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Commonwealth and Council

Carmen Argote, Danielle Dean, Katie Grinnan, Young Joon Kwak, and Kenneth Tam
July 1 – August 3, 2018

Commonwealth and Council is a gallery in Koreatown, Los Angeles. Our program is rooted in our commitment to explore how a community of artists can sustain our co-existence through generosity and hospitality. Commonwealth and Council celebrates our manifold identities and experiences through the shared dialogue of art—championing practices by women, queer, POC, and our ally artists to build counter-histories that reflect our individual and collective realities.

In October 2010, the living room was cleared in an apartment on Commonwealth avenue and Council street for Gala Porrás-Kim's solo show, *I Want to Prepare to Learn Something I Don't Know*. Porrás-Kim charted her efforts at learning Korean, her mother tongue which was foreign to her due to her growing up in Colombia before moving to the U.S. as a political refugee. She tried to dismantle her feelings of alienation and decipher the cacophony of visual information in Koreatown through listening to stories and traditions, and devising her own methods to construct and alter meaning. The second show in the apartment featured Jen Smith's banner "WE MAKE THE RULES," conceived as a communal affirmation and a critical provocation of imperial power.

At the gallery in the years that followed, Danielle Dean mined and appropriated language and images from mass media and marketing to examine how these capitalist apparatuses shape and reinforce colonial power structures and racist ideologies. Young Joon Kwak queered spaces, envisioning a brave new world of radical realness, dance floors and mutant salons free from bigotries and binaries where trans-feminine voices make the rules. Patricia Fernández made a pact with the space, proposing a time-based sculpture which would evolve with objects, letters, and mementos that accumulate in a box as the relationship matured over ten years. Alice Könitz built social architecture, inviting visitors to engage and interact with the physical, emotional, and communal space of Commonwealth and Council. Rafa Esparza and Beatriz Cortez brought four tons of dirt and plants from immigrant homes into the space, inviting other Latinx artists to exhibit their work alongside them, eschewing the Western Romanticist notion of the artistic endeavor as an individualistic enterprise. EJ Hill endured and laid bare his heart, sharing his dreams and desires through the exploration of his physical and mental limits, gifting us glimpses of transcendence. Jennifer Moon unleashed her revolution, forged in the crucible of a corrections facility, rooted in tenets of continuous expansion and unadulterated love. Porrás-Kim continued her interrogation of knowledge tackling subjects she does not know—disappearing languages from Oaxaca and artifact fragments from various historic sites and museum collections—and explored issues of meaning, ownership, heritage, and value over five solo shows at the gallery, fulfilling a promise made over celebratory drinks for the first show at that apartment on Commonwealth and Council.

The truth is, we don't make the rules. Nationalism and sectarianism trump tolerance and unity in our political discourse and policies today. Our realities, our identities as queers, immigrants, women are marginalized and resisted. The artists who comprise Commonwealth and Council—Carmen Argote, Carolina Caycedo, Katie Grinnan, Olga Koumoundouros, Kang Seung Lee, Kenneth Tam, Julie Tolentino, and Clarissa Tossin, in addition to the aforementioned—reappraise the histories that left out our sisters and propose alternative visions for a minoritarian future. Herein, we reaffirm our values: that we are all stronger together, that art is most potent and meaningful as shared experiences, open-ended, and communal. Like the spirit of generosity extended to us by Tina Kim Gallery and 47 Canal in inviting us to show at their spaces, humble acts of kindness make up the trellis upon which Commonwealth and Council persists and grows. We invite you to share the experience of art with us.

This two-part group exhibition is being hosted by both 47 Canal and Tina Kim Gallery.