

NEW YORK, NY.- albertz benda is now opening People of the Otherworld, the gallery's first collaboration with the estate of Ken Kiff. This exhibition presents works in various media from the estate and loans from a major private UK collection, alongside new works by contemporary artists who live and work in the US. The exhibition title is derived from a story in Folk Tales of the British Isles, a book illustrated by Kiff in 1977. The title speaks to the artist's fascination with creatures – human, animal and mythological – that inhabit his visionary, expressive paintings. Though somewhat at odds with the art celebrated during his era, Kiff was remarkably successful, celebrated through institutional exhibitions and collected both in his native country and the US. The exhibition is guest curated by Kathy Battista, an art historian who has researched post-war British and international artists for over two decades.

Kiff's relationship with the US was established in the early 1980s. Following the inclusion of 17 paintings in the MoMA touring exhibition New Works on Paper I (1981), he joined Edward Thorp Gallery where he regularly exhibited in Chelsea. From that time into the late 1990s he also visited the US to make prints with Garner Tullis in New York and Santa Barbara. His return to Chelsea for this exhibition just over 40 years later marks a key moment in the re- evaluation of this British master of color, form, abstraction and the human condition.

Kiff's choice of subject matter and overarching themes are echoed in the work of living artists in the exhibition: Kate Barbee, Hiba Schahbaz and Elif Uras explore the divine feminine and Goddess culture; Coady Brown, Kim Dingle, Joshua Petker and Jessica Westhafer reveal a predilection for painting ambivalent psychological states through deceptively simple themes of the everyday; Sarah Bedford, Ken Gun Min, and Kathy Ruttenberg depict hallucinogenic nature and the tradition of landscape painting in their work. These new paintings and sculptures created in response to Kiff's work are juxtaposed with key works by Kiff spanning 1965 to 1999.

#### KEN KIFF

Kiff's work combined a mastery of color and a keen interest in both the mundane and spectacular. The figures that feature in his paintings range from diminutive men to towering nude goddesses; likewise, he gave horses, angels, fish and lizards equal shrift in his at times playful compositions. The theme of human existence is evident throughout his oeuvre: exuberance, banality and despair sit equally alongside each other in the work, with subjects as quotidian as seeing a therapist, posting a letter or meeting people in the street featuring, as well as depictions of goddesses, erupting volcanoes and fantastical creatures.

For thirty years he worked on a unique body of acrylic paintings which he called The Sequence, a semi-autobiographical project that began in 1971 and consists of over 200 works on paper, reflecting the joys and afflictions of daily experience. Several of these rare works are featured in the exhibition.

Ken Kiff was born in Dagenham, Essex, 1935 and died in London, 2001. For over thirty years he taught at Chelsea School of Art and the Royal College of Art, influencing and nurturing generations of successful artists. He was elected Royal Academician in 1991 and was Associate Artist at The National Gallery, London from 1991-93. His works can be found in major public collections including Cleveland Museum of Art, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Milwaukee Art Museum, MoMA, Tate Britain, The British Museum and The British Council, among others. Recent posthumous exhibitions have included The Sequence, Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, Norwich, UK, November 2018–April 2019; Man Painting, Turps Gallery London, June–July

2019; and Man, Bird Tree, Carl Freedman Gallery, Margate, UK November 2022 – February 2023.

Featured Artists: KATE BARBEE | SARAH BEDFORD | COADY BROWN | KIM DINGLE |  
KEN GUN MIN | JOSHUA PETKER | KATHY RUTTENBERG |  
HIBA SCHAHBAZ | ELIF URAS | JESSICA WESTHAFFER

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People of the Otherworld: Ken Kiff in Dialogue

July 13th, 2023 - August 11th, 2023