Katharina Murschetz, Manuela Ammer, Ulrike Müller, "What Kind Of Zoo is the Museum?", *mumok insider*, September 2022

What Kind of Zoo is the Museum?

Manuela Ammer and Ulrike Müller have jointly curated the exhibition *The Animal Within – Creatures in (and outside) the mumok Collection*. In the interview, they talk about the show, their collaboration, and the curatorial and artistic gaze.

When museums invite artists to curate a collection exhibition, a different point of view is explicitly allowed. What can it do?
Manuela Ammer: Museums are currently undergoing a major transformation. Like other institutions that produce knowledge, the museum, too, must now redefine the principles behind its work. The world has grown more complex and knowledge more diverse. One history has become many, and categories like "central" or "marginal" no longer indicate quality but rather structures of domination. If we want to do justice to this changing society, we need to come up with new narratives. An outside perspective like that of an artist enables us to question our own position while drawing attention to blind spots.

To what extent is it possible to speak of the artist's gaze as an alternative way of seeing?
Ulrike Müller: I don't think we should put too much emphasis on the difference between the curator's and the artist's gaze; the collaboration with Manuela much rather is about two pairs of eyes seeing more than one. This is particularly gratifying for me, because otherwise I'm often left to my own devices, working away and making decisions that will only be discussed and evaluated much later. As an artist, I always pay attention to how things are made, which materials were used, and how elements are held together. This also applies to formal questions, which I would not want to separate from content, or politics. Expectations and constraints may be self-imposed in my case, but that does not make them any less real. After all, it's not about self-realization but about putting my finger on larger issues, and that means touching on social concerns and significance.

Valeriy Gerlovin, Rimma Gerlovina, *Zoo-Homo Sapiens*, 1977, Photo: Victor Novatsky, donation by the artists, www.gerlovin.com, 2010

With respect to the term "curation," it wasn't very long ago that a layperson would hardly have known what to make of it. Today, outfits, wardrobes, or social media presences are referred to as curated. Are there aspects of these that come close to what curating an exhibition entails?
MA: I would say, yes. Exhibitions, too, are ultimately about narrating connections, about making certain attitudes legible. This happens—not exclusively, but in part—through materials, colors, and forms, as well as spatial decisions. The most intelligent exhibition idea will fail if it addresses only visitors' minds and leaves their bodies out of the equation. Perhaps the most important difference from curating a social media presence is that exhibitions are not necessarily about conveying a positive experience. Frustration, being unable to understand something instantly, or feeling excluded can also be part of the dramaturgy.

How did you develop this collection exhibition?
UM: While preparing this exhibition, we asked ourselves what kind of zoo the museum actually is. In which works in the collection do animals appear as a motif? Where do we see skins, bones, feathers—the animal as material? We never thought that we would come across around 500 works that relate to animals in a collection from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries … Based on that discovery, we identified a number of topics that seemed to us relevant to the present day, and then we reduced and honed the selection of works and—where necessary—supplemented it with loans.

Is it possible to say in general that, based on the nature of the two professions, different aspects of a collection are exciting for artists than for curators?
MA: In general, one might perhaps assume that curators have a stronger interest in art history, but I have the impression that Ulrike and I ask quite similar questions about the collection. We were not so much interested in the "best" art here, or in the "most important" artists, but rather in how history and stories can be told differently.
UM: Sticking with the analogy between the zoo and the museum, for example, the show is not only about the animal as a motif but also about the "frame" in which art is presented and who makes which classifications. In short, the museum, like the zoo, is also a place of domination and domestication.

Read the unabridged version of the interview on the mumok blog at www.mumok.at

Manuela Ammer has been a curator at mumok since 2014.
Ulrike Müller is a painter who lives and works in New York. Her works have been shown internationally, a.o. at the Venice Biennale 2019.
The interview was conducted by Katharina Murschetz, press officer at mumok.

Roberta Smith, "4 Art Gallery Shows to See Right Now", *The New York Times*, February 24, 2021.
https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/24/arts/design/4-art-gallery-shows-to-see-right-now.html

The New York Times

4 Art Gallery Shows to See Right Now

"Threads," a group show of textile art; Peter Sacks's imposing "Republic"; Kazuko Miyamoto's sculptures; and "K as in Knight"explores ambiguity.

Published Feb. 24, 2021 Updated Feb. 26, 2021

'Threads'

Through March 21. Foxy Production, 2 East Broadway, Manhattan. 212-239-2758, foxyproduction.com.

Textiles today are in the same place that ceramics occupied a decade ago: ubiquitous in contemporary art and used in numerous ways. With just four artists, "Threads" surveys several of the possibilities. In the works here, textiles are made, appropriated and alluded to.

The abstract artist Ulrike Müller leads the way with "Rug (con triángulos)," a large handwoven wool piece (for floor or wall, as here). Its rich purple field is punctuated by 18 large triangles in various hues (including russet, pink and dark tweedy green), forming a beautiful meditation on the color effects of dyed and woven wool. The polymathic artist Steve Reinke contributes a stunning display of 22 small needlepoints that are searing in color, largely abstract and quite different from his ironic, more reality-based work in video. Resembling both miniature TV monitors or paintings, they punch well above their bantamweight.

Ulrike Müller's "Rug (con triángulos)," from 2015, a handwoven wool piece in "Threads," a group show at Foxy Production. Ulrike Müller and Foxy Production; Charles Benton

In wall pieces titled "Wound" and "Burden," Tuesday Smillie layers together disparate swaths, lengths and scraps of fabric and plastics, illuminating hierarchies of gender, class and taste with a precision and subtlety that reveals itself slowly. Look for details - bits of language, a pink denim back pocket on an expanse of pink moire, for example. Johnathan Payne's modest lattices are made of shredded paper and gesso and then stitched together in sections like a quilt. They are painted front and back with brushy layers of color that peek through one another on the front, while on the back, casting reflections on the wall. Crisscrossing like girders on a bridge, these pieces suggest a kind of architectural lace. They lavishly complicate the grid that is the basis both of classical modernism and weaving. This is an excellent show.

ROBERTA SMITH

Ulrike Müller, Ulrike and Amy Zion, "The Conference of the Animals: Conversation between the Curator Amy Zion and the Artist Ulrike Müller", *Springerin*, Issue 4, December 15, 2020, https://www.springerin.at/en/2020/4/konferenz-der-tiere/

springerin

The Conference of the Animals

Conversation between the Curator Amy Zion and the Artist Ulrike Müller

Ulrike Müller, Amy Zion

The Conference of the Animals is a two-part project at the Queens Museum in New York, by artist Ulrike Müller and curator Amy Zion, which was set to open on April 5, 2020. After a five-month delay, the exhibition opened in September 2020, and shortly afterward, Müller and Zion sat down to reflect on the project, the pandemic, and broader questions about their respective practices. At the Queens Museum, school children are a large segment of the audience, and the director is actively thinking about expanding the institution to include a children's gallery and playground. Unlike other contemporary art museums in the city, the Queens Museum is a very particular institution that crosses from contemporary art to historical exhibits documenting two World Fairs, for which the building was originally conceived and served as a pavilion. It also functions as a community center in a neighborhood that is home to many recent immigrants. *The Conference of the Animals* consists of a monumental-sized mural by Müller and an exhibition of children's drawings by Zion.

Ulrike Müller: Let's start where we are, sitting in

Corona Park under the Unisphere, following an opening gathering for our exhibition. It feels incredible that the project came together after this interruption. That we actually had a chance to see it together with a small group of friends today is a big deal. We were installing in the galleries in August while a food bank was underway, literally on the other side of the wall, and we are processing the incredible loss that this neighborhood has experienced and how this reflects on the museum's role in relation to their immediate public.

Amy Zion: Yes exactly, it's a very different situation from where our collaboration began, and really from where you began: your invitation from the Queens museum to realize a project for their Large Wall. How did you go from that to the subject of children's drawings?

Müller: One thing that immediately struck me was that the Large Wall encloses the Panorama of the City of New York—a miniature version of a big city enclosed by a huge wall, that was going to be the support for my painting. I had this idea that putting children's drawings directly onto my mural would do something productive, both with my work and in the space of the museum. I wanted to use this opportunity to push my formal thinking into an explicitly social space, and I realized that the larger scale raised questions about modes of address and how the work positions its viewers.
My smaller scale paintings are premised on a one-on-one encounter between an object and a viewer. By sheer scale, this mural was going to cross over into a conversation of public art. I was worried about losing a sense of playfulness and arriving at something that could be perceived as controlling and prescriptive.
The connection to children's drawings came out of a conversation with students at the Cooper Union where I taught a painting and drawing class last year. I had them read Winnicott, and was aware of how he had collected drawings made during the London Blitz by children separated from their families. One student, Cate Pasquarelli, told me about drawings she made as a child after 9/11, in which smoke played a recurring role. She referenced a drawing of a cat with smoke coming out of its ears. Something clicked for me; it had to do with a kid's perception, the way in which children experience the city.

I made a connection between the miniature city, children processing things that happen in the city, and the history of the building, but I didn't know where to go from there.

Zion: Yes, and that's when the curator Alhena Katsof introduced you to me. She knew about my interest in children's drawings and an exhibition that actually was meant to happen in 2018 but was cancelled. So the show was in limbo and I had been trying to find a context for my research.
Katsof first facilitated a meeting with another curator who I greatly admire, Lynne Cooke, which helped to clarify my thinking. The original exhibition was going to create a roughly chronological history of the United States through children's drawings. My initial research found that there is a tendency in Western societies throughout the 20th century and still today to document political events with children's drawings and that was really what held my interest. In talking to Cooke, however, she expanded my thinking and said no, that's one part of a show that should be more expansive: How do children's drawings fit into psychology? How do they fit into art history? How do they fit into international diplomacy? and so on. When you and I met, it was this nice opportunity to think of this exhibition as chapter one: an exhibition, as part of your project, site-specific to the museum; to the history of the building, which hosted the UN General Assembly from 1946–1950…

Müller: Children's drawings are at once ubiquitous and overlooked. They are often meaningful to people close to a child but they don't register within an art world. Where does that leave creativity, in a moment when imagining that things could be different seems crucial and our collective future is at stake? Meaning production as a social process, which drives my work, is very directly present in kids' drawings, at least up to a certain age. They invent the language for what they want to say as they're saying it.

Zion: It really was interesting for me to come into the project through your invitation. You had an intuition that you needed children's drawings to do this sort of scale thing, but how that would happen remained very open.

Müller: Yes, it was a slow process from an idea toward a concrete approach. You came on board relatively late, with only months to put together the exhibition. Now that the work is actually up we can start thinking about how there isn't one conceptual bracket between the mural and your exhibition. Instead, at least to my mind, the two parts are held together in several different ways.

Zion: Definitely. It's interesting, too, that you mentioned your initial interest in children's drawings stem from this anecdote about your student and 9/11. When we met I said I'm totally interested, but let me just make sure I can find material directly related to New York City, and then I found the drawings from the Children's Museum of Art's 9/11 collection. That discovery was enough to give me confidence that a whole exhibition was possible. Of course, that was October 2019 and no one predicted the pandemic. Now it turns out that the project is bookended by these traumas; especially how they affect children in New York City, which is very much on people's minds at the moment, particularly with schools closing.
Children and animals are protagonists in *The Animals' Conference* [Erich Kästner's *Die Konferenz der Tiere*, 1949], the book from which the exhibition takes its title. Together, our projects are also populated by both figures. How did this coupling become important to you?

Müller: I had arrived at animal-like shapes working on monotypes in the print shop, where the process literalized questions of legibility and image, and that carried over into drawings for the mural.
The title was another at first intuitive connection. At some point, I remembered The Animals' Conference, a book I had as a child. When I reread the book, I realized that it also is tied to a very particular historical moment: the story that Erich Kästner tells is directly informed by his pacifist stance in the wake of World War II. So yes, many small steps amounted to a stringing-together of Western 20th century history as anchored by traumatic events, a history that is present in the building, and is in stark contrast to the progressivist ideals of the World Fairs, for which the museum's building was initially conceived.

Zion: It's true and it's a reminder of the moment we were living through before the pandemic hit. I mean the scale of the kind of repetitive crises was different but that it had still become this moment where… nothing was ever stopping, and it never felt any more like there was a break from an environmental crisis, or a political crisis. And this kind of adjustment, that many if not most parts of the world have already experienced, of just a perpetual state of craziness, I think this was very much on both of our minds: what do you do as an artist in this situation?

Müller: Absolutely. In practical terms the lockdown of New York City was a complete break and interruption of our lives, but then also the pandemic itself just pointed to what we already knew: that our way of life is destructive and unsustainable. Along those

lines, the changed situation emphasized concerns and amplified resonances. It's not like all thinking was completely resituated.

Zion: No, and I think that's how a lot of people are talking about the pandemic. It just highlighted all these things that were going on before. Everything just became unavoidably present.

Müller: The pandemic in a lot of ways is a further redistribution of a dystopian present, where some are shielded by privilege and many are not. The crisis is on such a bodily level that it made people who had felt relatively safe aware of vulnerabilities, especially also white middle and upper class people in this country. As we've seen over the past months with the movement for Black lives there is a potential for solidarity that wasn't in place before.

Zion: I'm really glad that our project opened, for one, but also that we weren't sitting at home when the lockdown started thinking, 'How do we move this online or how do we turn this into something else?' It was an immediate shift in time and pace. Suddenly we had no idea when—or if!—the show would open. So I started these additional dialogues: with Petrit Halilaj to get his childhood drawings in the show; and with Nancy Gillette, a curator at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. This became a compensation for how fast the show came together. The postponement meant a lot of extra work, a lot of uncertainty, and a lot of institutional hurdles that we wouldn't have had otherwise. But at the same time, it did provide this weird addendum: you're ready to install and then all of a sudden you have five months to think through what you put together really quickly.

Müller: One of the things that I was actively researching and looking at while I was working on the mural were animal sculptures in socialist housing projects from the mid 20th century, specifically in Vienna, Austria, where I lived before moving to New York. These low-key public sculptures belong to a particular historical political moment, but also to a particular mode of making art that isn't about an international art world or a star system. It could be an artist's job to come up with the group of seals or playing ponies that inhabit the courtyard of an apartment complex. They signify something about the space while also stepping away from the heroic figuration of the more radical socialist imagination of the earlier part of the 20th century.

Socialism morphed into social democracy, and instead of workers muscular bodies one is looking at bears and cubs and animals at play… the role of art changed from agitprop to something that aims at integrating people across party lines and speaks to values

such as family and play and intimacy and togetherness and all of these things, somehow cozy but enforcing norms and creating exclusions and therefore problematic. I wanted to have both a critical relationship to this history and the immediate emotional appeal of those animal figures. You could say that I also use animals as vehicles, but I tried to make them not-nameable, creaturely in a more open, unspecified way.
Zion: It does, but when you talk about being referred to as an abstract artist, but not seeing yourself that way, do you mean that you see the works as representational in a sense?

Müller: No, the work seems to be moving towards images, slowly. Abstraction in a 20th century sense where you look at a still life and then you end up with a bunch of cubes. But kind of the other way around where shapes are building blocks and they can be precariously stacked to suggest an image, a kind of inversion.
Zion: What was interesting to me was that you were steeped in research about the WPA [Works Progress Administration] murals. A lot of the interesting examples of artworks by children depicting New York City came out of the WPA as well. I was reading some material from the Children's Museum of Art where these collections are held and I realized, the goal of the WPA was to bring art out of this elitist cultural sphere and into a civic sphere, like literally into Children’s Schools and into public life more generally. My interest in children’s drawings comes very much out of an interest in Art Brut. Jean Dubuffet shared this goal in a way, to take such “anticultural positions” to bring art closer to the people. It was a contamination of sorts.

Müller: I had to think about whether I could actually call my work a mural. It is such a historically charged term, and most often applied to work that is very explicit in its politics and that subscribes to forms of social realism and that kind of figuration. I already knew a little about the very specific history of abstract artists making murals for the WPA in New York City, like the Williamsburg Murals or the murals for the Goldwater Hospital, and it was interesting to research that more while also looking at the spatial organization and color palette of these works. The director of the WPA’s mural division in New York City was an abstract painter, Burgoyne Diller. He hired abstract artists for mural projects, but in order to avoid the ideological battles that would have arisen if an abstract composition had been labeled a “mural” they called them "wall decoration”. Speaking about decor, I deliberately use common house paint for the mural, and some areas are sponge painted, which is a pedestrian decorative technique, a kind of faux-fancy.

Zion: So it's interesting you bring up decor because it is a place where so much interesting stuff can appear, not necessarily appear the way it should appear—to get credit and visibility and space—but that the decorative sphere has always been a sort of fugitive space where women can produce and children can produce. My first art history teacher was more so a historian of decorative arts, she always said, that's real life—it's the plate we eat off of and what it says, rather than some separate, elite cultural sphere of things on a wall, which tells you less about the common world.
It's very interesting to think about the two poles to which children's drawings cling: in art history, they are completely ignored and seen only as inspiration. We can't name any famous drawings by children. We can name collectors of children's drawings or people who study them, and assign value retroactively to drawings by famous artists, but we don't value the children artists themselves. On the other hand, children's drawings have been used so seriously as evidentiary material with respect to war and lobbying for aid. Hardly a day goes by now that I don't see some story or something where children's drawings or writings are being used in that way, totally uncritically, as truth claims about something "really happening." I think we should be really critical of that impulse and yet there seems to be no method to analyze this material. When of course there's evidence that they're steeped in ideology, that the role of adult authority is so present.

Müller: Why do you think that children's drawings have received so much less attention art historically than how Non-European art and art by people in mental health institutions were used by modernist artists as what Susan Sontag calls "models and mysteries"?

Zion: I think because we think of children as outside of time; once they become adults then they make serious work, then they have a name, a career that you can evaluate.

Müller: The Western colonial perspective also conceptualizes so-called 'primitive others' as outside of time, tied to tradition and, you know, unable to innovate.

Zion: That kind of shift or correction is quite evident with respect to say, African art. It's like, oh we were kind of deliberately framing these cultures as unchanging and backwards and it's clear that they're not. Plus, there are scholars from those places and scholars who actually just went to those places and could do that work, because so much evidence existed to the contrary. Similarly, with work that Lynne Cooke did with Judith Scott: she is basically saying here is somebody who has an output and can we take it seriously and insert her into a larger discourse? Why not? With children's art you

can't really do that in the same way, unless the children become adult artists and then you look back retrospectively somehow…

Müller: Maybe it is because Western thinking is so fixated on progress that once you're an adult you can only have a sentimental relationship to your own childhood. Rather than continuing to resonate with early experiences, the understanding somehow is that childhood has to be over and in the past. On the other hand, I and a lot of people I know are spending tons of money on psychoanalysis and other forms of therapy, which contradicts that notion of time. But also on a global scale we are increasingly and undeniably dealing with the destruction and devastation that is caused by a belief in progress and growth as requirements to keep capitalism going. So now I really made a scale jump.

Zion: No, but it's true. It's true because we have this idea, and it's the way that art history has been structured as well, that time is linear and there's a progression and that there are teleologies. Okay, so now maybe we're trying to broaden the geographic scope of that and to complicate it and to say "this was happening at the same time as this" but it is still just mapping teleologies next to each other. We're not really thinking seriously about the construction of history as something that could be cyclical.

Steel Stillman, "Ulrike Müller: In the Studio", *Art in America*, November 2019, p.82–91

Art in America

ULRIKE MÜLLER

in the STUDIO

Interview by ***Steel Stillman***
Portrait by
Grant Delin

Photo Katja Illner.

IT IS SOMETIMES SAID, BY DISTRACTED twenty-first-century viewers, that Ulrike Müller's work is about gender or political issues or modernist abstraction – as if artwork of any substance could possibly fit under just one umbrella. While all those characterizations may be accurate, they become fully true only if we add to them dozens of others: concerns like

Above, view of Ulrike Müller's exhibition "Weather," 2014, at Callicoon Fine Arts, New York.

Previous page, monotypes in Müller's exhibition "Container," 2018–19, at Kunstverein für die Rheinlande und Westfalen, Düsseldorf.

architecture, art history, contradiction, craft, domesticity, humor, materiality, ambiguity, multiplicity, and scale. Too often, people have pigeon-holed Müller because of her political and social activism, particularly her engagement with lesbian and feminist issues, and this perception has limited the understanding of her oeuvre.

Since the early 2000s, Müller has worked in a range of mediums, from audio, video, and performance to a spectrum of painting-related practices. The latter include drawing, vitreous enameling, wall painting, and rug-making, in addition to painting on paper and canvas. She employs a similarly wide range of motifs: linear abstraction; precise arrangements of flat, suggestive shapes; figurative images of cats and flowers. Müller produces her art in batches – drawings, paintings, rugs, and so forth – sometimes seasonally. All these bodies of work are ongoing, and when examples are installed together, often enveloped by a site-specific wall drawing, the materially diverse elements play off one another. About ten years ago, Müller's work changed radically, moving away from performance toward painting. The development of her practice since then has been nonlinear and recursive. If you had to describe its interrelations, you might – besides offering up the lists of subjects, mediums, and formal approaches above – try using a cluster diagram with arrows going back and forth every which way.

Müller was born in Brixlegg, Austria, in 1971. She studied journalism in Vienna before switching to the Academy of Fine Arts there, receiving her degree in textile arts in 1996. Except for a six-month residency in LA, researching the history of the Judy Chicago–founded Feminist Art Program, Müller remained in Vienna, working as a translator until 2002. She then moved to New York to attend the Whitney Museum's Independent Study Program, and has lived there ever since. In 2002, in New York, she became involved with LTTR, a queer feminist collective that produced numerous performances and events throughout the aughts. Collaboration remains important for Müller. Arguably her best-known group project was "Herstory Inventory," for which she invited one hundred artists to make small two-dimensional works based on one hundred written descriptions of T-shirts in the collection of the Brooklyn-based Lesbian Herstory Archive. In 2012 "Herstory Inventory" was exhibited at the Kunsthaus Bregenz in Austria and then the Brooklyn Museum in New York, where it was shown alongside works from the museum's collection.

Müller, who teaches painting at Bard College, has had fifteen solo shows since 2004. Notable among them are: "Fever 103, Franza, and Quilts" at the Cairo Biennial (2010), where she represented Austria; "WEATHER" (2014) and "And Then Some" (2016), at Callicoon Fine Arts, New York; "The old expressions are with us always and there are always others" (2015) at the Museum Moderner Kunst (mumok), in Vienna;

All Müller artwork this article courtesy Callicoon Fine Arts, New York.

and "Container" (2018), at the Kunstverein für die Rheinlande und Westfalen in Düsseldorf. Standouts among her more than fifty group shows include the 2017 Whitney Biennial in New York, the 2018 Carnegie International in Pittsburgh, and the current Venice Biennale. "Or Both," a dual exhibition with solo and group components, can presently be seen at Moore College in Philadelphia; it will be followed by the artist's third Callicoon solo, in 2020.

