

VERENA DENGLER

Dengled Up In Blue

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Dengled Up In Blue is Verena Dengler's wordplay on Bob Dylan's *Tangled Up In Blue*, as though the song were his self-deprecating declaration as a music-making amateur painter. Dengler's title is coquettish yet significant: A polymorphic installation manifests a discourse focusing on her person, which ultimately serves as a stand-in for female artists' existence within the complexity of the art scene, as well as within the broader context of contemporary realities. Her roles as a woman, as an artist, as a writer, as a model and muse for artists and friends – the complex valency of her various simultaneous identities – are addressed, subverted in the individual pieces, and balanced out in the installation as a whole. Verena Dengler appropriates the space, rearranges it, rips open the blocked-out windows in order to occupy even the street outside with a large-scale tarp featuring her portrait.

In the first room, Verena Dengler issues a first warning: Blue spray-painted cardboard packaging from the art supply company Boesner is mounted in a golden picture frame, signaling Warning, Art! At the threshold to the main room she places a second notice: Welded lettering spells out the words "name-dropping." A instrument of artistic production that plays an important role in the often-employed citing of historical references. Verena Dengler herself makes use of this approach, citing aesthetic historicisms, banal everyday phenomena, as well as avant-garde high art and myths. She references fellow artists, alludes to real production conditions in the art scene, as well as the intermediate world of the internet, and allows these very divergent complexities to run into one another. The collision releases entirely new meanings.

The power of stereotypes, social codes, and artistic genius is undermined through incisive allusions. Dengler brings conventional hierarchies into disarray and ignores genre boundaries. The stuffy needlepoint picture is given the status of abstract painting, amplified by a pseudo-nice pink frame. The pixel-like structure is emphasized as a quality. Rugs, as textile paintings, lie on the floor. A tarp becomes a glorified monumental portrait. The smallest piece is hung on the specially built high wall.

No medium is left out – from drawing, painting, sculpture, textile design, installation, literature, to performance captured on video, these various approaches are all melded together. In an essay, Verena Dengler takes on the role of ghost-writer; *Envy Nordpol* is once more a play on words. In the text, pop-culture and philosophical ideas intermesh just as they do in the art work. In the video, she plays a homecoming art star living a bizarre existence unmoored from reality. Irony as well as criticism of society and politics flare up in razor-sharp spikes.

With precisely deployed seriousness and rigor, Verena Dengler develops a complex and sprawling display that simultaneously analyzes and deconstructs itself, yet also charges itself with content. By means of a methodology of controversy, the work develops from a personal and self-referential level to a generally relevant level of critical reflection that allows the powerful force of its content to unfold. Various meanings and connotations overlap to form a polysemic zone around the heterogeneous categories of identity and authenticity of the artist as an artificial character. Quite significantly, in her piece *Spott & Hohner* (mixed media, 2014), Verena Dengler cites the words of Karl Lagerfeld: *And what this term supposed to mean "Kunstfigur"? For me, the figure... is more important than the art.*

Text: Margareta Sandhofer