

Polly Apfelbaum

Waiting for the UFOs (a space set between a landscape and a bunch of flowers)

19 September — 18 November 2018



Polly Apfelbaum, *Aquarius* (2018). Ceramic and glaze, courtesy the artist and Frith Street Gallery, London

Ikon presents a major exhibition of new and recent work by internationally renowned New York-based artist Polly Apfelbaum (born 1955), 19 September — 18 November 2018. Entitled *Waiting for the UFOs (a space set between a landscape and a bunch of flowers)*, the exhibition exemplifies Apfelbaum's interest in "space, obsession and otherness". Featuring large-scale colourful installations comprising textiles, ceramics and drawings, Apfelbaum's practice is framed within wider sociological and political contexts, and the legacy of post-war American art.

The exhibition takes its title from the 1970s song *Waiting for the UFOs* by British singer-songwriter Graham Parker - recalling the vast empty spaces of the American landscape and the obsessive marginal characters who anxiously anticipate extra-terrestrial visits - conjoined with the surrealist René Magritte's definition of a garden:

“a space set between a landscape and a bunch of flowers”. Making particular reference to his extraordinary landscape painting *The Plagiarism* (1940), the idea of appropriation is explored further through Apfelbaum’s characteristic use of allusion and quotation, blurring the conventional line drawn between popular culture (or craft) and high art. This is especially pertinent given that Ikon’s current premises are a refurbished Arts and Crafts school building.

Here, snaking around all the walls of the first floor, a frieze of yellow and orange stripes foils a line of more than a hundred unique ceramic targets (all 2018). Each named after a constellation, the repetition of the target pattern gives way to the apprehension of a single obsessive visual trait. Whilst they can be read as references to abstract artists, such as Kenneth Noland, Poul Gernes or Jasper Johns, they also nod to folk art, dart boards or the circular irrigation patterns seen in aerial views of the American Midwest. Apfelbaum’s practice illustrates a sensitivity to site, scale and architectural setting. At Ikon she perceives the gallery space as a landscape, to be populated by both her work and visitors to the exhibition, as she explains:

It's important to me that people have to move through the work so the spectator activates it and participates in the experience. As you move through the installation, perspective, light and parallax are constantly changing the way you see the work in space.

On the second floor, large hand-woven rugs (all 2018) with broad bands of rainbow colours in circles, stripes and waves again gesture towards a landscape or garden. These floor-based installations are surrounded by earlier works including *Basic Divisions (Wavy Gravies)* (2012), a series of drawings using marker pen on paper, concentric circles of fake flowers such as *Wallflowers (Mixed Emotions)* (1990/2018), “target drawings” and suspended rows of glazed ceramic beads: “I’m making it an erupting rainbow volcano experience!”.

Placing emphasis on the essential formal qualities, especially colour and texture, Apfelbaum asserts the importance of popular culture and craft activity. Her use of various stained and dyed fabrics and glazed ceramics is both beguiling and refreshing in its offering of simple pleasures. In this way, the artist subtly assumes a political and feminist position, challenging pomposity, notions of entitlement and hierarchies in cultural practice, to promote egalitarianism.

The exhibition is accompanied by a catalogue including an essay by curator and writer Glenn Adamson, plus a public programme of talks and events. The exhibition is supported by the Henry Moore Foundation.

For more information, high-res images and to request interviews please contact Milly Carter Hepplewhite or Lisa Hopf on 020 8969 3959 or email milly@pelhamcommunications.com or lisa@pelhamcommunications.com

IKON

Ikon Gallery
1 Oozells Square, Brindleyplace, Birmingham B1 2HS
0121 248 0708 / www.ikon-gallery.org
Open Tuesday-Sunday & Bank Holiday Mondays, 11am-5pm / free entry
Registered charity no. 528892

Social Media Handles:

Instagram, Twitter and Facebook:

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Links

www.ikon-gallery.org

www.pollyapfelbaum.com

Note to Editors:

1. Ikon exhibition opening: Wednesday 19 September, 6-8pm.
2. Polly Apfelbaum (born 1955, Pennsylvania, United States) has had solo exhibitions internationally, including at: Otis College of Art and Design, California (2016); Bepart, Belgium (2015); Worcester Art Museum, Massachusetts (2014); Lumber Room, Oregon (2014) and Mumbai Art Room, India (2013). Her work is in the collections of The Museum of Modern Art, New York; The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Brooklyn Museum of Art, New York and The Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, amongst others.
3. Ikon is an internationally acclaimed contemporary art venue situated in central Birmingham. Established in 1964 by a group of artists, Ikon is an educational charity and works to encourage public engagement with contemporary art through exhibiting new work in a context of debate and participation. The gallery programme features artists from around the world and a variety of media is represented, including sound, film, mixed media, photography, painting, sculpture and installation. Ikon's off-site programme develops dynamic relationships between art, artists and audiences outside the gallery. Projects vary enormously in scale, duration and location, challenging expectations of where art can be seen and by whom. Education is at the heart of Ikon's activities, stimulating public interest in and understanding of contemporary visual art. Through a variety of talks, tours, workshops and seminars, Ikon's Learning Team aims to build dynamic relationships with audiences, enabling visitors to engage with, discuss and reflect on contemporary art.
www.ikon-gallery.org
4. Ikon is open Tuesday – Sunday and Bank Holiday Mondays, 11am - 5pm. Admission is free. Ikon Gallery is supported using public funding from Arts Council England and Birmingham City Council. For the latest news and events follow @ikongallery on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