This conversation began last winter and continued in June in Müller's Brooklyn studio, where we sat at a small table in front of a row of north-facing windows.

STEEL STILLMAN Many of your art projects in the early 2000s were performance- or language-based. For instance, in the audio piece *One of Us (Freakish Moments)* [2005], using the second person, you address listeners one at a time through headphones, telling them about their day, which has been filled with endless humiliation . . .

ULRIKE MÜLLER From sweating to slipping on a banana peel to shitting one's pants on a subway train and worse. *One of Us* was made for a group show at the Mütter Museum, in Philadelphia. I wanted to disturb the comfort of the viewer's assumed normalcy vis-à-vis the "freakish" medical specimens on display. The text was a montage of incidents I'd experienced or heard about.

STILLMAN Then, in 2005, in the aftermath of Abu Ghraib, you wrote, performed, and video-recorded *LOVE/TORTURE*. In it, you stand on a stage with your back to the audience, lit by a single bright light that casts your shadow on the back wall. You then engage in an implied dialogue – your interlocutor is neither seen nor heard – in which you are both torturer and sadomasochistic dominant. The text is superimposed on the images.

MÜLLER Suspending the question of the implied other's consent, the text offers short bursts of direct address that hover ambiguously between torture and sexual role playing. I timed myself so that each passage of text was followed by an equivalent period of silence. That silence, during which the audience had to sit with what they'd just heard, constituted the piece.

STILLMAN The shadow seems to imply the absent other.

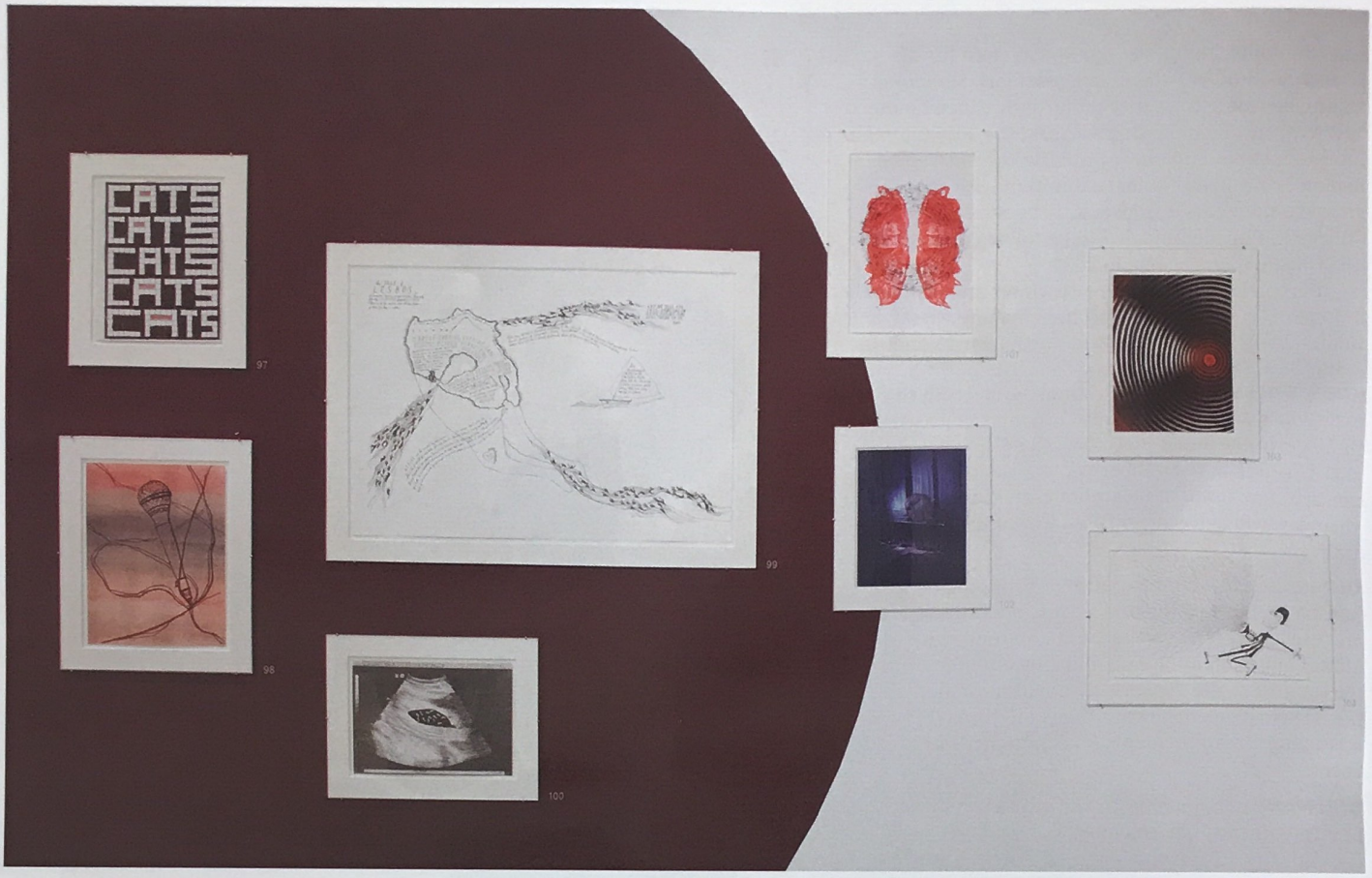
MÜLLER Or a doubly absent other, because with my back turned, I too am both there and not there. At that time, I was thinking a lot about how to use the first person without necessarily speaking about myself.

STILLMAN Soon after that you started working on what became the "Curiosity Drawings." Is it true that they began as research for a video?

MÜLLER Those works emerged out of experiments that mirrored, on a visual level, what I'd been doing with text. For instance, when editing the *LOVE/TORTURE* video, I used a split screen to document the use of silence in the performance. Around that same time, I began taking sheets of letter-size paper and dividing them vertically with a pencil line. I then traced sim-

Above, *Come-On*, 2016, acrylic and papier collé on paper, 23¼ by 18 inches.

Right, *Dokebi*, 2016, vitreous enamel on steel, 15½ by 12 inches.



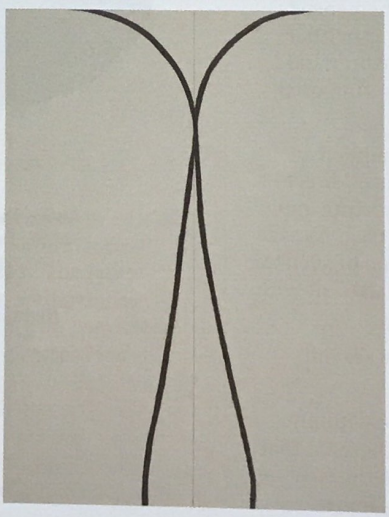
ple shapes, circles, and curves from objects that I had on my desk, like a water glass or rolls of tape. I was interested in handmade symmetries, and the line doubled as an axis and a spine. From there, the drawings developed organically, almost making themselves, each one giving me more than one possibility for how to continue.

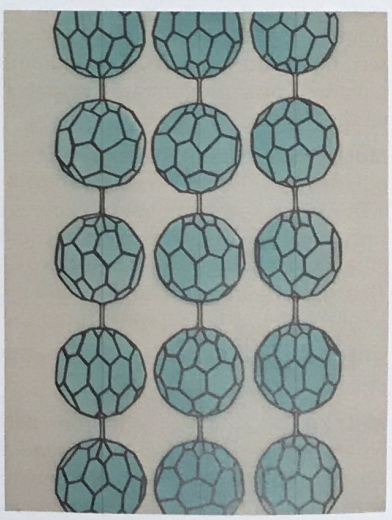
STILLMAN In the end, there came to be fifty-one "Curiosity Drawings," all but two titled with a line from the early feminist Mina Loy's poem *Lunar Baedeker* [1923].

MÜLLER Titling the "Curiosity" images was important to me; without them, the drawings wouldn't have been finished. In her travel guide to the moon, Loy evokes particular otherworldly qualities of light, temperature, and scenery. And on a sonic level, she uses alliteration and internal rhyming, and pays special attention to the sounds of vowels. I found my visual strategies reflected in her language.

STILLMAN In hindsight the "Curiosity Drawings" were the pivot point between your text-based work and the primarily visual work of the years since. How did the enamel paintings get started?

MÜLLER It took me several years to get there. For a while, I continued working on paper, but I found the results too quiet and the material too vulnerable. I wanted the works to be more explicit, and sturdier. I tried painting on canvas and metal before making





Top, view of the exhibition "Herstory Inventory: 100 Feminist Drawings by 100 Artists," 2012, at the Brooklyn Museum, New York.

Above, two examples from the series "Curiosity Drawings," 2005–06, pencil and spray paint on paper, 11½ by 8½ inches each. **Left, *III Cocaine in cornucopia*, and right, *XIX Odious oasis*.**

the connection with enamel through signage. Not many signs are enameled any more, but on a residency at Artpace San Antonio, I was introduced to Sherry Fotopoulos, a jewelry maker, who taught me the technique. In pursuing the sign-like quality of enamel, I hadn't realized that I'd have to go through the jewelry world.

STILLMAN There are constraints when working in enamel: there's a limited palette of frit – the powdered glass that is fused onto metal when fired – and the colors can't be mixed; and the motifs can't be drawn by hand but must be translated from working drawings into stencils.

MÜLLER Plus, I'd never worked with metal before, and it didn't feel natural to use a kiln and handle red-hot stuff. But I liked the limitations of the process. Picking colors from a preformulated palette introduces a culturally shared element – a language with built-in ideas and assumptions, like the six or eight colors that kids are given in a box of crayons. They're supposed to be enough to depict the world.

STILLMAN The enamel paintings in the first groups, "Fever 103" and "Franza," relate back to the "Curiosity Drawings." From then on, the motifs and colors become more complex.

MÜLLER In retrospect, there is something methodical to how I introduced colors one by one as I went along.

Left, *Some*, 2017, vitreous enamel on steel, 15½ by 12 inches.

Right, *Some*, 2017, vitreous enamel on steel, 15½ by 12 inches.

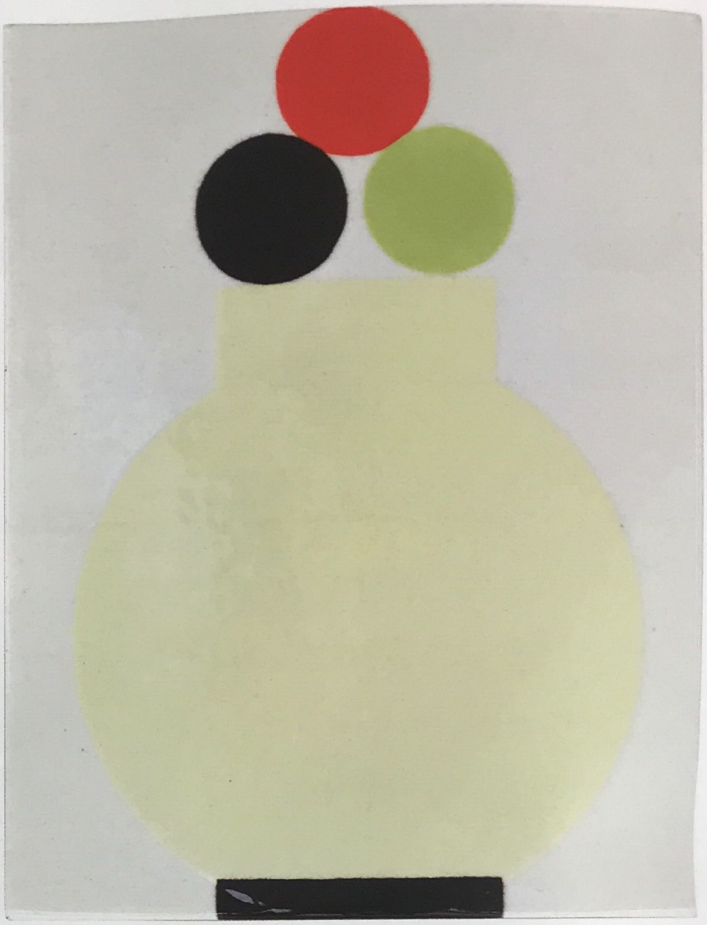
After the first enamels, which were all only black-and-white, I then added red, whose quasi-Constructivist quality led me to other strong industrial colors. Eventually, to counter that boldness, I brought in baby blue and pink to lend a pastel sensibility. Over time, the enamels have evolved from conveying graphic concerns with negative space toward more painterly preoccupations.

STILLMAN You generally present the enamels in groups, identifiable by their shared palettes and related motifs, in horizontal rows. Why?

MÜLLER Partly because that's how I make them, relationally as groups. But there's also a seasonal component. It's simply too hot to use the kiln in the summer, so when I make a set of enamels they also represent a slice of time. Each batch is like setting up an experiment and pushing it along. I'm trying to make active objects that have a built-in instability and offer more than one reading.

STILLMAN The first solo show of yours I saw was "WEATHER," at Callicoon Fine Arts in 2014. It consisted of a group of enamels displayed against a gray wall painting. What purpose did the wall painting serve?

MÜLLER I wanted to insist on white as a color and not merely a neutral backdrop. Colored walls complicate the figure/ground relationships within paintings, and prompt questions about where they begin and end.



The Callicoon space at the time was a narrow Lower East Side storefront. I was fascinated by the fact that the walls were taller than the space was wide. For the wall painting, I mapped the width of the space up onto the side walls using Benjamin Moore Classic Gray, which has a sandy beige tone. But in the front, on the walls near the entrance, I slanted the wall painting back at a forty-five-degree angle to echo the way daylight slanted in. And the exposed heating pipes and radiators, which had been painted white to make them less noticeable, suddenly stood out against the gray walls, like a drawing that had been latent in the space.

STILLMAN In 2015 you worked on two shows at mumok. One was a solo show of your own work, curated by Manuela Ammer, called "The old expressions are with us always and there are always others." The second was an installation of work from mumok's permanent collection that you and Ammer co-curated, titled "Always, Always, Others: Non-Classical Forays into Modernism," its first three words cribbed from the first title. Where did that phrase come from?

MÜLLER I found it on the cover of the January 1919 issue of the literary magazine *Others*, which published poems by writers like Marriane Moore and Mina Loy, among others.

STILLMAN That group show, besides being a collaboration with Ammer, is also a collaboration with history.

MÜLLER Manuela and I were already working on my solo show when she invited me to collaborate with her on the selection of works from the collection. We subtitled it "Non-Classical Forays into Modernism." For me, this was an opportunity to think through my relationship to modern art in an applied way. Many had assumed an obvious relationship between my work and early twentieth-century art. Even though I kind of knew what they meant, I also knew that I'd never fully thought this through. Working with mumok's collection was particularly interesting. Founded in 1962, mumok started collecting modern art late, and it didn't have the funds to compete with institutions like the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Instead, the organizers set out to build a collection that could still hold the grand narratives of modernism with work that was probably considered second tier. Mumok owns work by Eastern Europeans, by artists who stood alongside those recognized as "masters," and by quite a few Chicago Imagists and Pattern and Decoration artists, which made for surprising combinations. I came to think of modernism as an ongoing search for means of expression rather than as a succession of familiar formal achievements.

Left, *Rug (gato chico)*, 2015, wool, 64 by 58½ inches.

Right, *Others*, 2015, vitreous enamel on steel, 15½ by 12 inches.

STILLMAN In the mix of your mumok solo were two bodies of work: a group of fourteen enamels, collectively titled "Others," and four woven wool rugs, three of which featured variations on an image of a cat. One of the first enamel painting you saw upon entering the exhibition shows three optically vibrant red, green, and black circles above a larger, yellow, spherical shape, against a white background. The forms clearly represent a vase of flowers. Why these images?

MÜLLER Around that time, I started to invite more recognizable imagery into my work, whether by following my studio procedures or by deliberately incorporating found images, like the cat. I arrived at the vase image by arranging shapes: the vase appeared, and I let it happen. It was satisfying to make a painting with such strong iconic pull that it both cohered as an image and fell apart formally: the smaller circles, which came to represent flowers, refused to sit on the same picture plane with each other. Flower still lifes and pet portraits belong to the repertoire of the hobby painter. At the time I was wondering whether I could use strong iconographic signifiers to put pressure on my formal strategies, to raise the bar for myself. Could I make a painting with a cat that wouldn't be a cat painting? And in so doing, could I overcome various simplistic assumptions about modernist abstraction, gender, and sexuality that I felt were clogging up the reception of my work?

STILLMAN The cat image that the rugs were based on comes from a series of small gouaches titled "Oid" [2008]. Where does that title come from?

MÜLLER It's just the suffix, meaning "like," found in words like trapezoid or ovoid. The Oids were post-

"I always try to repurpose my motifs, by mirroring them, inverting their color, changing their scale, or cutting them up."

***Rug (con triángolos)*, 2015,** wool, 86 by 64⅜ inches.

card-size paintings, sketches for working through ideas quickly. I've never shown them publicly, but I pulled them out for Manuela during a studio visit in 2014. I was weighing the question of whether to bring more recognizable imagery into my work, and that particular cat image seemed to propose a possible way forward.

STILLMAN Why rugs? Was the cat the first?

MÜLLER No. The painter Emi Winter had put me in touch with the Oaxaca weaving workshop of Jerónimo and Josefina Hernández Ruiz, with whom I produced a diptych in 2013. One rug was based on a drawing with a cropped triangle and diagonal lines; the other repeated the motif in one quadrant, alongside two variations of a stripe pattern and another rectilinear drawing. When I showed them, I used the rugs to occupy both the image space of the wall and the object space of the floor.

STILLMAN Black cats especially call to mind associations of mystery and bad luck.

MÜLLER True, but I was especially interested in that particular cat: in its flat silhouette and the way it's been cropped; in the way the animal is posed and establishes eye contact, gazing up at the viewer from below with eyes that are cut out, empty but also full, with a legible expression.

STILLMAN In your mumok show, your offbeat materials and means were joined by more familiar art mediums. I was confused because it seemed you might be abandoning your experiments with alternative ways of painting. It must have been a decision . . .

MÜLLER More than one decision. I came to understand that the trajectory for my work was to move deeper into the studio and toward painting as a receding horizon. At the same time, I was beginning to feel overly safe and in control. I'd become fairly good at negotiating the processes and decisions involved in making the drawings that became enamel paintings and rugs. What would happen if I removed some of that mediation and started to use a brush? I wanted to challenge myself, to operate across a fuller spectrum.

STILLMAN Repetition seems to occur nearly everywhere in your work, whether in the variations of a motif within a group of drawings or paintings, or in the reappearance of a motif from an earlier group in a later one, where it can feel like the return of an old friend.

MÜLLER This kind of recycling for me is a conscious studio strategy, a process that involves tracing and stencil-making that lends itself to reconfigurations. It can be about doing something again to understand it better, or to see if it can function differently. I always try to repurpose my motifs, by mirroring them, inverting their color, changing their scale, or cutting them up. When I am working on a new group of enamels, I often return to earlier groups and see if I can carry something over in a meaningful way. Instead of building my work along a narrative of progress, proceeding linearly from one body of work to a different, supposedly better, one, I prefer a lateral narrative with multiplying sets of difference.

Below, *Step by Step*, 2010, vitreous enamel on steel, 15½ by 12 inches.

Bottom, view of Müller's installation at the Carnegie International, Pittsburgh, 2018, showing *Rug (con zapatos)*, 2018, left, and *Rug (el zapato)*, 2018, right.

STILLMAN Recently you returned to a motif, an image of a high-heeled shoe, that you first used in 2010 to make the very first enamel painting. Then last year, you revisited it as the basis for the very large rugs that are currently in Venice, and two others that were in the Carnegie International. The shoe motif derives from a photograph, right?

MÜLLER Yes. It's based on a photograph of a cobbler's sign that I took a long time ago, I think in Brighton Beach. I based the first full-scale enamel plate on a drawing of that sign, but I considered it a test at the time. It didn't leave the studio until last year.

STILLMAN I first saw it as an intensely colorful rug, but the enamel version is in black and white. It recalls Warhol's shoe drawings.

Photo Bryan Conley.

Left, *Make Ends Meet*, 2019, monotype, 29 by 22¼ inches.

Right, *Underfoot*, 2019, monotype, 29 by 22¼ inches.

MÜLLER Among other things, the reference to Warhol was on my mind when I used that template for the Carnegie rugs. I wanted to know how something can be iconic and open at the same time.

STILLMAN Not only are the shoe rugs big, but some are composed from vertical sections, each about a meter wide, that extend sideways three or five at a time. The horizontal result is something filmic or like an architectural frieze.

MÜLLER The horizontality is new. From the "Curiosity Drawings" onward, I chose to make everything vertical to establish a bodily relationship to viewers. The frieze offers a way to maintain the vertical in a horizontal format—as progressions of figures, implying time and movement.

STILLMAN This fall, Moore College in Philadelphia is presenting two simultaneous shows based on your work, both curated by Mia Locks. One is a solo exhibition and the other a group show featuring artists whose work Locks sets in relation to yours.

MÜLLER Unlike my recent solo shows, which have all been about new work, this one looks back over the past decade. I'm hoping it will be useful for me to get a little distance and assess things. The only new element will be a wheat-pasted sequence of about two hundred black-and-white vector diagrams of the template drawings I've made since 2010. The diagrams will be hung well above eye level and will run chronologically around the galleries as another kind of frieze, spelling out in more detail what we've been talking about here.

STILLMAN There's something fundamentally enigmatic about your work. It draws us in with its rich visuality and beauty but leaves us not quite knowing what it's about. Perhaps that's the ultimate seduction: not being sure keeps us looking.

MÜLLER I'm interested in not knowing and believe it's a desirable approach to the world and to looking. Knowing often gets in the way of seeing things, and there's a lot that we, collectively, would do better to reevaluate. ●

STEEL STILLMAN is a New York–based artist and writer. *See Contributors, page 12.*

CURRENTLY ON VIEW

Works by Ulrike Müller in the Venice Biennale, through Nov. 24, and in the two-part curatorial project **"Or Both,"** comprising a solo exhibition and a concurrent group show, at Moore College, Philadelphia, through Dec. 7.

Stephan Salisbury, "Moore brings in a Whitney Biennial curator and two other high-powered women to create edgy exhibitions at the art school", *The Philadelphia Inquirer,* August 20, 2019, https://www.inquirer.com/arts/moore-college-of-art-philadelphia-women-curators-mia-locks-20190820.html

The Philadelphia Inquirer

Moore brings in a Whitney Biennial curator and two other high-powered women to create edgy exhibitions at the art school

by Stephan Salisbury, Updated: August 20, 2019

COURTESY OF MOORE COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN

Over the next two years, Moore College of Art and Design near Logan Square will bring three well-known curators from outside the region to mount exhibitions that explore feminism, migration, race, community, and other complex subjects.

