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1.Color 2.Hole and 3.Joke

Selected Works on Paper
 Curated by Christian Meyer
 January–March 2020
 Location Eschenbachgasse
 Publication

Artists: Rachel Harrison, Ulrike Müller, Yoshitomo Nara, Raymond Pettibon, Florian Pumhösl, Amelie von Wulffen, Franz West, Heimo Zobernig (ill. p. 752)

Press Release (excerpt)

Drawing became fashionable in the 18th century when it left the confines of the artist’s studio to enter a broader field of discourse, culture, politics, and social life. This transformation was most evident in France, where drawing was significantly and influentially repositioned and reconceptualized. This exhibition traces the emergence of the modern understanding of works on paper in multiple senses—as an autonomous form of expression, an index of the artist’s style, an object of aesthetic contemplation, and an epistemological tool. By exploring the artists’ interactions with paper rather than simply their use of the material as a basis, the exhibition considers works on paper as a means of conceptualization as well as a visual mode of thinking in and of itself. Focusing on the power of contemporary works on paper, this selection of work looks at how artists use drawing to examine themes including identity, place, and memory, thereby pushing the boundaries of the medium. The constitutive influence of Pop Art on their work is shared by all the artists represented in the show. Building on the achievements of Dadaism, the Pop artists began to parody the society on which their reactions were based. The Pop Art movement then sought to solidify the idea that art can draw from any source, that there is no cultural hierarchy to disrupt this. Presented in a fine art setting, the line between “high culture” and the quotidian becomes blurred. To assess the permanent conceptual impact on contemporary drawing, we must bear in mind some of the characteristics of contemporary art after Pop Art: Appropriation of cultural icons; use of vibrant, bright colors, irony, and satire; as well as innovative techniques like print, mixed media, and collage that reference its graphic nature.

Amy Sillman writes on Rachel Harrison’s exhibition at CCS Bard Galleries, *Consider the Lobster*:

- “11. Brown light vs. iridescence. Ludwig Wittgenstein: “‘Brown light.’ Suppose someone were to suggest that a traffic light be brown.”
- 12. Suppose someone were to suggest a world made of cardboard, a world with a monochromatic dun color and with only two dimensions. What could be revealed in this flat, matte world? Few events would be able to pierce its surfaces, to jab or cut past its folded edges.
- 13. Harrison sets up such a world made out of cardboard, with pictures of iridescent windows hung around its periphery. It is like a medieval diagram, where the world is reduced to the stark duality of brown versus shiny. But paradoxically, the simplicity of this boiling down into a mere two-ness, the dun world versus the radiant one, offers us a way to sense more palpably the possibility of contact between two worlds, two entities, or to imagine more powerfully the possibility of their conflation or collapse.
- 14. Inside the folds of the cardboard world are little visual jokes, little punch lines in the form of figurines. Some of the figurines are brightly colored.
- 15. Harrison names three ways to cut through a two-part world: 1) color; 2) hole; and 3) joke.
- 16. In this world, then, colors and holes and jokes are one and the same. They have the same valence. What is there, what is visible, what is lacking, what is repressed, what has been removed, what is invisible, what is tactile, all render themselves in outline form.
- 17. Indigenous parts. Cut-up white shapes interact with a punch list of color swatches that hit the eye: first pink, then orange, purple, green, lemon-lime, rabbit gray, raspberry, and aqua. When Harrison breaks from narrative color, she turns first (like a good modernist) to categories.
- 18. White, or no-color, attains equal status with color or material, and therefore the act

of removal attains equal status with coloring in. To cut or to color, both are to delineate pugnacious little patches that punch you in the eye. In Harrison’s hands, colors and cuts stay as shapes. All colors are treated equally as holes and cuts, and all the removals are treated as shapes. What isn’t seen is equal to what is seen. Is this female? 19. Comedy. Jewish comedy? Carl Andre’s famous line, “A hole is a thing in a thing it is not,” could be paraphrased into the following Borscht Belt formulation: A hole is a joke in a thing it is not. How much more pugnaciously slapstick can you get than cutting a hole out of a room?

