

Sat. 18.11.2017–Sun., 08.04.2018

FEMINIST AVANT-GARDE of the 1970s
from the SAMMLUNG VERBUND Collection, Vienna
ZKM_atrium 8+9

The ZKM shows an extensive exhibition with over 400 art works from the SAMMLUNG VERBUND, Vienna, put together by founding director Gabriele Schor. In the 1970s, female artists began to subvert cultural constructions of the female, and in doing so, use their bodies as a projection surface for social codes and their criticism. Using new media such as photography, film and video, and in performances and events, the artists deconstructed the existing restrictive cultural and social conditioning, the mechanisms and automations to suppress women. For the first time in the history of art, female artists took the “representation of women” in visual arts in hand, together, by developing a multitude of self-determined female identities: provocative and radical, poetic and ironic. The claim of the exhibition at the ZKM is to incorporate the “Feminist Avantgarde” (Gabriele Schor) into the canon of art history, and highlight the pioneering performance of these female artists. This exhibition is consistent with a specific tradition of the ZKM. Most recently, the ZKM dedicated an extensive retrospective (2014) to the media art pioneer Lynn Hershman Leeson, and in 2015 in the scope of the Karlsruhe Festival *Frauenperspektiven* [Women’s perspectives], presented highlights from the ZKM video collection, including the video works of Ulrike Rosenbach. The virtual exhibition series was entitled *Frauen Video Arbeiten* [Women Video Working].

In the 1970s, the female artists emancipated themselves from the role of muse and model; i.e. they emancipated themselves from their status as an object to a self-determined subject, who actively participated in social and political processes. The stereotypical role assignments of mother, housewife and wife were radically questioned with the medium of irony. Central topics were: the discovery of female sexuality, the use of their own bodies, breaking down stereotypical images of women, the dictate of beauty and raising awareness of violence against women. The rejection of traditional, normative ideas of how a woman should live connected the commitment of the artists of this generation. “It is exciting to observe that the artists chose similar image strategies, without knowing each other”, explains Schor.

The exhibition is divided into four areas:

- Reduction to mother, house wife and wife

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Press conference
Thurs., 16.11.2017, 11.00 am

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Regina Hock
Speaker press and
PR work
Tel: 0721 / 8100 – 1821

E-mail: presse@zkm.de
www.zkm.de/presse

ZKM | Zentrum für Kunst und
Medien Karlsruhe [Centre for art and medi.
Karlsruhe]
Lorenzstraße 19
76135 Karlsruhe

Cooperation partner



Founder of the ZKM



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- Alter ego: Masquerade, parody and role play
- Female sexuality versus objectification
- Normativity of beauty

In light of the emerging civil rights and women's movement, the concerns of women were discussed increasingly publicly. An important slogan was: "The private becomes political". Women achieved more of a hearing for their personal and supposedly private concerns amongst the general public. They formed feminist networks, organised exhibition opportunities, wrote manifestos and founded numerous newspapers and magazines. They used historically uncontaminated media such as photography, video and film, and carried out performances and events, against male dominated painting.

Using costume and masquerade, the female artists investigated everyday and historic clichés, and unmasked ideas of identity and femininity as a social construct. Martha Rosler (*1943) drew over the role of the woman responsible for home and hearth. Birgit Jürgenssen (1949-2003) draped an oven around herself like a kitchen apron. Cindy Sherman (*1954), Hannah Wilke (1940–1993), Martha Wilson (*1947) and Marcella Campagnano (*1941) put and are putting female roles under the magnifying glass in their staged photographs.

Lynn Hershman Leeson (*1941) impersonated a fictitious character called Roberta Breitmore for years. Rita Myers (*1947), Ewa Partum (*1945) and Suzy Lake (*1947) questioned the ideals of beauty in their works – the attributes of flawlessness were subverted with irony. When VALIE EXPORT asked passers-by to touch her breasts in a box strapped to her upper body in her event tap and touch cinema at Stachus in Munich, she broached the issue of male voyeurism in film. The own body was often a starting point for art. Artists such as Ana Mendieta (1948–1985) or Gina Pane (1939–1990) went to the limits of physical and mental capacity with their self-harmful events.