The first of the visiting curators, Mia Locks, 36, is not exactly unfamiliar with Philadelphia as an art venue. Her mother, Sueyun Locks, is the director of the venerable Marian Locks Gallery, now on Washington Square.

Mia Locks, named senior curator at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, earlier this year, will present “Or Both,” an exhibition highlighting the work of Austrian-born artist Ulrike Müller. Müller’s work will appear alongside a group show that includes work by several other artists, including Martin Beck, Barbara Chase-Riboud, Jennie C. Jones, Eric N. Mack, Medrie MacPhee, Dona Nelson, and Deborah Remington.

The show will open Sept. 27 and run through Dec. 7.

PHOTO: KATJA ILLNER.
Ulrike Müller at her solo exhibition, "Ulrike Müller: Container," Kunstverein für die Rheinlande und Westfalen, Düsseldorf. The exhibition closed in February.

"It's a two-part exhibition," Locks said by phone from Los Angeles. "From the beginning I started thinking about the [gallery] space. There are two sides and they have a different feeling, a different mood, a different texture. Even the sound is different."

This led Locks to seek a different way to show Müller's diverse body of work, which can utilize paint on canvas, drawing, textile, enamel on steel, collage, fabric, and even performance, publishing, and audio text. The group show is more engaged in exploring Müller's compositional methods than her subject matter and is "really a formal experiment," Locks said.

Locks is perhaps best known outside of the art world as co-curator of the 2017 Whitney Biennial, which sparked a major controversy by presenting white artist Dana Shutz' portrait of Emmett Till, mutilated and disfigured in his open coffin. The piece was widely criticized as an instance of white exploitation and appropriation of the African American experience. (Till was a 14-year-old African American child who was beaten and lynched by white men in Mississippi in 1955, a brutal dawn for the civil rights movement.)

Many artists sought to have the painting, *Open Casket*, removed from the biennial and even destroyed, which the curators and the Whitney refused to do. At the time, Locks and co-curator Christopher Y. Lew acknowledged that *Open Casket* presented an "unsettling image" with "tremendous emotional resonance," particularly for African Americans.

"By exhibiting the painting, we wanted to acknowledge the importance of this extremely consequential and solemn image in American and African American history and the history of race relations in this country," Locks and Lew wrote in a joint statement in 2017. "As curators of this exhibition we believe in providing a museum platform for artists to explore these critical issues."

Locks said she had nothing more to add to the statement.

The next two shows

In the fall of 2020, independent curator Kalia Brooks Nelson, who teaches at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts, will mount an exhibition featuring three women of color: Firelei Báez from the Dominican Republic, Pamela Phatsimo Sunstrum from Botswana, and Saya Woolfalk from Japan. The show will focus on themes of migration and femininity.

The third exhibition, in the fall of 2021, will be mounted by Charlotta Kotik, an independent curator and former head of the Brooklyn Museum's modern and contemporary art department. Kotik plans to present socially engaged artworks, working closely with Moore students and people from surrounding communities.

Gabrielle Lavin Suzenski, director of the Galleries at Moore, said she believed that the shifting curatorial perspectives each year will expand Moore's reputation as "an incubator for contemporary thinking" and "provide a unique and creative opportunity for curators to experiment in a new environment full of collaborative possibilities."

She added that "to have this outside perspective is a really unique way to add variety to what we're doing."

Posted: August 20, 2019 - 3:31 PM

Stephan Salisbury | **@spsalisbury** | **ssalisbury@inquirer.com**

Stanton Taylor, "Critics' Guide: The Best Shows to See in Dusseldorf", *Frieze*, November 15, 2018, https://www.frieze.com/article/best-shows-see-dusseldorf

Frieze

The Best Shows to See in Dusseldorf

With Art Dusseldorf in town your guide to the shows not to miss

Critics' Guides /

BY STANTON TAYLOR
15 NOV 2018

Ulrike Müller, Diavolaki, 2018, monotype, 74 x 57 cm. Courtesy: the artist and Callicoon Fine Arts, New York

Ulrike Müller, 'Container'
Kunstverein Düsseldorf
15 November 2018 – 17 February 2019

'Container' at the Kunstverein Düsseldorf marks Ulrike Müller's first institutional show in Germany. The current presentation sees Müller expand her painterly interests in colour and composition into a variety of new media – including enamels, rugs, collages, and monotypes – as well as the exhibition space itself. Müller's formal language draws heavily on the vocabularies of 20th century modernist abstraction. Yet her pointedly warm palette and crafty materials suggest more of a smirking, sidelong engagement with this tradition – a kind of engagement that has itself, by now, become its own kind of tradition – as opposed to outright endorsement. Indeed, Müller toes the line so well it's hard to know whether she's up to no good, or just smiling.

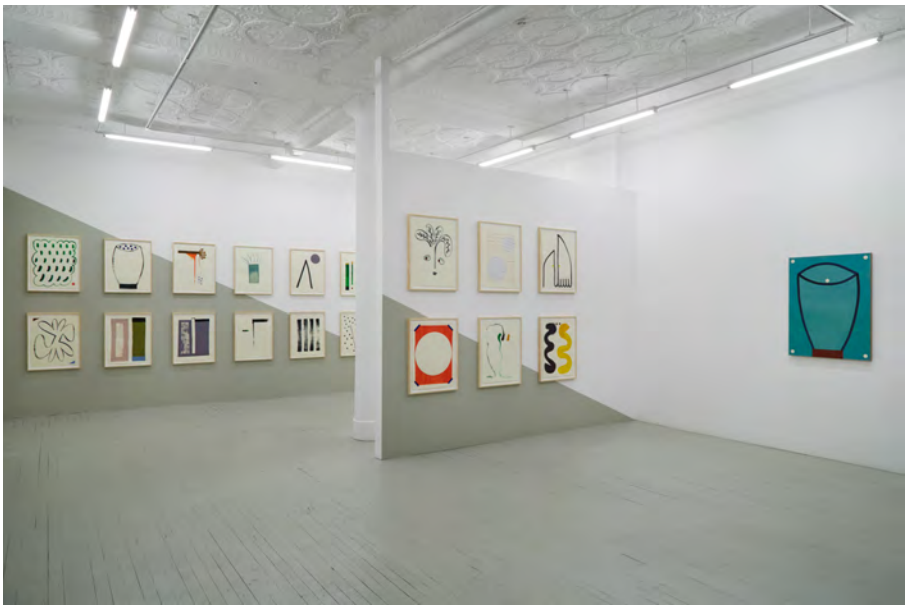
Rachel Haidu, "Ulrike Müller", *4 Columns,* October 21, 2016, https://4columns.org/haidu-rachel/ulrike-muller

4Columns

Ulrike Müller

Rachel Haidu

With wit and sly subversion, Ulrike Müller revisits—and revivifies—the legacy of modernist painting at Callicoon Fine Arts.



Installation view, Ulrike Müller, *And Then Some*, Callicoon Fine Arts, 2016. Image courtesy the artist and Callicoon Fine Arts. Photo: Chris Austin.

Ulrike Müller, And Then Some, *Callicoon Fine Arts, 49 Delancey Street, New York City, through October 30*

Since modernist abstraction's arrival on the scene in the first decades of the last century, and especially since abstract painting acquired hegemonic status in New York in the midcentury, it has been considered démodé and even regressive among certain circles to allow one's eyes to search out the figure. For good reason: abstract art demands that we see it as *itself*, not referring to any thing or person in the world. But at various points in the last century, figuration, along with ornament, wit, and even language, have infiltrated the lexicon of abstraction, not "ending" it by any means but tampering with its ultimatum-like finality.

It's into that very historical fray that Ulrike Müller's latest exhibition, *And Then Some*, at Callicoon Fine Arts, enters. Müller's work addresses that painterly modernism which rested on abstraction as if it were a hygienic sanitization process, cleaning the medium up of not only its associative or "illusionist" capacities but its anthropomorphism, charm, and sexiness. The result is a show that aims forthrightly to delight us with its lively wit, and, more surreptitiously, to allow a thorough rethinking of modernism and its alleged, programmatic assumptions.

Ulrike Müller, *Brat*, 2016. Acrylic and papier collé on paper, 23 1/4 × 18 inches. Image courtesy the artist and Callicoon Fine Arts. Photo: Matt Grub.

Ulrike Müller, *The Smoker*, 2016. Acrylic and papier collé on paper, 23 1/4 × 18 inches. Image courtesy the artist and Callicoon Fine Arts. Photo: Chris Austin.

Ulrike Müller, *Bouquet des Fleurs*, 2016. Acrylic and papier collé on paper, 23 1/4 × 18 inches. Image courtesy the artist and Callicoon Fine Arts. Photo: Chris Austin.

At Callicoon, Müller's paintings are as dexterous as they have ever been. Most in the show are on paper; a few are enamel, and even fewer are on canvas. They remind us of vases, faces, flirtations. Her earlier paintings on vitreous enamel on steel—a medium she has made her own for the past decade—made ambiguous associations to sexed or unsexed body parts (*is that V-shape a knee, is that hump a haunch?*). Over time, and thanks in part to a new color palette, these enamel paintings have begun to look more "abstract," like the kinds of line-and-color experiments that populated communally oriented modernist workshops such as the Bauhaus and the Wiener Werkstätte. But a more striking departure from her earlier work is to be found in the more figurative drawings in acrylic paint and papier collé on paper. There, we confront a figure on a ground, expressed always in the uninterrupted line of paint, its viscous, mono-colored brush-drag virtuosically clean. But this virtuosity is friendly, wants you to come inside; it is not a mere display.

In *Brat* (2016), the hyper, eight-legged or -petaled shape moves just like a "brat," with a mind of its own, not tethered to the polite corners, one marked in blue and one in dark red. Other works in acrylic and papier collé on paper, like *Façade* and *The Smoker* (both 2016), are faces and architecture. They remind us of the stylized, metonymic manner in which a face could be signaled in abstraction's early days, or a right angle made more impressive, more meaningful, in a building. And, like those early, communally oriented avant-gardes, they too tread that line between the modular and the ornamented, the systematic and the individual.

Müller's work both turns subtlety into an issue and dispenses with it: her game does not involve making life difficult for the viewer, but rather in asking us to examine what we want from subtlety, from nuance, from undecidability. One of the signal themes of the show is the bouquet, and indeed it was an earlier enamel painting of a vase topped by three balls—blossoms in black, red, and light green, signified simply by circles—that seems to have tipped her trajectory from a confrontation between abstraction and figuration into something more complicated. In her enamel paintings, at play is the magnetism, the dynamic between this-and-that. We see it through the vertical bisection of many of the enamel rectangles: this play of a curve that could be a breast except that then, two paintings away, it rotates into a diagonally tilted, curve-edged rectangle. When she moves onto paper, the modality is no longer a set of mechanisms: of tilt, fold-and-double, slot-in-different-colors. Instead it is a question of where that "ambiguity" leads us; what kinds of anxieties are produced by a "figurative" reading, by seeing a face or a bouquet? In the painting on paper *Bouquet des Fleurs*, the figure is explicitly coy or charming, its worried eyes glancing sideways as a bouquet of leaves grows from its nose, and we are reminded of where modernism was when it shunted expressivity for purer forms.

Modernist painting arguably reached its first apogee when European painters were confronting the outbreak of what would, in 1914, be the most catastrophic global war yet. Not only through *Bouquet*'s worried expression, but through their oddly acute and yet generalized sense of the presence of history do Müller's paintings evoke those moments when European bourgeois culture authorized its self-destruction, and plenty more.

Those moments—replete with epic grandiosity and haunting loss—have "always been with us"—a phrase I borrow and deform from the title of Müller's recent exhibition at Vienna's Museum Moderner Kunst, *The old expressions are with us always and there are always others*. It was shown alongside the new presentation of the MUMOK's holdings, which Müller co-curated with curator Manuela Ammer, titled *Always, Always, Others: Non-Classical Forays into Modernism*. Folklore, animals, crafts, and bodies, in the works of many long-unseen painters from the depths of the museum's collection, infused a new sense of what "modernism" could hold, shaking the European canon loose from its teleologies. Klee's semiotic tapestries, Miró's flat, curvy planes, Picasso's urbane still lifes, and Sophie Taeuber-Arp's geometric compositions—all of these ghosts can be found in Müller's painting. But so can the spirit of craft and social-therapeutic art workshops, of those self-taught artists whose modernisms are no less stunning for being shut out of art history, and yet no less historical. Indeed, the "us" is ultimately what is at stake in Müller's work, just as it is, for some, the stakes of modern art itself. By drawing us back toward those "others"—other modernisms, more communal and agitated, less cautious, more open—Müller enables a rereading of what modernism and indeed painting has done or could do.

Rachel Haidu is an associate professor in the Department of Art and Art History and director of the Graduate Program in Visual and Cultural Studies at the University of Rochester. She is the author of The Absence of Work: Marcel Broodthaers 1964–1976 *(MIT Press/October Books, 2010) and numerous essays, most recently on the works of Ulrike Müller, Andrzej Wróblewski, Yvonne Rainer, Sharon Hayes, James Coleman, Gerhard Richter, and Sol LeWitt. Her current book manuscript examines notions of selfhood that develop in contemporary artists' films and video, dance, and painting.*

Jason Farago, "Ulrike Müller", *The New Yorker,* October 31, 2016, p. 18.

THE
NEW YORKER

Ulrike Müller
The Austrian artist's nearly symmetrical paintings on enamel are joined by her charmingly terse works on paper, in which a vase of flowers can emerge from a smattering of dots and squiggles. Müller has long been active in New York's queer and feminist circles, and a geometric tapestry here nods to women's peripheral place in prewar abstraction, and to the greater opportunities they found in the applied arts. Müller's paintings, by contrast, are unburdened by history—still rigorous, but married to sprightliness. *Through Oct. 30. (Callicoon, 49 Delancey St. 212-219-0326.)*

"Ulrike Müller - Why I Paint", *Phaidon*, Vitamin P-3 Feature, October 17, 2016,
https://www.phaidon.com/agenda/art/articles/2016/october/17/ulrike-muller-why-i-paint/

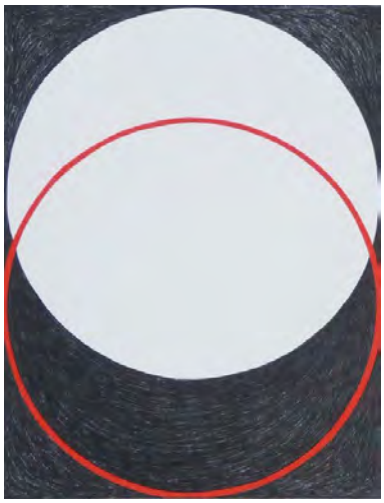
PHAIDON

Ulrike Müller - Why I Paint

Exploring the creative processes of tomorrow's artists today - as featured in Vitamin P3

Ulrike Müller - photograph courtesy of the artist and Callicoon Fine Arts, NY.
Photo: (c) eSeL.at - Lorenz Seidler

The beguilingly simple compositions of the Austrian born painter Ulrike Müller are dominated by precise geometries: ample circles, rakish triangles and gentle U-shaped curves nestled into rectangular fields. Bisecting, overlapping and entering each other, Müller's geometric shapes create a sense of active and easy-going interaction. Though they speak the language of geometric abstraction so familiar to the history of twentieth-century painting, her works seem to go beyond absolute non-figuration, hinting towards some sort of sensual interplay between shape and colour, arc and line.



Ulrike Muller - Print (Weather), 2014
available at Art-space

Ulrike Muller - Others, 2015 courtesy the artist and Callicoon Fine Arts

Müller's geometric designs are only a part of a rich and variegated practice that actively engages with feminist and queer histories. From her work with the gender queer collaborative journal LTTR, to her curatorial work for the 'Raw/Cooked' series at New York's Brooklyn Museum and for mumok, Vienna, as well as in her understated paintings, Müller is constantly investigating the ways that form crosses over and intersects with questions of representation, identity and the body. Here, the Vitamin P3-featured painter tells us what interests, inspires and spurs her on.

Who are you? I'm much more challenged by figuring out ways to refute rather than answer this question. With its implications of self-sameness and stability it directly points toward some of the things that I try to undo in my work. Rather than assuming meaning or identity as given, I strive to activate seeing and knowing as processes.

What's on your mind right now? Now that you got me started I'm thinking about problems of self-representation and artist's biographies! Beyond that, I'm processing a gallery show that opened two weeks ago at Callicoon Fine Arts in New York. It includes a new type of work, brushy paintings on paper and canvas. A couple of years ago I realized that the legibility of both image and indexical gesture were challenges I needed to tackle. I'm interested in how they both relate to the hyper-mediated quality of my enamel paintings and rugs and how they extend the conversation.

How do you get this stuff out? I show up at the studio, I don't judge my ideas before they have materialized, and I edit a lot.

How does it fit together? I have this idea that a life's work does not need to progress in a linear succession, so rather than abandoning one thing for another I'm interested in accumulation and in the space between different types of work and approaches. It has to do with not accepting inherited categories such as fine versus applied art and the gendered baggage of such distinctions. I think that a lot happens between things, and it is one of the ways in which I hope to rope in my viewers.

What brought you to this point? I wanted to be a painter when I was much younger, but didn't know a way how to. There were lots of other things that I did - organizing, queer feminist publishing, performance, video - and I brought all of this along as I finally figured out a way into the studio.

Ulrike Muller - Weather, 2013 courtesy the artist and Callicoon Fine Arts

Can you control it? Of course I make decisions, but it's generally more productive to try and suspend what I think I know and to follow the work.

Have you ever destroyed one of your paintings? Yes, I will destroy and recycle work that isn't good. It's part of my editing process.

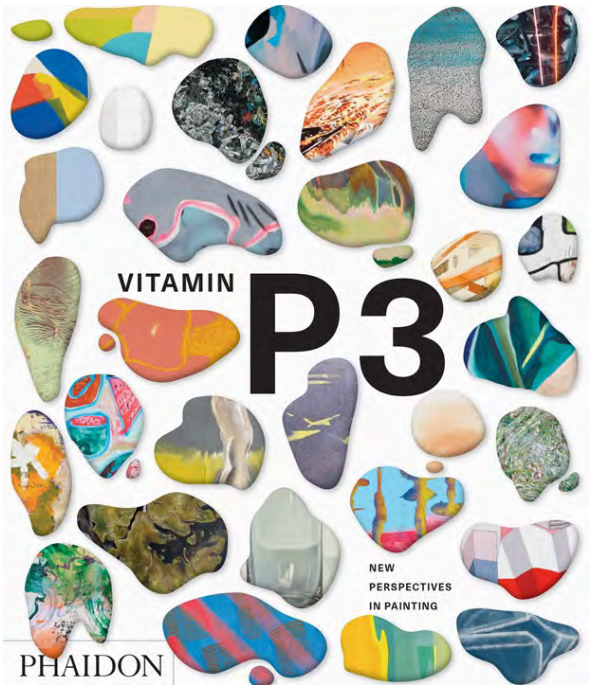
What's next for you, and what's next for painting? I have a pretty good sense of what I will be working on in the next months, but there is the big uncertainty of upcoming elections and a concrete fascist threat in both the US (where I live) and Austria (where I am from). It's a terrible moment in the world, and a strange time to make art. Maybe in some humble way painting can be a place that resists the post-factual spin and asserts both materiality and agency.

Ulrike Muller - Others, 2015 courtesy the artist and Callicoon Fine Arts

Ulrike Muller - Weather, 2013 courtesy the artist and Callicoon Fine Arts

Vitamin P3 New Perspectives In Painting is the third in an ongoing series that began with Vitamin P in 2002 and Vitamin P2 in 2011. For each book, distinguished critics, curators, museum directors and other contemporary art experts are invited to nominate artists who have made significant and innovative contributions to painting. The series in general, and Vitamin P3 in particular, is probably the best way to become an instant expert on tomorrrow's painting stars today.

Find out more about Vitamin P3 New Perspectives In Painting here. Check back for another Why I Paint interview with a Vitamin P3-featured artist tomorrow. Take a look at Ulrike's prints available at Artspace. And if you're quick, you can snap up works by many of the other painters featured in Vitamin P3 at Artspace - the best place to buy the world's best contemporary art. Finally, be sure to check out more of Ulrike's work at Callicoon Fine Arts.



The cover of Vitamin P3 New Perspectives In Painting

Branden W. Joseph, "Ulrike Müller: The Old Expressions Are With Us Always and There Are Always Others", *Artforum*, September, 2015

ARTFORUM

“Ulrike Müller: The Old Expressions Are With Us Always and There Are Always Others”

AUTHOR: BRANDEN W. JOSEPH

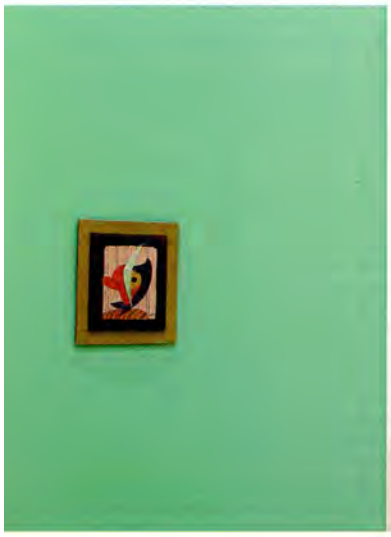
10.10.15-01.31.16 mumok Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien, Vienna

Curated by Manuela Ammer

The title of Ulrike Müller’s exhibition derives from the early-twentieth-century little magazine Others, which promoted modern free-verse poetry and was associated with Grantwood, a thriving artistic community of individuals united, as Suzanne Churchill put it, “solely by their difference from any norm.” All facets of this reference (including the title phrase’s placement on the magazine’s cover by the feminist artist Marguerite Zorach) prove apposite for Müller, whose prints, drawings, and expanded painting practice—encompassing paint on canvas, vitreous enamel panels, jewelry, quilts, and woven rugs—simultaneously look back to modernist precedents and reflect outward to the type of heterotopic and queer communal ideals she helped foster in the journal-based artist collective LTTR. This exhibition will feature the full range of Müller’s work alongside a collaborative rehang of MUMOK’s permanent collection.

