Ian Davenport/Sue Arrowsmith, Sam Durant/Ana Prvacki, Antony Gormley/Vicken Parsons, Dan Graham/Mieko Meguro, Kelly Barrie/Sherin Guirguis, Gary Hume/Georgie Hopton, Mary Kelly, Rem Koolhaas/Madelon Vriesendorp, Neo Rauch/Rosa Loy, Richard Wentworth /Jane Wentworth

Sweethearts: Artist Couples

21 March - 21 April 2012

SWEETHEARTS: ARTIST COUPLES

Antony Gormley + Vicken Parsons
Georgie Hopton + Gary Hume
Sue Arrowsmith + Ian Davenport
Kelly Barrie + Sherin Guirguis
Ray Barrie + Mary Kelly
Sam Durant + Ana Prvacki
Dan Graham + Mieko Meguro
Rem Koolhaas + Madelon Vriesendorp
Rosa Loy + Neo Rauch
Jane Wentworth + Richard Wentworth

Pippy Houldsworth Gallery is delighted to present rare collaborations by some of the world's most important artist couples in Sweethearts. Using their individual respective practices - artist, designer, or architect - each couple has collaborated on a unique and significant work, each piece being jointly negotiated, conceptualised and created.

Ana Prvacki & Sam Durant live in Los Angeles with their young daughter. History Wipes is the first work that one encounters in the gallery. In what may be considered a 'post-studio' practice, Prvacki and Durant resist the static nature of a fixed object within a gallery space, inviting each visitor to become part of their work by taking a wet wipe home with them. Such wipes are ubiquitous in our fast-paced world where restaurants, aeroplanes and other public places distribute them to quell the spread of germs. Both artists will participate in Documenta this year.

In their statement regarding the work, they discuss the significant implications in their small gesture:

'We provide a fantasy solution to personal, social, ecological, political, economic disasters, mistakes and disappointments and even deep, deep dirt. A clean slate is available with the History Wipe. For instance, generations of deeply entrenched sexism or racism, xenophobia can be wiped clean with a simple gesture. Why spend years reading Marx or meditating when the beginners mind is just a wipe away, effortlessly and endlessly. With our product an instant moral and ethical shift makes a new world possible.'

Ray Barrie & Mary Kelly have lived London and New York for many years, and now live and work in Los Angeles. How to Build a Bomb Shelter at Home is a process-based piece that uses compressed lint as medium. It is an amalgamation of Kelly's earlier lint pieces that typically use historical texts as inspiration and Barrie's sculptural work. Made in a typical household dryer the work is built up over loads of laundry that leave a trace on a lint filter.

The diagrams represent instructions on building a Morrison shelter, a ubiquitous domestic item familiar to all post-war American homes.

'Whether it ends with an argument or an epiphany, for us, everything begins with a conversation at the kitchen table.
Before this work became a self-conscious collaboration, it was simply an exchange:

“Hear that plane? Sounds just like a V2.”
“How would you know? You weren’t born yet.”

We were talking about growing up after the war and how the traumatic impact of that event was passed on in the gestures and silences, even more than the words, of our parents. And how, as a consequence, the social movements of the 1970s spun a narrative that separated us from them. Most of all, though, we were thinking about the absurd optimism of turning a kitchen table, just like the one we were sitting at, into a make-shift bed and shelter, where the whole family, but sadly, not our dog, would gather during night-time air-raids. It was this uncanny combination of domesticity and global catastrophe that led us back to the laundry room, to the dryer lint captured in the filter screen, and to the process of casting assembly diagrams of the Morrison shelter, circa 1941, in low relief.'

Richard & Jane Wentworth have lived together in London for the past three decades and have two grown sons. Jane runs a successful practice that consults with major cultural agencies and museums around the globe. Richard is one of Britain’s most cherished artists and has taught generations of YBAs. His work takes a post-studio approach and is done through his peripatetic travels. For Sweethearts they have produced the installation Heads, Bodies and Legs.

Ian Davenport & Sue Arrowsmith created two paintings that combine their individual approaches to image making, with the abstract gesture of Davenport and the precise linear quality of Arrowsmith’s work. Both romantic in nature, their palette may read as a cyclical dyad of night (Midnight Moonlight) and day (Sunshine of Your Love).

Davenport and Arrowsmith said this about the work:

'It was a new experience working together on a painting and discussing what might be successful. We talked a lot about collaborations in the past we found interesting. One we really liked was between Warhol and Basquiat. They made a piece together mimicking a boxing poster, so we jokingly ordered some boxing gloves!

We began by making two small works, using a circle background painted by Ian and then a tree study by Sue. One came together more quickly. We found the circle provided an atmospheric colour and a starting point that Sue was able to complement, painting on top a willow tree. We started a dark blue version next and then Ian realised he had begun a similar coloured painting months earlier, only to reject it because it reminded him too much of a moonscape. The piece then fell into place with Sue overpainting a black tree silhouette.

Midnight Moonlight is very evocative of a scene we all recognise and we are both very pleased. No arguments or heated discussions and the boxing gloves weren't needed after all!'

Antony Gormley & Vicken Parsons are artists who have lived and worked in London for the past thirty years. They are known for their respective practices—he for his large-scale figurative work and she for her abstract painting. Gormley’s Angel of the North, 1998 in Northeast England is one of the most celebrated sculptures of our generation, making him a household name in the UK.

