

ΔΕΣΤΕ

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Ίδρυμα ΔΕΣΤΕ
Εμ. Παππά & Φιλελλήνων 11.
142 34 Νέα Ιωνία
Αθήνα Ελλάς

DESTE Foundation
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Athens Greece

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May 2022



Kaari Upson, *Left Brace Erase, Back Brace Face*, 2016 (detail) | © The Kaari Upson Trust, 2022

KAARI UPSON: NEVER ENOUGH

DESTE Foundation, Athens
11 Filellinon & Em. Pappa St., Nea Ionia 142 34

Opening,
May 25, 2022 | 19:30–22:00

Duration,
May 26, 2022 —
October 27, 2022

Opening Hours,
Wednesday & Thursday 12:00–20:00



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The DESTE Foundation is pleased to present *Never Enough*, an exhibition that pays tribute to Kaari Upson (1970–2021), which will take place at the DESTE Foundation in Nea Ionia, Athens between May 26 and October 27, 2022. The show was especially curated by the artist’s close friend, Dakis Joannou.

Over her brief yet prolific 15-year career, Kaari Upson developed an elaborate universe woven out of memory, conjecture, fact, and fiction. Imbued with a mystical animism, each sculpture, painting, drawing, and video merges personal and collective traumas, desires, fears, and fantasies. For Upson, the key to accessing oneself could be found in one’s possessions, especially those contained in the home. Upson’s interest in domesticity grew out of *The Larry Project* (2007–2012), a series of works in which she investigated the psyche using a mysterious neighbor, whom she later called “Larry”. Having acquired a significant amount of his personal belongings Upson obsessively researched him giving rise to an astonishing body of work about a man she never met. In several videos Upson appears in multiple roles playing a version of herself, a twin, a lover, her mother, a friend—all while reenacting, theorizing, and questioning aspects of domesticity, personae, and interpersonal relationships. Other works in the series include the iconic “Kiss” painting diptychs, in which she smashed together a portrait of Larry and a self-portrait, while the paint was still wet to create a distorted merger of the two characters. Upson also brought the characters to life by creating a life-size doll of Larry that features in the videos and was later cast in charcoal along with one of herself.

A classically trained painter, Upson embraced failure and repetition, experimenting with unorthodox approaches to casting and painting, and working under extreme circumstances with unpredictable outcomes. She developed a method for casting discarded mattresses, couches, and



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other domestic furnishings in materials including latex, fiberglass, Aqua-Resin, and urethane, capturing every detail of the texture, stitching, and pattern of the original. These confounding sculptures represent an absence of the body, evoking loneliness, emptiness, and loss, but with their swirling, psychedelic colors, illusionistic shadows, and dizzying patterns, they become hallucinogenic vessels of memories and dreams. Her pseudo-scientific approach was largely intuitive and speculative, resulting in disquieting, provocative, and haunting works.

Later, for the series *MMDP (My Mother Drinks Pepsi)* (2014–2017), Upson turned to her own mother—who enjoyed a Pepsi every day expressing her satisfaction with an audible “Ahhhh” for each can popped—playing her in a series of videos and drawings, and creating life-size dolls of her, which doubled as cat beds. *MMDP* also comprises complex sculptures made of Pepsi cans reminiscent of ancient artifacts—an effect created by filling the empty soda containers with liquid aluminum so that their surface looked charred—as well as videos that feature the artist among aisles of Costco megastores where her mother shopped frequently.

Throughout these projects, graphite drawings often provided the springboard for accompanying sculptural works. Large-scale and reminiscent of detailed journals, Upson’s drawings are reflective of her rapid-fire brain, mapping out a web of connections, references, and ideas, providing both insight and confusion, clues, and tangents. Filled with precisely rendered images and text, they often took years to complete as the artist repeatedly returned to them to add visual, temporal, and intellectual layers to their lush surfaces.

In the exhibition *Kaari Upson: Never Enough*, the DESTE Foundation presents over 30 pieces by Upson spanning her entire career from the



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photograph *It's Never Enough* (2007), which was shown in her MFA exhibition at CalArts, to pieces from her last bodies of work—an untitled painting on canvas (2020–2021) and *Portrait (Vain German)* (2020). For the design of the show, Dakis Joannou collaborated with architect Sotirios Kotoulas to select a different color for every wall, in every gallery. This unconventional exhibition design provides viewers with a new lens through which we view and interpret her work, creating unexpected connections within individual pieces, and amongst the works shown together.