20. What if you withdraw from sensation? What if you cut out a hole? Is the removal of a hole an obstacle? Is a failed obstacle a way through? Can you remove the world?”¹

1 – Rachel Harrison, *museum with walls*, Bard College, New York 2010

Boltenstern.Raum

Nicolas Ceccaldi
 Knock knock
 invited by Hélène Fauquet
 January–March 2020
 Location Eschenbachgasse
 (ill. p. 756)

Press Release

Knock knock is an exhibition by Nicolas Ceccaldi about *Joker*, a 2019 American psychological thriller film directed and produced by Todd Phillips and starring Joaquin Phoenix. Set in early-1980s Gotham City, the film provides an origin story for Batman’s infamous arch nemesis never seen before on the big screen, following Arthur Fleck (Joaquin Phoenix), a social outcast and aspiring stand-up comedian who lives alone with his mother and who suffers from many mental illnesses including one which causes him to laugh uncontrollably when he is nervous. The film embarks us in Arthur’s descent into insanity and nihilism, inspiring a downward spiral of crime and violence, setting off a revolutionary uprising in the decaying metropolis; a path that brings him face-to-face with his alter-ego: the Joker. Joker is not only a gritty character study, but also a broader cautionary tale. The film and its main character are treated figuratively and metaphorically as subject matter, making the exhibition both an homage and a commentary. Every artwork takes various themes, narrative tropes, or visual elements from the film, and references them either in the form of personal interpretations or direct quotation. The exhibition title references the opening of a popular joke format (“*knock knock – who’s there?*”) a variation of which is delivered by Arthur Fleck in his Joker make-up during an awkward appearance on a talk show hosted by Murray Franklin (Robert De Niro), a TV presenter he idolizes. Despite having repeatedly rehearsed this moment in his living room and in his fantasies, Joker’s timing is off and after tediously rummaging through his “joke book,” he finally delivers the opening line “knock knock” prompting the host to quip “and you had to look that up?”



Untitled, 2020
acrylic on canvas
200×155 cm

Julia Haller

Knights
May–June 2020
Location Eschenbachgasse
(ill. p. 758)

Review
Brigitte Huck, Artforum International, September 2020

Just when it seemed that we would never emerge from the widespread mild depression caused by two months of lockdown, Julia Haller jolted us awake with her exhibition “Knights.” At long last, a light at the end of the digi-tunnel! The choice of artist for Meyer Kainer’s reopening sent a clear signal: the special qualities of Haller’s work demand a live encounter, which nothing can replace. How else would we feel the energy and rhythm of a hanging or the reverberations of a particular piece, its feedback sound? “Knights” was the artist’s third solo show at the Viennese gallery. The inception of the works she presented there in 2014 lay in the act of drawing with her left and right hands at the same time; these scrawls were engraved into nonporous Corian panels with a CNC milling machine before the application of paint and iron-oxide pigment. Her second show, in 2017, featured startling samples of yet another innovative transfer process: motifs—shrubs, palms, bare trees on islands—drawn on a computer and printed directly on canvases primed with acrylic, gesso, or emulsion paint, yielding dazzlingly glossy surfaces.

“The painted picture is no longer credible,” claims the fictional protagonist of a text Haller wrote in place of an artist’s statement in 2012. In the years since, the erstwhile student of Heimo Zobernig, under whom she studied “textual sculpture” at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, has dedicated herself to the production of hieratic, nonconformist, risky, and exceptionally alluring works in which painting undergoes a metamorphosis: the medium is in revolt, and its sculptural dimension takes over, revealing intangible contents, the absent, the discordant. Her work is not painting, it’s metapainting.

In this exhibition, Haller pressed the reset button with a black monochrome right by the entrance and then, as if in a game of carom billiards, played a series of bank shots, aiming for the edges, seizing an opening, sliding along the walls, turning a corner, occupying a frame. She responded to earlier exhibitions at the gallery—paintings were hung on the wall installed for the preceding show, by Anne Speier, and the orange wall paint in one gallery was familiar from its use by Ulrike Müller in 2019—putting them to use as repoussoirs and resonators for her works.

