

## LEA LUBLIN

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München

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„Glaubst Du, dass Frauen eines Tages wie Männer herumlaufen können, zum Beispiel ohne T-Shirt?“ fragt ein Schuljunge die feministische Performance-Künstlerin Hannah Wilke auf der Pariser Kunstmesse FIAC von 1975. Lea Lublin filmte die Szene im Rahmen ihres Langzeitprojekts *Befragungen zur Kunst* (1974–95), für das sie – lose orientiert am psychoanalytischen Dialog – Gespräche mit Laien wie auch (Kunst-)Expertinnen zur gesellschaftlichen Position von Kunst führte. Wilke wartete bekanntlich nicht auf die Erlaubnis, sich das T-Shirt auszuziehen zu dürfen (in ihrer Arbeit problematisierte sie die Repräsentation weiblicher Sexualität). Die an Jacques Lacans Psychoanalyse geschulte argentinisch-französische Künstlerin Lublin (1929–99) verfolgte eine andere Strategie; eine, der es um die Logik der Repräsentation selbst ging sowie um die gesellschaftliche und mediale Konstituierung ihrer (sexuellen) Codierungen.

Die von Stephanie Weber kuratierte Retrospektive präsentiert nun zum ersten Mal das breite Spektrum Lublins intermedialer Praxis – und setzt dabei auf Aktualisierung statt Kanonisierung. Zu sehen ist das deutlich am Herzstück der Ausstellung, der aufwendigen Rekonstruktion von *Fluvio Subtunal* (1969/2015). Konzipiert in Zusammenarbeit mit dem Instituto Torcuato Di Tella – dem argentinischen Zentrum für konzeptuelle und performative Praktiken – war dieses partizipative Environment ursprünglich Teil des Rahmenprogramms für die Eröffnungsfeier des seinerzeit längsten Straßentunnels der Welt (der Túnel subfluvial Hernandarias im argentinischen Santa Fe).

Wie die 1969er-Version besteht die modifizierte Rekonstruktion aus neun Bereichen, wie beispielsweise der „Sinneszone“, einem Schwarzlicht-Raum mit regionalen Produkten, oder der „Technologischen Zone“, die u. a. eine Filmdokumentation der Tunnelarbeiter von Santa Fe zeigt. An deren Ende gelangt man zum eigentlichen „Fluvio Subtunal“, einem zwölf Meter langen, begehbaren Plastiktunnel. Mit diesem spielerischen Parcours lenkte Lublin die Aufmerksamkeit weg vom Tunnel selbst (damals Argentiniens Prestigebauprojekt) und hin auf seinen breiteren Kontext in Santa Fe und die Bedingungen seiner Produktion (z. B. durch Sichtbarmachung der Tunnelarbeiter).

Anstatt das historische *Fluvio Subtunal* möglichst exakt nachzubilden, präsentiert diese Ausstellung nun eine überzeugende Aktualisierung: vom Tunnelbau in Santa Fe zum notorisch schwer zu bespielenden Kunstbau in München. Betont werden hier also die Spezifika des gegenwärtigen Kontexts: die des Ausstellungsraums selbst (z. B. indem die zylinderartige Anordnung des Tunnels den exzentrischen, kreisförmigen Raum mitten im Kunstbau akzentuiert) und die des größeren geografischen Rahmens (z. B. durch das Ausstellen bayerischer Lebensmittel in der „Sinneszone“).

Bereits ein Jahr zuvor, im Mai 1968, thematisierte Lublin die Grenzen dessen, was als Kunst und was als Arbeit, was als Produktion und was als Reproduktion gilt – ebenso wie die Institutionen, die diese Grenzziehungen perpetuieren. Während draußen die Straßenkämpfe ausbrachen, stellte sie die unbezahlte und unsichtbare Arbeit der Pflege ihres sieben Monate alten Sohns im Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris aus (*Mein Sohn*). In den 1980ern und 90ern schließlich analysierte und appropriierte sie die Narrative moderner Kunst und deren männlicher Protagonisten. „Der Pipimann der Maler“ heißt gleich die erste Ausstellungssektion. Sie versammelt Ausschnitte bekannter Renaissance-darstellungen von Madonna und Kind und

kombiniert sie mit suprematistischen Farbflächen à la Malewitsch zu geometrischen Wandinstallationen (z. B. das monumentale Triptychon *R.S.I. – Dürer, del Sarto, Parmigianino*, 1983). Die sexualisierten Kindskörper funktionieren hier aber nicht unbedingt als Kontrast zur Abstraktion der Farbflächen. Vielmehr geht vom suprematistischen Repertoire aus leuchtendem Rot, Gelb, Blau und intensivem Schwarz weniger kühle, analytische Neutralität aus als eine Persistenz des Sinnlichen, von Begehren im Bild. Lublin, so wird hier deutlich, ging es nicht nur um Bilder des Körpers, sondern um den (begehrenden) Körper des Bildes selbst.

