For All of this and nothing, the most recent exhibition in the Hammer Museum's ongoing Invitational series, curators Anne Ellegood and Douglas Fogle have invited seven Los Angeles–based artists to exhibit alongside seven of their peers from Berlin, Buenos Aires, Glasgow, London, Mexico City, and New York. At its heart, All of this and nothing explores affinities among a group of artists who investigate fundamental philosophical questions about our experiences of existing in the world. These expansive questions—"all of this"—are addressed not through grandiose statements or monumental objects but rather through simple gestures that are inscribed with the everyday and the ephemeral, with the sense that the things that appear to be "nothing" may in fact warrant our attention. By grounding their works in materiality and deconstructing their mediums, the artists featured in this volume reveal the processes of art making to the viewer and support the notion that meaning in art is unstable, residing in constellations of objects over time rather than in singular objects.

With contributions by Douglas Fogle, Anne Ellegood, Cornelia Peponis, John Cage, and Charles Long.

ARTISTS
Karla Black, Charles Gaines, Evan Holloway, Sergei Jensen, Ian Kater, Jorge Macchi, Dianna Molzan, Fernando Ortega, Eileen Quinlan, Gedi Sibony, Paul Stetsko, Frances Stark, Mateo Tanoss, Kerry Tribe
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Never neglect the little things of life—Samuel Beckett

This essay borrows its title, “Assisted Levitation,” from a work by Fernando Ortega in which he used a large crane to position a small bird feeder outside the window of a gallery in Madrid. The gallery is called the Arte Carrillo Gil in Mexico City. There were no other works in the exhibition, and one had to walk through empty space before reaching the window and seeing the piece. What at first glance appeared to be an incredible understatement (something as modest as a mere bird feeder constituting an entire exhibition) was revealed to be a much more complex affair, the scale of the crane far exceeding that of the typical artwork and its positioning outside the museum’s walls. One easy task was left: the viewer would see a bird feeding outside the window was left to chance (and patience), giving visitors an incentive to spend more time than they might normally with a work of art in order to see it come alive. Like much of the work in *All of this and nothing*, Ortega’s delicate nods to the poetic within the cycles of life and death. Reflecting his interest in the trajectory of time and the different ways in which it operates, he also combines intimate and frames moments as well as protracted periods, from the hours of the day to a lifetime. For *Vidas paralelas* (Parallel lives, 1998), Macchi took a hammer and chisel to a sheet of glass, punching a hole in it and creating a series of cracks radiating outward from the point of contact. On a second, accompanying sheet of glass, he painlessly created identical cracks with a glass cutter, producing what seems like a nearly impos-
IAN KIAER

Having started out as a painter, Ian Kiaer expanded his practice to incorporate sculptural elements after seeing an exhibition of the work of the architect Rem Koolhaas. Kiaer was impressed by the latent potential of the architectural models on view: "it was something to do with the model's physical presence, which by its nature is intimate and dependent on an interior space and yet metaphorically always tends to imply a wider proposition for society. I suppose in that sense, the model can work in the space between hermeticism and engagement; it has a place in both." Interested in visionary thinkers throughout intellectual history, Kiaer is fascinated by the idea that utopian social ideas are often developed by thinkers who are cloistered in forced or voluntary exile, an ironic duality that parallels the process of art's production occurring in isolation and its reception playing out in public.

Architectural models are made in preparation for building something at full scale, but in Kiaer's work models operate as proposals as well as spaces into which one may project oneself or that one may envision inhabited by an imaginary population. In this sense, his models are more like miniatures, a distinction of scale as it pertains to the experience of sculpture versus the function of scale in an architectural model, in which scale is used out of necessity to show how an idea will be manifested at a much larger size. In other words, they are intended to represent something real. In sculpture, scale is manipulated in relation to the content of the work and plays on perception and association in order to achieve a desired effect and to aid in the construction of meaning. By incorporating models into his arrangements of handmade and found objects, Kiaer opens the work to both possibilities; in the context of an artwork that includes other elements, his architectural models are both propositions and representations. He is thus able to achieve a doubling of scale. The first is human scale—one's encounter with the array of objects and images within the space in relation to one's own body — and the second is the imagined scale of a figure small enough to occupy the space of the model. At this scale everything is transformed: an upturned garbage pail is a mountain; an expanse of black plastic is an ocean.