The nine unprimed canvases in Haller’s show—all Untitled, acrylic on canvas, 2020, the checklist tersely noted—were the scenes of a shift of register: from generously spaced fields of white, pink, yellow, or a bold brownish orange to meandering lines or fragments of lines; from a swarming mass of doodles to squiggles, graffiti, and cartoons. The interest was in the gesture and in the trace. Referential meaning and even intentionality are dispensable. So is classical compositional organization. What counts is weightlessness, suspense. As Bowie phrased it, channeling his Major Tom: “I’m floating in a most peculiar way!”

With a certain mysterious detachment, Haller tries to prevent us from figuring out her creative logic. “Knights” needed no Texte zur Kunst. A xeroxed leaflet sufficed. It consisted of eight repetitions of the phrase “I’m trying to write a sentence with a mouse,” borrowed from a text by artist Christoph Bruckner. Art and language were here reduced to a scrawl, contesting the authority and professorial presumption of experts. And yet Haller does not hesitate to insert allusions to canonical works of art into her work: “The black square inevitably evokes Malevich. But these are not quotations,” as the gallery’s Christian Meyer assured me, nor statements, but rather symptoms. And, as they say, thou shalt love thy symptoms as thyself.

Boltenstern.Raum

Edith Deyerling
tempt me blue
invited by H el ene Fauquet
May–June 2020
Location Eschenbachgasse
(ill. p. 760)

Text (excerpt)
Bellu&Bellu

Idiosyncratic Abstractions

2d

Edith Deyerling’s approach to painting is a door that she has painted herself. The bell on this door reads ‘Edith Deyerling.’ Edith rings Edith’s doorbell, sometimes there is only a door but no bell, sometimes a bell without a door, and sometimes Edith opens the door.

The paintings produce rather than imitate; they reflect not reality but the impossibility of its representation. It is therefore not the truth of the representational reality that is of interest, but the changes in the representation of the perceivable. The familiar slowly fades away, contours blur, and the world slowly disappears from view. Abstraction is an effect of affect—it is not pure, nor does reduction offer a universality that extends beyond body, time, and space.

Marcin Maciejowski

We are Awesome
June–July 2020
Location Eschenbachgasse
(ill. p. 762)

Text
Marcin Maciejowski

We are Awesome

My shows are, for me, a summation of hours spent in my studio. Their narration is rarely planned from the very beginning, instead, it forms from individual events, messages, conversations, thoughts, films—all these individual impulses are potential paintings for me.

During the pandemic, my world was limited to my studio, garden, and online life; however, this was not a big change in my daily routine. I didn’t feel isolated, but I felt that the pandemic was blocking me somehow, even though it also gave me a lot of creative impulses. Just sometimes it was difficult to use them in the painting process itself. I wondered what paintings should be painted in times of the global situation with COVID-19. First, when further cultural events were canceled, I thought, maybe none of them. But after a while, it seemed to me that they should be special, important, universal, and meaningful works. It seemed to me that instead of creative fantasies, the situation called for a practical approach to reality. I was very tormented by these thoughts and assumptions. And this did not help me much in painting.

But drawing during that time was easy, almost every day during the lockdown, I was sketching something, I made some diary entries, on pages—intimate, tiny, sometimes funny, I saved the current moment, something that made my day. What was that? The neighbor’s cat broke into the studio regularly and we laughed that he didn’t respect the quarantine rules. Instead of visits, friends were sending selfies with their pets that saved them from loneliness and stress. The adventures of animals have replaced



I’ve got my eyes on you, 2020
oil on canvas
120×80 cm

the adventures of people, a bit like in the classic Aesop's Fables. These little joys and emotional relationships with animals were great material for sketches. Better than media panic. The virtual world assured us that it is very difficult, and we, in social media, assured the world that we could do it and that we are awesome. Everyone wants to be awesome. To keep fit while the lockdown was in progress, I regularly ran on my treadmill watching documentaries. One of them was *Christian Dior: The Refinement of a Lost Paradise*. I like watching the same movies many times and I liked this one. For a moment, the great tailor became my artistic alter ego, a hardworking perfectionist, completely absorbed in sketching his fantasies about perfect looking women. Not practical, but as it soon turned out, at the same time desirable in a modest, postwar reality. I found loose analogies to the present time in this film—the creative energy of Dior was truly inspirational. His way of drawing fascinated me—he drew his own visions all the time. He made dozens of sketches before he put something into practice. And it was close to me, because I drew a lot myself, and at the same time, more and more sketches were waiting in the studio. For some reason, I expected more from paintings than drawings and sketches, until I returned to my own world without being sure that it fits in global current affairs. I started painting. I found myself in a quiet place where the most important decisions are about what to eat for dinner and which of the sketches await me to start painting today. It's the best place for the artist and an awesome feeling.