Dass es sich bei diesem Körper vor allem um den verdrängten, weiblichen handelt, zieht sich dabei wie ein roter Faden durch ihre Praxis und läuft schließlich in *Le corps amer (à-mère) (Der bittere Körper (der Körper der Mutter))*, 1995) zusammen. Teil einer Serie, die um Marcel Duchamps Aufenthalt in Buenos Aires (1918–19) kreist und alternative „Schöpfungsgeschichten“ seiner Subjekte und Objekte erzählt, ist es ihre letzte Arbeit. Mittlerweile zerstört, ist sie hier in Form einer Diaprojektion zu sehen (was angesichts Lublins Verständnis von Bildern als Projektionsflächen des Begehrens vollkommen konsequent erscheint). Bei dem Objekt handelte es sich um einen weiblichen Glastorso, der ein Porzellanpissoir in sich trägt. Das Urinal spielt offensichtlich auf Duchamps *Fountain* (1917) an, der Titel der Arbeit dagegen auf Lacans Bezeichnung der symbolischen Ordnung: „Le nom-du-père“ – der „Name-des-Vaters“ – beschreibt die Funktion des Gesetzes. Und was wird immer wieder als das Gesetz der Kunst seit der Moderne angerufen, wenn nicht der Name „Duchamp“? Lublin jedenfalls unterwarf beide – „Duchamp“ wie auch „Lacan“ – ihrer eigenen Logik. Denn wenn in *Befragungen zur Kunst* auch Kinder die Rolle von Analytikern spielen dürfen, geht es schließlich weniger um eine Anwendung als vielmehr um die Entwendung der Psychoanalyse.

‘Do you think one day women will be able to go around like men, without any shirts on?’ a schoolboy asks the feminist performance artist Hannah Wilke during the Parisian art fair FIAC in 1975. Lea Lublin filmed the scene as part of her long-term project *Interrogations into Art* (1974–95) for which she conducted conversations, loosely modelled on psychoanalytic dialogue, with both laypeople and (art) experts about art’s position in society. Wilke, as is well known, did not wait for permission to take off her shirt, interrogating in her work the representation of female sexuality. Lublin, an Argentinian-French artist (1929–99) versed in the psychoanalytic theory of Jacques Lacan, followed a different strategy, one that focused on the logic of representation itself, and on the social and medial constitution of its (sexual) codes.

This retrospective presents for the first time the wide gamut of Lublin’s intermedial practice. Curated by Stephanie Weber, the exhibition’s aim is to actualize rather than canonize. This can be seen clearly with the show’s lynchpin, an elaborate reconstruction of *Fluvio Subtunal* (1969/2015). Conceived



pale torsos and heads, rendered with classic expressive strokes, glowing proudly in white and pink, surrounded by a smoky backdrop of spray-painted lines and brushstrokes in black. In Walter Dahn's *Selbst doppelt* (Self twice, 1982), on the other hand, the head is duplicated as two rectangular boxes with triangular noses and tired eyes, both cleaved from the top by a hastily scribbled axe, alongside a vertical slogan in yellow letters: 'Löscht mit Blut das brennende Wissen' (Extinguish burning knowledge with blood).

Three main currents are already emerging here. First, Büttner and the 'Hetzler Boys' (the scene centred on gallerist Max Hetzler), primarily Albert Oehlen and Martin Kippenberger, who constantly picked at the scabs of painterly self-assertion in West Germany's post-war bourgeois milieu, both ridiculing it and redrawing it for their own use. By contrast, as part of the scene centred on the artist-run Galerie am Moritzplatz in Berlin, Castelli und Salomé displayed and celebrated a transgressive homosexual lifestyle that was still very much taboo at the time, even in art. Dahn, on the other hand, as part of the 'Mülheimer Freiheit' group (named after the address of their Cologne studio) developed a kind of 'Pop Brut' combining iconic simplification with exuberant use of slogans.

