

LUTZ BACHER «SNOW»

23 NOVEMBER 2013 – 2 FEBRUARY 2014

PRESS INFORMATION: FRIDAY, 22 NOVEMBER, 11 AM

OPENING: FRIDAY, 22 NOVEMBER, 6-9 PM

Lutz Bacher (lives and works in New York) has been questioning the medialisation and commercialisation of individual life choices and models of sexual and social identity since the early 1970s through the alienation and deconstruction of their familiar manifestations. Accordingly, since the beginning of her career as an artist, she has concealed her true identity behind a misleading and deceptive male pseudonym and rarely appears in person on the art scene. With «SNOW», Kunsthalle Zürich presents an exhibition, in which the artist incorporates an overview of her work from the 1970s to the present day into the ensemble of an installation created specially for the exhibition.

Lutz Bacher's oeuvre evades all attempts at categorization or typological definition and instead provides extensive scope for wide-ranging interpretations. With her photographic works, sculptural ensembles, video works and installations, she challenges supposedly familiar images that have become established in the collective understanding. Through innovations, distortions, fragmentations, alienations and abstractions, she enables images and objects to interact in a new way and hence enables us to experience the collapse and contradiction of our societal conventions and the medial fictions associated with them. Themes like identity, its formation and interchangeability – be it in relation to individuals themselves or the celebrities feted by popular culture –, communities and their loose networks, the human body, sexuality and materiality are the core of her work.

Bacher consistently avails of popular sources – including dubious sex manuals, pulp fiction, gossip columns and self-help books – and appropriates paparazzi photos. The found combinations of images and texts and the possible interpretations and irritations generated by such relations play an important role in her appropriation strategy. In *The Lee Harvey Oswald Interview* (1976) she collages photocopied photographs of the John F. Kennedy's putative assassin with a question-and-answer interview. The conversation, which the artist has with herself under the name of the assassin, does not focus on Oswald or the mythologisation of American conspiracy theories, as the title of the work would suggest, but explores instead the medium of photography, history and the impossibility of finding truth in an image or text. These ideas can also be found in the large-format works of the *Jokes Series* (1987–1988). They show black and white press photos of various celebrities from the 1970s – for example, Marlon Brando and the American politician and feminist Bella Abzug as seen here in the exhibition. On the portrait shots, nasty but supposedly apt one-liners are located that amount to disparaging self-descriptions. The paparazzo Ron Gallela, one of the photographers responsible for the establishment of the tabloid press has his say in the work *Jackie & Me* (1989): Bacher appropriates unauthorised photographs including narcissistic captions by Gallela. The snapshots show a dark-haired female figure who is dodging the camera lens. Could it be Jacqueline "Jackie" Kennedy, who is trying to flee the obtrusive photographer? This work exposes the act of observation on different levels. Gallela is not the only one spying on the female figure: the paparazzo himself also appears to have been watched by a concealed observer and the viewer ultimately also becomes the observer in his or her reception of the work.

Through the appropriation of pornographic images of the female body, Bacher assumes a traditionally male position and hence raises the question as to what happens when a woman assumes this position of the viewer and why this perspective is often seen as taboo. The work *Sex With Strangers* (1986) shows explicit images of sexual acts – which are often hard-core and violent. The enlarged photocopies with accompanying captions of pages from a paperback book reproduce pseudo-sociological platitudes in a way that resembles a scientific study on rape. The subject of the paintings and drawings in the series *Playboy* (1991–1994) is also erotic. These commissioned works are based on the sensual, large-breasted and blithely smiling pin-ups by the illustrator Antonio Vargas, which appeared in *Playboy* in the 1960s and '70s. The female nudes appear with politely

suggestive statements: for example, a blond wearing only an open transparent black robe and presented in a lascivious seated pose is shown saying: "Sure I'm for the feminist movement. In fact, I'm pretty good at it."

Lutz Bacher not only includes images and texts into her works, she also uses found objects from the graveyards of collective obsessions sourced in charity shops and the overflowing surplus stores of the consumer world. The artist adds a kind of physical or and in a metaphorical sense psychological damage to these objects, which range between readymades and *objets trouvés*, and thereby reveals the ruins of our identities, role allocations, collective patterns of behaviour and desires in both conceptually compelling and narratively accessible but always misleading works and environments. *Big Glass* (2008) shows a broken mirror, which is misappropriated as a readymade. In using this title, Bacher makes an art history reference to Marcel Duchamp's work *The Large Glass* (1915–1923). The viewer's glimpse of himself or herself in the fragmented mirror image reveals Bacher's interest in the fragmentary and corporeal – themes that can also be found in works like *Arm* (2009), a life-sized cast of a left arm, *Bison* (2012), an incomplete wild bovid created from theatre props, and the photographs *Little People* (2005), which portray toy plastic trolls.

The artist's presentation at Kunsthalle Zürich, which is organised as an overview exhibition, is the last of three individual shows based on different formats and approaches which Bacher presented in Europe in 2013: the artist presented works at the Portikus in Frankfurt am Main in spring and in late summer at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London. A joint catalogue for the three exhibitions, which presents the full inventory of her oeuvre in the form of an artist book, is being published for the opening in Zurich.

Catalogue

A catalogue entitled *Lutz Bacher. SNOW* is published by JRP|Ringier Kunstverlag with an essay by Caoimhin Mac Giolla Léith, 353 pages.

Events

Press Information:

Friday, 22.9., 11 am

Reality Check – Talks and Encounters at Kunsthalle Zürich:

Reality Check #5/ Appropriation and Riot: Thursday, 12.12., 6.30 pm

Reality Check #6/ Between Private and Public Identity: Thursday, 16.1., 6.30 pm

Family Workshops:

Sunday, 8.12. / 5.1. / 19.1., 1.30 – 3 pm (Brigit Meier, Museum Educator)

For children between five and thirteen years of age accompanied by an adult. We explore themes and issues around the current exhibition in a playful way. The impressions gained from viewing the works are then expressed through participation in a hands-on artistic activity.

Participation fee per family: 20 CHF.

Art appreciation for schools (in German):

Workshops: School classes at all levels can explore contemporary art, based on a dialogue suited to their age and translate their impressions into an artistic work.

Monday, 1 – 6 pm; Tuesday – Friday, 9.30 am – 6 pm, by appointment.

Duration: 1.5 hours, with Brigit Meier, Museum Educator

Information: meier@kunsthallezurich.ch

Free of charge to school classes from the canton of Zurich.

Guided Public Tours:

SUNDAY TOURS, 2 pm: 1.12. / 15.12. / 22.12. / 12.1. / 26.1.

LUNCHTIME TOURS, Wednesdays, 12.30 pm: 18.12. / 22.1.

EVENING TOURS, Thursdays, 6.30 pm: 5.12. / 9.1. / 30.1.

Please consult the latest information on our website www.kunsthallezurich.ch

Opening hours:

TUE/WED/FRI 11 AM – 6 PM, THURS 11 AM – 8 PM, SAT/SUN 10 AM – 5 PM, MON CLOSED

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS: 26.12 / 1.1. / 2.1., 10 – 17 UHR

CLOSED: 24.12. / 25.12.

We would be happy to provide additional information and digital visual material:

Tel: +41 (0)44 272 15 15 or email presse@kunsthallezurich.ch.

KUNSTHALLE ZÜRICH

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