Kerstin Stakemeier, "Ulrike Müller, Museum of Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien", *Artforum*, February, 2016, p. 228-229

ARTFORUM



From left: **View of "Always, Always, Others: Non-Classical Forays into Modernism," 2015–16.** From left: Alfred Klinkan, *Gelber Schamane* (Yellow Shaman), 1977; Lajos Tihanyi, *Composition*, 1930–34. Photo: Laurent Ziegler. **Wolfgang Paalen, *Bella Bella*, 1941,** oil on canvas, 45¼ × 35". From "Always, Always, Others: Non-Classical Forays into Modernism." **Karl Wirsum, *Wooden Puppet in Various Materials*, 1975–76,** wood, wood composite, lacquer, 34 × 14⅛ × 4¼". From "Always, Always, Others: Non-Classical Forays into Modernism."

Ulrike Müller

MUSEUM MODERNER KUNST STIFTUNG LUDWIG WIEN, VIENNA

Kerstin Stakemeier

ULRIKE MÜLLER conjures forth an other. This other is an as yet unidentified and genuinely differentiated being, a different sex, a different sensibility—one that not only deviates from but also exists within the still overwhelmingly male and straight modern teleologies of art. It's not surprising, then, that the word *others* is the starting point for two exhibitions by the New York–based artist now on view at Vienna's Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien, both staged together with curator Manuela Ammer. The first, which closes February 21, is Müller's solo presentation on the museum's subterranean floor, tellingly titled "The old expressions are with us always and there are always others"; the second, "Always, Always, Others: Non-Classical Forays into Modernism," is a rehang on the ground floor from MUMOK's modern art collection and remains on view through May 8. Together, the shows propose an open-ended modernity—one that remains incomplete, is not secluded within the past, and has drifted into our present.

In the rehang, we find several pieces by well-known twentieth-century artists working in a wholly uncharacteristic mode. A case in point is architect Josef Hoffman, cofounder of the Wiener Werkstätte, who is represented here not via the orthogonal geometries with which we might associate his production, but by a series of works on paper sporting outlandish, twisted patterns. Elsewhere, Viennese painter Oswald Oberhuber, best known for his massive, thickly impastoed canvases, makes an appearance with *Dreieck Kreuz Malzeichen* (Triangle Cross Multiplication Sign), 1976, a seemingly endless series of symbols drawn with crayons on a humble sheet of paper. We also encounter several pieces from Oberhuber's *Museum im Museum* (Museum in the Museum), 1978, the artist's idiosyncratic collection of Austrian and German art of the 1920s and '30s. These works, including pieces by Friedl Dicker, Camilla Birke, and Max Oppenheimer, are shown alongside those by artists who figure more prominently in artists' art histories than in academic ones, such as the Austrian painter, writer, collector, and dealer Wolfgang Paalen—his cosmic, windswept *Bella Bella*, 1941, is on display. Paalen's decisive role in French Surrealism and pivotal influence on American Abstract Expressionism in the '40s is all too often hidden behind a profoundly multifarious and thus seemingly impenetrable oeuvre.

Müller and Ammer have also chosen to show works by the much-appreciated but oft-overlooked Chicago Imagists, with selections by Karl Wirsum, Gladys Nilsson, and Jim Nutt. Significantly, the Imagists are not presented as members of a discrete movement with a shared history and common affinities, but are rather brought into alliance with European attempts to refigure the many crises of the gendered body in industrial modernity. For example, the Chicago-based painter Christina Ramberg's storyboard-like acrylic painting *Ticklish Construction*, 1974, in which a stylized woman's torso is shown in profile, laced up in different girdle-like wrappings, hangs next to Dicker's densely layered photocollage *Frauen Schönheit durch Mutterschaft?* (Female Beauty Through Motherhood?), 1930. At the center of Dicker's work, we find the belittling image of an immiserated pregnant proletarian woman—a photograph used the same year in a work by Dicker's comrade John Heartfield—that serves to mock Käthe Kollwitz's romantic aesthetics of feminine victimization that were so popular at the time. Ramberg's contorted torso and Dicker's deaestheticized panorama of class antagonism are stylistically unrelated, but they are closely linked by a shared understanding of the female body as the locus of social containment. Indeed, Ammer and Müller hung all the art here according to its potential for dramatizing form as an always-social fact, for rendering modernity as an artistically and psychologically twisted state, with a deeply bodily, libidinal heritage that has yet to be unpacked.

MÜLLER'S OWN SHOW demonstrates that this refigured history of modernism remains active in the present. She poses abstraction neither as removed nor withdrawn, but as a socially determined realm of contemporary life, of corporeal and affective experience. Startlingly, her paintings elicit from abstraction its supposed opposite: a new kind of figuration, where the body and sex are everywhere yet not quite identifiable. Müller's work and its configuration in this exhibition appear as a meticulously formulated statement on the gendered history of (painterly) abstraction, and its relationship to a sexed return of figuration today.

From left: **Jim Nutt, *By All Means but Not Now*, 1974,** acrylic on canvas, 61⅜ × 49¼". From "Always, Always, Others: Non-Classical Forays into Modernism." View of "Ulrike Müller: **The old expressions are with us always and there are always others," 2015–16.** From left: *Rug (gato de cochinilla)*, 2015; *Rug (el primer gato)*, 2015. Photo: Laurent Ziegler. **View of "Ulrike Müller: The old expressions are with us always and there are always others," 2015–16.** From left: *Others*, 2015; *Others*, 2015; *Others*, 2015. Photo: Laurent Ziegler.

The two works on the exhibition's first wall function as a key to the show. A portrait-size enamel-on-steel work is accompanied by a larger woven wool rug, the pair exemplifying two formats that have preoccupied Müller in recent years by virtue of the fact that they keep a careful distance from painting. The enamel work's title (like that of all the fourteen enamel works on display) is *Others*, 2015, but unlike the other *Others*, the composition features an arrangement of shapes that is clearly representational: The rounded, eggshell-colored center shape takes the form of a vase, while the trio of dots in light green, bright red, and black at its top indicate blossoms. The kitschy figuration dominates the whole and acts as a wry riposte to the hard-edge commodity critique or technological utopianism of the enamel paintings of Marcel Broodthaers and László

Müller gives us the painting we deserve, but the joke's not on painting—it's on us.

Moholy-Nagy. The rug, stuck to the wall, induces a similar effect. It is partitioned into four equal sections, containing, respectively, stripes, a field of black triangles, shapes suggestive of a schematic house, and the face of a black cat. Müller again lets cliché take over our perception, presenting a series of amuse-bouches, forms that oscillate between opaque abstraction and soothingly figurative allusion, between Bauhaus weaving of the '20s and its eternal return as a commodified pattern in contemporary interior design.

But there is nothing soothing about Müller's show. If the works on view play out the clichés of painting's (and, even more so, painterly abstraction's) proximity to stereotyped sentiment, the gendered flowers and cats (not to mention her pretty palette of pinks and soft blues) have the effect of twisting the knife—of "giving us the painting we deserve," to paraphrase Douglas Crimp's notorious quip. In the first room, twelve enamel *Others* from 2015 hang in a straight line, followed by a series of twelve acrylic-on-paper works from 2014. The enamel surfaces are stunningly beautiful, the abstract compositions transfixing. Yet they lack geometric balance, coming to rest, teasingly, on the verge of aesthetic equilibrium. It is a playful cruelty: Our perception is lured in by comfortably gendered elements—the radiant palette, the deep colors—only to have the controlled graphic lopsidedness withhold any gratification, thus revealing something unruly and libidinous within.

With the acrylic drawings, the artist moves one step closer to painting's traditional tropes. In those works, figure and ground are clearly distinguished, and unlike in the enamel pieces, actual brushstrokes figure prominently. But they are not paintings yet: With their white wooden frames and allusive titles, such as *Nockerln*, *Profil*, *Hairy Situation*, and *Same Same*, the drawings are more like studies—provisional doodles destined to be remade as "full" artworks later on—as if Müller were dutifully going through traditional painting's hierarchical motions.

If, since the '80s, we have witnessed generations of "painters" ironically restaging the tropes of modernism as a farce, Müller shows us the limits of this appraoch. These artists very practices remain embedded in, in fact *depend on*, the heroic modernist myth as a counterpoint: They can't resist seeing painting as part of a doomed teleological manhood. And here what is most remarkable about Müller's show becomes apparent. With her careful use of cliché, Müller pushes us to relinquish our gendered conception of painting altogether, to see modernist form as something that has always been bound to libidinal constellations still open for painterly negotiation. Müller gives us the painting we deserve, but the joke's not on painting—it's on us.

The acrylic-on-paper drawings led to the show's second, larger room, where we find three more rugs: The first and second featured the cat alone, while the third is a field of triangles with a knotted version of Müller's painterly signature. The room also contains three large oil-on-canvas paintings from 2015. For these, Müller actually *has* used the drawings from the previous room as studies: Each of the canvases is based either directly (as in the case of the floral *Große Blume* [Large Flower] and the hard-edge *Béla*) or indirectly (as with the monochrome *Mimi*) on those acrylic-on-paper works. Here, Müller comes to the logical terminus of the trajectory she has established over the past few years (if not in the preceding rooms of the exhibition), reaching a position that no longer keeps a distance from oil and canvas but embodies it completely. But she does so having already demonstrated the relationship between modernist form and our gendered terms of perception, breaking open, but not overtaking, firmly institutionalized narratives of art. The painted or drawn line traces the historical and contemporary marks of an unconscious—one that is not only subjective but also social in structure; one that is fatefully reindividuated in Müller's sexed expressions. □

"The old expressions are with us always and there are always others" is on view through February 21; "Always, Always, Others: Non-Classical Forays into Modernism" is on view through May 8.

KERSTIN STAKEMEIER IS A PROFESSOR OF ART THEORY AND ART MEDIATION AT THE AKADEMIE DER BILDENDEN KÜNSTE NÜRNBERG.

Oona Lochner, "Ulrike Müller — mumok, Wien", *Frieze*, February 17, 2016, p. 136-138.

frieze

ULRIKE MÜLLER
mumok, Wien

Ulrike Müller, *Others*, 2015

FEBRUARY 17, 2016 *by Oona Lochner*

Ulrike Müller's work was presented at mumok in the form of two exhibitions: the solo show *The old expressions are with us always and there are always others*, curated by Manuela Ammer, and a show of works from the museum's collection conceived jointly by artist and curator under the title *Always, Always Others*. Both titles refer to *Others. A Magazine of the New Verse*, published in New York in the 1910s, which offered figures like Djuna Barnes, Marcel Duchamp, T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound a platform for experimental artistic formats and alternative, in some cases queer ways of life. 'Others' here stood for a counterpart and foil to one's own identity, as a deviation from the norm, and as the alterity of art.

Müller's expanded concept of painting is tied to queer-feminist art practices and communities. She often works in collaborative contexts, including New York's LTTR collective and the *Herstory Inventory* (2012), a project she initiated. At mumok, Müller's painting, which is concerned equally with the form of the body and its status as an object, its visibilities and politics, comes into contact with classical modernism, plus works from the 1970s, which articulate tensions between the body and societal structures.

For the first time in years, Müller presented new works on canvas, as well as a series of enamels (*Others*, 2015) and four rugs she commissioned from Oaxaca, Mexico. Both enamels and rugs are associated with industrial image production and with private forms of manufacture such as handcrafts, thus evoking multiple histories of the Other of art and its appropriation (for example by Constructivism, the Bauhaus, or the women's movement). At the same time, they are materials that tend toward blurriness: in the under and over of weaving, the edges of adjacent areas interlock, and when the powdered pigment of enamels melts into glass, lines often bleed, rendering once-clear divisions indistinct.

In one enamel at the entrance, three circles in red, green and black sit atop a bulbous shape that tapers upwards. More than in Müller's other enamel panels, the impression here is one of figuration (a vase of flowers) although the abstract geometrical character of the picture remains essentially intact. This underlines a constant feature of Müller's painting: its wavering between figure and abstraction, between knowledge and perception.

Three of the rugs designed for the exhibition link and layer rectangular shapes, combining these abstract patterns with the silhouette of a cat in black. As if leaning over a windowsill, it lowers its head over a horizontal band of color that shines out from its eyes or – in *Rug (el primer gato)* (2015) – comes through the cat's body to the surface, as if the animal had got in between the layers of the textile. The relationship between figure and ground comes under pressure, creating tension between representation and abstraction, between art-historical reference and association (Olympia's cat, floral still lifes, color field painting) and perceptions of form. Müller's pictures refer to viewers' shared stock of art-historical knowledge, but the connections remain loose, leaving space for ambivalence and polyphony of personal and cultural experience.

Not only with its title, the exhibition assembled from the mumok's collection echoed Müller's own work. Loosely grouped around the themes of body, textile, folklore and metamorphosis, the exhibition included seldom-shown artists, using their works to take a fresh look at supposedly long-resolved questions about modernism. The show began with a number of avant-garde works on paper (from Alexander Rodchenko via Josef Hoffmann to the photographer Florence Henri) that explore the boundaries between figuration and abstraction. The graphical pressure exerted on bodies here by the abstraction of forms found a social correlative in the political posters by Austrian artist and graphic designer Friedl Dicker from the 1930s, which show the female body subjugated to its reproductive functionality. Similarly via categories such as soft/solid. and private/industrial, the dialogue between a graphic silk-screen print by the Wiener Werkstätte designer Mathilde Flögl, textile objects by Philip Hanson and Miriam Shapiro's *Pink Light Fan* from the 1970s focused attention on discourses of gender that are also inscribed in Müller's rugs. Finally, the reference in these rug works to non-European, locally rooted craft traditions was echoed in the encounter between the folklorisitc picture detail of the Hungarian cubist Béla Kádár and Art Brut drawings, adding new positions to the history of the avant-garde's relationship to the naive and the popular.

Always, Always Others was not Müller's first interaction with a museum collection. In 2012, for *Herstory Inventory*, she tracked down lesbian-feminist symbols in the archive of the Brooklyn Museum and presented her finds together with drawings that processed the visual repertoire of the lesbian women's movement of the 1970s. As in Brooklyn, Müller's approach in Vienna rendered visible the unexpected Other in the collection. Rather than obvious references, the double exhibition established open structures – between the works from the collection that entered into dialogue via wall openings, to Müller's own works, and on to the social and cultural contexts related to both the works and the audience. Rather than didactic re- and counter-canonization, this created scope for questioning the way we consider objects and bodies in the very process of our own seeing.

Translated by Nicholas Grindell

Jennifer Allen and Giaco Schiesser, "The Impermanent Collection", *Mousse Magazine*, nº 52, February 16, 2016, p. 90-97

MOUSSE

THE IMPERMANENT COLLECTION

Within one article—marked by two distinct yet complementary approaches—Jennifer Allen and Giaco Schiesser reflect on a new approach of dealing with archives, be they artists' accumulated materials or museum collections. From the standpoint of an "aesthetics of production," Schiesser traces the lines of desires, needs and necessities of today's artists, curators and architects who endlessly rearrange the material of different archives. From a standpoint of an "aesthetics of reception," Allen very concretely shows the effects of such new dispositives of impermanent collections on the viewer's body. A glimpse behind the scenes into the permanent "rearranging" of collections and other archives can be a truly disorienting experience.

RECEPTION
BY JENNIFER ALLEN

Two people meet at a dinner party. They discover that they like the same things: novels, music videos, even stand-up comedy routines, which no one else at the table has heard of. Sounds like the beginning of a beautiful friendship. The only anomaly: one was a fifty-year-old American businesswoman; the other, an eleven-year-old Austrian schoolgirl.

This exchange—which I witnessed at a get-together of families—could be an allegory about history. Or the difficulty of forming a contemporary historical consciousness in an era saturated with digital information. It's tempting to view the girl as precocious, the woman as well-informed, both as living beyond their years, thanks to the Internet. How else could such a connection occur, if not via the virtual archive?

What was as striking as their connection was their temporary disconnection from their peers: the other adults and children at the table who could not follow their conversation. A "mini-public" emerged from the usual generational groupings. Whatever our origins, we no longer seem to be anchored—or united—in the same way by our

PRODUCTION
BY GIACO SCHIESSER

There seems to be an urgent need to reread, rearrange or reconstruct the (art) material and artifacts that have been archived by individuals or by museums. Material that has been increasing exponentially since the dawn of the digital age. Examples can be found around the globe: from the MoMA's decision to reorganize its permanent collection in an interdisciplinary manner to the mumok's new presentation of its permanent collection; from the newly-opened Museum of Tomorrow in Rio de Janeiro, which unites science and art, to the M.F.A. and Ph.D. artistic research projects of today's students whose works often involve perpetually reorganizing archival materials.

From the standpoint of epistemology and of the aesthetics of production, it may be useful to have a look at this "new" dispositif, its discourses and its effects for the public and the audience. Why is this new dispositif emerging in our times in different places around the world, not only in the arts but also in science and the humanities, in politics and economics? What are the known or the unknown forces that drive curators, artists or architects to develop new approaches

All images from "Always, Always, Others. Non-Classical Forays into Modernism" installation views at mumok, Vienna, 2016

From left to right - Lajos Tihanyi, *Composition*, 1930-1934
Alfred Klinkan, *Gelber Schamane*, 1977. © Hedwig Klinkan

From left to right - Jim Nutt, *By All Means But Not Now*, 1974
Joseph E. Yoakum, *Mt. Corcilu In Tippururyay Mtn Range near St Menehould France*, 1966

All images courtesy of mumok, Vienna. Photo: mumok / Laurent Ziegler / Stephan Wyckoff

age. Nor by our nationality, mother tongue, profession, class, culture, even daily experiential context.

Two People Meet at a Museum…

By comparison, little separates Ulrike Müller and Manuela Ammer, who co-curated the show "Always, Always, Others. Non-Classical Forays into Modernism" at the mumok in Vienna. The artist Müller was born in 1971; the curator Ammer, in 1977; both in Austria. The show—their selections from mumok's permanent collection—appears as the result of a connection through collaboration.

Ammer curated Müller's smaller solo show "The old expressions are with us always and there are always others" which opened with "Always, Always, Others" but on a different floor of the mumok. The titles were inspired by the defunct New York journal *Others. A Magazine of New Verse* (1915-19), which published writers like Djuna Barnes, Marianne Moore or T.S. Eliot. As the exhibition guide for "Always, Always, Others" notes, the journal "claimed the innovative social and artistic potential of the 'Other': from free verse right through to early feminist and queer perspectives." The leitmotifs used for presenting the artworks—Textiles and Tectonics, Folklorisms, Metamorphoses, Bodies Under Pressure—relate to poems published in *Others* and to Müller's own work with textiles, crafts and the body.

Mentioning the "Other" in relation to Modernism may evoke the much-criticized category of the Exotic, if not André Breton's studio where Surrealist and ethnographic works hung side by side. By taking a journal of literary Modernism as their point of departure, Müller and Ammer seemed to relate the "Other" to poetic experimentation, gender and sexuality instead of exoticism. But none of the above dominates their take on mumok's permanent collection. Instead, Modernist stars (Rodchenko, Schlemmer, Kokoschka) appear alongside far lesser-known movements from the 1970s (Neue Wirklichkeiten, Chicago Imagists, Pattern and Decoration Movement). Some classics were linked to 1970s by acquisition, like Leopold Stolba's watercolour *Fisch* (Fish), completed in 1904 and acquired by the mumok in 1972, one year after Müller's birth.

This time-travelling between the early 20th century and the 1970s reminded me of the two dinner guests, although a mere half-generation lies between Müller and Ammer. Like the guests, Müller and Ammer seemed to be looking for themselves in cultural references from different periods beyond their own existences and their lived memories (in the 1970s, they were still children, likely not running around with checklists through exhibitions). While selecting artworks from the permanent collection, they time-travelled along a highly-personal idiosyncratic itinerary, transforming the collection into a foundational history, a mythology: our origins, grounded once again in Modernism. Not biopolitics but bio–art history. While Modernism rejected the past, Müller and Ammer embrace it selectively, autobiographically. They did not exactly reorganize the mumok permanent collection but used the collection to reorganize their own histories.

The true "Other"—and the true star—is ugliness: the jarring, often psychedelic palette of many works from the 1970s. Most could not have left the depot for decades: from calico textiles to cartoon-like paintings (which shed another light on Philip Guston, who was not included). It's an Other-worldly experience to see Kokoschka's unfinished oil *Portrait of Bertha Eckstein-Diener* (1910), who was abandoned wearing bare canvas instead of a dress, near Philip Hanson's *Untitled* (1974) series of hot pink-purple-orangey textile wall hangings, which suggest a wardrobe of tie-dyed corsettes. Or Alfred Klinkan's oil painting *Gelber Schamara* (Yellow Schamara, 1977) with doodle-like fantastical hybrid creatures near Béla Kádár's cubist painting *Village Departure* (1925). Both feature dogs. And colour. I didn't get the other connections or why these two works appear in Folklorisms, despite the guidebook's largely formalist explanations.

Müller and Ammer intensified the jarring impact of such combos by having the museum walls painted in conspicuous

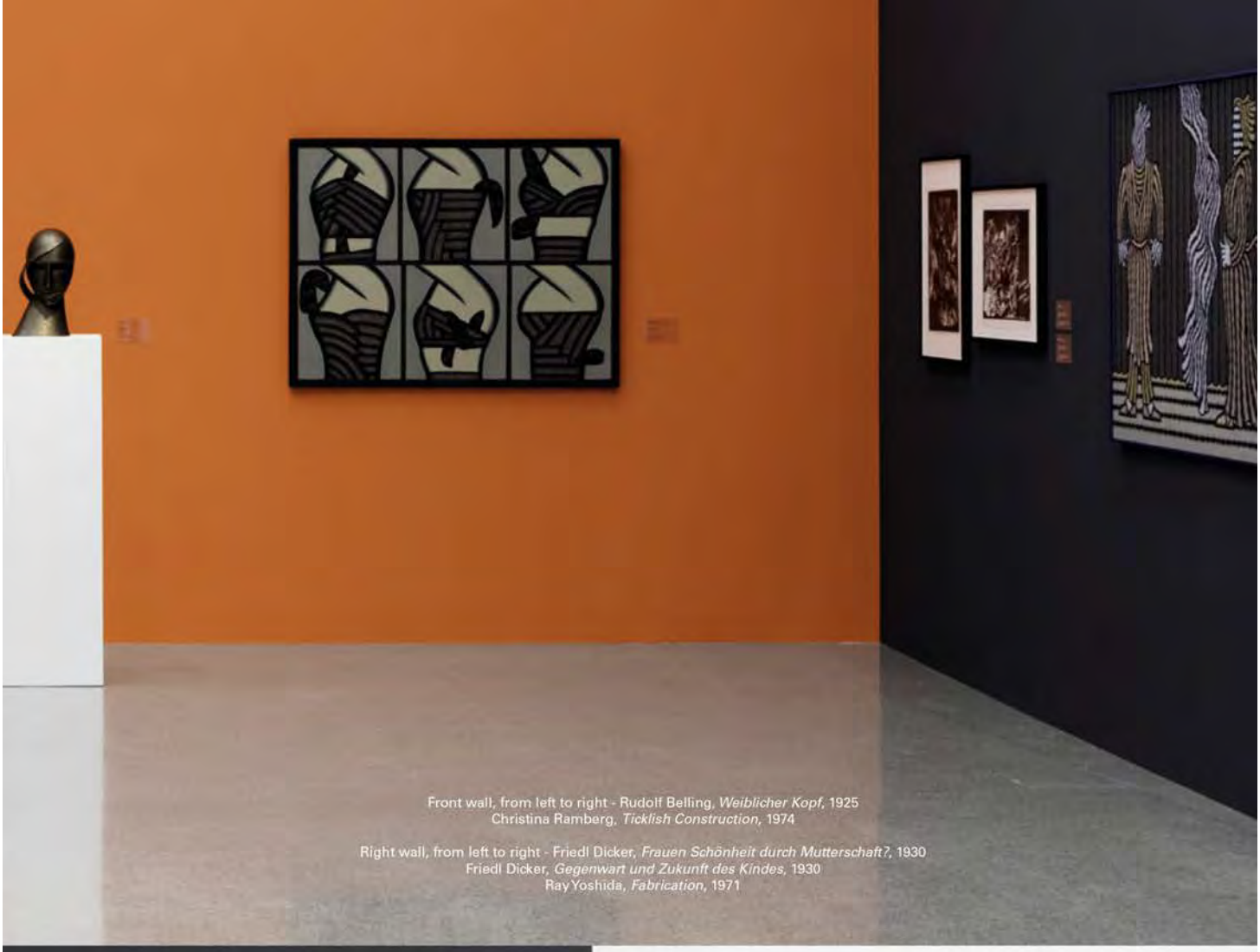
to "bricolage," introduced by Claude Lévi-Strauss in 1962? What intentions lie behind the discourses that have been created along the way? And what might be the unconscious desires of artists, curators and museum directors or even the effects of such new approaches on them and their work?

