

Lutz Bacher

9 April – 31 May 2014

Opening reception Wednesday, 9 April, 7-9 pm

For her first exhibitions with Galerie Buchholz, the American artist Lutz Bacher will present three concurrent shows in the gallery's three locations. The first two exhibitions will open in the gallery's two spaces in Cologne (Neven-DuMont-Strasse and Elisenstrasse) on April 9th in conjunction with Art Cologne; the third will open in the Berlin gallery on May 2nd for Berlin Gallery Weekend.

At Neven-DuMont-Strasse, Lutz Bacher will show her historic series "Sex with Strangers" from 1986 alongside her more recent series "The Celestial Handbook". In "Sex with Strangers", a key early work, the artist made photographic enlargements of illustrations and captions from a book that purports to be a cautionary sociology study about female psychology and deviant sexual behavior but is, in fact, pulp pornography. As with her iconic "Jokes" (1985-8) and later "Playboys" (1991-3) series, this work pairs image and text in ways that complicate and transform an initial reading of the work, sending these explicitly pornographic scenes into a discourse around pop-psychology, feminism, obscenity, politics, humor, etc. On view in the gallery offices and in the window of the adjacent Antiquariat Buchholz will be Lutz Bacher's "The Celestial Handbook", first shown at the 2012 Whitney Biennial in New York. Here, the artist has framed the illustrated pages from Robert Burnham's 1966 amateur astronomy book *Burnham's Celestial Guide*, showing the small-scale plates from this self-published, quasi-scientific manual which depict telescopic images of galaxies, stars and nebulae along with brief, surprisingly poetic captions. Both bodies of work highlight the poignant conjunctions between image and text in these found cultural artifacts, culling material from two very different books that each appear to be one thing but end up revealing quite another. In the case of "Sex with Strangers" pornography masquerades as a sociological study and in so doing reveals a range of political, psychological, and comical implications; in the case of "The Celestial Handbook" an amateur's attempt at scientific astronomy ends up revealing the poetic inadequacy of depicting and describing the cosmos.

At Elisenstrasse, Lutz Bacher will show two recent groups of painting and sculpture and an early video slideshow. The "Gray Paintings (Loxodonta)", is a suite of 23 paintings on raw canvas in which a field of monochrome gray paint, some flecked with bright red, has dried, creased, and cracked, pointing to the materiality of the paint and canvas itself and also suggesting a primordial landscape, stone or elephant skin. Next to these paintings, Lutz Bacher's "Organ Pipes" will be arranged inside 2 intricate foam core boxes. This sculptural work is comprised of 43 pipes from a dismantled organ that range from 10 cm to 250 cm long, describing the musical scale of this grand instrument. The organ itself – an instrument the artist has investigated in previous works – registers as an object at the junction between music, technology, architecture, and religion, and these pipes, wrested from their original function, take on other morphological forms, appearing at once anthropomorphic, phallic, or torpedo-like, resting in their protective foam cases. In both the "Gray Paintings (Loxodonta)" and the "Organ Pipes", the materiality of the objects open up to suggest a vast scope of cultural production – the elemental tin transformed into the majestic pipe organ, an achievement of pre-industrial design on par with horology; the "Gray Paintings (Loxodonta)" echoing the stone surface of prehistoric cave paintings and also the modernist tradition of the monochrome. "James Dean", a video slideshow from 1986, the same year as "Sex with Strangers", shows a sequence of images from the iconic "torn sweater" photo shoot of the actor by photographer Roy Schatt in 1954. The slideshow cycles through pairs of images presented on a pair of monitors, and these looping still photographs show the Hollywood icon self-consciously posing, reflecting, brooding, and generating a model for the construction of identity through images. Central to Lutz Bacher's work over the past 40 years, and striking in the bodies of work on view, is the particular way that meaning in each image or object expands from its original context into something simultaneously personal and monumental.

Living and working under the pseudonym "Lutz Bacher" in Berkeley, California since the 1970s, the artist recently relocated to New York City. In 2013, she mounted three related institutional solo-exhibitions: at Portikus in Frankfurt-am-Main, at the ICA, London, and at the Kunsthalle Zurich. Previous institutional solo-

exhibitions include MoMA/P.S. 1 (2009), Kunstverein Munich (2009), and the Contemporary Art Museum, St. Louis (2008). Recent group exhibition include "Spies in the House of Art", The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (2012); The Whitney Biennial, The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2012); "Closed Circuit", The Metropolitan Museum of Art (2008); "Gray Flags", Sculpture Center, New York and Bordeaux Musee d'Art Contemporain, Bordeaux (2006); "American Tableaux", Walker Art Center, Minneapolis (2002); and "Bit Streams", The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2002). Her work is the collections of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; MoMA, New York; The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; The Art Institute of Chicago, among others. Upcoming institutional exhibitions include the Aspen Art Museum and the National Gallery of Denmark, Copenhagen.