These three lines – quick-witted mockery, self-assertion, simplistic pop – ran through the exhibition, both the hits and the misses. And they didn't always match the lines dividing the milieus that competed for prestige, then as now, mainly between and within the cities of Hamburg, Cologne, Düsseldorf and Berlin. As Walter Grasskamp writes in the catalogue, a certain 'historiographical confusion' still reigns even today 'because seemingly authentic accounts of what happened are mixed with local legends and partisan reports.' Correspondingly, many of the period's key protagonists are still reluctant to be 'framed' within specific historical contexts. But such geographical and historical categories are constructs that help to outline precisely such tensions. In any case, with hindsight it is clear that Kippenberger had the best sense of humour, that Oehlen later became a far better painter, and that Helmut Middendorf's and Elvira Bach's celebrations of cool nightlife characters in fast, garish strokes still look like murals for a then-trendy neon café. In his work, Salomé, however, goes beyond such mere self-celebration, with a sense of radical openness including the possibility of precarious self-harming. In a joint work painted with Castelli entitled *KaDeWe* (1981), the life-size bodies of the two artists hang on hooks like half pigs at the Berlin luxury department store of the title. The political dimension here is the way the grotesqueness of society is performed with the artist's own body. The same applies to Bettina Semmer's *Kuh* (Cow, 1983) in which a female Minotaur with a naïve look in its eye holds Eve's apple in its hand, side by side with an exact copy of itself; this doubling reveals misogyny (linking of cow and Eve motif) as a reproduction of the cliché. Another great painting is Semmer's *Olympia (Deutsche Katastrophen Serie)* (1985), based on a photograph of one of the terrorists involved in the attack on the Israeli Olympic team in Munich in 1972. The face with its

stocking mask and dark skull-like eyeholes is framed by brutalist concrete balconies, and overlaid with semi-transparent patches of pale brown paint.

Apart from Semmer, Andreas Schulze is among the artists in this exhibition whose works have best stood the test of time – as in *Ohne Titel (Wachtelbild)* (Untitled, Quail Picture, 1983), whose quails, peas and blades of grass, spread across the large-format canvas like lost playthings, make it extremely hard to keep a straight face. In this show, Schulze's intelligently absurd 'naïveté' also proved superior to the demonstrative naïveté of Milan Kunc, who indulged in a kind of late-Picasso, children's book Pop. Nevertheless, seeing all this work together made it possible to define such preferences for oneself, rather than merely adhering to a preestablished canon.

All of this made clear that what the painters of the early 1980s were trying to set themselves apart from was not (as is often claimed) the supposed hegemony of 1970s academic conceptualism (after all, most of these painters thought conceptually and had undergone academic training). Instead, they were opposed to the discourse of neo-avant-gardist exclusivity that had also been rife within painting (as when, in the early 1970s, Philip Guston was rejected as a traitor for turning to cartoonish figuration); they were thus rebelling against the ideologically cemented purism of genres and styles viewed as mutually exclusive. As in almost any oedipally structured rebellion, however, this purism was repeated in altered form – this time via the policing of milieu borders on the basis of pedigree, and thus actually constituting a regression. But this is easily said today: how, if not via urban milieus setting themselves apart in a regressive, adolescent manner, would it have been possible to generate the necessary energy in the becalmed times of the Cold War, before the 'multipolar' post-1989 world and the advent of digital networking?

