

Press Release

## Mika Rottenberg

23 June – 2 October 2022  
Hauser & Wirth Los Angeles  
North A & B Galleries



**Los Angeles...** Hauser & Wirth is pleased to announce a solo exhibition by Mika Rottenberg, the first major presentation of her work on the West Coast. The exhibition celebrates the global release of 'Remote' in late September: her first feature-length film, made in collaboration with filmmaker Mahyad Tousi. Opening 23 June 2022, the artist's first Los Angeles exhibition will feature video works – 'Spaghetti Blockchain' (2019), 'Cosmic Generator' (2017), 'NoNoseKnows' (2015), and 'Sneeze' (2012) – in addition to new kinetic sculptures, drawings, and installations.

Rottenberg illustrates the absurdity of humanity's rampant production, distribution, and consumption of objects by juxtaposing existing industry with her own, often unexpected, manufacturing systems. 'I think of objects in terms of the processes behind them and the idea that humankind is captured in everything around us. I want to make these processes more visual. If art has any power, it is in making things visible.' From pearl and food cultivation to the mass-production of wholesale plastic items sold in China, Rottenberg excavates the processes humans invent to create a sense of control.

Concurrent with the exhibition at Hauser & Wirth, 'Remote' will premiere this fall, and be shown at various international venues over the course of the coming year. Co-created by Rottenberg and Tousi during the Covid-19 pandemic, the film is set in a post-pandemic near future. Unoaku (Okwui Okpokwasili) and four other women living in different parts of the world – all of them fans of a popular South Korean dog-groomer-performer (Joony Kim) – discover a mysterious portal hidden in each of their homes with universe-altering consequences. 'Remote' will be presented in collaboration with Artangel, United Kingdom; Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Denmark; Moderna Museet, Sweden; Musée d'Art Contemporain de Montréal, Canada; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, United States; and the Busan Biennial, South Korea.

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### About the exhibition

The exhibition presents a survey of recent works in video, drawing, and sculpture that showcase the breadth and rigor of Rottenberg's dynamic practice. Shown for the first time on the West Coast, 'Spaghetti Blockchain' (2019) examines how humans manipulate and comprise matter and their relationship with the mechanical world. Titled after blockchain technology, this work merges images and sounds to create fast-shifting connections between a diverse range of sources that weave into themselves with no resolution. The film opens on a Tuvan throat singer, whose voice reverberates across the Siberian prairie. Soon, the deep drone of her voice is juxtaposed with highly technical imagery and the low electronic hum of the Large Hadron Collider – a particle accelerator Rottenberg filmed while she was a guest artist at CERN – and a monolithic potato harvester. Meanwhile, a hexagonal corridor spins to reveal scenes that evoke ASMR videos: a hand slices and sears a gelatin roll on a grill, another kneads a mound of turquoise dough, a third stirs colorful plastic balls, while a fourth spray-coats a man's bald spot. By disorienting audiences and simulating tactile feelings, Rottenberg never fully completes the connections, giving way to a plethora of interpretations.

'Cosmic Generator' (2017) investigates the idea that material is not static but is in constant transformation, while in contrast, humans are confined to the banal reshaping of material as a result of global capitalism. Filmed on site in Yiwu, China and at the border between Mexicali, Mexico and Calexico, California, the video installation collapses the distance between these seemingly disparate geographies – a phenomenon we experience more and more with the advent of new technologies. In Yiwu, women sit amongst a dizzying array of thousands of colorful plastic objects. They yawn, sleep, and scroll their phones with no signs of customers, confined to a sea of plastic junk to be distributed across the world. On the border of Mexicali and Calexico, the viewer is then confronted with Chinese characters and architectural iconography. This city, known to have underground passageways from the Prohibition era that were used for the flow of goods and people, now encompasses a large Chinese population. Seen to the artist as akin to a gigantic earthwork, the tunnel system subverts the border above it, which bars humans from crossing, while objects from the Chinese warehouse move without restriction.