Boltenstern.Raum

Kamilla Bischof
Am Fuße der großen Stehlampe
invited by Julian Inić
June–July 2020
Location Eschenbachgasse
(ill. p. 766)

Text (Exzerpt)
Esther Buss

Malerei mit Sprungfedern

Die in „Am Fuße der großen Stehlampe“ gezeigten Bilder sind alle in den letzten drei, vier Monaten entstanden. Sie wirken fester und geschlossener als die eher luftig angelegten Arbeiten, die zuletzt in Graz und Berlin zu sehen waren, vielleicht auch ein wenig geführter, der skurrile Überschwang macht einem atmosphärisch etwas dunkleren Ton Platz. Die Ölfarben sind kräftig und gedeckt, es gibt viel Grau und Blau, die Rottöne gehen ins Rostige, auch das Orange sieht nicht mehr ganz frisch aus. Der stellenweise dann doch wolkige Eindruck entsteht durch den Einsatz von Spray, gelegentlich bearbeitet die Künstlerin die Maloberfläche auch mit Kreide, so ergeben sich Stellen mit eher haptischer Textur. Diese Bilder wirken eher organisch gewachsen als gesetzt, das Verhältnis von Ausformuliertem und Skizzenhaftem folgt dennoch einer ökonomischen Logik.

Ihre zeichnerische Anlage kommt ihnen zugute.

Auf den ersten Blick herrscht Übersichtlichkeit: Ein Basketball liegt in einem Blumenbeet, eine nackte Frau mit robustem Schuhwerk stemmt vor einem Spiegel Gewichte, ein Wesen mit Engelsflügeln sitzt auf einem Hydranten, im Hintergrund fährt ein Bus vorbei. Man ist schnell versucht, die einzelnen Elemente zu einer narrativen Szene zu ordnen—mit der Beschreibung von Figuren, Schauplätzen, Handlungen. Durch das Verschieben und gezielte Verunklaren von Beziehungen bringt Bischof das Erzählmaterial jedoch bald aus der Ordnung. Gerade in den bühnenhaften, vermeintlich offenen Anordnungen lauern Verstecke, vielleicht auch Fallen. In „Sonne oder Sauna“

führt eine Leiter vor blauem Himmel in das triste Setting einer einsamen Existenz, die vor lauter Mühe, ein bestimmtes Bild von sich selbst zu modellieren, die Verbindung zur Welt verloren hat. Das zeltartige Ding in „Das gelackte Leben“ sieht einladend aus, mit seinen Zähnen erinnert es aber auch an eine fleischfressende Pflanze, an eine Mundhöhle oder, nicht weniger beängstigend, an eine Vagina Dentata. Oder „Geschichten aus dem Gardinenwald“, ein Bild, das mit Dimensionen und volkstümlich-fröhlichem Überschuss spielt. Eine durcheinandergewürfelte Menge aus Menschen, Tieren, Sachen und Körperfragmenten reiht sich am Rand einer Sprechblase, die zur Bühne umgemünzt wurde. Bei Bischof ist die Welt der Figuren und Dinge ein dynamischer Mechanismus, der ständig neue Bedeutungen, Funktionen und Gestalten generiert – die Sprungfedern einer Matratze könnten zu Spinnen mutieren, aus einem paar Gartenclogs steigt eine Rauchwolke aus Fragezeichen. Man kennt diese Art der Elastizität und Zweckentfremdung aus dem Animationsfilm. Etwa aus Walt Disneys „Steamboat Willie“, in dem Mickey Mouse als frecher Deckhelfer mit allem Musik macht, was ihm so in die Hände gerät, und es ist vielleicht kein Zufall, dass auf den neuen Bildern vermehrt comichafte Elemente zirkulieren. Auch das Listige haben Bischofs Malereien mit den Cartoons gemein. Es ist einfach immer mit allem zu rechnen, man muss schon ein wenig auf der Hut sein.

