

The Inaugural Exhibition of the New K3 Gallery

PAUL McCARTHY

nine dwarves



Paul McCarthy (American, b. 1945)

White Snow Dwarf, Grumpy

2012

Yellow silicone

182.9 x 121.9 x 121.9 cm / 72 x 48 x 48 inches

© Paul McCarthy

Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth

Photo: Fredrik Nilsen

April 5 – May 12, 2012

Exhibition Information

Artist: Paul McCarthy (American, b. 1945)

Exhibition Title: Paul McCarthy: nine dwarves

Exhibition Dates: April 5 – May 12, 2012 (Opening Reception: April 5, 5-7pm)

Exhibition Space: Kukje Gallery K3

Website: www.kukjegallery.com

KUKJE GALLERY

About the Exhibition

Kukje Gallery is pleased to present a solo exhibition of Paul McCarthy (b. 1945) opening on April 5. Over the past 40 years, McCarthy has garnered critical attention from all corners of the art world, having developed a prolific studio practice that utilizes both a stunningly diverse variety of materials and a radically experimental approach to art. This exhibition is comprised of 9 sculptures and 1 aluminum sculpture. The *nine dwarves*, installed in the gallery space, is a body of work from his *White Snow* series, which has received tremendous attention as well as controversy in major exhibitions and art fairs around the world. Influenced by Disney's well-known animation *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), the *nine dwarves* reveal the kind of social satire and his wry sense of humor.

In celebration of Kukje Gallery's 30th anniversary, Paul McCarthy's solo exhibition will take place in K3, Kukje Gallery's newly constructed third exhibition space. The total floor area of K3 is 1,260 square meters, site area is 800 square meters, and the height of the building reaches approximately 6 meters, and the exhibition space is constructed to accommodate large-scale installation works and specialized media viewing. The passageway that connects the entrances of K3 with K1 and K2, there is an outdoor courtyard designed to exhibit large scale sculptures such as McCarthy's *Apple Tree Boy Apple Tree Girl*.

An artist who cannot be confined to a specific medium, Paul McCarthy's work defies boundaries, utilizing sculpture, drawing, paintings, photography, performance, and video. As a multimedia artist, McCarthy has directly confronted social and political issues in addition to critically engaging with the primitive human nature that responds to these issues. The artist has stated that his work did not evolve from "paintings as action to performance to sculpture, but as parallel, concurrent and intimately related methods of working." McCarthy's oeuvre exploits both his mastery of forms and approaches to this uncomfortable reality with a fresh shock.

Paul McCarthy work is well known as being founded on a criticism of popular ideals such as the 'American Dream,' and he has continuously defied the mainstream values and vocabularies of Hollywood and Disneyland — often exploiting their very ubiquity to raise fundamental questions of hypocrisy and psychological trauma. It is this willingness to confront taboo themes that has resulted in McCarthy's work often being described as controversial, and the grotesque, violent, and overtly sexual themes in his works have been the subject of dispute but, at the same time, have been interpreted as the artist's own visual vocabulary.

About the Works

McCarthy's recent work *nine dwarves* introduced in the exhibition at Kukje Gallery draws upon the characters from Disney's famous animation *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, which is in turn adapted from the widely known 19th century German folk tale "Snow White." Beginning in 2008, McCarthy began a series of drawing that were the basis of his early investigations into the fairy tale. These drawings used a highly repetitive and even obsessive mark making process that utilized a wide variety of source material coming from both high art and popular culture.

First shown in 2009 in New York, the artists' interest in *Snow White* eventually resulted in his creation of the large-scale sculptures of the dwarves. *Nine dwarves* is comprised of 9 dwarf sculptures cast in vibrantly colored silicone rubber. There are interpretations of each of the original characters in the Disney animation, titled Dopey, Doc, Sleepy, Sneezy, Happy, Bashful, and Grumpy.



White Snow Dwarf, Happy
2010

White Snow Dwarf, Sleepy 2
2012

White Snow Dwarf, Dopey 2
2012

McCarthy's interest in "Snow White" is inspired by not only the dark psychological and social themes that inform the original German story, but also the way the modern version reflects the commercialization of the 20th century and the massive corporate influence that has grown up around fairytales and children's toys. This prurient theme can best be seen in how the dwarves gaze at the young and beautiful Snow White and in the way their bulbous noses clearly symbolize various iterations of the phallus. The grotesque transformations of the characters are not all adorable nor obscene, but exist in between, eliciting pathos. It is McCarthy's fluency in this middle ground that allows his work to so successfully challenge his audience, evoking both love and the dark side of human desire.

According to the artist, "Snow White is a history, and some of that history is a self-portrait. ... the longer you live in the world the more you transpose present and past. At times, the past becomes the window you travel through, the window between the present and the past, and things become more layered. You aren't in the past but you are thinking about it. This is not just about the story of Snow White,

KUKJE GALLERY

it's a story about a lot of things. It's about art, it's a love story. I don't have a concrete answer about what it is and I'm not looking for one. I don't look for art to provide answers. I do something and it takes me to the next thing and the next after that."

