Gallery

## **The Party** **Curated by Ali Subotnick**

For Immediate Release

July 12 – August 31, 2018

Opening reception: Thursday, July 12 from 6–8pm

Inspired by Blake Edwards' 1968 film *The Party*, this exhibition, curated by Ali Subotnick, explores the comedic impulse in contemporary art. The show is haunted by the spirit and rampant absurdities of the film, which has become a cult classic for Sellers' performance as disaster-prone Indian actor Hrundi V. Bakshi who is mistakenly invited to a fancy cocktail party at the home of a studio executive after being blacklisted for pre-maturely triggering an expensive explosion on a movie set. The resulting hilarious catastrophe illuminates the internalized prejudices and self-importance of the star-studded party guests. The movie itself continues to carry a cultural resonance despite the uncomfortable fact that Peter Sellers is a white actor playing an Indian man. After the film's release it was banned for several years in India. The complex nature of its reception is perhaps best highlighted by former prime minister Indira Gandhi who, an avid fan of the movie, was famous for quoting Peter Sellers character, saying, "In India we don't think who we are, we know who we are." The artist Jamie Isenstein explains the surprising continued relevance of the film:



Martin Creed, *Work No. 1190: Half the air in a given space*, 2011, gold balloons.

*Peter Sellers in blackface is the painted "elephant in the room"!!! In high school I loved the film for the zany/realist gags, the 1960s aesthetics and the slow build to mayhem. I never realized how complicated the film is, that it is actually making a statement about cultural appropriation. (After all it was released the same year the Beatles went to India). It all started to click when the cowboy pulled the Italian lady past the camera while she's holding a bucket of Kentucky Fried Chicken (even Italians and their Spaghetti Westerns are indicted!). And then Bakshi explains the offensiveness of painting the elephant by suggesting he take on a western costume. True genius.*

Serving as both an organizing principle and a prompt for artists to create new works, Subotnick uses the sensibility of the film to explore artwork that walks the line between art and entertainment, comedy and tragedy, reverence and satire, serious and farcical. Participating artists are united by a sense of delight in challenging and surprising the viewer and embracing the idiosyncratic. **Jamie Isenstein** created a grandfather clock that spews bubbles; an image directly inspired by the film. Martin Creed objectifies the air we breathe with a room filled with balloons inflated with half the air in the space it is situated. **The exhibition will also include a work by Maurizio Cattelan that will be accessible to visitors on Tuesdays and Fridays during the run of the exhibition.** The piece, which features a Parrot trained to produce unlikely sounds, furthers Cattelan's use of animals as part installation part performance. In 1993 he famously employed a Donkey in an exhibition at Daniel Newberg Gallery in SOHO (this piece was reenacted at Frieze New York in 2016.) Other artists include **Catharine Czudej, Marepe, Jason Meadows, Pentti Monkkonen, Ruby Neri, David Robbins, Jennifer Rochlin, Frances Stark** and **Jeffrey Vallance with Dan Ciesielski**. Video works by **Sean Landers** and **Peter Land** take the impulse toward slapstick to a logical extreme while **David Robbins'** 2003 pilot *The Ice Cream Social* embodies oddball comedic sensibility and an unnerving nostalgic aesthetic.

Ali Subotnick is an independent curator based in Los Angeles. She is currently organizing the artist projects for the inaugural edition of Frieze Los Angeles.

**Note:** *Untitled* by Maurizio Cattelan features a live parrot. In order to ensure the well-being of the animal, this artwork will be viewable on Tuesdays and Fridays from 12 – 6pm for the first 40 minutes of each hour.

### **Gallery Hours**

Monday through Friday  
10am – 6pm

### **Press Inquiries**

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### **General Inquiries**

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