Curated by Sarah Lucas and Kris Lemsalu

SEÑORA!
September–October 2020
Location Eschenbachgasse
Publication
Artists: Sarah Lucas, Kris Lemsalu, Michèle Pagel, Kate Boxer, Edith Karlson, Patricia Jordan, Bárbara Sánchez-Kane, Angela Bulloch, Johanna Ulfsak, Marilyn Humphreys
(ill. p. 768)

Text
Attilia Fattori Franchini

One is not born, but rather becomes a SEÑORA

*Revolution is not a one-time event.*¹

Can an exhibition have the force of revolution?
Can its spirit be so subversive that inspires more acts of rebellion?
Can it create new forms of collectivity?

As a perfectly fitting dress, suavely shaping a body whilst presenting it in a novel form, *SEÑORA!* incarnates those questions whilst deconstructing gender, both socially and through materialism.

The show, presented at Meyer Kainer as part of curated_by 2020, jointly devised by artists Kris Lemsalu and Sarah Lucas, invites friends, collaborators, and associates to make their inner network of knowledge, exchange, and support visible. It is a double act of love and caring, of openness and inclusion. It is an invitation to offer multiple perspectives and exchanges, to bring out the strengths of those they admire and respect; a refusal to worship the individualistic ego.

SEÑORA! was born in Italy and we connect this incipit to the artists' previous collaboration during the 58th Venice Biennale as part of Lemsalu's Estonian Pavilion celebration. It is important to highlight the word celebration as Lemsalu's *Birth V – Hi and Bye* (2019) was a (re)birth, a collective nativity. Taking inspiration from ancient myths, German carnival, pagan and Nordic rituals, Lemsalu is a cosmic shaman



Invitation, 2020

embracing the transcendental consequentiality of life-death, day and night, summer and winter, good and evil—which she reenacts through cathartic performances. The Estonian artist has a reputation for arousing abjection, rejection, and shocking feelings in the viewer. Her pieces are kitsch, uncanny, at times dystopian, absurd but also playful as they overthrow assumptions: physical, social, and historical. They bear a visceral effect, almost vertiginous making you feel unstable.

The practice of Sarah Lucas is hyperbolic punk. It is rebellious, particularly not PC, and groundbreaking. For the last thirty years, she has made work characterized by a pun-like witty approach subverting notions of identity and sexuality. Questioning the very meaning of gender roles and art-making, Lucas’s practice pierces the security of our everyday. She employs in infinite novel ways, readily available materials such as household objects or food—whilst also being interested in the juxtaposition of various artistic viewpoints. As Maggie Nelson writes, “Lucas has been making objects that ‘look so fucking good’ out of a shape-shifting devotion to questions of anatomy, presence, ambivalence, rudeness, and humor. It’s a story of objects, and also of ways of being together—with objects, with each other.”² Her Shop project with fellow artist Tracey Emin in the early days of East London in the early 1990s is by now a successful example of creative experimentation and community hangout where what was offered was not only the irreverent artist-made merchandising—as the “I’m so fucky,” “She’s a kebab” and “Complete arsehole” T-shirts—, but also an idea of collectivity and exchange. Featuring a selection of apparently distant positions, *SEÑORA!* has the force of a singing chorus. Imagined as an extension of Lemsalu’s and Lucas’s practices, we can identify many conjoint elements. A punk attitude and a desire to subvert social norms unite the participating artists. A fascination for the sacred and profane, pop and kitsch, the body and sex, and a fondness for everyday objects and the domestic emerges in the work. They all cherish a certain counter-position, which refuses trends, roles, and dogmas but strives through free association and intuition. Judith Butler has envisioned gender as a performative act. It is therefore through performativity that we must understand *SEÑORA!*, willingly choosing the female subject as its polyvocal enacted character.

A SEÑORA always smiles. Eyes are open but sunglasses are still on.