The artist's *Heidi* and *Pinocchio* series (1992) can be viewed as precedents to these sculptures. In them, McCarthy was influenced from personal memories of the wild forests and open spaces on his property near the Mojave Desert in California. Inspired by these landscapes and architecture alongside the fairytales, the artist later shifted the story of *Heidi* to a more modern context. While weaving his ideas and other influences together, McCarthy embraced mass-produced images from the popular versions of these stories combining them with his signature approach to materials and performance. Through this, his ability to juxtapose high and low iconography reveals the contradictions inherent in the Hollywood-created fantasy, as well as the innocence and pride that embodies the American myth and identity.

One of the immediately compelling aspects of the dwarf sculptures is the way the artist has captured his sculpting processes in the final forms. This can be seen both in the aggressive mark making and rough hewn gestures of the figures themselves and in the pedestals where various detritus from the sculpting process has been cast and embedded in the pedestal bases. These cast off remains reflect how much McCarthy was captivated by the aggression and visceral messiness that resulted from the sculptural process. McCarthy has commented on how he was especially interested in the deep black color in and how it suggests the coal of a dank mine. For him the black is reminiscent of Kazimir Malevich, Ad Reinhart, Alberto Burri who continuously worked toward pure abstraction. For McCarthy, the process from the initial stage of sculpting the dwarfs to casting – building, then grabbing, erasing, adding, squeezing, and scattering evidences of the process – are equivalent to a long journey to successively achieve a kind of abstraction. He has stated, "casting liberates the literal through a kind of unifying monotone, a different representation of the original thing that lets me explore where reality and abstraction intersect."



Apple Tree Boy Apple Tree Girl
2010

Installed in the gallery's outdoor garden, *Apple Tree Boy Apple Tree Girl* (2010) is a 5-meter tall aluminum sculpture made based on the traditional figurative porcelain sculptures known as Hummel figurines from Germany. Like the *nine dwarves*, *Apple Tree Boy Apple Tree Girl*, appropriates popular cultural icons and twists them. The massive outdoor sculpture is inspired by the cute porcelain 'Hummel' figures that became popular when American soldiers, who were stationed in Germany during World War II, sent them home as souvenirs. Resembling Adam and Eve, McCarthy has enlarged and modified the original decorative figures playing with their idealization of plump children, innocence and youth in a poignant and disturbing way. As with his *nine dwarves*, *Apple Tree Boy*

KUKJE GALLERY

Apple Tree Girl is rendered using a combination of rough sculptural techniques and subtle material choices to create powerful and unsettling mediations on cultural identity and the commercialization of myth. Indeed reborn to the approximate size of giant robots with the height of 5 meter, the two sitting on an apple-tree swing appear to be contemplating a ghastly re-worked Garden of Eden.

About the Artist



Paul McCarthy (American, b. 1945)
© Paul McCarthy
Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth

Paul McCarthy was born in Salt Lake City, Utah, in 1945. While he was born Mormon in the American state most often associated with this religion, his childhood was spent in a relatively liberal environment as his mother was a human rights activist. He studied art at the University of Utah for two years, and went on to study painting at the San Francisco Art Institute (1968–69). Later, he studied film and video at the University of Southern California (1970–73). From 1982 to 2002, he mentored students teaching performance, video, installation, and art history at the University of California Los Angeles.

Paul McCarthy is perhaps best known for his many performances and installations that investigate popular literary tropes and heroes such as Pinocchio, Santa Claus, the "West" and Pirates. He began to receive widespread attention in the art world in the 1990s. Already actively working in painting, performance, and video, the artist achieved international attention with a 1992 group exhibition titled *Helter Skelter* at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles. The work he exhibited, *The Garden* (1991–92) was the first mechanical sculpture the artist had ever presented and included sets originally used in the American Western TV series *Bonanza*. These fake trees combined with naked cowboys fornicating expertly captured male gender anxiety. In a 1995 work *The Painter*, McCarthy himself dressed up as Willem de Kooning in a work that attempted to expand the medium of performance and video. *The Painter* received attention for openly mocking the commercial relationship among artists, dealers, and collectors. *Bunker Basement* (2003) is a large-scale installation and video performance filmed in the artist's LA studio in 2003, where the artist dressed up as President George W. Bush, repeatedly performing grotesque sexual behaviors with Queen Elizabeth and Osama bin Laden. The work portrays their immoral attitude toward politics while behaving like selfish depraved children.

Paul McCarthy has greatly influenced major contemporary artists, especially those whose work deals with the body, human life and death, and sex such as Damien Hirst and Lucian Freud, as well as those who have consistently created unorthodox and challenging work such as Jason Rhoades, Cindy Sherman,

KUKJE GALLERY

Jonathan Messe, and the Chapman Brothers.