Let's start with a closer look at mumok's "Always, Always, Others. Unklassische Streifzüge durch die Moderne" ("Always, Always, Others. Non-Classical Forays into Modernism"). The exhibition—co-curated by the artist Ulrike Müller (born 1971) and the curator Manuela Ammer (1977)—presents artifacts of classical modernity from the museum's permanent collection in a new way, to show that the collection is much richer and much more manifold than one would think (or has thought so far). Divided into four sections—Textiles and Tectonics, Folklorisms, Metamorphoses and Bodies Under Pressure—the exhibition focuses on material and media while making conceptual connections mainly by paying attention to the formal qualities of the artworks. Modern art of the early 20th century is combined with and related to rarely presented artifacts dating from the eclectic 1970s in the collection.

It is obvious that one layer of this dispositif is about taking a closer, more differentiated look at 20th century modernity in comparison to the dominant dispositif of a classic canon of modern artworks which was created and reiterated by European and US-American museums in the last century. In this sense, you could say a new mapping of an old and well-known territory is taking place. Ein Zeitalter wird besichtigt ("An Era is Visited"), to quote the title of Heinrich Mann's memoires. The methods used for the exhibition: not only Lévi-Strauss's bricolage but also Harald Szeemann's in-situ-production with artists, Situationist strategies of psychogeography and post-structuralist methods of "anything goes!" All of these methods are well-known, some of them having been used for more than sixty years. And all have a transforming impact on the audience: instead of being at the mercy of an "aesthetics of conviction" staged by curators, the audience is offered opportunities. Just like the reader of montage literature or the viewer of montage movies, each exhibition visitor has to decide for himself or herself in which way he or she will make sense out of all the staged stuff, by selecting, by combining anew, by thinking beyond what has been presented by the curators.

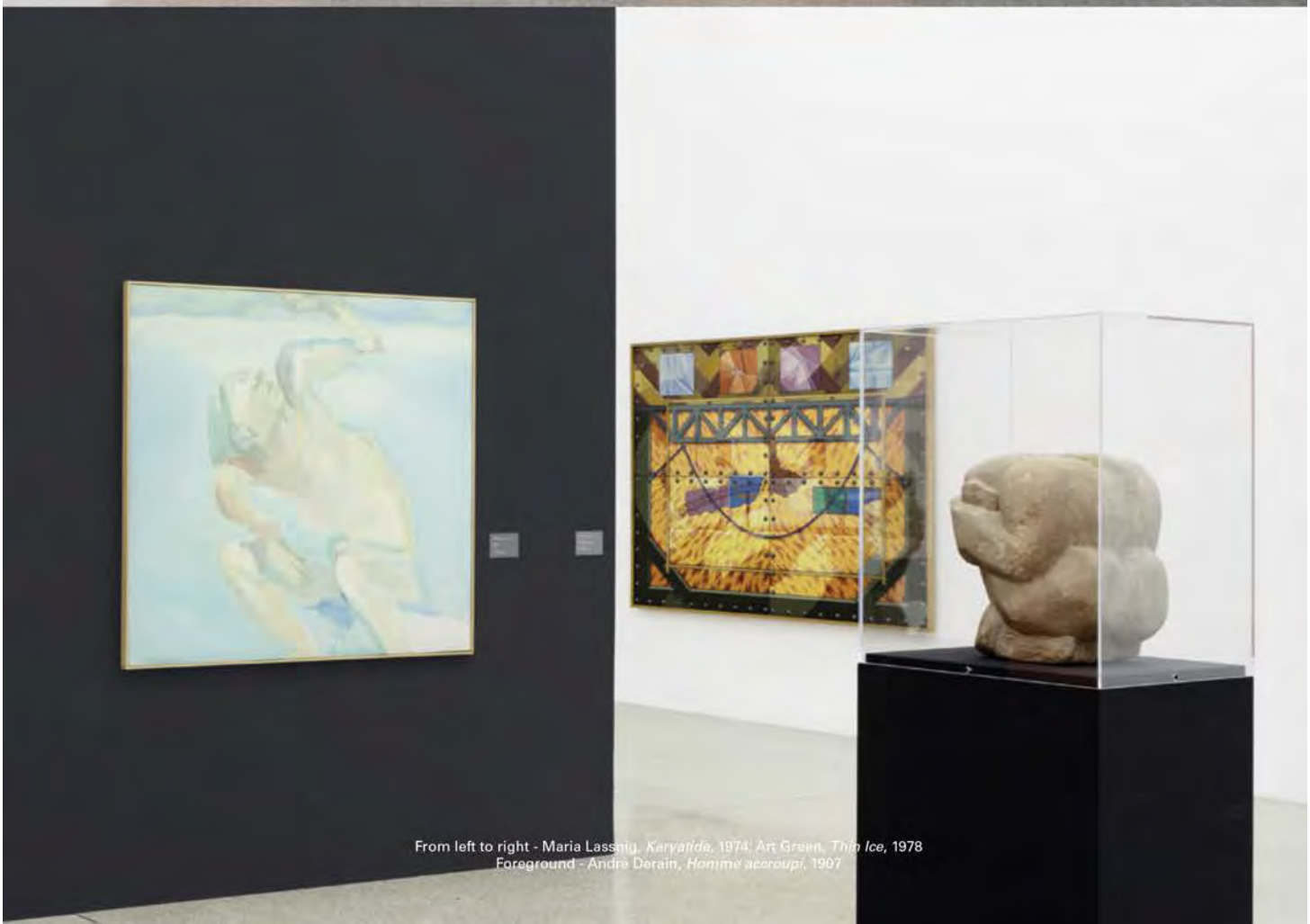
Again, the question is: why the current interest or even desire in a never-ending rereading / rearranging / deconstructing / restructuring / relating of artifacts from different archives, be it by individual artists, galleries or museums?

One answer might be found in our changing sense of belonging: our need to have a specific location within society. People born in the 20th century—up to let's say the 1960s—were born into and became part of preexisting, clearly distinct communities (social groups, classes, youth cultures, among others). Consider the mods versus the rockers in the 1950s in UK, or the rock'n'rollers versus the hippies in the 1960s in the US. In those times, you didn't have to think about your self-understanding



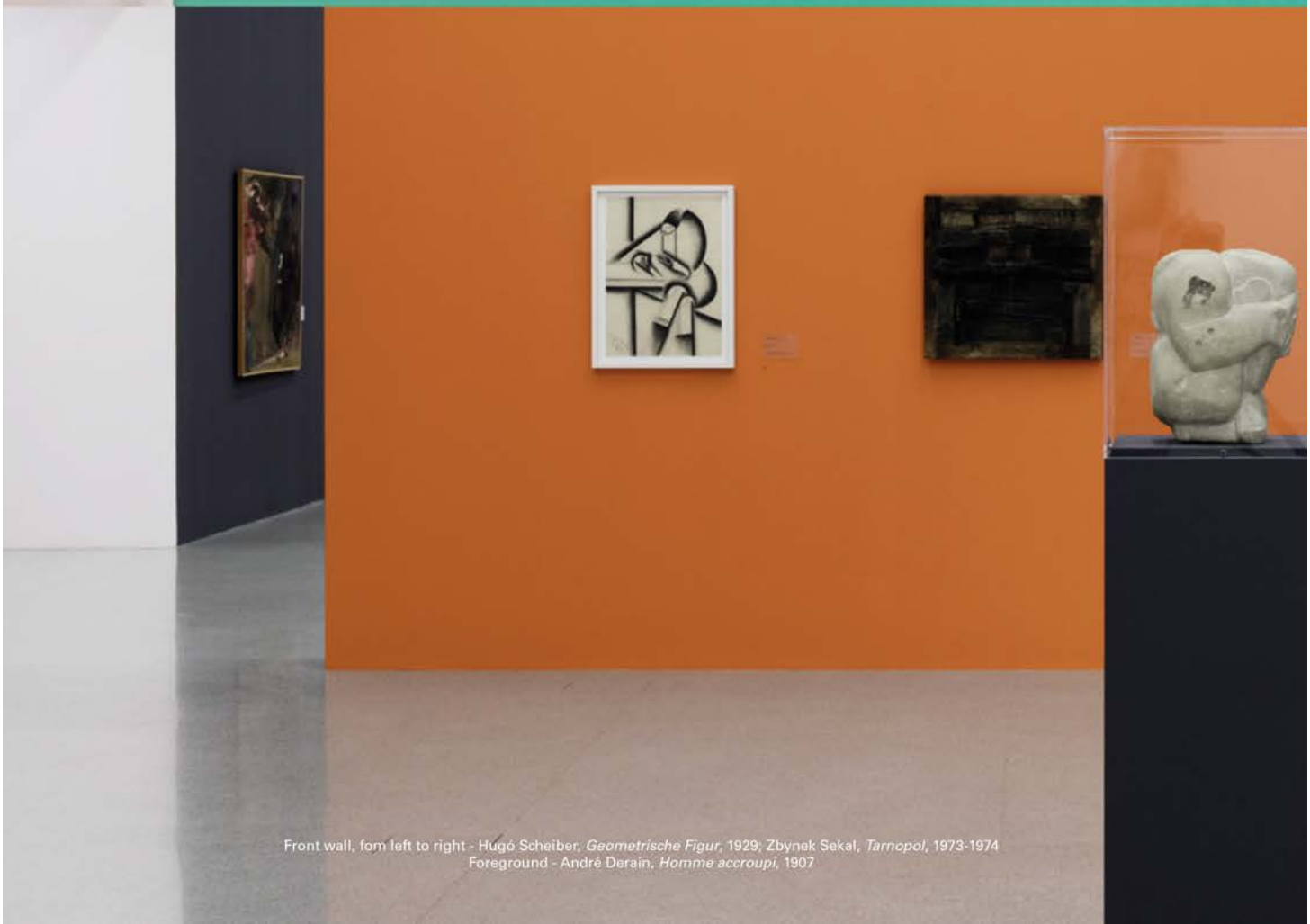
Front wall, from left to right - Rudolf Belling, *Weiblicher Kopf*, 1925
Christina Ramberg, *Ticklish Construction*, 1974

Right wall, from left to right - Friedl Dicker, *Frauen Schönheit durch Mutterschaft?*, 1930
Friedl Dicker, *Gegenwart und Zukunft des Kindes*, 1930
Ray Yoshida, *Fabrication*, 1971



From left to right - Maria Lassnig, *Karyatide*, 1974, Art Green, *Thin Ice*, 1978
Foreground - André Derain, *Homme accroupi*, 1907

Front wall, from left to right - Michail Larionov, *Der Raucher*, 1920ies; Jim Nutt, *Thump and Thud*, 1973



Front wall, fom left to right - Hugó Scheiber, *Geometrische Figur*, 1929; Zbynek Sekal, *Tarnopol*, 1973-1974
Foreground - André Derain, *Homme accroupi*, 1907

monochrome shades, like fiery orangey-red and soothing pale lemon. Openings in the walls create unexpected perspectives and force more connections between the already-oddly-positioned works. After a couple rounds, the show felt confusing yet somehow fun and deeply weird. In a good way. The experience was so intense visually, the show felt like something that wanted to interact closely with your body, like clothes, food, furniture, perfume, make-up, handcream, even drugs. That's not surprising, since it's based partly on the co-curators' births. What else but a bodily reaction can one expect from the viewer of bio–art history?

The Good, the Bad, the Ugly…

Of course, revising history is not new. Wherever one places the start of the art historical discourse—Pliny, Vasari, Winckelmann, Griselda Pollock—someone else always comes along, to add another chapter or to rewrite the book. Ditto for exhibitions. Consider how Massimiliano Gioni's "The Encyclopedic Palace" at the 55th Venice Biennale in 2013 shifted Outsider Art to Insider Art. As this example suggests, revising history is usually about *expanding* it: adding forgotten or unheard voices.

"Always, Always, Others" seemed to tick that box with the 1970s artists (also by excluding the usual suspects from that decade). "Bad Canon," to cite *Texte zur Kunst*'s editor Caroline Busta. The ugly aesthetic recalled the mumok's own "Bad Painting. Good Art" from 2008 (which featured Guston), if not Miuccia Prada's ugly aesthetic. The kitsch-craft vibe faintly recalled "Town-Gown Conflict" with Lucy McKenzie et al., at Kunsthalle Zürich in 2011, if not curating the museum's depot like shopping at a flea market or a second hand store: This item could revamp that old Kokoschka / my old pantsuit.

That said, the visual intensity and bodily reactions feel new. So I don't think this revision was about adding voices—"Other," bad, ugly, kitschy, crafty—but about surviving with a surplus. And experiencing one. Too much art. Too many voices. Too many choices. Why not use your body to navigate the 20th century? And I don't think the exhibition was about pop culture's addiction to its own past alone; it wasn't Simon Reynolds's retromania, but retro-retro: from 1970s to 1904. The jarring combos also reminded me of the two dinner guests: elements that used to be separate—fifty-year-old Americans and eleven-year-old Austrians; Kokoschka's portraits and Hanson's textiles—now fit together closely. Okay.

The visual was always infinitely modular: any image can go with any other image(s). Ditto for artworks. What's different is that we must now somehow live up to the mindboggling number of combinations that the Internet turns into reality with every passing second. We are far beyond simply taking pictures of art and other things and putting them together to look at them. Images have become so strong—so decisive—that they can create realities to which *you* must adjust your experience. Müller and Ammer seemed curate with this ideal, this excess, in mind. Now you have to deal with Kokoschka and Hanson. Or to keep up with the American woman and the Austrian girl (who ended up as images on my iPhone). All that looking—all those jarring combos—start to act on the body. Perhaps that's why I thought of clothes, food, furniture, etc.

I also thought of the late bandleader Artie Shaw buying a wristwatch every week when he started to make huge amounts of money in the 1930s because he had no other way to grasp and to understand his experience. And of cutters, who turns their extreme emotions into self-inflicted wounds that they can feel and watch heal. Extremes can create a reaction in the body of trying to keep up, of incorporating the experience. Digitalized capitalism, while setting the new dizzying pace, has added its own set of options for the body. After telling a friend about "Always, Always, Others," she directed me to NETSET, Net-a-Porter's new app: you take a picture of ANYTHING—clothes, a painting, a landscape, your meal, your dog—and the app suggests a series of clothes, which match the palette and the overall visual composition of the image (and which can purchased instantly). Next exhibition: I will take a picture of the press release and show up at the opening, already wearing the exhibition on my back.

or your process of subjectification. You were part of a group almost naturally. This sense of belonging has since changed dramatically. Already in 1985, Jürgen Habermas—not only a philosopher but also a sharp witness of current events—wrote that we had started to live in a decade of "new obscurity" (see *Die neue Unübersichtlichkeit*, translated into English in 1986 as The New Obscurity: The Crisis of the Welfare State). Since then, the need, if not the necessity, of each individual to position and to locate himself or herself in one or in different groups has started to become crucial for everyone and for everyday life.

Since the rise of the digital age, where artifacts and knowledge are at one's fingertips in a second and in unprecedented scales, the non-location of individuals has become an obvious, critical situation to be dealt with at once. You have the freedom and the constraint to choose where you want to position yourself, to locate yourself.

When one considers the necessity of locating oneself today, it seems that artists, curators, museum directors and architects, among others, are recombining the elements of fast-growing archives (their own or from the Internet), which undermine traditional knowledge and strategies of gaining knowledge. It seems as if they have to locate themselves, to i-locate themselves, to invent and to subjectify themselves—permanently, endlessly and inconstantly—in the material. Instead of objectively organizing the artifacts from a collection, they organize subjectivity in them. Today, for bricoleurs, situationists and neo-structuralists, the gestures of deconstructing and rearranging have been transformed from a possibility into a necessity.

This new epistemological dispositif of i-locating oneself seems to be a suit that suits younger generations best, because they put it on naturally and unconsciously. Perhaps older generations that have grown into a tradition of, let's say hermeneutic reading, looking and listening must cut a new suit for themselves. May it be a hybrid one, for the best of our society, today and tomorrow.

Giaco Schiesser (born 1953) is a philosopher, theorist and publisher. He studied philosophy, cultural and literature studies at Free University Berlin. His work and his publications focus on the theories of cultures, media, and subjects/singularities, epistemology, aesthetics, art research, democracy, public spheres and every day culture. He is a professor for the theory of cultures and of media, founder of the Media Arts programme (1997) and head of the Department of Art & Media at Zurich University of the Arts, ZHdK (since 2002). He also holds a permanent visiting professorship for Ph.D. at University of Arts and Design Linz, Austria. Within this framework he runs a PhD group for art research at ZHdK.

Jennifer Allen is a writer living in Berlin. She has published articles in many international publications, including *Artforum* (New York) and *frieze* (London) and has lectured at a host of academies, this year at the Oslo National Academy of the Arts. In 2009, she was awarded the art criticism prize by the German Kunstverein Association.

In un solo articolo – contraddistinto da due approcci diversi ma complementari –, Jennifer Allen e Giaco Schiesser riflettono su un nuovo approccio per gestire gli archivi, che si tratti dei materiali accumulati dagli artisti o di collezioni museali. Dalla prospettiva di un'"estetica della produzione", Schiesser traccia i confini dei desideri, dei bisogni e delle necessità di artisti, curatori e architetti contemporanei, che ridispongono continuamente il materiale di diversi archivi. Da una prospettiva di un'"estetica della ricezione", Allen mostra in modo molto concreto gli effetti che questi nuovi dispositivi delle collezioni temporanee hanno sul corpo degli spettatori. Per un critico dell'arte, dare un'occhiata dietro le quinte della "ridisposizione" permanente di collezioni e altri archivi può rivelarsi un'esperienza davvero disorientante.

Ricezione
di Jennifer Allen

Due persone si conoscono a una cena. Scoprono di amare le medesime cose: romanzi, video musicali e persino cabarettisti che nessun altro degli invitati ha mai sentito nominare. Sembra l'inizio di una splendida amicizia. Unica anomalia: una delle due è una donna d'affari americana di cinquant'anni; l'altra, una studentessa austriaca di undici.

Questo scambio – cui ho assistito durante una serata tra amici – potrebbe essere un'allegoria dei nostri giorni. O della difficoltà di formare una coscienza storica contemporanea in un'epoca saturata dall'informazione digitale. La tentazione è quella di considerare precoce, la ragazzina e bene informata, la donna. Di pensare che entrambe non dimostrino la propria età grazie a Internet. In che altro modo potrebbe crearsi un legame simile, se non attraverso l'archivio virtuale?

Ciò che colpiva nel legame instaurato era la momentanea disconnessione dei due dai discorsi dei coetanei, dagli altri adulti e degli altri bambini seduti a tavola. Dai soliti gruppi generazionali è emerso un "mini-pubblico". A prescindere dalle nostre origini, non sembriamo più ancorati – o uniti – allo stesso modo dalla nostra età. Né dalla nazionalità, dalla lingua madre, dalla professione, dall'estrazione sociale, dalla cultura e nemmeno dal contesto quotidiano.

Due persone si conoscono in un museo...

In confronto, non c'è molto a separare Ulrike Müller e Manuela Ammer, le co-curatrici della mostra "Always, Always, Others". Non-Classical Forays into Modernism al mumok di Vienna. L'artista Müller è nata nel 1971, la curatrice Ammer nel 1977; entrambe sono nate in Austria. La mostra – la loro selezione della collezione permanente del mumok – si presenta come il risultato di un legame ottenuto attraverso la collaborazione.

Ammer ha curato anche la personale di Müller, "The old expressions are with us always and there are always others"; la mostra, più piccola, è stata inaugurata insieme a "Always, Always, Others", ma si teneva su un altro piano del mumok. I titoli si ispiravano alla rivista newyorkese, ormai defunta, *Others. A Magazine of New Verse* (1915-1919), che pubblicava autori come Djuna Barnes, Marianne Moore o T.S. Eliot. Come riporta la brochure di "Always, Always, Others", la rivista "rivendicava l'innovativo potenziale sociale e artistico dell''Altro': dal diritto al verso libero fino alle prime prospettive femministe e queer". I *leitmotiv* usati per presentare le opere – Tessili e tettoniche, Folklore, Metamorfosi e Corpi sotto pressione – rimandano a poesie pubblicate da *Others* e al lavoro di Müller con i tessuti, l'artigianato e il corpo.
Citare l'"Altro" in rapporto al Modernismo può evocare la tanto criticata categoria dell'Esotico, o persino l'atelier di André Breton le cui pareti erano decorate da opere surrealiste ed etnografiche. Prendendo come punto di partenza una rivista di Modernismo letterario, Müller e Ammer sembravano collegare l'"Altro" alla sperimentazione poetica, al genere e alla sessualità anziché all'esotismo. Ma nessuno degli elementi citati domina la loro lettura della collezione permanente del mumok. Le stelle del Modernismo (Rodchenko, Schlemmer, Kokoschka), anzi, compaiono accanto a movimenti degli anni Settanta molto meno conosciuti (Neue Wirklichkeiten, Chicago Imagists, Pattern and Decoration Movement). Alcuni classici sono stati assimilati agli anni Settanta tramite il processo di acquisizione, come l'acquerello *Fisch* (Pesce) di Leopold Stolba, portato a termine nel 1904 e acquisito dal mumok nel 1972, un anno dopo la nascita di Müller.

