

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Louise Kruger: Political Works**

September 8 – October 15, 2016

Lori Bookstein Fine Art is pleased to announce an exhibition of works by Louise Kruger. This is the artist's fifth solo show at the gallery.

This exhibition is comprised of politically-charged works that encompass a wide range of US history, from the Founding Fathers to the Nixon and Bush administrations. Kruger maintained a radically-liberal point of view throughout her lifetime, which effected not only her voting habits but the company she kept and the artwork she produced. Indeed, in the political turbulence of the 1940s, Kruger developed lifelong friendships with kindred spirits such as city planner Jane Jacobs, and fellow artists Antonio Frasconi and Stan Kaplan, as well as folk singer and social activist Pete Seeger, sharing both political and creative ideas. In a similar way to Seeger's music, Kruger manifested her ideals in the artwork she created. More often than not, her political satire was humorous, albeit cunning, as evidenced in soft-sculptures like *Nixon*, *Ehrlichman* and *Mitchell* (all c. 1974-75). The works feature caricature-like-effigies of the aforementioned politicians emerging from bags like hand-puppets or jack-in-the-boxes. This kind of topical, social commentary can be seen as a continuation of the great tradition of artist as social commentator.



*Nixon*, c.1974-75, Embroidered fabric, paint, wire, bag, 32.5 x 16 x 10 inches.



*Untitled (Soldier)*, c. 1969, Embroidered fabric, buttons, 89 x 52 inches

Some of the artist's most direct and difficult political works are her textiles, otherwise regarded as a "craft" traditionally associated with women. Kruger was able to use such simple materials as fabric, scissors and needlework as a vehicle for her own cunning political critique. For example, the embroidered fabric work *Untitled (Soldier)* (c. 1969) is a direct response to the artist's feelings on the hyper-patriotism during the Vietnam War. Instead of the glorified depiction of a soldier, Kruger presents a man with skeletal legs in a military uniform carrying an American flag and a sword. Through this piece, the artist mirrors propagandist aesthetics akin to the "I Want You" posters. The skeletal legs on this figure show a man already halfway to death who refuses to accept the vanity of his patriotism. In another fabric work, *Untitled (Victory)* (c. 1973), the word VICTORY is emblazoned above an emaciated

fetus. Dated to the same year of the historic Roe v Wade Supreme Court case, Kruger boldly, even unapologetically, states what the ruling means for her and her leftist comrades.

In contrast to her direct and subversive fabric pieces, Kruger's wood sculptures are ambiguous and open to interpretation. For example, the sculpture *Fighting/Hugging Men* (c. 1980) features two simplified figures locked together in a questionable stance: are they embracing in harmony or struggling in a stalemate? This sculpture comments on the ways in which humans interact, letting the viewer read the two figures in their own way. In the large scale sculpture *Hand* (c. 1965), the simple gesture of one finger pointing upward evokes many different interpretations. Could it be Uncle Sam's hand choosing you for the army or the gesticulation of a politician during a speech? These ambiguous wood works allow the viewer moments of introspection in contrast to the fabric works that confront the viewer more directly.

Louise Kruger's (1924 - 2013) formal education spans decades and continents. From 1942 to 1945, she attended Scripps College, Claremont, CA followed by continued studies at The Art Students League of New York. In addition to her formal education, she studied woodworking and joinery with Captain Sundquist, a ship builder in New Jersey and traditional metal-working techniques at the Guastini foundry in Pistoia, Italy and with the Ashanti people in Kumasi, Ghana. The artist has been exhibited widely including exhibitions at Martha Jackson Gallery, Schoelkopf Gallery, Landmark Gallery, and Condeso/Lawler Gallery. Most notably, in 1953, she was included in the New Talent show at the Museum of Modern Art, New York. Kruger's work is included in several public collections including the Brooklyn Museum, the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, the Museum of Modern Art and the New York Public Library.

*Louise Kruger: Political Works* will be on view from September 8 - October 15, 2016. An opening reception will be held on Thursday, September 8th from 6-8 pm. Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday, 10:30 am to 6:00 pm. For additional information and/or visual materials, please contact the gallery at (212) 750-0949 or by email at [info@loribooksteinfineart.com](mailto:info@loribooksteinfineart.com).



*Hand*, c. 1965, Wood, 49 1/2 x 24 x 11 inches.