Dumas project (2010) is based on the French author and adventurer Alexandre Dumas's 1850 novel The Black Tulip, which is set in seventeenth-century Holland and tells the fictional story of a young man who attempts to win a national competition to breed a black tulip but is suddenly imprisoned. The tale is set against the backdrop of the true story of the lynching of the highest-ranking Dutch government official and his brother by an angry mob in 1692. The constellations of works in Dumas project are mostly black and white, with the exception of Dumas project yellow offset (2010), which is made of stretched yellow cotton cloth covered by clear plastic sheeting. The black-and-white palette suggests presence and absence, substance and lack. The arrangements of objects recall traditional still-life painting, a genre that was prominent in seventeenth-century Dutch art. The landscape was also revered by Dutch painters of the period, and Kiaer's placement of delicate constructions of square, circular, and triangular hivelike forms in Dumas project black tulip rings, Dumas project small white offset, and Dumas project large white offset calls to mind the ships in harbor scenes that celebrated the legendary Dutch affinity for trade or the bounty of fruit and bouquets of flowers that symbolize abundance, beauty, and life in Dutch still lifes. Other floral motifs run through the work, as in the white-on-white patterning in the fabric element of Dumas project: small white offset (2010) and the suggestive title of Dumas project: bud, a small rock that is shaped like a nascent flower.

Kiaer strives to eradicate the possibility of apprehending his works as complete by employing several strategies, including composing his tableaux from fragments, refusing clearly delineated frames, and dispersing the point of view. These strategies are reinforced by his use of found ephemeral materials. The cast-off materials engage in an interplay with marginalized utopian ideas that he pulls from history and embeds in the work, not always as metaphor but often as representation. Using modest materials such as worn fabrics, balsa wood, cardboard, and trash to invoke majestic spaces, diminutive gestures to stand in for grand ideas, and sparsely arranged ordinary objects to evoke extraordinary landscapes, Kiaer conjures imagined spaces and real places, inviting the viewer to enter and explore the continually evolving ideas and the potential for change that lie within one's own history.


Ian Kiaer, Nominov project: Pravda workers' club, 2004; metal, wood and Formica table, paper, cardboard, rubber and acrylic sheet, wood, and watercolor and varnish on linen; dimensions variable. Courtesy of Janine Partilager.
Ian Kiaer, Dunes project: black tulip/rings, 2010; synthetic fabric, acrylic on taffeta, tissue paper, rubber, and plastic; overall dimensions variable, approx. 77 x 110 x 230 in. (195 x 280 x 710 cm). Collection Dr. Paul Marks, Toronto. Installation view, Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York.
Ian Kiaer, Dusan project: Large white offset, 2010; linen, acrylic on cotton, polystyrene, plastic, and rubber; 77 x 104 x 122 Lb. (195.6 x 264.3 x 310 cm). Courtesy of the artist and Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York. Installation view, Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York.
Ian Kiefer, *Duras project: small white offset*, 2010; oil on cotton, cotton pillow, cardboard, plastic, and paper towels; overall installation dimensions: 25 x 135 x 45 in. (139.7 x 343 x 114.3 cm). Collection Dr. Paul Marke, Toronto. Installation view, Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York.

Ian Kiefer, *Bruegel project: survival balloon*, 2007; Mylar and electric fan; installation dimensions variable. approx. 84 x 84 x 91 in. (213.5 x 213.5 x 231 cm). Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt. Installation view (with detail), Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York, 2007.