

### **ABOUT KIRSTEN STOLLE**

Kirsten Stolle is a visual artist working in collage, text-based images, and installation. Her research-based practice is grounded in the investigation of agribusiness propaganda, food politics, and biotechnology. Stolle was born in Newton, MA in 1967, lived and worked in the San Francisco Bay Area for 19 years, and currently lives in Asheville, NC. She received a BA in Visual Arts from Framingham State University, and completed studies at Richmond College in London, England and Massachusetts College of Art and Design.

Her work has been published in The Atlantic, Photograph, The Billboard Creative, TAZ Berlin, Le Monde diplomatique, SLEEK, Made in Mind magazine, Poetry magazine, The Creators Project, and Widewalls, among others.

Stolle's work is included in the permanent collections of the San José Museum of Art, Crocker Art Museum, and the Minneapolis Institute of Art. She is a recipient of a Pollock-Krasner Foundation grant, as well as grants from the San Francisco Arts Commission, The Puffin Foundation, and Artists' Fellowship, Inc. She has been awarded numerous residencies including at the Ucross Foundation, Blue Mountain Center, Millay Arts, and Marble House

The work in this exhibition was supported by the North Carolina Arts Council, The Puffin Foundation, Ltd., Ucross Foundation, and Turkey Land Cove Foundation.

This exhibition is funded in part by a grant from South Arts in partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts and the South Carolina Arts Commission, and with the generous support of Charleston magazine and Mindelle Seltzer and Robert Lovinger.



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#### **RELATED EVENTS**

All events during this exhibition will occur in person in the Halsey Institute galleries. subject to change. Events are free and open to the public, unless noted. Check halsey.cofc.edu for up-to-date information.

#### **OPENING RECEPTION**

Friday, August 26, 6:30-8:00 PM Free for all Halsey Institute Members and CofC Community \$5 donation otherwise

#### ARTIST TALK WITH KIRSTEN STOLLE

Saturday, August 27, 2:00 PM

#### **CURATOR'S COFFEE CLUB**

Friday, September 16, 9:00-11:00 AM Free for all Halsev Institute Members

#### LECTURE BY ESSAYIST HANNAH STAR ROGERS

Tuesday, October 4, 7:00 PM

#### WGS INTERSECTIONS: KIRSTEN STOLLE

Wednesday, October 19, 5:00 PM A panel discussion with CofC Women's and Gender Studies Program

#### SIT A SPELL CONVERSATION SERIES

Thursday, November 10, 12:00 PM In partnership with CofC Center for Sustainable Development

#### FAMILY DAY!

Sunday, November 13, 1:00-5:00 PM Free for all Halsey Institute Members \$5 for non-member families

#### LOCATION

The Marion and Wayland H. Cato Jr. Center for the Arts College of Charleston 161 Calhoun Street, Charleston, SC 29401 halsey.cofc.edu

#### **GALLERY HOURS**

During exhibitions Monday-Saturday, 11:00 AM-4:00 PM Open until 7:00 PM on Thursdays Free admission!

#### CONTACT

(843) 953-4422 or halsey@cofc.edu

#### BLOG

Learn more about the exhibition at halsey.cofc.edu/learn

The Halsey Institute of Contemporary Art at the College of Charleston School of the Arts provides a multidisciplinary laboratory for the production, presentation, interpretation, and dissemination of ideas by innovative visual artists from around the world. As a non-collecting museum, we create meaningful interactions between adventurous artists and diverse communities within a context that emphasizes the historical, social, and cultural importance of the art of our time.

#### IMAGE CREDITS:

This side, top left: How To Control Weeds [detail], 2020. Ink on archival pigment print; Reverse side, top left: Good Good Days? (detail), 2022. From the series Science For A Better Life. Collage, 1984 Bayer magazine advertisement, Reverse side bottom right: Faith, Hope & \$5,000 (detail), 2017. Cut-outs, collage, and acrylic on found book pages; Cover top left: Roundup Concentrate Plus, 2022. From the series Pesticide Pop. Dibond with vinyl overlay; Cover top right: Fast Action Roundup, 2022. From the series Pesticide Pop. Dibond with vinyl overlay; Cover bottom left: Bayer Advanced, 2022 From the series Pesticide Pop. Dibond with vinyl overlay; Cover bottom right: 2, 4-D Weed Killer, 2022. From the series Pesticide Pop. Dibond with vinyl overland All works © Kirsten Stolle and courtesy of the artist and Tracey Morgan Gallery

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## HALSEY INSTITUTE OF CONTEMPORARY ART

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### **KIRSTEN STOLLE**

# **ONLY YOU CAN PREVENT A FOREST**

August 26 - December 10, 2022











## The Artist in the Archive The Discoveries of Kirsten Stolle

by Hannah Star Rogers

Only You Can Prevent A Forest challenges viewers to examine the often-assumed differences between art and science with boundary-crossing works. Artist Kirsten Stolle's works collectively show that categories of art and science are determined not by universal axioms but by practices that circumscribe bodies of knowledge. Our realities are constructed by social forces that we shape through our actions. These artworks draw on corporate archives to collectively form an alternative archive of the artists' ideas about the social impacts of the agrichemical industry.