McCarthy's artistic career spans more than 40 years including participation in the 2004 Whitney Biennale and a total of four Venice Biennales (1993/1995/1999/2001), and has held solo and group exhibitions in internationally prominent museums and galleries. Major exhibitions include a retrospective at the New Museum (New York) in 2000, solo exhibitions at Tate Modern (London) in 2003, Moderna Museet (Stockholm) in 2006, and Fondazione Nicola Trussardi (Milan) in 2010. His work can be found in major international museums and private collections, including New York's Museum of Modern Art, Whitney Museum of American Art, and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, the Museum of Contemporary Art Los Angeles, Tate Collection; and the private collections of François Pinault, Dakis Joannou, and the Rubell Family Collection.

Introducing Kukje Gallery K3

To celebrate its 30th anniversary, Kukje Gallery is opening a third exhibition space following K1 and K2, with the aim of showcasing a broader scope of art works and experimental contemporary art. The new building, which will also be used as a multi-functional cultural space, seeks to escape the conventional gallery layout and instead strengthen its experimental and functional possibilities.

The height of the building, which reaches 6.1 meters, accentuates the sprawling and open exhibition space, and one of the unique characteristics is having all the peripheral building features such as entries, vestibules, elevators and stairs pushed out of the space in order to assert the cube form of the interior. This exhibition space was constructed to accommodate large installation works as well as new-media projection pieces, and through skylights that surround the ceiling, such art works can be viewed in a fresh ambiance that is steeped in natural light. Because the skylight can be adjusted and even completely darkened, cutting off all natural light to create a black-box environment, one of the remarkable features of the space is being able to show specific media screening exhibitions and light-sensitive works as well.

The most striking aspect of Kukje Gallery's third space can be found in the ingenious and distinctive use of a mesh lining, which completely surrounds the exterior of the building. The mesh is made of metal, making it extremely solid and durable; at the same time the small loops that interlink and make up the structure allows flexibility of material. This material takes after the pattern of a net and naturally creates a border between the building and the outside environment all the while imbuing the building with a sense of modernity. Moreover, the space creates a spatial harmony between the nearby, diversely structured contemporary buildings and the traditional ambiance set by the Gyeongbok Palace.

The new K3 building, designed by the Brooklyn-based architectural firm SO – IL, headed by the critically acclaimed young architect Florian Idenburg, has already received tremendous critical attention

KUKJE GALLERY

PRESS RELEASE

for its innovative design. SO – IL was awarded the AIA Award (American Institute of Architects) for the K3 building design in May of last year. Furthermore, The Art Institute of Chicago recently acquired a number of concept and process models SO – IL created for the design for Kukje Gallery, and they will become part of the permanent collection, along with works by Frank Lloyd Wright, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Bertrand Goldberg. The AIC plans to show the installations of the Kukje design in upcoming exhibitions.

KUKJE GALLERY

54 Samcheong-ro, Jongno-gu, Seoul, Korea 110-200 T+82 2 735 8449 F+82 2 733 4879 kukje@kukjegallery.com www.kukjegallery.com

Exhibition Images & Captions

Use of images **must** clearly credit the artist and other relevant parties.



Paul McCarthy (American, b. 1945)

White Snow Dwarf, Grumpy

2012

Yellow silicone

182.9 x 121.9 x 121.9 cm / 72 x 48 x 48 inches

© Paul McCarthy

Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth

Photo: Fredrik Nilsen



Paul McCarthy (American, b. 1945)

White Snow Dwarf, Happy

2010

Black silicone

185.4 x 121.9 x 121.9 cm / 73 x 48 x 48 inches

© Paul McCarthy

Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth

Photo: Fredrik Nilsen

KUKJE GALLERY

54 Samcheong-ro, Jongno-gu, Seoul, Korea 110-200 T+82 2 735 8449 F+82 2 733 4879 kukje@kukjegallery.com www.kukjegallery.com

Exhibition Images & Captions

Use of images **must** clearly credit the artist and other relevant parties.



Paul McCarthy (American, b. 1945)

White Snow Dwarf, Sleepy 2

2012

Blue silicone

156.2 x 121.9 x 121.9 cm / 61 1/2 x 48 x 48 inches

© Paul McCarthy

Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth

Photo: Fredrik Nilsen



Paul McCarthy (American, b. 1945)

White Snow Dwarf, Dopey 2

2012

Flesh silicone

193 x 121.9 x 121.9 cm / 76 x 48 x 48 inches

© Paul McCarthy

Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth

Photo: Fredrik Nilsen

KUKJE GALLERY

54 Samcheong-ro, Jongno-gu, Seoul, Korea 110-200 T+82 2 735 8449 F+82 2 733 4879 kukje@kukjegallery.com www.kukjegallery.com

Exhibition Images & Captions

Use of images **must** clearly credit the artist and other relevant parties.



Paul McCarthy (American, b. 1945)

Apple Tree Boy Apple Tree Girl

2010

Aluminum

525 x 208.3 x 189.2 cm / 206 3/4 x 82 x 74 1/2 inches (Boy)

546.1 x 290.8 x 213.4 cm / 215 x 114 1/2 x 84 inches (Girl)

© Paul McCarthy

Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth

Photo: Joshua White

KUKJE GALLERY

54 Samcheong-ro, Jongno-gu, Seoul, Korea 110-200 T+82 2 735 8449 F+82 2 733 4879 kukje@kukjegallery.com www.kukjegallery.com