Relational Aesthetics, a three-dimensional work made in collaboration, combines their practices. A mobile-like structure consists of spherical shapes hung at differing heights, resulting in a personal set of references that conjures the notion of a constellation. The spheres are painted in colours and strokes similar to Parsons' abstract canvases while the configuration of shapes is reminiscent of Gormley's sculpures based on DNA. A play on the contemporary art historical term 'relational aesthetics', it is also a tongue-in-cheek reference to the negotiation that goes along with any relationship, personal or creative.

Rosa Loy & Neo Rauch are both artists who live and work in Leipzig, Germany and are leading figures in what is known as the Leipzig School. Both are painters who work with figuration: Loy is known, amongst other aspects, for her mythical constructions and use of animals, and Rauch for his postmodern take on social realism. Their combined effort results in a large-scale painting called Die Jagdgesellschaft, which is a perfect union of their work. On the left side of the canvas, upright female figures hold what appear to be weapons (guns or pipes) and are flanked by a protective dog and two large-scale rabbits. The fairy-tale nature of this is complemented on the right side of the canvas, where masculine figures conjure a nostalgic and clichéd notion of German history. A man wearing a war medal and traditional clothes smokes a pipe while others in the background congregate and converse. The palette adds to what may be considered their critique of the kitsch, romanticised nature of much Teutonic folklore.

Georgie Hopton & Gary Hume live between London and upstate New York. They have created a series of seven works for Sweethearts that combine photography, painting and collage.

'It seemed apparent, even without discussion, that the two of us being together in one studio was not going to be conducive to producing a collaborative work. Both Gary and I are solitary creatures where work is concerned and feel very possessive (or is it protective?) of/towards our studios..... So, I took the initiative and sent Gary a collection of various of my still life photographs to get a 'conversation going'. I imagined he would find use for some of them and produce drawings from them which, by the very nature of his working method, would resemble very little my originals. Instead, he chose to simply look at and paint directly from one of these photographs - a small pink vase containing yellow nasturtiums. The result: three 'after paintings' which, to me, are joyful, tender and full of music.

Gary then sent me three of his drawings, drawings which do not come from my photographs, nor from anywhere I know. He prefers to keep their origin a mystery. To me they appeared to be abstract, but as David Hockney says, everything is abstract, so for all I know, they're completely figurative. It was hard for me to begin to work with them, they were so alien to me - and seemed so complete already. But apparently they were not, or didn't have to be, and I knew I had to do something with them, so after a battle, I did. I have been making collages again over the past few years and it seemed the only way to go with these. They had a certainty I could only meet with more certainty - and collage I find to be pretty no holds barred. There is no meaning, only feeling in them. I thought of Gary - it was impossible not to, being faced with his work, and I thought of the two of us and tried to conjure up something of our union in the pieces. The titles say more of this. One of them is made with a wallpaper we recently used in a room in our house. It seemed a nice idea, to bring a bit of domestic bliss into the equation, for lately, we've been experiencing much of this.'

In the second gallery Mieko Meguro & Dan Graham have contributed a dialogue resulting in four small drawings. Graham, who has lived in New York for most of his life, and Meguro, who is originally from outside of Sapporo, Japan, now lives and works in New York. Graham's work is known for its conceptual and performative approach to architecture and experience, while Meguro is known for her drawings and hand made artists books. Dan, Dan Thinks and Dan with my panda pillow on an aeroplane #1 and #2 were made on a journey from New York to Copenhagen. Meguro drew Graham wearing several of her items, such as sunglasses and her panda travel pillow. These colourful and exuberant drawings nevertheless suggest the intimacy of fellow travelers, both through the

globe and through life.

Kelly Barrie & Sherin Guirguis live and work in Los Angeles with their son. Barrie is himself a ‘sweetheart’ as the child of two well-known artists. He grew up around creative people and family friend Dan Graham gave him his first cassette tape. Guirguis is originally from Egypt and teaches at Otis College. Her work typically employs Islamic patterns that take the form of both cut drawings and larger, three-dimensional sculpture. Barrie’s work is rooted in conceptual and process-based photography. Their collaboration is the perfect alignment of their individual practices as well as their respective cultures.

Slow Dance (Enta Omry) is based on a performance where the couple danced to a 45-minute ballad titled “Enta Omry” by legendary Egyptian vocalist Um Kalthoum. Using elements from each of their practices, Barrie and Guirguis constructed an Arabic “rug” using photo-luminescent powder on black paper. The couple then performed the dance, tracking their footsteps on the powder, disrupting the hard edge pattern of the “rug” and simultaneously using it to map their movements. The end result was then photographed in small sections, stitched back together digitally and outputted as one seamless photographic print.

Rem Koolhaas & Madelon Vriesendorp live in Rotterdam and London. Both are originally from the Netherlands and are steeped within international art and architecture practice. Vriesendorp’s work has been the subject of a major retrospective and Koolhaas is one of the leading architects and theorists of our time. Their work Flagrant Delit is an irreverent take on architecture, where the Empire State and the Chrysler building lie together in a post-coital scene, in a bed that straddles the map of Manhattan. Created during the research for Koolhaas’ book Delirious New York these drawings served as inspiration for the concept behind Sweethearts.

Opening Hours: Mon-Fri 10-6, Sat 10-4.
For further information, please contact Claire Nichols on +44 (0)20 7734 7760 or claire@houldsworth.co.uk.

Upcoming:
Rachel Goodyear, A Tethered Swarm, Main Gallery, 27 April - 26 May 2012
Ai Weiwei, The Box, 27 April - 26 May 2012