

Art en Valise is thrilled to present Czech artist Eva Kotátková 's first solo exhibition in North America. Spanning the mediums of drawing, collage, installation, sculpture and performance, the exhibition brings together a selection of works that presents Kotátková's process of deconstructing traditional behavioral systems into fragmented models that invite new alternative ways of seeing and existing.

The starting point for Kotátková's work begins with her own immediate contact with imposed structures- family and school- that are crucial yet limiting to the construction of human experience. Through the process of art making Kotátková is able to undermine and recontextualize the values and mechanisms used to regulate our perception of the world, and in turn the way we perceive ourselves. Kotátková's practice has since expanded to include the revision of greater social impositions and their effects, specifically unveiling the latent trauma that haunts the individual and collective reality of those who live on the periphery.

The artist has refined her own artistic vocabulary, employing the body and its endless articulations as the visual threshold for these investigations. Drawing from her archive of memories, appropriated images and objects, Kotátková presents the body as both a physical and metaphysical weight bearing force- at times appearing deformed or reformed by the burdens we inherit.

The works on paper are comprised of bodies or isolated body parts bound to materials such as textbooks, furniture and architectural forms in surrealist ways, drawing our attention to the constraints of history and space. Recalling the avant-garde surrealist approach to choreographing visual juxtapositions in order to set the unconscious adrift, Kotátková –also bound to her own experience- creates blueprints for possible new approaches to observing and behaving. Included in some of the images are hand-drawn directional arrows that subtly direct our gaze outward from the image and into the unknown.

Extending this surrealist sensibility and expanding notions of otherness, Kotátková creates awkward sculptural objects that appear as three-dimensional iterations of her works on paper. Her sculpture *Reading Machine* (2010) is a corset made of metal with various bookstands protruding from its base. The constraint associated with the corset is destabilized by the multitude of bookstands that offer the wearer of the garment agency to engage multiple viewpoints. Likewise, a simple wheelchair is modified with fixed cage-like footrests and a suspended cage for one's head. These additional devices both heighten the confines of the wheelchair and at the same time challenge its function as a device that allows mobility for the immobile. The image and physical presence of the cage is characteristic of the artist's practice, a mechanism that the artist suggests is more isolating and cruel than a wall. The cage confines the subject but allows for the subject to perceive what they are withdrawn from. Furthermore, the device authorizes the captive to be perceived as isolated from the outside.

These works in addition to others (all from various series) are assembled into a narrative that traces the arc of one's life. Beginning with drawings from *House Arrest* (2010) and ending with the wheel-chair sculpture from *City of the Old* (2010), this exhibition considers our trajectory towards freedom and the apparatuses that persistently threaten our process of self-realization.

Eva Kotátková lives and works in Prague, Czech Republic. She studied at the Academy of Fine Arts and the Academy of Applied Arts in Prague, before continuing her studies at the San Francisco Art Institute and the Akademie der Bildenden Künste in Vienna. The artist was recently nominated for the Future Generation Art Prize (2013). Kotátková has exhibited prominently in international group shows, some of which include: The Encyclopedic Palace for the 55th Venice Biennale (2013); 18th Biennale of Sydney (2012) and the Liverpool Biennale (2010). Kotátková has also exhibited in international solo shows, the most recent being *Eva Kotátková at Modern Art Oxford* (2013). The artist is represented by Meyer Riegger in Berlin and Hunt Kastner in Prague.

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