

Ulrike Müller

The old expressions are with us always and there are always others

Curated by Manuela Ammer

Always, Always, Others. Non-Classical Forays into Modernism

Curated by Manuela Ammer and Ulrike Müller

mumok Museum moderner Kunst
Stiftung Ludwig Wien
Museumsplatz 1, 1070 Wien

Ulrike Müller

*The old expressions are with us always
and there are always others*

Exhibition dates

October 10, 2015, to January 31, 2016

*Always, Always, Others. Non-Classical
Forays into Modernism*

Exhibition dates

October 10, 2015, to May 16, 2016

Press conference

October 9, 10 Uhr

Opening

October 9, 7 pm



Ulrike Müller, *Rug (gato chico)*, 2015
(detail)

Courtesy of the artist and Callicoon Fine
Arts, NY

Press contact

Karin Bellmann

T +43 1 52500-1400

karin.bellmann@mumok.at

Katja Kulidzhanova

T +43 1 52500-1450

katja.kulidzhanova@mumok.at

Fax +43 1 52500-1300

press@mumok.at

www.mumok.at

In her artistic work, Ulrike Müller (born 1971 in Brixlegg, Tirol, lives in New York) explores the relationships between abstraction and bodies and a concept of painting that is not restricted to brush and canvas. The geometrical figures and color surfaces in her compositions are never “purely” abstract. They carry erotic and sexual associations; they tease, touch, and penetrate each other without collapsing into pairs of opposites. Müller uses abstraction as an idiom that can be figuratively appropriated, emotionally charged and / or politically connoted—depending on the context and the viewer. “My paintings are part of the desire to imagine and to practice alternatives to traditional gender roles and lifestyles,” Müller says.

mumok is delighted to present Ulrike Müller’s first solo show in a museum, and also a special selection from our own collection that has been chosen by Müller together with mumok curator Manuela Ammer, in a dialogue that juxtaposes works of classical modernism with more recent works.

Müller’s solo exhibition at mumok shows a painterly practice not defined by technique but deliberately seeking out mediums and formats to create connections with other realms of life and of production. Müller uses enamel, for example, which is employed in commercial sign making and in jewelry. She has also translated her designs into textile objects like quilts and rugs. Müller’s painting production incorporates standards and production processes that are usually extrinsic to art. In her enamel pictures, the artist explores the opportunities provided by an industrially made color palette, while her rugs draw on the traditional skills of weavers from Oaxaca, Mexico, who produced Müller’s designs. Deliberate confrontation with the “Other”—with mediating and regulating bodies—raises the question as to the artist’s “signature” or “hand.” Within this kind of set-up, how can images be “expressive,” and how can a subjectivity come into play?

Expressivity in the Intermediate Spaces—Müller’s Performative Approach to Figure and Form

Ulrike Müller has made rugs, works on paper, and enamel and canvas paintings especially for this solo show at mumok. They all show how Müller locates expressivity in intermediary spaces. Her approach to form and figure is performative. The use of latent images, shifts, and reversals activate the relationships between the various elements of a composition, and between the works in a group, different techniques and media, or viewer and work.

The new group of enamel paintings entitled *Others* (2015), for example, includes three circles in red, black, and green that can be seen both as parts of a vase for

flowers and as abstract geometrical shapes. They also recur as triangles, which can in turn also be seen in a further picture in their complementary colors blue, white, and orange, and are also used as motifs in Müller's rugs. There they meet the motif of the cat looking out of the image that impressively implicates viewers in the instable conditions and relations of form and shape, shape and background, and abstraction and figuration. "Not often, even in recent painting, does one see a figure trade places with geometric shapes or color fields as if figure and shape were interchangeable layers in a composition," writes Rachel Haidu in her contribution to the catalogue. The motif of the cat, which is literally woven into the geometrical elements of the rugs, invites a shift in perspective in which subject and object—viewer and viewed—change places for a moment. The "Other" becomes the catalyst in a practice of painting that believes in the political potential of a shared and unregulated in-between.

A Concept of Painting Schooled in Feminist and Queer Practices

Müller's programmatically open concept of painting relates to her artistic practice "beyond" the picture. She is a member of the queer-feminist New York collective LTR and initiated a life drawing club for artists, Friends of the Fine Arts, in which the physical act of collective modeling was just as important as drawing together. She also initiated the exhibition and publication project *Herstory Inventory*, in which women artists were invited to reinterpret images of lesbian feminism based on the inventory of the Lesbian Herstory Archives in Brooklyn, NY.