Kirsten Stolle is an Asheville, North Carolina-based visual artist working in collage, drawing, and mixed-media who often focuses on food politics and biotechnology. In this exhibition, Stolle extends her work into addressing the connection between chemical companies and the U.S. military. What most distinguishes her engagements with corporate language and image is her research-based practice grounded in the investigation of corporate propaganda. Stolle's aesthetic strategies are not focused on the technical details of the chemicals, but rather on the context of the art-science work.

Stolle's potent mix of text and materials carry the weight of historical and current choices in many areas of life through chemical company influence, creating works that include ink prints, collages, pop-art

references, a site-specific sculpture, and salon-style gallery walls. Text is made material: viewers are asked to dwell on the words of the exhibition's title as a green neon light sculpture, and on those found in *Faith, Hope & \$5,000* (2017), repurposed from the title of Dan Forrestal's corporate history of the Monsanto Chemical Company. By giving these texts material heft, Stolle illuminates these companies' intentions.

The Science For A Better Life series (2020-2022) repurposes thirty years of aggressive advertising campaign images and texts from Bayer, Monsanto, and Dow Chemical, which marketed their toxic products in popular magazines. Using the conventions of erasure poetry, Stolle's work reveals by obscuring.² She collages, cuts, and draws, redacting texts to reveal connections. The distinctions between government and corporations fall away so viewers are invited to think of the use of these supposed divisions within the agrichemical sector. Left with an erasure text like: "New Hunters: Monsanto killers solve problems," from the New Hunters (2022) collage based on a 1965 advertisement, the artist's new texts prove sticky. This invites viewers to hold on to these words, so that when they encounter Plant Protection (2022), they are primed to read this towering assemblage of plastic pesticide bottles covered in gold glitter as an absurdity of gilded toxic greed.

In one of the six HERBS (2022) collages, we encounter a wide strip of bright orange vinyl pressed against a letterpressed guote from a Bayer CEO explaining that when Bayer acquired Monsanto in 2018, the Monsanto name would be subsumed under the Bayer corporation. The quote asserts that the Bayer name had been chosen for the company because of "strong, positive recognition" among consumers, as opposed to Monsanto's dubious international reputation. Stolle memorializes this act of naming and the power companies have to disconnect themselves from histories through mergers, acquisitions, and speech-acts. In doing so, she draws attention to the company's greenwashing tactics and insisting on the long lives of corporations and the lasting effects of corporate decision-making, which ultimately can be influenced by social values. The most striking work on the HERBS salon wall is an exploration of the Jesser-known color-named Rainbow Herbicides used in the American invasion of Việt Nam. The herbicides were named for the color-coded bands around the 55-gallon drums used to ship and store the chemicals.<sup>3</sup> As the reality of what these colors mean sinks into viewer's minds the colors are mentally transformed from pop-ish fun to blazing warnings.

Stolle's work not only gleans from corporate fields but also plants new ideas for viewers. Art-science work can be thought of in four major categories: conveyance, contributive, contextual, and critical modes. Stolle's artworks carry all of these categories. Combined, they offer viewers new discoveries about relationships for which

they may have never seen textual evidence. Information is being conveyed through this but so are critical modes with which viewers can approach these details with an understanding of the broader context of corporate connections. This gives rise to the most exciting aspect to Stolle's work: its potential to contribute new knowledge by bringing together newly formed strands of thought which can form into new narratives for viewers.

The artist in the archive returns to us with innovative ways to visualize social realities and relationships achieved through seductive colors and forms that draw us into textual complications. Even as the artist reveals our condition through dystopic histories, her works lead viewers toward awareness of Bayer-Monsanto and Dow's greenwashing by exposing their historical connections to warfare and encouraging viewers toward curiosity about the role of such companies in their everyday lives. Stolle's works leave open the possibility of the better future chemical companies could never provide: the future Stolle has planted through these artworks.





Hannah Star Rogers is an Art and Science Studies scholar, curator, and poet. She received her Ph.D. at Cornell University in Science & Technology Studies, where her research concerned the intersection of art and science.

#### NOTE

- 1. Dan Forrestal, Faith, Hope & \$5,000 (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1977)
- Erasure poetry was recently used to great effect in Redaction: A Project, a project by visual artists and filmmaker Titus Kaphar and poet Reginald Dwane Betts to explore ethical and current documents related to bail, court fees, and filmes for the MoMA PST's Spring 2019 exhibition.
   A.L. Young, The History, Use, Disposition and Environmental Fate of Agent Orange (New York:
- 4. Along with Megan K. Halpern, I offered a preliminary version of this typology which can help to analyze the contributions of projects at the intersection of art and science. See Rogers and Halpern, "Art-Science Collaborations, Complexities, and Challenges," in Routfedge Handbook of Public Communication of Science and Technology, 3rd edition, eds. Massimiano Bucchi and Brian Trench, 214-237 (New York: Routlededge, 2021)

