

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Eugenia P. Butler

That Which Emerges

September 15 – November 3, 2018

Opening Reception: Saturday, September 15, 6 PM – 9 PM

The Kitchen Table Book Launch: Saturday, September 29, 4 PM

“My pieces are bridges to the Other—the unknown, the psyche, the world of dreams, the unconscious—a huge reservoir of tappable, deep human and planetary information and energy” —Eugenia P. Butler

That Which Emerges is the first solo exhibition of Eugenia P. Butler’s work since her passing in 2008. With a prolific career that spanned over forty years, Butler played a formative but often overlooked role in the conceptual art movement. The exhibition title, borrowed from a large work on paper of the same name, traces a through-line within four distinct bodies of work, each connecting material and immaterial realms of inquiry.

Butler’s early text pieces gesture towards the potential of the imagination, and engage the viewer to perceive the phenomena of the mind. As the only woman exhibited at her mother’s groundbreaking conceptual art gallery on La Cienega Boulevard in the sixties, her work gained international critical attention early on. These early works were partly an outgrowth of her exploration of invisibility while an art student at UC Berkeley. They rivaled those of her male contemporaries—many of whom exhibited with her mother (including James Lee Byers, John Baldessari, Joseph Kosuth, and Dieter Roth).

The Flesh Drawings, a ritual act of literally “fleshing out” the field of unconsciousness, map the emotional terrain of the interior human condition. In shades of pink with grey and yellow, they are supple, erotic, and yet feel quietly dark. Within these drawings emerge floating shapes that intimate faces, bodies, forms, animals, and flora. These works piece together symbolic forms that suggest violence, confinement, and containment, while also revealing openness and support of natural forms.

Bridging Butler’s notion of ideas as objects, in 1993, she invited twenty-six artists from around the world to have conversations with her over a series of meals in a hidden booth at Art/LA ’93, for an event titled *The Kitchen Table*. The project included many notable artists, including Allan Kaprow, John Outterbridge, Carolee Schneemann, Suzanne Lacy, Felipe Ehrenberg, Marina Abramovic, Monica Mayer, and Joan Jonas, with the conversations grounded by the story-telling mode of exchange over a meal. It was Butler’s belief that the project and the deep exchange of ideas it proposed were a valid form of art. The full video archive from the project will be on view for the first time in this exhibition. A publication of the unabridged conversations, transcribed and edited by Leila Hamidi, will be available at The Box to commemorate the 25th anniversary of this project.

The most recent of the works on view, the *Sphere Drawings*, bridge a body of work that is deeply invested in the exploration of ideas and giving shape to the immaterial realm they inhabit. Echoing Butler’s lifelong interest in particle physics, these works hold a buoyant quality that allow for open engagement and deep meditation. The dream-like architectural space within the images of twisted staircases and open floor plans provide a glimpse both of the cosmos and the smallest particle of matter—holding energy, ideas, and allowing space for the unknown to unfold. What does it mean to visualize one’s inner life? Eugenia P. Butler tried and succeeded in doing so.

“I learned very early the critical importance of art and its relationship to the life of the mind”