Questo viaggio nel tempo tra i primi anni del Ventesimo secolo e i Settanta mi ha fatto pensare alle due ospiti della cena, benché a separare Müller e Ammer ci sia appena una mezza generazione. Come le ospiti, Müller e Ammer sembravano cercare se stesse nei riferimenti culturali di diversi periodi che andavano oltre le loro vite e i loro ricordi personali (negli anni Settanta erano ancora bambine, e probabilmente non correvano, armate di liste, da una mostra all'altra). Selezionando le opere della collezione permanente, hanno viaggiato nel tempo seguendo un itinerario altamente personale e idiosincratico, trasformando la collezione in una storia di fondazione, in una mitologia: le nostre origini, ancora una volta radicate nel Modernismo. Non biopolitica ma storia della bio-arte. Se il Modernismo rifiutava il passato, Müller e Ammer lo accolgono in modo selettivo, autobiografico.

Il vero "Altro" – nonché la vera star – della mostra è la bruttezza: i colori stridenti e spesso psichedelici di molte opere degli anni Settanta. Tante non hanno potuto lasciare il magazzino del museo per decenni: dai tessuti calicò ai dipinti che ricordano i fumetti (che hanno gettato una luce diversa su Philip Guston, che non è stato incluso nella selezione). È un'esperienza da Altro mondo vedere il dipinto a olio incompleto di Kokoschka, *Portrait of Bertha Eckstein-Diener* (1910), abbandonata mentre indossava una tela grezza anziché un abito vero e proprio, accanto a *Untitled* (1974) di Philip Hanson, una serie di tessuti da parete sui toni del rosa shocking-viola-arancio, che fa pensare a un guardaroba di corsetti tinti a nodi. O vedere il dipinto a olio *Gelber Schamara* ("Schamara Gialla", 1977) di Alfred Klinkan, con le sue stravaganti creature ibride piene di ghirigori, accanto al dipinto cubista di Béla Kádár, *Village Departure* (1925). In entrambe le opere compaiono dei cani. E dei colori. Non ho colto le altre similitudini, né il motivo per cui compaiono nella sezione Folklore, malgrado le spiegazioni della brochure.

Müller e Ammer hanno intensificato l'impatto stridente di queste combinazioni facendo dipingere le pareti del museo con vistose sfumature monocrome, per esempio un acceso rosso arancio e un rassicurante giallo pallido. Le nicchie nei muri creano prospettive inaspettate e provocano ulteriori collegamenti tra le opere dalla disposizione bizzarra. Dopo un paio di giri, la mostra mi è parsa disorientante, ma anche divertente e profondamente strana. In senso positivo. A livello visivo, l'esperienza è stata talmente intensa da far sembrare la mostra qualcosa che desiderava interagire intimamente con il corpo, al pari di abiti, cibo, mobili, profumo, cosmetici, crema per le mani, persino droghe. Non sorprende, dato che è parzialmente basata sul periodo in cui sono nate le co-curatrici. Cosa ci si può aspettare dallo spettatore della storia della bio-arte, se non una reazione corporea?
Il buono, il brutto, il cattivo...

Naturalmente, rivisitare la storia non è una novità. Ovunque si decida di situare l'inizio del dibattito storico sull'arte – Plinio, Vasari, Winckelmann, Griselda Pollock –, arriva sempre qualcun altro ad aggiungere un nuovo capitolo o a riscrivere il libro. Lo stesso vale per le mostre. Pensiamo a come "Il Palazzo Enciclopedico" di Massimiliano Gioni, alla 55. Biennale di Venezia del 2013, ha trasformato l'Outsider Art in Insider Art. Come suggerisce questo esempio, rivisitare la storia di solito ne prevede l'*espansione*, l'aggiunta di voci dimenticate o inascoltate.

"Always, Always, Others" sembrava fare proprio questo riguardo gli artisti degli anni Settanta (anche escludendo i soliti sospetti del decennio). Un "cattivo canone", per citare Caroline Busta, caporedattrice di *Texte zur Kunst*. L'estetica del brutto ricordava la mostra (in cui era esposto Guston) "Bad Painting. Good Art" ospitata proprio dal mudok nel 2008, se non l'estetica del brutto di Miuccia Prada. L'atmosfera kitsch-artigianale ricordava vagamente "Town-Gown Conflict", con Lucy McKenzie e altri, alla Kunsthalle di Zurigo del 2011, e l'approccio al magazzino del museo ricordava un giro di acquisti in un mercatino delle pulci o in un negozio dell'usato: questo potrebbe rinnovare quel vecchio Kokoschka / il mio vecchio tailleur-pantalone.

Detto ciò, l'intensità visiva e le reazioni corporee appaiono nuove. Credo che lo scopo di questa revisione non fosse aggiungere voci – "Altro", cattivo, brutto, kitsch, artigianale –, ma sopravvivere con un surplus. E viverne uno. Troppa arte. Troppe voci. Troppe scelte. Perché non utilizzare il proprio corpo per esplorare il Ventesimo secolo? E non credo che la mostra riguardasse solo la dipendenza che la cultura pop prova nei confronti del proprio passato; non riguardava la retromania di Simon Reynolds, ma il rétro nel vero senso della parola: dagli anni Settanta al 1904. Le combinazioni stridenti mi hanno ricordato anche le due ospiti della cena: elementi che un tempo erano separati – cinquantenni americane e undicenni austriache; i ritratti di Kokoschka e i tessuti di Hanson – e che ora coesistono da vicino. Okay.

L'aspetto visivo è sempre stato infinitamente modulare: qualsiasi immagine può accompagnare qualsiasi altra immagine (anche più di una). Lo stesso vale per le opere d'arte. La differenza è che ora dobbiamo in qualche modo essere all'altezza dell'incredibile numero di combinazioni che Internet rende possibile a ogni secondo che passa. Abbiamo superato di parecchio il momento in cui scattavamo foto all'arte e ad altre cose, e le univamo per osservarle. Le immagini sono diventate talmente forti, talmente decisive, che sono in grado di creare realtà cui devi adattarti. La curatela di Müller e Ammer sembrava guidata da questo ideale, da questo eccesso. Adesso devi vedertela con Kokoschka e Hanson. O stare al passo della donna americana e della ragazzina austriaca (che sono diventate immagini sul mio iPhone). Tutta questa osservazione, tutte quelle combinazioni stridenti cominciano ad avere un effetto sul corpo. Forse è per questo che mi sono venuti in mente vestiti, cibo, mobili eccetera.

Ho pensato anche al defunto *bandleader* Artie Shaw, che, negli anni Trenta, iniziò a guadagnare grandi somme di denaro e prese l'abitudine di comprare un orologio da polso a settimana, poiché non aveva altri modi di afferrare e comprendere ciò che stava vivendo. E ho pensato ai *cutter*, che trasformano le loro emozioni estreme in ferite autoinflitte che possono avvertire e osservare nel corso della guarigione. Gli estremi possono suscitare una reazione del corpo, indurlo a stare al passo, a incorporare l'esperienza. Dettando il suo nuovo ritmo vertiginoso, il capitalismo digitalizzato ha

aggiunto la propria serie di opzioni per il corpo. Dopo aver parlato a un'amica di "Always, Always, Others", lei mi ha fatto conoscere NETSET, la nuova app di Net-a-Porter: basta scattare una foto di QUALSIASI COSA – vestiti, un quadro, un paesaggio, un pasto, il tuo cane – e l'app propone una serie di vestiti che si abbinano ai colori e alla composizione visiva complessiva dell'immagine (e che si possono acquistare all'istante). Alla prossima mostra scatterò una foto del comunicato stampa e mi presenterò al vernissage indossando già la mostra sulla schiena.

Produzione
di Giaco Schiesser

Sembra esserci un grande bisogno di rileggere, ridisporre o ricostruire il materiale (artistico) e i manufatti archiviati da persone o musei. Materiali aumentati in modo esponenziale dagli albori dell'era digitale a oggi. Gli esempi sono in tutto il globo: dalla decisione del MoMA di riorganizzare la collezione permanente seguendo un ordine interdisciplinare alla nuova presentazione fatta dal mumok della propria collezione permanente; dal Museum of Tomorrow di Rio de Janeiro che unisce scienza e arte, ai progetti di ricerca artistica, che spesso consistono nella perpetua riorganizzazione di materiali d'archivio, degli studenti dei Master of Fine Arts e dei Ph.D.

Dalla prospettiva dell'epistemologia e dell'estetica della produzione, può essere utile dare un'occhiata a questo "nuovo" dispositivo, ai suoi discorsi ed effetti sul pubblico e sugli spettatori. Perché emerge nella nostra epoca, in diversi luoghi intorno al mondo, non solo in ambito artistico ma anche in quello scientifico e umanistico, in politica e in economia? Quali sono le forze note o ignote che spingono curatori, artisti o architetti a sviluppare nuovi approcci al "bricolage", concetto introdotto da Claude Lévi-Strauss nel 1962? Quali intenzioni si celano dietro i discorsi che sono stati creati lungo il percorso? E quali potrebbero essere i desideri inconsci di artisti, curatori e direttori museali, o gli effetti di questi nuovi approcci su di loro e sul loro operato?

Partiamo da un'osservazione più attenta di "Always, Always, Others. Unklassische Streifzüge durch die Moderne" (Sempre, sempre, altri. Incursioni non classiche nel Modernismo) del mumok. La mostra – co-curata dall'artista Ulrike Müller (classe 1971) e dalla curatrice Manuela Ammer (classe 1977) – presenta manufatti della modernità classica provenienti dalla collezione permanente del museo, proponendoli in modo nuovo per mostrare che la collezione è molto più ricca e varia di quanto si potrebbe pensare (o di quanto si è pensato finora). Divisa in quattro sezioni – Tessili e tettoniche, Folklore, Metamorfosi e Corpi sotto pressione –, la mostra si concentra sui materiali e i media, e stabilisce collegamenti concettuali prestando attenzione soprattutto alle caratteristiche formali delle opere. L'arte moderna degli inizi del Ventesimo secolo è unita e messa in relazione a manufatti della collezione, esposti raramente, che risalgono agli eclettici anni Settanta.

Appare chiaro che uno strato di tale dispositivo riguarda un'analisi più ravvicinata e differenziata della modernità del Ventesimo secolo in confronto al dispositivo dominante di un canone classico di opere moderne creato e reiterato da musei europei e americani nel corso del secolo scorso. Da questa prospettiva, si potrebbe dire che si sta verificando una nuova mappatura di un territorio antico e ben conosciuto. *Ein Zeitalter wird besichtigt* (Un'era viene visitata), per citare il titolo delle memorie di Heinrich Mann. Ecco i metodi usati per la mostra: non solo il bricolage di Lévi-Strauss, ma anche la produzione *in loco* con gli artisti di Harald Szeemann, strategie situazioniste di psicogeografie e metodi post-strutturalisti del "vale tutto!". Tutti questi metodi sono noti, alcuni sono usati da oltre sessant'anni. E tutti hanno un impatto trasformativo sul pubblico: anziché essere in balìa di un'"estetica della convinzione" inscenata dai curatori, il pubblico dispone di opportunità. Proprio come i fruitori di letteratura e del cinema basati sul montaggio, ogni visitatore deve decidere quale senso dare a ciò che è esposto, selezionando, combinando in modi inediti, andando oltre ciò che è presentato dai curatori.

Di nuovo, la domanda è: da dove nasce il recente interesse, per non dire il desiderio, verso un'infinita rilettura/ridisposizione/decostruzione/riorganizzazione/relazione di e con manufatti provenienti da diversi archivi, di individui, gallerie e musei?

Si potrebbe individuare una risposta nel nostro mutevole senso di appartenenza e nel bisogno di avere una precisa collocazione nella società. Le persone del Ventesimo secolo – diciamo fino agli anni Sessanta – sono nate in comunità preesistenti e chiaramente distinte (tra le altre, gruppi sociali, classi, culture giovanili), di cui sono diventate parte. Pensiamo ai mod contro i rocker nel Regno Unito degli anni Cinquanta, o agli amanti del rock'n'roll contro gli hippie negli Stati Uniti degli anni Sessanta. In quel periodo, non c'era il bisogno di interrogarsi sull'autocomprensione o sul processo di soggettivazione. Si apparteneva a un gruppo, in modo quasi naturale. Tale senso di appartenenza è cambiato drasticamente. Già nel 1985, Jürgen Habermas – non solo un filosofo ma anche un attento testimone dei tempi – scriveva che avevamo cominciato a vivere un decennio di "nuova oscurità" (si veda *Die neue Unübersichtlichkeit*, tradotto nel 1998 come *La nuova oscurità. Crisi dello Stato sociale ed esaurimento delle utopie*). Da allora il bisogno, se non la necessità, di ciascun individuo di posizionarsi e collocarsi in uno o in diversi gruppi ha cominciato a diventare fondamentale per tutti e per la vita quotidiana.

Dall'avvento dell'epoca digitale, in cui i manufatti e il sapere sono a portata di polpastrelli, nell'arco di un secondo e in quantità senza precedenti, la non collocazione delle singole persone è diventata una situazione evidente e critica da affrontare. Abbiamo la libertà e l'obbligo di scegliere in che modo collocarci.

Quando si valuta la necessità contemporanea di posizionarsi, sembra che artisti, curatori, direttori museali e architetti, tra gli altri, stiano ricombinando gli elementi degli archivi in crescita (i propri o quelli che si trovano su Internet), insidiando il sapere tradizionale e le strategie per ottenerlo. Sembra quasi che debbano collocarsi, "i-collocarsi", per inventarsi e soggettivarsi – in modo permanente, infinito e incostante – nel materiale. Anziché organizzare in modo oggettivo i manufatti di una collezione, organizzano se stessi nei manufatti in modo soggettivo. Oggi, per i *bricoleur*, i situazionisti e i neo-strutturalisti, i gesti di decostruzione e ridisposizione non sono più una possibilità ma una necessità.

Questo nuovo dispositivo epistemologico dell'i-collocazione sembra un completo che forse si addice alle generazioni più giovani, che lo indossano con naturalezza e inconsapevolmente. Forse le generazioni più anziane, che si sono abituate a una tradizione di, diciamo, lettura, osservazione e ascolto ermeneutici, devono crearsi un nuovo completo. Speriamo sia ibrido, per il bene della nostra società, di oggi e di domani.

Eva Birkenstock, "Gender and Geometry", *Texte zur Kunst,* issue 94, June 2014, p. 202-204

TEXTE ZUR KUNST

Gender and Geometry

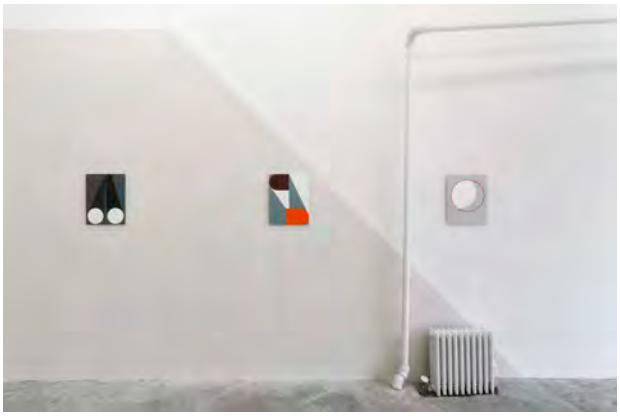
Eva Birkenstock on Ulrike Müller at Callicoon Fine Arts, New York

For the announcement poster for her exhibition "Weather" at Callicoon Fine Arts in New York, Ulrike Müller translated a found photograph into a drawing. In it, a cat looking at its mirrored reflection sees itself as a lion, humorously referring to the images of permanent self-reflection and overestimation that circulate in psychological, self-discovery forums. This idea extends to the entire exhibition: in figures of disparate symmetries, discrepancies between self-perception and the perception of others, and adjacencies of different material properties. In "Weather," Müller uncovers the differentiation of these reflections—in the dissonances that emerge between repetitions.

The tubular, ground floor gallery opens with a glass façade onto Forsyth Street in Manhattan's Lower East Side. In order to allow the exhibition space to reach into the urban environment, Müller removed the windows' original light-filtering films. She also applied a simple, geometric wall painting in light beige, which serves to frame "Weather," her new series of ten small-format enamel paintings. With the wall painting, the lines within these images are extended into the exhibition space in such a way that the walls, a radiator, and the white heating pipe and ducts—as well as the incidence of light, shadows, and the surrounding environment—all become painterly elements of the entire composition.

Five of the small-format, enamel paintings are staggered along each of the narrow gallery's two long walls. Their low placement, at almost 55 inches on center, directs one's gaze to chest or torso height. The circles, triangles, and diagonals covering them generate planes and objects. Lines repeatedly divide the space of the image on the middle axis, and in turn, soft curves, hard edges, and vertical and horizontal lines overwrite the surfaces. The division of the shiny, iconic enamel veneer is dissolved by further partitions, and two-dimensional elements are arranged in such a way that they simultaneously open up three-dimensional perspectives. To a certain extent, the works in the "Weather" series are ambiguous images—symmetrical-asymmetrical compositions—that eschew straight-forward interpretations. They transcend the clear distinction between different states, from background and foreground, abstraction and figuration, and masculine and feminine-coded gender attributions.(1) Together they enter into a dialogue in order to question—not without a bit of humor—representational paradigms of gendered body politics and painterly abstraction at the same time. This is how in one painting, an acute triangle with two small circles, which might initially be associated with "feminine" forms, transforms on second glance into a phallus, allowing the figure to persist in an ambiguous state. The gendered attributions, which unite with the naturalizations of simple geometric forms in Müller's paintings, thus appear as polymorphic figures. Initiating a game around the hidden sexualities of abstract objects, they suggest new meanings as soon as one tries to grasp them.(2)

Since 2010, Müller has been working in enamel; she orders her materials from the same sign makers who also outfit New York's subway system. As such, she makes use of a technique that was already prominently introduced into the discourse of painting in 1923 with László Moholy-Nagy's so-called "Telephone Pictures." Through the implementation of "neutral" geometric forms and the relinquishment of individual style, Moholy-Nagy sought a means of deconstructing the bourgeois "hypertrophe painter ego" and combining painterly



activity with the production standards of his time.(3) However, in contrast to Moholy-Nagy's industrialization of the medium, Müller doesn't outsource her production. Apart from her support materials, she carries out every working step in her studio and consciously develops her enamel paintings from within the realm of handicraft. Here, rather than subscribing to the economy of handicraft and the handmade, she refers to contemporary expanded modes of production in order to further a queer-feminist perspective. Painting is subtly "queered" through her commitment to a technique—and with it, a materiality—that calls for the intimacy of handicraft, the anonymity of industrial production, and the sexualization of abstract forms all at the same time.

In "Weather," Müller examines the social potential of artistic practices and the possibilities of a contemporary, feminist language of forms. Her critical reference to traditional dichotomies (such as form/content, abstraction/figuration, masculine/feminine) does not obscure their primacy within the field of vision, but on the contrary, their presence in her paintings fosters a continuous questioning and dissolution of the categorizations connected to them. Her practice reflects a search for an aesthetic beyond singular positions, an aesthetic that favors an operative rationality, which allows space for ambivalence, interstices, and ambiguities. As Müller herself argues: "It is not about creating something new but rather about addressing and activating desires rendered illegible by standard patterns of experience and about seemingly 'impossible' subject positions. Shaped by feminist critiques of representation and operating in the realm of abstract form, my work [...] explore[s] other possibilities of body images in which the perceiving and experiencing body is a specific one."(4)

The layered and overlapping white, gray, yellow, and beige areas of her enamel paintings—which are broken up by punctuated highlights in bold blue, orange, and red—could be compared to Ljubow Popowa's Constructivist studies of the late 1910s and early 1920s. Besides similarities in form and use of color, the work of these two artists shares a specific haptic—in Popowa's work, through the mixture of bronze power and marble dust, and in Müller's work, through the crystallization of glass particles under extreme heat, which produces a smooth, almost fluid tactility despite the hardness of the material. However, whereas Popowa still struggled with the equality of the gendered body and women's recognition as self-aware subjects of the revolution, Müller advances the differentiation of bodies. Her artistic biologizations of simple, geometric forms orient themselves with a view no longer directed at two sexes. Instead they create a polymorphic gender of painting.

Ulrike Müller, "Weather," Callicoon Fine Arts, New York, January 12–February 16, 2014.

Translated by Alena Williams

(1) Following George Bataille, Rosalind Krauss and Yve-Alain Bois suggest the term "formless" as a point of departure for an artistic discussion about the dissolution of the modernist dichotomy of form and content. See Yve-Alain Bois and Rosalind Krauss, Formless: A User's Guide. New York: Zone Books, 1997, published on the occasion of an exhibition of the same name held May 22–August 26, 1996 at the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.
(2) Similar matters were also addressed in "Féminin-Masculin. Le sexe de l'art," an exhibition held October 26, 1995–February 12, 1996 at the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.
(3) Brigid Doherty, "László Moholy-Nagy: Constructions in Enamel, 1923," in Barry Bergdoll and Leah Dickerman, Bauhaus 1919 – 1933: Workshops for Modernity. New York and London: Museum of Modern Art in collaboration with Thames & Hudson, c2009: 130.
(4) As quoted in Achim Hochdörfer, "Painting as Passage," in: Achim Hochdörfer and Barbara Schröder, eds. Ulrike Müller: Franza, Fever 103, and Quilts. New York: Dancing Foxes Press, 2012: 18.