The excellent quality of this exhibition is guaranteed by the 13 years of research work by Gabriele Schor for the SAMMLUNG VERBUND (founded in 2004). The SAMMLUNG VERBUND includes works from both well-known artists and those still to be discovered. Many of the works waited almost 50 years to be discovered. This is how the German artist Renate Eisenegger explains it: "For 40 years, no one asked about my works. They were all in the attic." The German artist Annegret Soltau also remarks looking back: "At the time, I could not have imagined that my works would be so popular today." These works from Europe, Latin America and the USA are now internationally contextualised for the first time. Most works in the show are original pieces from the 1970s, which have lost nothing of their presence and vibrancy over the decades. "The

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works of the feminist avant-garde have one thing in common. They emerged from an existential necessity," explains Schor.

The exhibition is not a women's exhibition, but a theme exhibition. It unites artists who were born between 1930 and 1958.

50 artists involved

Helena Almeida (* 1934), Eleanor Antin(* 1935), Anneke Barger (* 1939), Lynda Benglis (*1941), Judith Bernstein (* 1942), Renate Bertlmann (*1943), Teresa Burga (* 1935), Marcella Campagnano (* 1941), Judy Chicago (* 1939), Linda Christanell (* 1939), Lili Dujourie (* 1941), Mary Beth Edelson (* 1933), Renate Eisenegger (* 1949), VALIE EXPORT (* 1940), Esther Ferrer (* 1937), Lynn Hershman Leeson (* 1941), Alexis Hunter (1948–2014), Sanja Iveković (* 1949), Birgit Jürgenssen (1949–2003), Kirsten Justesen (* 1943), Ketty La Rocca (1938–1976), Leslie Labowitz (* 1946), Katalin Ladik (* 1942), Brigitte Lang (* 1953), Suzanne Lacy (* 1945), Suzy Lake (* 1947), Karin Mack (* 1940), Natalia LL (* 1937), Ana Mendieta (1948–1985), Rita Myers (* 1947), Lorraine O'Grady (* 1934), ORLAN (* 1944), Gina Pane (1939–1990), Letitia Parente (1930–1991), Ewa Partum (* 1945), Friederike Pezold (* 1945), Margot Pilz (* 1936), Ulrike Rosenbach (* 1943), Martha Rosler(* 1943), Suzanne Santoro (* 1946), Carolee Schneemann (* 1939), Lydia Schouten (* 1955), Cindy Sherman (* 1954), Penny Slinger (*1947), Annegret Soltau (*1946), Betty Tompkins (* 1945), Hannah Wilke (* 1940–1993), Martha Wilson(* 1947), Francesca Woodman (1958–1981), Nil Yalter (* 1938)

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Artist talks

Gabriele Schor talks to the artists Linda Christanell, Renate Eisenegger, Kirsten Justesen, Karin Mack, ORLAN, Margot Pilz, Lydia Schouten and Annegret Soltau.

Date: Sat., 18.11.2017, 2.30 pm, ZKM_Medialounge

Exhibition tour

The exhibition *Feminist Avantgarde of the 1970s* has been touring Europe since 2010 (Rome, Madrid, Brussels, Sweden, Hamburg, London). The number of artists and works has tripled since the beginning. The exhibition could previously be seen in mumok in Vienna, and then toured to its station at the ZKM:

Stavanger Art Museum, Stavanger, Norway
June to September 2018

House of Arts Brno, Czech Republic
December 2018 to February/ March 2019

Catalogue

The 560-page catalogue issued by Gabriele Schor (Prestel Verlag) is a reference work on the feminist art movement of the 1970s.

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