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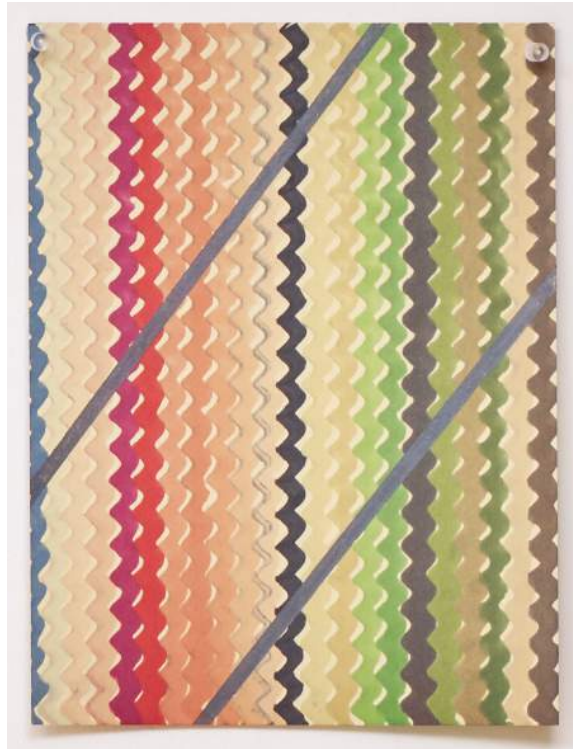
Polly Apfelbaum, *Basic Division (Wavy Gravies)* (2012). Marker pen on paper, courtesy the artist and Frith Street Gallery, London. © Polly Apfelbaum



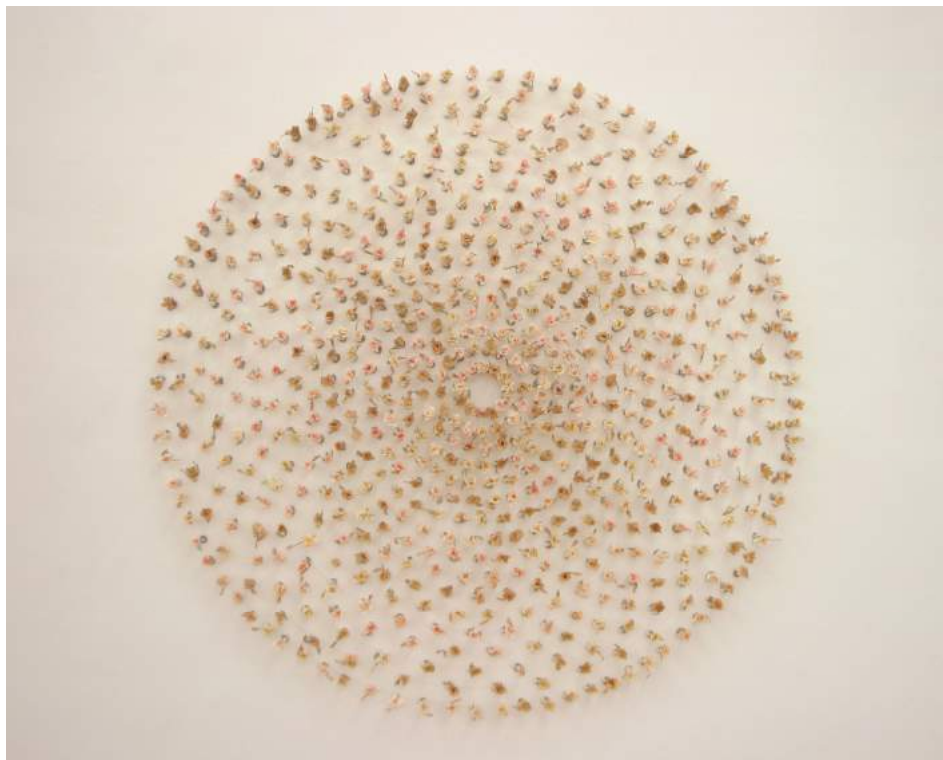
Polly Apfelbaum, *Basic Division (Wavy Gravy)* (2012). Marker pen on paper, courtesy the artist and Frith Street Gallery, London. © Polly Apfelbaum

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Polly Apfelbaum, *Basic Division (Wavy Gravy)* (2012). Marker pen on paper, courtesy the artist and Frith Street Gallery, London. © Polly Apfelbaum



Polly Apfelbaum, *Wallflowers (Mixed Emotions)* (1990/2018). Mixed media, wire, paper, tacks, pencil, glitter, courtesy the artist and Frith Street Gallery, London