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First shown to critical acclaim at Okwui Enwezor's 2015 Venice Biennale, the video installation 'NoNoseKnows' (2015) transports the viewer between the seemingly disparate worlds of an anonymous office suite in New York and an enormous pearl-making facility in Zhuji, China. In one, an extremely tall woman with an exaggeratedly long nose sits alone in a claustrophobic office surrounded by colorful bouquets of flowers. Every time she sniffs them with her visibly irritated nose, an allergic reaction triggers a sneeze that produces a plate of noodles. In the other, an endless row of women factory workers seated at a large table pry open mussels and insert sinuous foreign matter with tweezers which over time will aggravate the creature, producing a pearl. The surgical precision through which the factory workers cultivate the pearls mirrors the shrewd editing techniques of the video work, deftly blending fact and artifice to create a world in which the intricacies of labor and the production of value are rendered visible.

The exhibition also includes a selection of drawings created over the course of the pandemic. Replete with a unique visual language – couplings of fingerprints, human limbs, palm trees – these drawings track the artist's icons in a narrative fashion where they exponentially reproduce and ultimately vanish, evoking diagrams of chain reactions and biological systems. The gestural application of graphite and paint coalesce in these works, connecting the artist's body to the two-dimensional work. To the artist, the body is its own kind of producer, which makes hair and nails, but also marks on a piece of paper. Exploring larger themes such as labor and production in relation to the corporeal and the mechanical, the drawings closely relate to the ideas that Rottenberg deconstructs through her sculptures, installations, and video works.

Reminiscent of Rube Goldberg machines, Rottenberg's kinetic sculptures are composed from recycled materials and sculptural elements that are arranged into machines. In some of the sculptures, human labor is necessary to activate motion – arms turn cranks and legs pedal wheels. A new group of sculptures are powered by electricity, exploring the overlapping functions of humans and machines. With these sculptures, Rottenberg explores the physical (and metaphorical) distance between human labor and mechanical production, pointing to the futility of emoting energy to create a sense of control that results in something as irreverent and fruitless as a twirling pom-pom. 'I think in my work I try to give shape to the way things are made and consumed, which has become so vast as to become unimaginable. If we actually comprehended the insanity of it, I think people would probably behave differently.'



#### About the artist

Born in Buenos Aires in 1976, Rottenberg spent her formative years in Israel then moved to the US. There, she earned her BA from the School of Visual Arts in New York, and followed this with an MFA at Columbia in 2004. A solo exhibition of Rottenberg's work is currently on view at the Musée d'Art Contemporain de Montréal (21 May – 9 October 2022). Recent presentations include the Louisiana Museum in Humlebæk, Denmark (2021); and 'Easy Pieces,' presented at the New Museum in New York, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, and Museum of Contemporary Art in Toronto (2019 – 2020). Rottenberg was the recipient of the 2019 Kurt Schwitters Prize, which recognizes artists who have made a significant contribution to the field of contemporary art. In 2018, she was the winner of the Smithsonian American Art Museum's James Dicke Contemporary Artist Prize, which recognizes an artist younger than 50 who has produced a significant body of work and consistently demonstrates exceptional creativity.

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Tuesday – Sunday, 11 am – 6 pm

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### Caption and courtesy information:

#### All images:

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Spaghetti Blockchain (Video Still)  
2019

4k video installation with 7.1 surround  
sound, color; 18:15 min

#11 with cabbage and ponytail  
2020

Plywood, aluminum, mechanical parts,  
plastic, hair

110 x 63.5 x 41 cm / 43 1/4 x 25 x 16  
1/8 inches

Crank element with belt: 30 x 35 x 36  
cm / 11 3/4 x 13 3/4 x 14 1/8 in

Photo: Zak Kelley

Vv47

2022

Graphite, acrylic, color pencil on paper  
68.6 x 76.2 cm / 27 x 30 inches

60.6 x 80 x 4.4 cm / 23 7/8 x 31 1/2 x  
1 3/4 in

Photo: Jeff McLane

#33 with bamboo and bicycle  
2020

Plywood, aluminum, mechanical parts,  
plastic, hair

79 x 61 x 60 cm / 31 1/8 x 24 x 23 5/8  
inches

Bike element with belt: 64 x 38 x 72.5  
cm / 25 1/4 x 15 x 28 1/2 in

Photo: Zak Kelley

Installation view, 'Mika Rottenberg,'  
Hauser & Wirth Los Angeles, 2022

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