Upon entrance, we are immediately introduced to the visionary and exquisite tones of this performative act-as-exhibition. Kris Lemsalu’s crib *Tame a fish, tame a bird* (2020) culls two quirky characters embracing each other: a polychrome ceramic vulva with trousers and clown boots with spurs and a green toy turtle wearing a T-shirt declaring WAR IS OVER! IF YOU WANT IT. Symbolically entangled over mutual care, the two alien figures inspire tenderness whilst revealing an attentive bond. Opposite from that Sarah Lucas’s seated bronze nude sculpture titled *DICK ‘EAD* (2018) depicts a curling abstract body with a disproportionate vertical red phallus. It seems to nudge viewers—and here allow me the wordplay—in a cocky way, confronting gender assumptions. As a motto, the words declared by Lucas in a recent interview hang in the air: “Life’s a collaboration, even if you’re not making art.”³

Softly entering the door, she dances following the temporality of space.

Upon entering the second room, a long photo-wall stretches out, reminiscent of a teenage bedroom eager to share identitarian moments. The wall is a collage of portraits and social scenes depicting the show’s participants. Intergenerationally theatrical, the wall seems to whisper the stories behind the makers, revealing some of the inspirations and inputs these artists share with each other. Through this simple act, the curators underline the bond between art and life, the importance of mutual support, and the infinite inspirational intersections between friends and lovers, writers and curators, mentors and strangers. Feminism as a way of living. Probing our experience of space and the show, Angela Bulloch’s geometric *Totem Pillar: Treasury* (2017) evokes a sacred object or divine symbol⁴—perhaps a phallus? Shall we worship it or invoke protection? Next to it, the bucolic scenery of Marilyn Humphreys’s sunset-coloured embroidered hat (teapot cap) *Of Innocence and Antiquity* (2020) brings us back to the origin of time. Minimalism and craft are placed as discursive punctuation enlarging the possibilities of representation. Perhaps this is a curatorial choice to keep us vigilant, a tool to acknowledge the power of our gaze.

Zig-zag, I turn my head around.

Employing a symbolic vocabulary, as powerful and poignant as emojis, Michèle Pagel’s sculptures transform the everyday into funny, yet cynical messages. “Disgust often plays the role of the subvertor in Michèle Pagel’s work. Disgust for a society that sits immovably in capitalism vortex, implementing wheelings and dealings from the end of the hallway and suffering from a poverty impossible to recover from.”⁵ The work *Mehrwecknutte* (2019) plays with the character of the pole dancer. Lace lingerie is placed on a brick core, held vertically by a pole—reminiscent of a vertical rotisserie or doner kebab—whilst different monetary currencies are collected on the floor. Seen as an embodiment of post-capitalistic societies, attraction comes from an inner desire for what we might despise. On the opposite side, a group of three sculptures⁶ also by Pagel, combine archetypal symbols to materiali poveri. A pink monolithic middle-finger reinforces the soft yet aggressive message. Overturning the pedestal problem, all sculptures are exhibited on breeze blocks, a device broadly employed by Lucas. Differing in scale and weight, the blocks transform the works into something between industrial and organic. Kate Boxer’s painting *Zohra Drif, Djamilia Bouhired and Hassiba Ben Bouali* (2020) offers a different view by portraying a group of female combatants. Casually holding firearms, the fighters are dressed in fashionable clothing as if caught in a conventional moment of everyday life, they seem to guard or protect the exhibition as much as their territory. Shall we employ violence to overturn oppression? By choosing positions that refuse to cater to the standard ideas about femininity—sweetness, softness, vulnerability—Lemsalu and Lucas lead us to wonder about what societal standards permeate art.

One step at a time, the last room.

Known for binary-defying collections, designer Bárbara Sánchez-Kane examines Latino stereotypes, Mexican machismo, and gender bias through her clothing. Masculinity is playfully explored in *untitled* (2020), assembling a flower-embossed leather jacket, boxing gloves, and a strap-on. Inspired by fetish and S&M culture, desire and violence are here entangled through the choice of garments. Placed on the opposite side, the sculpture’s possible feminine counterpart is realized as an abstract stiletto, featuring a corona beer as foot and Tabasco hot sauce as a heel. Mrs. Michelada—the ultimate wet dream.