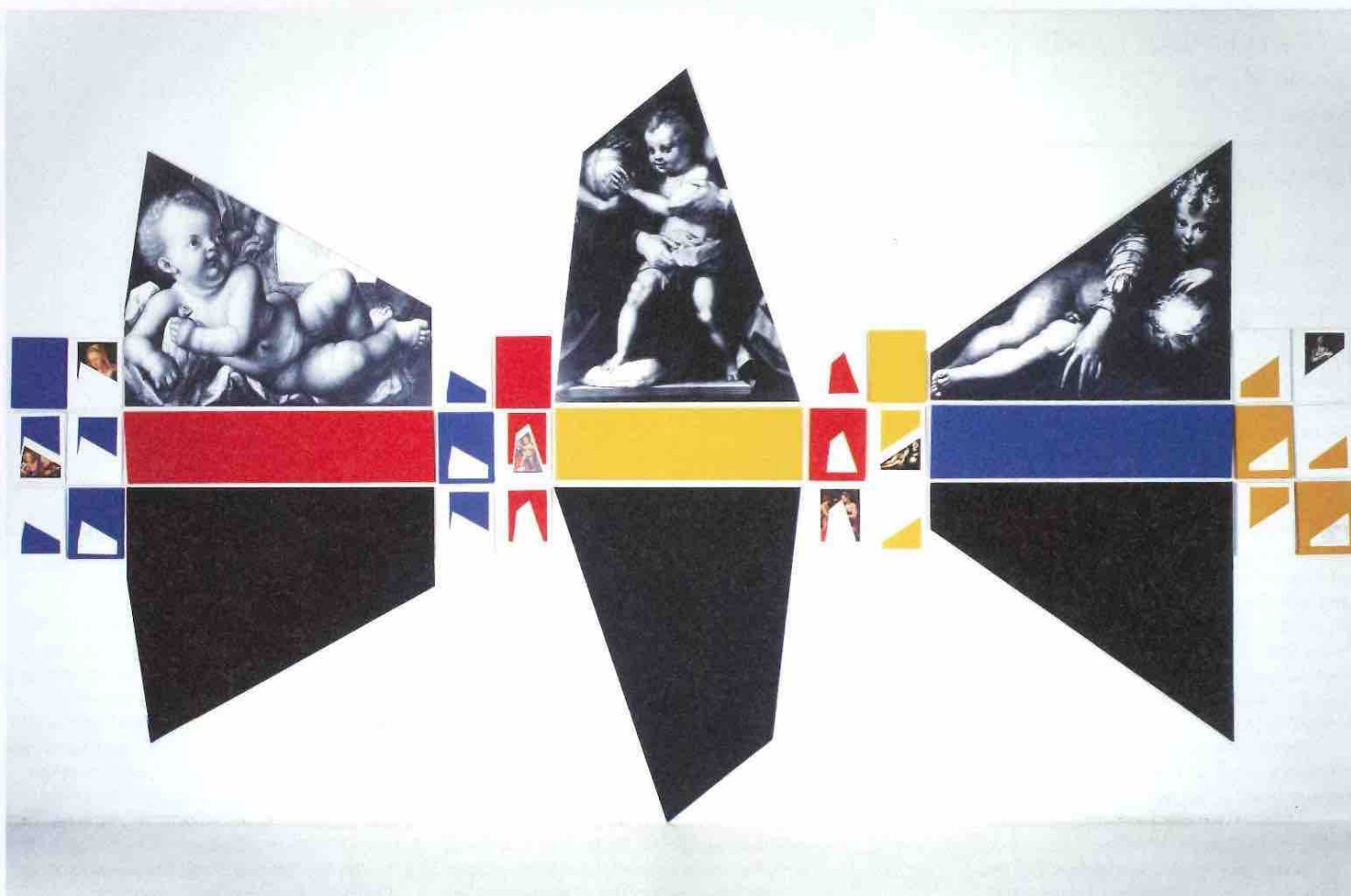
The show at Haus der Kunst showed the other side of the 1980s myth in the form of a selection of key underground bands: *Einstürzende Neubauten*, D.A.F., *Der Plan*, *Die Tödliche Doris*, F.S.K., *Palais Schaumburg* and *Ornament & Verbrechen*. (Why not Malaria? An important band, and one consisting entirely of women, who otherwise featured here only as individual members of F.S.K. and *Tödliche Doris*.) Whereas music was largely omitted in Frankfurt (thankfully, as it is so often used as a crutch to portrait the painters of the period – as if everything could be explained simply in terms of punk and its DIY ethos), the Munich show placed music centre stage. Presented on a large wall each, including pictures and a screen with film material, the selected bands formed the basis for this exhibition organized by the Goethe Institute and curated by Leonard Emmerling and Mathilde Weh. Originally conceived as a media-based show without artworks or artefacts that travelled to cities including Minsk and Novosibirsk, the exhibition makes no secret of its didactic slant, along the lines of 'letting the world know what was going on back then in West Germany' (and, to a lesser extent, in East Berlin, thanks to the inclusion of *Ornament & Verbrechen*).

At Haus der Kunst, it was supplemented by a small number of important exhibits, including Bernd Zimmer's almost life-size rendering in emulsion on canvas of an S-Bahn train (*1/10 Sekunde vor der Warschauer Brücke – Stadtbild 3/28*, 1978) that once graced the side wall of the legendary Berlin club SO36, for a single night.

More than in Frankfurt, this exhibition acted as a milieu study, especially thanks to photographs which lent an idea of the demeanour and style-consciousness of those involved. Take, for example, Gabi Delgado of D.A.F. sweeping ecstatically across the stage, or the three members of *Die Tödliche Doris* (Nikolaus Utermöhlen, Käthe Kruse and Wolfgang Müller) grinningly draping themselves around a urinal for an autograph card portrait: Marcel Duchamp, nightlife and a humorous allusion to sexualized pissing – three birds with one stone. From today's point of view, the activities of *Die Tödliche Doris* feel especially fresh and timely: as in *Sesselgruppe Kleid (dreiteilig)* (Chair Group, Dress, actually not made until 1991) in which crosses between a man's shirt and a woman's dress are draped over garden chairs, flowing into one another as a cheerful allegory of queerness. In a mischievous Facebook post, Wolfgang Müller (who at the time had been responsible for the deliberately misspelled title 'Geniale Dilletanten') recently asked whether this particular work might not deserve to be purchased by a public collection, like the important canvases by painters of the period. Which brings us to the prospect of being 'co-opted' by institutions: it always used to be the case that musicians tended to want to go anywhere but the museum (standing for established culture as a whole) – and that artists tended to want access to the museum nevertheless. Ultimately, both have now ended up there. The effect is mixed: in some cases, it signals long-overdue recognition, in others it amounts to a kind of mummification. And that is a fair price to pay for each person who can now no longer ignore or play down the significance of figures like Bettina Semmer or Wolfgang Müller.

