

# **MERMAID MAIJA & THE ISLAND PAINTINGS**

## **MAIJA PEEPLES-BRIGHT**

### **April 13–June 10, 2023**

Parker Gallery is proud to present an exhibition of new work by Maija Peeples-Bright, *Mermaid Maija and the Island Paintings*. This is the artist's second solo show at the gallery.

Maija Peeples-Bright is one of few women artists commonly associated with Northern California's Funk and Nut art of the late 1960s and '70s. For 60 years, Maija Peeples-Bright has made surreal and maximalist paintings and ceramic sculpture composed primarily of 'beasties' from the animal kingdom. The artist's dizzyingly dense compositions are constructed with distinctively tessellated visions.

Her newest paintings draw inspiration from islands around the world: Sardinia, England, Japan, Hawaii, Australia, Zanzibar. The seductive intrigue of these locales is expressed through multiplying grinning animals of all kinds dancing across land and sea. *Hippo Hawaii* for example features a landmass composed of neon orange hippopotamuses and a surrounding sea of shimmering, parading peacocks, octopi, horses, and whales. This cast of characters is rendered in the artist's typically thick impasto and vivid color, adding a physical dimension to the bustling animal compositions.

Self-portraits of the artist as a mermaid appear in both the paintings and ceramic sculptures. She swims joyously with pandas in *Jaguar Japan* and her arms embrace *Ocelot Oahu*. As a sculpture, Mermaid Maija explores architecture and landscape—houses, towers, hill-tops—but is never to be seen without her beasties who emerge as her mermaid hands, or as window dressing. Across this newest body of work, Peeples-Bright ecstatically transmutes herself into the alternative world of her beasties and invites the viewer to share in her idiosyncratic form of gaiety.

**Maija Peeples-Bright (b. 1942 in Riga, Latvia) lives and works in Rocklin, CA. Recent solo exhibitions include those held at Parker Gallery, Los Angeles (2020); Nicelle Beauchene, New York (2019); Guerrero Gallery, San Francisco, CA (2018); b. sakata garo, Sacramento, CA (2017); Transmission Gallery, Oakland, CA (2016); and the Marin Museum of Contemporary Art, Novato, CA (2014). Recent group exhibitions include *Funk You Too!: Humor and Irreverence in Modern and Contemporary Ceramic Sculpture*, Museum of Art and Design, New York, NY (2023); *The Candy Store: Funk, Art, and Other Art With A Kick*, Crocker Art Museum, Sacramento, CA (2022); *The Interior*, Venus Over Manhattan, New York, NY (2021); *Strange*, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, Berkeley, CA (2019); *Landscape Without Boundaries: Selections from the Jan Shrem and Maria Manetti Shrem Museum of Art*, curated by Dan Nadel, Manetti Shrem Museum of Art, Davis, CA (2019); and *Go Away Road*, Loyal, Stockholm, Sweden (2019). Her work is included in several permanent collections, including the Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, Berkeley, CA; Cincinnati Art Museum, Cincinnati, OH; Crocker Art Museum, Sacramento, CA; Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, NY; Mackenzie Art Gallery, Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada; Manetti Shrem Museum of Art at UC Davis, CA; Minneapolis Institute of Art, Minneapolis, MN; Nevada Museum of Art, Reno, NV; and Nickle Arts Museum, Calgary, Alberta, Canada; among others.**