Müller's interest in the formal idioms of modernist abstraction is thus primarily an interest in the politics of the body, a critical look at the logics of representation and reproduction that bodies are subjected to and—more significantly—that they themselves can invent. Because Müller does not fixate her pictures but rather very precisely opens them up to certain materials and contexts, she is able to provoke new alliances and connections. "It is not about making something new. Rather, it is about allegedly 'impossible' subject positions and about activating desire that has been smothered by standardized patterns of experience" (Müller).

The Collection Presentation *Always, Always, Others*

Parallel to and in conjunction with Müller's solo show, Müller and mumok curator Manuela Ammer are presenting a new selection of works of classical modernism from the mumok collection, which is far more diverse than past presentations have suggested. Alongside frequently shown positions such as André Derain, Oskar Kokoschka, and František Kupka, this new selection also includes works by the Hungarian artist Béla Kádár, who combined abstraction with folklore idioms, by French artist André Beaudin, whose depictions of animals challenged the formulaic nature of cubism, and by the Viennese artists Mathilde Flögl and Friedl Dicker, whose works in the applied arts aimed at shaping social and political realities. Classical modernism mumok-style is polyphonic.

To make this polyphony heard, the curators have set up a special dialog with another rarely shown area of the collection—the eclectic 1970s, whose alternative images of the body and designs of identity make classical modernism suddenly seem astonishingly “non-classical” and remarkably topical. Works by the Austrian artists’ group *Neue Wirklichkeiten*, the Chicago Imagists, the Pattern and Decoration Movement, and the Gugginger Gruppe all ask in their own different ways as to the “Other” in art—exploring gender, popular culture, autodidactic approaches, and craftsmanship. They open up a new perspective that reveals classical modernism to have also been a process of searching and experimenting that was keenly determined by the “Other.”

Polyphony between Abstraction and Figuration

Four groups of works hint at the many shades that lie between abstraction and figuration. *Textiles and Tectonics* focuses on the material dimensions of the body of the image, on painting as masquerade, as clothing and disguise, and as decoration. *Folklorisms* asks as to the connections between avant-garde and creativity as an anthropological constant—the local, the popular and the naive as an emotional frame of reference. The group of *Metamorphoses* looks at games with ambiguity and intermediary states. Animals and landscapes prove to be motifs of transformation that also set material and form in motion. The last group, *Bodies under Pressure*, addresses the relationship of the individual to social norms, and the tension that arises when figure and structure enter into conflict with each other.

The titles of both exhibitions refer back to the magazine *Others: A Magazine of New Verse*, which was published between 1915 and 1919 and included poems and texts by authors such as Djuna Barnes, T.S. Eliot, Mina Loy, Marianne Moore, Ezra Pound, and Man Ray. *Others* saw itself as an experimental platform asserting the social and artistic innovative potential of the “Other,” from free verse to feminist and queer perspectives.

Fact-Sheet

Ulrike Müller

The old expressions are with us always and there are always others

Exhibition dates	October 10, 2015, to January 31, 2016
Press conference	October 9, 2015, 10 am
Opening	October 9, 2015, 7 pm
Venue	mumok, MuseumsQuartier, Museumsplatz 1, 1070 Wien, level –2
Curator	Manuela Ammer
Exhibition production	Dagmar Steyrer
Catalogue	<i>Ulrike Müller</i> <i>Always, Always, Others</i> Edited and published by Manuela Ammer and Dancing Foxes Press. With a foreword by Karola Kraus and texts by Manuela Ammer, Rachel Haidu, and Ulrike Müller. German–English, c. 80 pages, numerous color illustrations. Softcover. Dancing Foxes Press, Brooklyn/NY.

Always, Always, Others. Non-Classical Forays into Modernism

Exhibition dates	October 10, 2015, to May 16, 2016
Press conference	October 9, 2015, 10 am
Opening	October 9, 2015, 7 pm
Venue	mumok, MuseumsQuartier, Museumsplatz 1, 1070 Wien, level 0
Curators	Manuela Ammer, Ulrike Müller
Exhibition production	Dagmar Steyrer
Catalogue	<i>Ulrike Müller</i> <i>Always, Always, Others</i> Edited and published by Manuela Ammer and Dancing Foxes Press. With a foreword by Karola Kraus and texts by Manuela Ammer, Rachel Haidu, and Ulrike Müller. German–English, c. 80 pages, numerous color illustrations. Softcover. Dancing Foxes Press, Brooklyn/NY.

Opening hours

Mondays: 2–7 pm
Tuesdays to Sundays: 10 am – 7 pm
Thursday: 10 am – 9 pm

Tickets

Normal € 10, concessions € 8 or € 7

Press contact

Karin Bellmann
T +43 1 52500-1400
karin.bellmann@mumok.at

Katja Kulidzhanova
T +43 1 52500-1450
katja.kulidzhanova@mumok.at
press@mumok.at, www.mumok.at/de/press