Roberta Smith, "Ulrike Müller: 'weather' " *The New York Times*, February 7, 2014, p. C20

The New York Times

Galleries:

★ ULRIKE MÜLLER: 'WEATHER' (through Feb. 16) The latest paintings from this wide-ranging artist are small, compressed and built to last, being baked enamel on steel. Using two to five colors and a flexible geometric vocabulary that doesn't rule out the human body, they conjure shifting conditions of light, complementary shadows and even the coming of a full moon. The colors could be less muted, but that is just one of many possibilities opened in this impressive show. Callicoon Fine Arts, 124 Forsyth Street, near Delancey Street, Lower East Side, 212-219-0326, callicoonfinearts.com. (Smith)

W.V. Reviews in Brief: "6 New York Gallery Shows to See This Month", *Modern Painters*, February 10, 2014

BLOUIN ARTINFO

Reviews In Brief: 6 New York Gallery Shows to See This Month

Ulrike Müller
Callicoon Fine Arts
124 Forsyth Street
Through February 16

Ten gorgeous enamel paintings on steel, all titled *Weather*, continue Müller's project of excavating and revivifying visual languages. The organic, balanced forms on intimate-size panels recall marginalized strains of modernism. By using a largely decorative technique and incorporating abstract elements that evoke fleshy, twinned human forms, the artist queers painting in a subtle way that rhymes with her "Herstory Inventory" project, where she and other feminist artists reinterpreted classic feminist and lesbian-separatist imagery.—*W.V.*

Roberta Smith, "Art in Review: Moira Dryer Project", *The New York Times*, January 16, 2014, p. C36

Moira Dryer Project

By Roberta Smith
JAN. 16, 2014

Eleven Rivington
11 Rivington Street, near Chrystie Street,
and 195 Chrystie Street, near Stanton Street, Lower East Side
Through Feb. 22

This excellent exhibition is the first in New York in 20 years for the obdurate yet romantic wood-panel paintings of Moira Dryer (1957-1992). It arrives at a time when younger painters, many of them women, are exploring new ways of getting physical with their medium. Examples in the immediate vicinity of this show include Sarah Crowner's abstractions in painted and sewn canvas, at the Nicelle Beauchene Gallery, and Ulrike Müller's plaquelike works in baked enamel on steel at Callicoon Fine Arts.

Besides making her panels big, Dryer tweaked and supplemented them to stress their physicality. She then contradicted this literalness with thin, sometimes streaky applications of close shades of one color. The results are both bold and restrained, with the paint application seeming more related to early American painted furniture or sign painting than to the frequent machismo of Modernist abstraction.

"Captain Courageous" is a field of sloshed greens with splashes of white — a wall of wild water. Toward the bottom, there is a niche, like a mail slot or a place for a plaque, that makes the painting seem small and intimate.

In "The Signature Painting," a two-part work, a series of concentric rectangles in shades of terra cotta suggest an old-fashioned rag rug, as do the brushy, almost fringed edges of the color field. Dryer's initials, large and curlicued, are a quaint, witty touch, and so is the jutting, slanting box just below the painting's bottom edge. It suggests an old school desk and is painted in more terra-cotta tones, with a freewheeling figure eight, such as a restless student might have made.
Dryer did something different with support, paint and suggestion each time out in these works. The timeliness of her art is underscored by a group show at Eleven Rivington's second gallery that brings together the contrasting physicalities of paintings and paintinglike works by Mika Tajima, Jeffrey Tranchell, Julia Dault, Noam Rappaport, Mary Weatherford and Jackie Saccoccio, which are variously pertinent.

Will Heinrich, "'Descartes' Daughter' at the Swiss Institute", *The New York Observer*, October 1, 2013, https://observer.com/2013/10/descartes-daughter-at-the-swiss-institute/

THE NEW YORK OBSERVER

'Descartes' Daughter' at the Swiss Institute

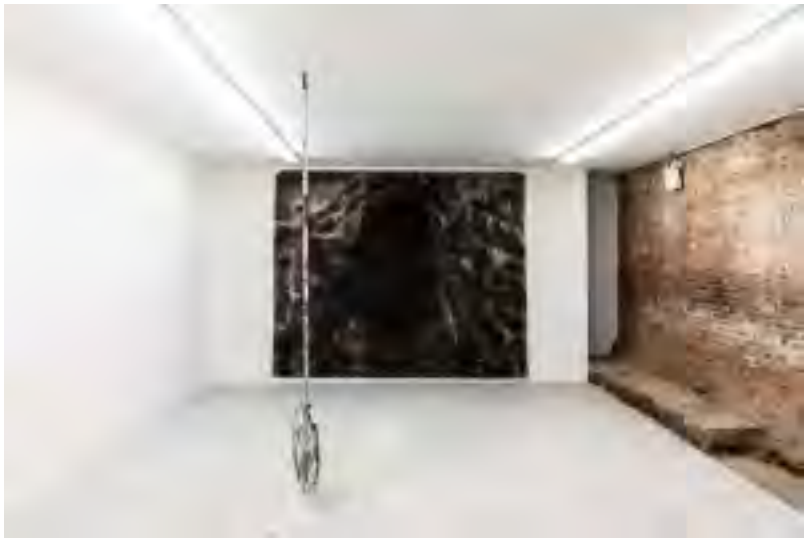
By **Will Heinrich** 10/01 4:15pm

Installation view. (Courtesy Swiss Institute)

Named for the "animatronic effigy" that the father of mind-body dualism supposedly built after the death of his young daughter, this group show, curated by Piper Marshall, doesn't argue with the famous dichotomy so much as indulge in it, taking its inadequacies for granted and then squeezing out the fun it still has to offer.

The shiny, sealed-off surfaces of Ulrike Müller's five small enamel-on-steel *Mirrors* reflect the viewer's face as if by accident, ostensibly more intent on communicating their own designs. But even those designs—an inscribed white circle orbited by a small gray moon; a bone-yellow form like a minuscule Blackletter "i," with the viewer's face for a dot—draw most of their meaning from the encounter. Only one, a heraldic-couture composite of triangles and pinked borders, offers a diffident, solitary cogito.

The transition into the externalized reconstruction of the viewer's own mind that fills the main gallery is signaled by Lucas Knipscher's *What Nice Feet I Have #1*, a flat circle covered in newspaper that hangs from a narrow square pole just inches above its own shadow on the slick concrete floor. An apparently solemn descent of Platonic geometry, this pendulum makes a good-natured jab at Descartes's failure to explain the mind's control of the body by wavering slightly as you approach; then the projecting triangular nose on its far side points you up to its gray porcelain feet walking on the ceiling, sweetly but firmly insisting that it's not the spirit but the body that was ever in doubt.



Lucas Knipscher, 'What Nice Feet I Have #2′ (2013), front, and Miriam Cahn, 'L.I.S. strat. orte bergsee' (1986), behind. (Courtesy the artists and Swiss Institute)

Sergei Tcherepnin's *Stereo Ear Tone Mirrors*, two round security mirrors in the room's corners, plays the self-creating feedback of the ghost in the machine as an electronic score. John Chamberlain's untitled, gap-toothed foam sectional covered in a silver parachute gets at the gruesomeness of the genuinely mindless body. Rochelle Goldberg's *the space between two mirrors*, a black steel frame enclosing a horizontal wooden sculpture, is a ball-and-socket curtsy to phenomenology constructed with the conceptually robust looseness of an AK-47. And Pamela Rosenkranz's *Because They Try to Bore Holes (Gaining Tension)*, a blank sheet of Ilford photo paper mounted in a shiny white frame under glass, gets at the streaks and stains of consciousness with no object.

In Melanie Gilligan's brilliant video *Self Capital, Episodes 1-3*, the global economy, played with sexy gusto by Penelope McGhie, submits herself to a course of hypnotic self analysis. Charline von Heyl's *My Little Doppelgänger Poltergeist Soul* is an oil painting of a rib-bone marimba. And Mr. Knipscher's *What Nice Feet I Have #2* drops right through the floor into the downstairs gallery, where its cartoonishly monocled pendulum hangs between Ms. Goldberg's *Tan of Cuna*, an inset, chromed-tin portrait of the human being as minimal but unbreakable, and Miriam Cahn's *L.I.S.strat.orte bergsee*, a massive black chalk drawing of an ocean. "If decontextualizing causes you to miss the point," Mr. Knipscher's calmly upside-down pendulum seems to say, "It isn't my fault." *(Through Nov. 3)*

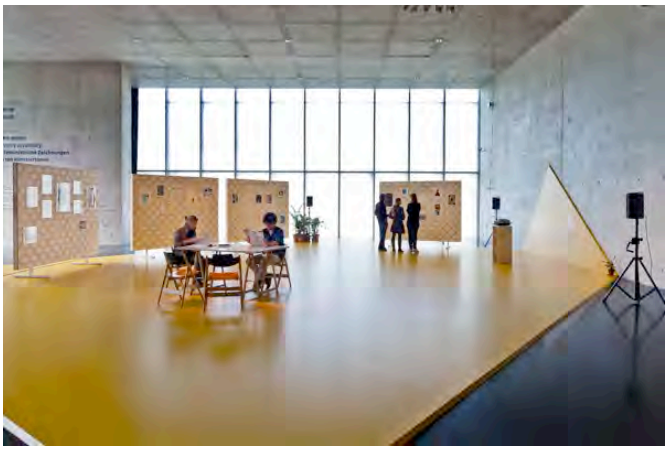
Corrine Fitzpatrick,"Ulrike Müller", *Artforum*, May 21, 2012,
https://www.artforum.com/interviews/ulrike-mueller-talks-about-herstory-inventory-31046

INTERVIEWS

ULRIKE MÜLLER

Ulrike Müller talks about *Herstory Inventory*

May 21, 2012



Ulrike Müller is an Austrian-born, New York–based artist whose work investigates form as a mode of critical engagement. In 2007, Müller found an inventory list describing a collection of feminist T-shirts at the Lesbian Herstory Archives in Park Slope, Brooklyn. She distributed individual image descriptions from this list to 100 artists, inviting them to translate the texts into drawings. The result, Herstory Inventory: 100 Feminist Drawings by 100 Artists*, is a collaborative rethinking of the queer, feminist archive. The project's debut exhibition is at the Kunsthaus Bregenz in Austria through June 24; it will return to New York for a reconfiguration at the Brooklyn Museum that opens on June 29.*

IN FEBRUARY I went to Bregenz to see the space, and I realized that this show was going to be a challenge architecturally, institutionally, socially, and personally. I had to find my own position vis-à-vis my history of the place, my experience returning there, but also my familiarity with it. I do translation work and this was the biggest translation job I had ever been confronted with: to bring so many people with me, not in person but with their drawings, which are so much a record of a hand—of a mind thinking and a body moving, and one's own subjectivity responding to a past that is a history sought out.

I was thinking about queerness, visibility, and absence. I wanted for the space to be a queer and social space, but at the same time I couldn't assume there would be a presence of queer bodies or a familiarity with queerness as an idea, or an experience. What is a queer space without queer bodies? How could questions of social norms be activated in a space that could also possibly address bodies that don't think of themselves as outside of norms? It was also important to consider language. I think for the whole project, making a claim and then using that to propel things forward has been an important strategy. The subtitle, "100 Feminist Drawings by 100 Artists," intends to produce questions, to provoke. In some ways the whole installation, or my work in general, aims to spatialize problems and questions as something that can then be related to or talked about. That question of language, of what adjective to use and what to attach the adjective to, has so much to do with queerness.

I decided to create a more intimate space within the very cool monumentality of the museum, which is built onto a grid. I inscribed into the footprint of the square building a yellow rectangular floor that turned out of the grid and pushed up onto the wall creating a triangle, like a sheet of paper with one corner folded up. I thought of this 1,500-square-foot yellow floor as a painting space that came out of my own formal sensibility and vocabulary. To go really big with that was very exciting. There are four freestanding movable walls covered with 1970s-era wallpaper, playing with certain feminist tropes of domesticity. There are thirty-five drawings on the walls, partly originals and partly facsimiles. There is a table in the space where some are in printed reproduction and all one hundred are on an iPad slide show. There is a slide projector with details that I photographed and a five-channel audio installation of multiple voices calling out the inventory of T-shirt descriptions. The recorded voice is such a particular thing that is of the body without the body being present. It makes me think about the T-shirts in the archive as something that's intended for a body but that body's not there. A body trace.

The institution invited me to make a connection to local histories. I did research around the history of homosexuality in the region, but all that produced were records of repression, and I was looking for a more celebratory approach. The result of that investigation was one painting by Maria Lassnig that I found in the collection of the Kunsthaus, from 1975. It's one of her first self-portraits with animals and she made it during her time in New York. That's the only piece that went directly onto the concrete walls of the institution, facing the temporary walls with the drawings. It seemed a good way to open up conversation about feminism and imagemaking and politics. — As told to Corrine Fitzpatrick

"Ulrike Müller's Herstory Inventory", *RANDY Magazine*, April 25, 2012

RANDY

Ulrike Müller's Herstory Inventory

by randy

Ulrike Müller's Herstory Inventory is up now at **Kunsthaus Bregenz** in Bregenz, Austria!! This extensive show features 100 feminist drawing by vital contemporary artists, some of whom have contributed to **RANDY**.

Ulrike Müller works with a wide range of media in different contexts. On the basis of conceptual practices she engages with the sociopolitical potential of artistic activity through drawing, painting, video, sound works, and performance. A central interest is her exploration of the ambivalences of contemporary gender constructions beyond binary categorizations of identity such as man/woman, hetero/homo. Her project Herstory Inventory, being presented for the first time at the KUB Arena, dates back to when, conducting research at the Lesbian Herstory Archives (Brooklyn, New York), the artist found an inventory list of T-shirts present in the collection.

Müller subsequently invited 100 internationally known artists to translate into new pictures the lovingly detailed descriptions of the pictures and graphic elements on the T-shirts written by a volunteer at the archives. Against the backdrop of the history of the movement, drawing becomes an act of political engagement with the historical insignia, symbols, and positions of US lesbian feminist discourse. In a wide range of styles, formats, and problematizations, the pictorial translations of the texts enact personal attitudes toward historical feminist imagery, confronting them with their queer feminist rethinking. At the same time, the drawings by artists like Amy Sillman, Linda Bilda, Cristina Gómez Barrio, and R.H. Quaytman give insight into artistic strategies of representational politics and formal invention. Ulrike Müller's invitation to rethink images from the history of lesbian feminism turns the inventory of the Lesbian Herstory Archives into a source and reference point for a wealth of artistic designs.

Lauren O'Neil-Butler, "Reviews: Ulrike Müller, Brooklyn Museum", *Artforum*, September 2012, p. 270

Ulrike Müller

BROOKLYN MUSEUM

What does it mean to make feminist history a little silly? For her contribution to the Brooklyn Museum's "Raw/Cooked" series (a yearlong string of exhibitions dedicated to Brooklyn-based artists), Ulrike Müller handled her personal and political affinities with a refreshingly light touch. Born in Austria and living in New York since 2002, Müller often works collaboratively, coediting the queer journal *LTTR*, for instance. This exhibition marked the latest in her series of "Herstory Inventory" installations, for which she bands together with like-minded artists to reimagine entries in a droll stock list she found at the Lesbian Herstory Archives: one-line descriptions of images appearing on the hundreds of T-shirts in the collection produced from the 1970s onward. (To wit: "abstract design with clitoris in the center," "mermaid with wings holding a labrys," "prancing unicorn," "A naked woman riding a spiral graphic of some kind.") For the project's first iteration, in 2009, she enlisted the help of Nancy Brooks Brody, Emma Hedditch, Zoe Leonard, and MPA to produce a five-channel audio installation based on the list. Then, for "Herstory Inventory: 100 Feminist Drawings by 100 Artists," realized first at Kunsthaus Bregenz, Austria, and again here, she distributed one hundred of the list's entries to more artists and asked them to create drawings.

In case you didn't know, the Lesbian Herstory Archives, housed since 1993 in a brownstone in Park Slope, Brooklyn, collects books, journals, photos, films, posters, and other materials "relevant to the lives and experiences of Lesbians." In the various manifestations of Müller's project, the list serves to outline a history of the lesbian-rights movement and form a visual imaginary of its publics. For this incarnation, Müller also included twenty-four historic objects from the Brooklyn Museum's permanent collection based on one of five motifs—rainbows, triangles, axes, hands, and flowers—and these, in turn, produced another level of dialogue and exchange. Müller installed the drawings and objects in the elevator lobbies on the second through fifth floors of the beaux arts building, allowing the works to permeate the entire institution like a strong perfume.

This rhizomatic, horizontal schema of "Herstory Inventory" not only updated the visual imaginary depicted on the T-shirts but also extended that reenvisioning to the museum itself. By juxtaposing objects from the institution's collection with the Herstory drawings, the show prompted visitors to view the collection and, by extension, the museum itself in a different light. A multitude of latent subjectivities suddenly presented themselves, as a familiar space took on new sensibilities. This, in turn, aided viewers in elucidating abstract notions about the ways in which official and unofficial histories are written, or about the fact that dominant viewpoints are usually taken for granted. (As Müller stated in a recent interview, one of the aims of the project is to spatialize "problems and questions as something that can be related to or talked about.") Ultimately, the show's success hinged upon two factors: a reimagining of a previous generation's visual culture, and the transformation of the museum into a common realm, a space that brings hegemonic and non-hegemonic views into contact without fully endorsing either one.

Indeed, one of the most touching aspects of the show was the specific interactions between the historic objects and the drawings, summoning affective links across time. (The installation of Zoe Leonard's *An Iris*, 2012, a dead iris taped to a sheet of paper, near an austere 1875 watercolor of a calla lily by Fidelia Bridges was but one resonant example of a new work bringing questions about subjectivity and sexuality to an older work.) And let's not forget the numerous renderings of labryses and labia, which kept reminding us of the 1970s milieu on which this project is based, of the shapes and forms that once denoted political ideas but that today may feel stale. "Herstory Inventory" showed us how such images and icons are mutable, how they flourish and perish just as movements do, and how without a little humor a movement is already dead.

—*Lauren O'Neill-Butler*

Kim Kelly, ***Two amazons together on horseback with labryses all around,*** **2012**, watercolor and pencil, 6 x 9". From "Herstory Inventory: 100 Feminist Drawings by 100 Artists," 2012.

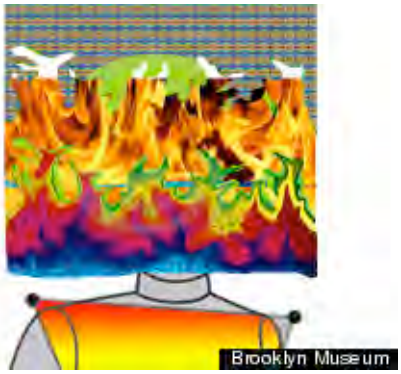
"Ulrike Müller's 'Herstory Inventory' At The Brooklyn Museum", *Huffington Post*, July 27, 2012, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/ulrike-mullers-herstory_n_1706738

HUFFPOST ARTS & CULTURE

Ulrike Muller's 'Herstory Inventory' At The Brooklyn Museum

Posted: 07/27/2012

How did a bunch of drawings inspired by T-shirts at a grassroots feminist organization end up in an art museum? The story of how such an unlikely exhibition came to be is the subject of "Herstory Inventory." The Brooklyn Museum's collaborative exhibition, organized by Austrian-born artist Ulrike Müller, traces the forms that makeup the narrative of lesbian and feminist histories, while showing how these forms can translate into political action.



Müller found her inspiration at the Lesbian Herstory Archives in Park Slope, Brooklyn. After visiting, the artist used a number of descriptions from vintage T-shirts and disseminated them to 100 artists, who interpreted the words in their own work. For instance, one read: "A graphic of the island of lesbos with icons depicting different sites and tourist activities."

There is a playful quality to the drawings, which combine stereotypically girly images like flowers and rainbows with traditionally masculine images of lightning bolts, horses and spears. The works define a movement and literally embody its transition from counter-culture T-shirt store to mainstream art exhibition.

The second part of the exhibition places the 100 drawings in conversation with 25 works from the Brooklyn Museum's permanent collection. Although we rarely see images like these in major museums, by looking for flowers, rainbows, and spears throughout art history's major works, Müller is able to find queer iconography within, even if it is unintentional.

Müller's "Herstory Inventory" is part of the "Raw/Cooked" series at the Brooklyn Museum. It will show until September 9, 2012.

Manuela Ammer, "K8 Hardy & Ulrike Müller", *Frieze*, January/February 2011

frieze

K8 Hardy & Ulrike Müller

GALERIE SONJA JUNKERS AND STEINLE CONTEMPORARY, MUNICH, GERMANY

To try and identify a 'feminist' and a 'formalist' in K8 Hardy and Ulrike Müller's joint exhibition, 'Feminism Formalism', would miss the point. Despite the different appearances of their shows, the artists' shared backgrounds, political agendas and interest in ambiguity made any division of content and form futile. In fact, breaking down such binary systems is the purpose of Hardy and Müller's endeavour. As members of the New York-based collective LTTR (which has stood for anything from 'Lesbians to the Rescue' to 'Lacan Teaches to Repeat'), the artists have edited a journal and organized events to act out a queer feminist ethics that rejects feminism's exclusive identification with femininity, in favour of more plural and permeable notions of gender.

This interest in community-building based on shared personal experience manifested itself in the performance Hardy and Müller staged on the opening night. Walking through the crowd, they told a story about a woman who is increasingly failed by her body: shitting her pants on the subway, getting sick in a cab, tripping, stumbling and fainting – all the while straining to keep up appearances. The performance climaxed with the artists shouting: 'Maybe you meditate, maybe you are straight, maybe you critical think [sic], but this is a performance – it's how I communicate.'

Queering the familiar to open it up to novel ways of reading was also at the core of Hardy's and Müller's solo presentations. By adopting the vocabularies of fashion and Modernism, respectively, the artists challenged semiotic systems conventionally employed to represent the gender binary. At Galerie Sonja Junkers, K8 Hardy showed work from her 'Position Series' (2010), photographs resembling fashion snapshots in which the artist (or occasionally her sister) performs various social and cultural archetypes. We see her, for instance, holding a yoga pose; kneeling on a stool in garter belts, mimicking a cat; or swinging from a lamp post in bright red tights and a neon orange wig. From the stuff of other people's closets, multiple personas are conjured, and all of them – or none of them – are K8 Hardy. Because the artist manipulates the images in the developing process, some photographs feature cuts or splits, and/or negative shadows of the artist's body in different postures blocking the light during exposure. It appears as if the female form were haunting this masquerade of identities, reminding us that, while there is no innocent viewer, Hardy's looks aren't innocent either. The direction of the gaze was complicated by the presence of four mannequin busts on pedestals positioned in the entrance of the gallery. Painted, made up with wigs, glasses, bizarre jewellery and headgear, these 'heads' (2010) looked out the window, at Hardy's photographs, and at an enamel work by Müller hung on the wall.

Müller's show at Steinle Contemporary addressed the question of style and representation on an entirely different level. Her series 'Vienna Paintings' (2010), like the majority of works on display, could be described as abstraction with a twist – or, perhaps more tellingly, an itch. Carefully composed of minimal lines, circles, curves and rectangular forms, Müller's work audibly converses with Modernist abstraction, yet it voices its own opinion. Where Modernism opted for purity and unambiguousness, Müller's imagery deliberately puts ambivalence to work. In her 2007 series of drawings, 'Paraphilia', titled after the term

for repeated sexual arousal by unconventional stimuli, the repeated encounter of round shapes and slightly irregular lines creates a play wherein abstraction flirts erotically with representation. ‘Heatwave’ (2010), a new group of paintings in baked enamel on steel, translates this innuendo of form into a medium formerly associated with sign production. Consequently, and in line with the requirements of the technical process, the artist’s compositions are clearer and simpler. Sensuality, here, is largely a matter of material quality. Complying with the smoothness and precious shine of the enamel’s surface, Müller takes the work to the next logical level. Also available at the show was a special edition of miniature wearable paintings – some of which played with the shape of the women’s symbol – opening yet another avenue in the dialogue between fashion and art, sexual politics and aesthetics, intellect and desire.