Like a rollercoaster ride, the exhibition plays with highs and lows, fragmentation rather than linearity, assembling and deconstructing, to offer new and intuitive critical visions. Johanna Ulfsak’s hand-woven fabrics, *Old Scar and Darkness Follows when Light Fails* (both 2020), unveil existential tales about the relationship between humans and their natural environment. Hung on hospital paravents, the naturally dyed textiles made of materials such as Mangalica wool, horsehair, and silk yarn, float between figurative and abstract motifs, entangled bodies, and bright expressive colors, delicately poised between solitude and closeness. Ulfsak reimagines the function of the paravent transforming it into an expressive screen, breaking the tension of opposite forces. Patricia Jordan’s *Birdcage Shadow* (1998), a graphite image of an infinite cage exalts empathic relationships with the animal world whilst Edith Karlson’s enigmatic installation⁷ reveals figurative meanings: a pair of dark masculine shoes, a ghostly tall figure, and the skeleton of an animal. Withdrawing from the vivid language of myth, Karlson—who also collaborated with Lucas on her British Pavilion presentation in Venice (2015)—creates contemporary allegories filled with fantastical characters to critically observe the present. Are we the assailant or the victim or simply pure spectators?

She might be a child, a punk, or an empress. A stairway to heaven.

A narrow staircase leads the viewers upstairs. As if secretly observing the show and its curious public from above, a group of three shaman-witches are sitting on wooden chairs. The sculptures, all by artist Kris Lemsalu, seem frozen in prayers or greetings as if caught in the middle of a ritual. As a Jungian manifestation of the subconscious, the sculptures represent perhaps the artist’s alter-egos ready to come to life. “We are images, dreams, photographs. We must not stay here. Prisoners. We shall break the illusion.” states Alejandro Jodorowsky as the Alchemist in his iconic film *The Holy Mountain* (1973). Are Lemsalu’s sculptures ready to break the illusion?

As is typical in her practice, the sculptures' heads, hands, and shoes are fabricated in ceramic whilst the textiles are a complex mesh, collected throughout the artist's travels and encounters. Through a carefully-staged collision of glossy porcelain, pop colors, threads, eyes, eyebrows, and a mixture of clothing and textiles, Lemsalu creates global, pan-cultural mythical figures, immortal mothers, divine oracles. An homage to the force of knowledge preserved in fairy tales, folklore, ancient rituals, and traditional culture. The ultimate SEÑORA.

We give our respect, silently embracing their symbolic power.

As if exiting a sacred temple, we descend the stairs, feeling lighter perhaps blessed, rejoining the exhibition's main space. Were we reborn? The message is clear, if we are to succeed in our revolution, we must cease to be individuals, and become a collective being, give up our agency and exist only through collaboration and exchange. We must be women.

1 – Audre Lorde, *Learning from the 60s*, public speech at Harvard University, 1982, published as part of *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*, Crossing Press, 1984

2 – Maggie Nelson, *No Excuses*, as part of *Sarah Lucas, Au Naturel*, organized by the New Museum, New York, published by Phaidon Press Limited, London, 2018, p. 12

3 – Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, Routledge, UK, 1990

4 – Francesca Gavin, *How YBA Art Legend Sarah Lucas Helped Design the Tate's Franz West Show*, *Another Magazine*, February 20, 2019

5 – Sabine Stastny, *Your Poverty*, as part of Michèle Pagel, *Kulturboom*, VfmK Verlag für moderne Kunst GmbH, Vienna, 2016, p. 90

6 – *No Hard Feelings; Girlfriend Material; If it's not love, then it's the bomb* (all 2019).

7 – Edith Karlson, *Short Story*, 2020

Heimo Zobernig

November 2020–April 2021

Location Eschenbachgasse

Publication

(ill. p. 772)

Press Release

INFRASTRUCTURE, *NATURE* read the inscriptions in Heimo Zobernig's latest pictures. Using slogan-like texts, Zobernig regularly addresses topics such as formalist modernism, economism, but also spirituality and other aspects of artistic practice. While *REAL*, *REAL EGAL* were terms introduced in the early 1990s, *FUCK PAINTING*, *FORMALISM*, *FINANCIAL TRANSACTION TAX*, *PAINTING*, *PAINTING SCULPTURE*, *FUCK PAINTING SCULPTURE* or *PERFORMANCE PAINTING SCULPTURE* served as the text modules for an exhibition of paintings in the gallery in 2011.

