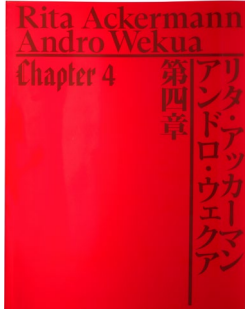


**Rita Ackermann & Andro Wekua: Chapter 4****Fergus McCaffrey Tokyo**

May 1 – July 31, 2021



Fergus McCaffrey Tokyo is delighted to present a unique exhibition bringing together two artists who are long-time allies, some-time collaborators, and singular personalities for a dual-person show that traces inspiration and creative exchange through some twenty years.

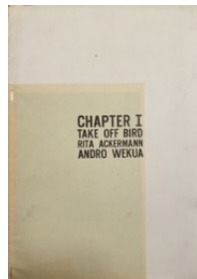
Grounded in a common experience of bankrupt Soviet idealism, systemic repression, eventual exile, and the immigrant experience, Rita Ackermann and Andro Wekua both left the Eastern Block in the 1990s to pursue careers abroad. While Ackermann's art retains few references to her early life in Hungary and is absorbed in her experience of America from the late 1980s to the present day, Wekua's art enigmatically clings to an unclear recent-past.

Ackermann and Wekua are part of a lineage that includes their fellow 'Easterners' Georg Baselitz and Sigmar Polke, in that they borrow widely from folk and fairy tales, invoke high and low culture, and navigate a path between state-mandated realism and the perceived allure of American gestural abstraction. Further, it is impossible not to reference two earlier displaced Europeans: Willem de Kooning and Mark Rothko, who seem to provide material and spiritual nutrition in finding a path between figuration, landscape, and pure abstraction.

Wekua begins with collages of animals, palm trees, inwardly consumed adolescents, and abandoned domestic spaces that become gradually obliterated and transformed under layers of bright pinks, purples, acid yellows, turquoises, and magentas that evoke the color palette of Rothko. His vibrant hues contain all of the elder artist's contradictions in the apparent elation and the tugging sense of desperation. It is a personal art drawn from a specific place and time, but which has universal resonance despite or because of its stubborn evasiveness. Though Wekua's scale of works and methods are significantly different, both feel psychically fraught and born of struggle. Scraped down and distressed in the making, Wekua's means are very evident to behold; loaded with materials and meaning.

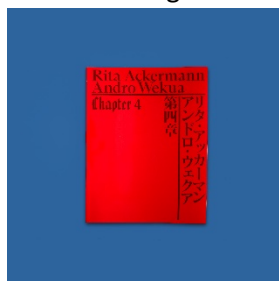
Portraiture and self-portraiture are amongst Wekua's most pressing concerns, and a sense of unease and discomfort is evoked that whispers of alienation and longing. However, the presumptions or 'certitude' of portraiture is confounded, with identities that are constructed, ambiguities embraced, meanings deferred, and truths evasive.

Ackermann shares the same layering, coding, and disclosure of source imagery, which often appears distracting and at odds with itself, perhaps reflecting a layer of self-defense against prying eyes and pervasive surveillance. Her *Do's and Don'ts* paintings (2008-09) are built from montages cut and pasted from magazines and photocopied books, which she amended with graphite and oil crayon, adding outlines, silhouettes, and textures; blurring the distinction between the source imagery and her own. Over the last 15 years her female protagonists have been grouped as *Nurses, Sisters, or Mamas*, reflecting, complying, rebelling, or simply ignoring the imposed stereotypes and fictive constructs of femininity. Though her subjects bear a strong resemblance to Ackermann herself—reimagined as a doe-



eyed manga character—‘she’ remains enigmatically serene and mute, while Ackermann’s free facility in hand painting, bravura oil stick, and sinuous chalk drawing intuitively respond in distinct gestures to the underlying cacophony of compressed layers both real and otherwise.

A 2002 introduction by a mutual friend, Gianni Jetzer, brought the like-minded practitioners into a shared process of creative trade that began by fax, and quickly became a self-published zine: *Chapter 1*; subsequently published by Nieves (Switzerland) for *Chapter 2* and *Chapter 3*<sup>1</sup>. Drawing on, from, and through a shared psyche of pictures, music, poetry, and plain talk, these remote communications manifest through various modes of technology: landline, voicemail, text, email, and image exchange that implies distance itself as key to the closeness of their preoccupation, up to now: *Chapter 4*. The paintings and collages from the two artists that make up this Tokyo exhibition range specifically from 2008 to 2021, while more broadly addressing a shared understanding that seems to have begun well in advance of Ackermann and Wekua’s initial meeting.



That they cannot travel to Japan to experience the fruits of this 21<sup>st</sup> century dialogue in-person together, does not diminish the strength or resonance of that unity. For those of us who see it, and those of us who do not.

In conjunction with the exhibition, a presentation of the artists’ sketchbooks, featured in the bilingual *Chapter 4* catalogue published by Fergus McCaffrey and Case Publishing, will be on-view at SKWAT/twelvebooks, Aoyama in Tokyo, alongside rare and out-of-print books by each artist.

### About Fergus McCaffrey

Founded in 2006, Fergus McCaffrey is internationally recognized for its groundbreaking role in promoting the work of postwar Japanese artists such as Sadamasa Motonaga, Kazuo Shiraga and Jiro Takamatsu. The gallery also exhibits the work of emerging and seminal Western artists including Marcia Hafif, Birgit Jürgenssen, Richard Nonas, Sigmar Polke and Carol Rama. In keeping with the gallery’s commitment to Japanese art and culture, McCaffrey opened its Tokyo outpost in March 2018 with an exhibition of paintings by Robert Ryman. The gallery’s 2019–2021 program featured exhibitions by Matthew Barney, Carolee Schneemann, Kazuo Shiraga, Min Tanaka, Jasper Johns, and Richard Serra, among others.

### For press inquiries, please contact:

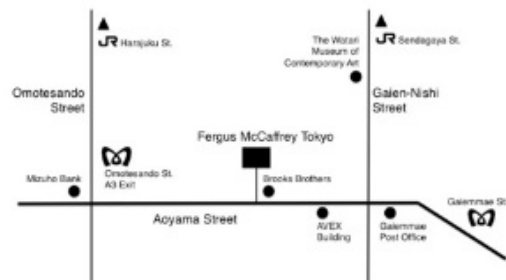
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### Note to Visitors

*In compliance with the government's health guidelines regarding social distancing, and to promote and protect the safety and well-being of our staff, artists, and community, visitors are asked to wear masks and sanitize hands before entering the gallery, contact-less temperature will be taken upon entrance, and a capacity of four visitors will be allowed at one time. We request that you please refrain from visiting the gallery if you have symptoms such as a fever or cough.*

## Map (Omotesando station A3 exit):



## Images:

1. *Rita Ackermann and Andro Wekua: Chapter 4*, 2021 (cover); published by Fergus McCaffrey, New York, Tokyo, St. Barth, and Case Publishing, Tokyo, Rotterdam
2. Left to Right: *Chapter 3*, 2004 (cover); published by Nieves, Switzerland; *Chapter 2*, 2004 (cover); published by Nieves, Switzerland; *Chapter 1*, 2002 (cover)
3. *Rita Ackermann and Andro Wekua: Chapter 4*, 2021 (cover); published by Fergus McCaffrey, New York, Tokyo, St. Barth, and Case Publishing, Tokyo, Rotterdam

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<sup>1</sup> Chapter 2 and 3 were published by Benjamin Sommerhalder, Nieves <https://www.nieves.ch>