Translated by Nicholas Grindell

1  
Anno Dittmer  
*Penny Lane is in my brain*  
1983  
Installation view  
Penny Lane's hair salon, Berlin



in collaboration with the Instituto Torcuato Di Tella – a hub for conceptual and performative practices in Buenos Aires – the participatory environment was originally commissioned for the opening ceremony of the *Túnel subfluvial Hernandarias* in the Argentinian Santa Fe (at the time the world's longest road tunnel). Like the 1969 version, the environment's modified reconstruction consists of nine sections, including the 'Sensorial Zone', a black-light space showcasing regional products, and the 'Technological Zone', which amongst others features a film on the tunnel workers of Santa Fe. After traversing the different zones, visitors reach the actual *Fluvio Subtunal*, a 12-metre long, plastic tunnel. With this playful scheme Lublin shifted attention away from the prestigious tunnel to its broader context in Santa Fe and to the conditions of its production (for example, by making the tunnel workers visible).

1  
Lea Lublin  
*Fluvio Subtunal (detail)*  
1969  
Environment, Santa Fé  
900m<sup>2</sup>

2  
Lea Lublin  
*R.S.I. – Dürer, Del Sarto, Parmigianino*  
1983  
Acrylic paint, gelatin silver print, ink,  
and paper on canvas and board  
3.5 × 6 m

Instead of rebuilding the historical *Fluvio Subtunal* as accurately as possible, this exhibition convincingly succeeds in actualizing the tunnel construction to Munich's Kunstbau, a tunnel-like space that is notoriously difficult to exhibit in (and whose name actually translates as both 'art building' and 'art construction'). What is emphasized here are precisely the particularities of the current setting: those of the exhibition space itself (the cylindrical arrangement of the tunnel, for instance, highlights the eccentric, circular space in the centre of the Kunstbau), and those of the larger geographic frame (for example, by exhibiting Bavarian products in the 'Sensorial Zone').

In May 1968, Lublin questioned the boundaries between those practices that are deemed 'art' and those deemed 'labour', those that are validated as productive and those naturalized as reproductive. While the first riots erupted, she exhibited the unpaid and invisible labour of caring for her seven-month-old son in the Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris (*My Son*, 1968). In the 1980s and 90s then she analysed and appropriated the narratives of modern art and its male protagonists. 'The Painters' Pee Pee' is the title of the very first exhibition section. It assembles fragments of famous Renaissance paintings of Madonna with child and combines them with Suprematist colour surfaces à la Malevich into geometrical wall installations (for example, the monumental triptych *R.S.I. – Dürer, del Sarto, Parmigianino*, 1983). The sexualised infantile bodies, to

be sure, do not necessarily resonate with the abstraction of the colour planes. Rather than cool, analytic objectivity, here the Suprematist repertoire of vibrant red, yellow, blue, and intense black radiates the persistence of sensuous desire. Lublin, as is apparent here, was not only concerned with images of the body, but with the (desiring) body of the image itself.

The female body – first and foremost, repressed – runs through her practice, converging ultimately in *Le corps amer (à-mère)*, *The Bitter Body (The Mother's Body)*, from 1995. Her last work is part of a series that revolves around Marcel Duchamp's sojourn in Buenos Aires (1918–19) and narrates different 'histories of creation' of his subjects and objects. Destroyed, it can be seen here in the form of a slide projection (which seems entirely consistent, given Lublin's understanding of images as projection screens for desire). The object comprises a female glass torso that contains a porcelain urinal. While the urinal clearly alludes to Duchamp's *Fountain* (1917), the work's title refers also to Lacan's moniker for the symbolic order of the law: 'Name-of-the-Father' (*Le nom-du-père*). And what is, time and again, invoked as the name of art's law since modernism if not Duchamp? Lublin, in any case, subjected both – Duchamp as well as Lacan – to her own logic. When in *Interrogations into Art* children take on the role of analysts, we experience less an application of psychoanalysis than its appropriation.  
*Translated by Jenny Nachtigall*