Achim Hochdörfer: "In 1994, the pictorial motif *REAL* found its way into his painting; more than fifty further variations were developed in the following years. As painting, the term *REAL* suddenly takes on entirely new connotations. It is now associated with an anti-modernist, conceptual pictorial concept that exposes the employed means of expression as literal realities. Paradoxically, in their optical presence and force, the geometric forms are thoroughly committed to a formalist tradition. It is as though Zobernig were insisting on the reality of aesthetic pretense, thus rejecting the schism between opticality and literalism. What is significant about the *REAL* series is that it brings the pictorial motif back from its functionalist contextualization and into painting. [...] It is no longer painting that establishes the relations to other artistic fields, but rather, these relations that force their way into painting."¹

In formal terms, it is noteworthy that the framing of the respective text grid, typical of Zobernig's more recent paintings, grows increasingly dense through the composition of colored pictorial elements, as the relationship between text and image blurs almost to the point of indistinguishability. The text often seems completely consumed by light and color. The explicit use of the terms *INFRASTRUCTURE* and *NATURE* addresses essential art discourses by recalling the ethnological structuralism introduced by

Claude Lévi-Strauss, which raises the question of whether empirical yet entirely relative pairs of opposites such as raw and cooked or fresh and lazy, which serve almost as leitmotifs in myths, reveal something about their structure, about the syntax underlying them, about the "unconscious mind" that is at work within them. In no way, therefore, is the civilized "cooked" superior to the "raw" in intellectual or cognitive terms, for both are only variants of those similar procedures for which Lévi-Strauss introduced the label "wild thought." The "primitive" is not driven by instinct instead of reason, but rather processes specific material no less "rationally," simply differently, with different goals and more in the mode of tinkering.

1 – Achim Hochdörfer, *Fuck Painting*, Quart 22/13

Boltenstern.Raum

Florian Pumhösl

Two Warped Reliefs

April–July 2021

Location Eschenbachgasse

(ill. p. 776)

Press Release

The *Warped Reliefs* were created on the basis of studies in lead foil, in which the work is distorted by the folding of the material. This results in a deformation of the pictorial space through the respective position of the composition. The starting proportion is a field that is a bit more than two meters in a ratio of 4:3. The easy malleability of the soft lead results in line elements that are similar to textile folds; in contrast, for earlier works (*Canal Reliefs*) Pumhösl used the technique of a roofer, resulting in works that are defined by their construction. The practice of repeating and playing through certain constellations results in delays and blurring of the material, which ultimately define the entire compositional situation. Constellations arise in which allocations disappear, such as the assignment to a system of signs, a scenic attraction, a cartographic figure, a compositional principle, or the like.

For Pumhösl, a relief can be realized, if a relationship between the elevations and the deformed picture object arises, in which nothing is explicitly demonstrated (such as an abstraction, a balance, emptiness, or the like). Due to the format, the color appears in its spatial dimension. The blue-green results from the mixture of two cobalt pigments dissolved in matt acrylic. The shape and color are not intended to be representative and, at best, accept associations with the blue-green color of brackish water or ideas of a marchland.

Annette Kelm

May–June 2021

Location Eschenbachgasse

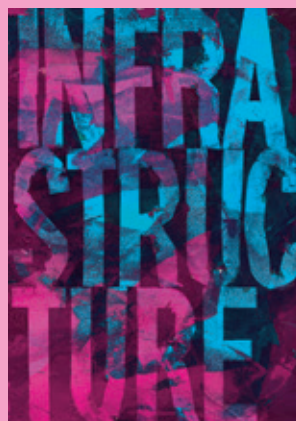
Publication

(ill. p. 778)

Text

Vanessa Joan Müller

Annette Kelm's artistic practice, with its focus on seriality and a seemingly objective approach to multiply coded materialities, is often described as conceptual—it reflects on the medium of photography and appropriates its classical genres in order to fulfill their conventions in a deliberately incomplete way by means of an abstracted,



Invitation, 2020



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