Manuela Ammer

Ben Judson, "IAIAR New Works: 10.1", *Art Lies,* issue 65, 2010

ART LIES
A Contemporary Art Journal

IAIR New Works: 10.1 Artpace San Antonio

Ben Judson

When Artpace San Antonio unveils its International Artist-in-Residence (IAIR) exhibits every four months, there are always attempts to conceptually and formally connect the three individual projects on view. Viewers, reviewers and even the curator try to figure out how the projects fit together, how they act on and lean against one another. Often this exercise falls flat, as the three artists—selected by the same curator and working in adjoining spaces—take their projects in entirely different directions. The IAIR work currently on view, however, demonstrates how well the confluence of the projects can sometimes shed light on each individual artist's approach to a singular concern.

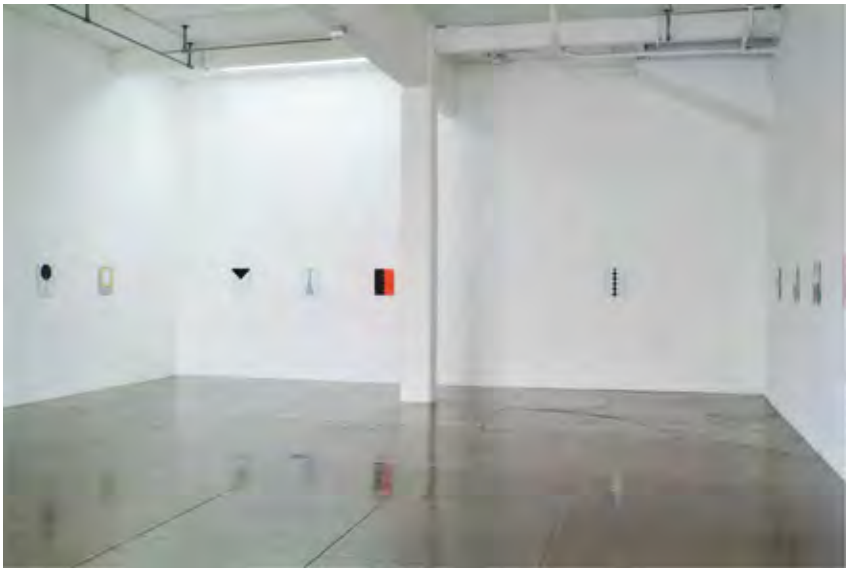
Buster Graybill, Tush Hog, 2010; mixed-media installation; dimensions variable; originally commissioned by Artpace San Antonio; photo by Todd Johnson

All three installations could have sprung from a single question: What happens when you take a minimalist surface and push a body up against it? In the answers provided by Buster Graybill, Klara Liden and Ulrike Müller, the kinds of surfaces, pushes and bodies vary widely: rams seeking corn butt their heads against stainless steel sculptures on a Texas ranch; a person clings to a concrete pillar high above the ground in downtown San Antonio; and bold, geometric abstractions referencing human anatomy fill the surfaces of small, steel plates.

In Tush Hog, Graybill released semi-minimal stainless steel sculptures filled with corn onto a ranch outside San Antonio. Small holes in the sculptures let the corn out, attracting wildlife—rams and feral hogs—and inspiring small feeding frenzies, while game cameras installed on the ranch captured video of these interactions. At Artpace, Graybill presents the rugged industrial sculptures, with dirt still clinging to them and corn scattered about the floor. Documentation (videos and stills) of the animals' responses hangs on the walls. In one video, a ram jumps up and down around a sculpture as another butts its head against it. The sounds of rams butting horns and running into the sculptures echo through the space. The installation leaves one to wonder if the gallery invaded the wild or the wild has invaded the gallery; sculptures born at Artpace infiltrated ranchland, but what the land sent back was imbued with an animal energy foreign to the art institution.

Klara Liden, Corps de Ballet, 2010; 3 channel video; music by Åskar Brickman; production still; originally commissioned by Artpace San Antonio; photo by Ulrike Müller

Liden's performative videos are a kind of inversion of Graybill's strategy. While Tush Hog's surfaces were created in the gallery and the movements came from the wild, in Liden's Corps de Ballet the artist constructed movements in the gallery and then pushed them against surfaces in urban spaces. Three surveillance-style videos projected on the gallery walls bring her actions back to Artpace—and to the



Ulrike Müller, Fever 103, 2010; enamel on steel; 15.5 x 12 inches (18 plates); installation view; originally commissioned by Artpace San Antonio; photo by Todd Johnson

viewer. One video starts with a shot of a street and the corner of a building with large concrete pillars. All that seems to happen are views of cars passing by, but eventually one notices the arms and legs of the artist clinging to the top of one of the pillars as she slowly edges her way down. Just before she reaches the bottom, the video ends. In an adjacent projection, the artist performs the same action on a lamp post at night. A third, shorter video shows Liden doing a slow, minimal dance on the top of a parking garage and ends with her body curled up in the empty space. Across from the projections, tar roofing paper swoops down from the ceiling, covering most of the gallery floor and forming a kind of stage for the viewer to inhabit. Off to one side, large rectangular solids constructed from the same paper hang from the ceiling. A repetitive soundtrack of piano music and bird sounds ties the environment together into a powerful mass of darkness and urban solitude.

The third part of IAIR 10.1 is formally quite different. Müller rendered some eighteen striking enamel-on-steel paintings and hung them at even intervals thoughout the gallery. Simple and geometric yet frankly erotic, the works are together titled after the Sylvia Plath poem Fever 103° (each painting also takes an individual title from one of the poem's eighteen stanzas). Müller's process of "painting" with enamel powder and baking onto steel plates softens her hard-edged compositions with a slightly organic, undulating surface. Colors that from a distance seem strictly separate intermingle under inspection. No field remains pure.

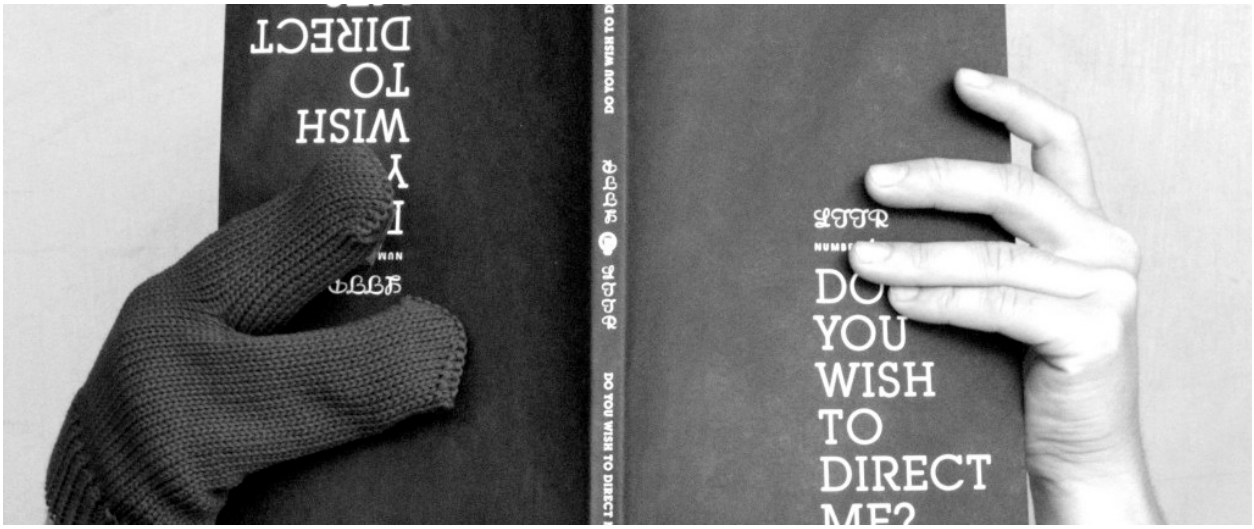
Müller arranged for Fever 103 to be viewed only in natural light. The large garage door from the gallery space to an outdoor patio remains open during viewing hours. This decision demonstrates the idea that these pieces, both in their design and production, are perfectly at home in an outdoor setting. Her compositions derive from signage and tile design, and her materials are rugged. When viewing these enamel paintings, one is thus reminded of the meeting point of public spaces filled with signs, and the more intimate places one tends to associate with decorative tiles: the kitchen, the bathroom—places, incidentally, dedicated to the needs of the body. While Graybill's Tush Hog and Liden's Corps de Ballet explore the movement of the work of art outside the gallery and then back in, Müller's Fever 103 subtly deconstructs her work from within. Gone are the video, the audio and the blatant industrial aesthetic of Graybill and Liden. However, Müller's approach still draws from Minimalism; bodies still push up against surfaces. She too breaks down the edges of her compositions, the physical limits of the gallery and, ultimately, the psychological limits of the public and private realms.

Ben Judson is a poet and freelance critic based in San Antonio.

This exhibition runs through May 16, 2010.

Julia Bryan-Wilson, "Repetition and Difference: LTTR", *Artforum*, Summer 2006

ARTFORUM



LTTR. Cover of "Do You Wish To Direct Me?," no. 5; September 2005; edition of 1000; 8.5 x 5.5 in. Liz Collins. *Merger Glove*, 2005; knit glove; edition of 1000. Courtesy of LTTR.

Repetition and Difference: LTTR

By Julia Bryan-Wilson

An embrace of a kind of promiscuity has driven LTTR from the outset.

"It is our promiscuity that will save us," AIDS activist and art theorist Douglas Crimp asserted in 1987, a time often marked by the brutal vilification of gay sex, when a devastating health crisis was portrayed in the media as punishment for pleasure. Crimp defied this moralism by arguing that gay men's sexual flexibility might help them adapt to safer sex strategies. While the AIDS crisis continues, albeit cushioned for some by the effects of life-extending drugs, it is nevertheless difficult to render Crimp's claim intelligible today. The value of promiscuity considered literally, as Crimp did, seems impossible to imagine given the profound conservatism of much of the contemporary gay and lesbian movement. (The terms of public discourse have changed, clearly, when debates focus on the participation of gays in the institutions of marriage and the military.) Gay couples have perhaps become more tolerated in U.S. society, but other queer practices and community formations have arguably become more limited. Given the current, narrow visions of queerness, there are still lessons to be learned from Crimp's promotion of openness and diverse encounters.

An embrace of a kind of promiscuity, then, has driven the New York–based collective LTTR from the outset. LTTR is a shifting acronym; it started in 2001 as "Lesbians to the Rescue"—a superhero slogan if there ever was one—and has since stood for phrases ranging from "Lacan Teaches to Repeat" to "Let's Take the Role." Just as the words behind its initials are variable, so too are its membership and output. Founded by Ginger Brooks Takahashi and K8 Hardy, LTTR has been joined by Emily Roysdon and Ulrike Müller; all four have ongoing individual practices as artists, videomakers, writers, and/or performers, and they frequently participate in other artistic and activist projects. (Lanke Tattersall was also an editor for the fourth issue.) While LTTR began as a collectively edited and produced journal, the group now also organizes screenings, exhibitions, performances, read-ins, and workshops. The original

phrase "Lesbians to the Rescue" suggests that someone, or something, needs to be saved (the phrase is missing only an exclamation point to drive home its campy urgency)—and it is clear from the excited, even libidinal ethos of its projects that LTTR sees this redemption as rooted in desire.

Promiscuity, whether sexual or—in the case of LTTR as an organization—curatorial, generates all-important moments of unexpected connection.

In a political climate tinged by anger, defeatism, and the persistent shaming of unruly forms of queerness, LTTR objective is a generosity based in exuberance. It is, in other words, with a purposeful *critical promiscuity* that LTTR puts itself forward. As Samuel R. Delaney explains in *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue* (1999), a hybrid memoir/theoretical investigation of the effects of gentrification on gay public sex in New York, it is the small exchanges of good will, modeled for him in the practices of casual sex, that make life "rewarding, productive, and pleasant." The group's open calls for submission and the multiple audiences of its live events exhibit its willingness to engage those with whom it might not otherwise come into contact. Promiscuity, whether sexual or—in the case of LTTR as an organization—curatorial, generates all-important moments of unexpected connection.

LTTR. Cover of "Listen Translate Translate Record," no. 2; August 2003; edition of 1000; 12.5 x 12.5 in, folded. Silka Sanchez. *Untitled*, 2003. Courtesy of LTTR.

Takashi writes in an editorial note for the first issue of LTTR's journal that the project was generated out of eager curiosity, a way "to share our big love for the homos." Here, the term "homo" is used in its loosest sense—LTTR explicitly refuses strict self-definitions—and this expanded meaning is quickly discerned in the journal's make-up: LTTR's critical promiscuity emphasizes bringing different bodies together across race, gender, and generation. Likewise, the contents of the journals do not conform easily to categories, and often blur the lines between art, criticism, and fiction. In the four issues produced to date (each produced in a limited edition of one thousand copies and distributed mostly in independent bookstores), contributors have included emerging artists, transgender activists, punk musicians, and established scholars. Authors have ranged from Eileen Myles to Lisa Charbonneau, Anna Bloom to Matt Wolf; and artists from Mary McAlister and Zara Zandieh to Gloria Maximo and Lynne Chan. To get a concrete sense of the publication's wide-ranging forms of production, consider the second issue (called "Listen Translate Translate Record"), which included a CD with audio tracks by Sarah Shapiro, Wikkid, and Boyfriend, as well as an altered tampon by Fereshteh Toosi, a poster by Silka Sanchez, "mood charts" by Leah Gilliam, poetry by Mary DeNardo, an essay by Craig Willse, and a small, stand-alone exam book, complete with a reproduced sticky note and scrawled notes to the instructor, by Astria Suparak. With every issue, LTTR draws on the resources of friends and colleagues, sharing the labor according to skills and energies; as much as the journal stems from do-it-yourself impulses, it is always a finely wrought object.

Emblematic of its mission, the cover of the first issue features a photo (part of a larger series by Roysdon) of a masturbating Roysdon wearing a strap-on dildo and a facemask of David Wojnarowic—underlining an affective fag/dyke connection. This gesture across gender and generation provocatively suggests that LTTR's inevitable engagements with the past are hardly straightforward, and can be irreverent, joyfully perverted, or achingly intense.

LTTR. Cover of "Lesbians To The Rescue," no. 1; September 2002; edition of 1000; 9 x 8.5 in. Emily Roysdon. *Untitled (David Wojnarowicz project)*; 2002. Courtesy of LTTR.

The group has numerous queer art/activist precedents, including the AIDS/HIV graphics-making collective Gran Fury, as well as feminist legacies such as the West-East Bag (conceived by Judy Chicago, Lucy Lippard, and Miriam Schapiro in 1971 as "an international information liaison network of women artists") and Heresies (formed in 1976 as an independent feminist, art, and politics publication). In fact, LTTR often explicitly references previous feminist practice, as in the title of the journal's fourth issue: "Do you wish to direct me?," a provocative question appropriated from Lynda Benglis's pioneering video *Now* (1973). Benglis, in an autoerotic meditation on the possibilities of the then-emerging video technology, asks this query to her own on-screen image. LTTR answers her question, dialogically, in its editorial statement, noting that "sometimes when you call, what you get back is both an echo and a response," and the playful commands hinted at by Benglis are taken up by the works in the issue itself, such as Liz Collins's red knit glove that directs the hand into unexpected configurations. But with its "genderqueer" focus—instead of calling itself a strictly lesbian project, LTTR instead invokes another kind of queer/trans sociality—LTTR has an identity-defying attitude that is markedly different from separatist moments in radical feminist art production. For example, consider the Lesbian Art Project, formed in Los Angeles in 1977 by Terry Wolverton, Arlene Raven, and others. That group similarly curated exhibitions, made small publications, and programmed events, but defined itself as exclusively by and for lesbians.

LTTR underscores the insufficiency of the term "identity politics" without dismissing the politics of identity.

LTTR's refusal of such a fixed subjectivity is not an example of what has been termed "post-identity," implying progress beyond or transcendent of all categories, but is instead a vision of a more permeable, unbounded sense of possible identification. The term "queer" was reclaimed in the 1980s to signal solidarity between gay men and lesbians (even as the word came off as erasure to some dykes), and the shifting nature of the "lesbian" in LTTR suggests a continuing search for new terminology to help us negotiate increasingly complex relationships to sex and self. LTTR thus underscores the insufficiency of the term "identity politics" without dismissing the politics of identity.

Ridykeulous. *The Advantages of Being a Lesbian Woman Artist*, 2006. Courtesy of LTTR.

In fact, the political resonance of LTTR may be discerned best in its sprawling live events, multiform publications, and curatorial endeavors, as they reach out to a somewhat improvised network of artists, activists, and theorists that could be called a community at a moment when it is increasingly difficult to speak with any precision about what was once called the public sphere. The recent upswing in institutional interest in collaborative production may merely suggest the artistic trend *du jour* (witness the weather reports issued around this year's Whitney Biennial), but underlying this resurgence in collaboration is a deeper anxiety about shared social space today, whether virtual, ideological, or physical. Against this cultural backdrop, LTTR has programmed a vibrant range of public events at numerous non-profit art spaces around New York, including the Kitchen and Printed Matter. In summer 2004, it hosted Explosion LTTR at Art in General: a month-long series of events and exhibits featuring, among other things, a talk by Gregg Bordowitz; the Toronto-based troupe Free Dance Lessons grooving with random passersby in Chinatown; music by Lesbians on Ecstasy; and a transgender legal workshop.

For the Explosion, LTTR also played matchmaker by pairing artists—most of whom did not previously know each other or each other's work—to collaborate for one day in the Art in General storefront window. One such collaboration between Leidy Churchman and Luis Jacob extended the vibe of promiscuity by installing a beige sofa in the window and inviting people to use it as a rendezvous site (*Make-Out Make-Out Make-Out Couch*, 2004). Some pairs, like Matt Keegan and Xylor Jane, whose mutual interest in pattern led to an installation featuring concentric square spirals in yellow and orange tape, have since occasionally worked together again. As the event progressed over several weeks, remnants of previous collaborations remained in the storefront, and artists responded in part to those traces, creating a palimpsest-like layering. This was made most explicit by Courtney Daily and Klara Liden, who created exact replicas of the art in the gallery space. These all-white ghost copies then spilled out over and across the street, extending the space of the gallery into the city. For example, one of the Keegan/Jane spirals was redone on the wall opposite the storefront, and it remained as a trace of this

A.K. Burns (Aisha Khalilah Burnes). *Decorated Soldier*, 2004. Courtesy of LTTR.

A.L. Steiner. *Please Rebel Act Now*, 2006. Courtesy of LTTR.

experiment for months after the residency ended. In each of these endeavors, LTTR rallies people together with ardent enthusiasm.

LTTR presents itself as a vital alternative, and not only to the art market's high gloss.

Enthusiasm like this, of course, is perilous, and almost always draws fire: detachment is often more critically prized. As Jacobs, one of the Explosion LTTR collaborators explains, "To ask strangers to collaborate is risky; it's an experiment that could have collapsed. What's amazing is how well it worked." LTTR's willingness to take such chances with their editorial choices has led to contradictory criticisms. Some see its projects as hodge-podge or ragged (i.e., too inclusive), while others think its process is not open enough (i.e., too exclusive). Despite—or even because of—the sometimes scrappy nature of its enterprise, LTTR presents itself as a vital alternative, and not only to the art market's high gloss. It also represents a different face of queer aesthetic production, one uninterested in a consumerist "queer eye" that knows exactly which scented candle to buy. "Practice More Failure" was the name of the third journal, and it is a knowing one, as it highlights LTTR's emphasis on "process and practice over product"—potential criticisms, collapses, and all.

LTTR's search for promiscuity—and all the risks and rewards that term implies—continues to motor its projects. In September 2005, LTTR hosted a release party in Chelsea for the fourth issue the journal, featuring DJs and street performances. It was a strikingly intergenerational, heterogeneous scene, as hipsters young and old joined in the celebration, participating in interactive installations and dancing on the piers. Maybe it was merely a crowd of artists and musicians and self-declared freaks, but it was also a community—a fragile, restless one that is constantly expanding and reconstituting. Feminist theorist and English professor Lauren Berlant has recently proposed that negativity and depression could be politically necessary responses to the disenfranchised character of our contemporary moment. Yet during an era of real despair, with an administration hateful of all types of difference, we also need these localized moments of pleasure and unsecured possibility, moments motored not only by passion but also a willingness to fail.

Links

The fifth exhibition in the Raw/Cooked series presents the work of Sunset Park--based artist Ulrike Müller. With the goal of starting a conversation on the lesbian feminist movement and examining the visibility of queer bodies within mainstream culture and the Museum, Müller orchestrated a collaborative drawing project based on the inventory list of the feminist T-shirt collection at the Lesbian Herstory Archives in Park Slope, Brooklyn. She distributed textual T-shirt descriptions to feminists, queer artists, and other interested New Yorkers, and asked that they translate these texts into new images. Her exhibition includes one hundred drawings from this project. Additionally, she used symbolic lesbian, feminist, and queer terms from the inventory as search criteria to mine the Museum's online collection. Through the display of approximately one hundred of the collaborative drawings and nearly twenty-five Museum collection objects in the Luce Center for American Art's Elevator Lobby and elsewhere in the Museum, Müller creates a visual dialogue among contemporary queer culture, the Museum, and the history of feminist activism.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yjDoew_KuAI

Ulrike Müller in conversation with Roger Conover

Vienna-born, New York-based artist Ulrike Müller takes shared emotions as a point of departure for making and reflecting on art and its critical position. Everything she makes takes full advantage of its medium. Different forms of performance--live, on video, captured on or exclusively for an audio track--are built out of spoken language and the language of the body. Her 2003 Vienna conference ("Public Affairs") which she developed into a book ("Work the Room") was conceived around the question "What does it mean to act critically?" with equal attention to the word "act" and the word "critical." After Müller moved to New York in 2002 she joined the team that co-edits the magazine LTTR (initials which throughout its five issues have stood for phrases from "Lesbians to the Rescue" to "Lacan Teaches to Repeat.") Instead of protesting what they don't want, Müller and cohort act out what they do want: a feminist ethics for the present.

http://video.mit.edu/watch/ulrike-mueller-with-roger-conover-4187/