

WOMAN

FEMINIST AVANT-GARDE of the 1970s from the SAMMLUNG VERBUND Collection

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

Exhibition dates
May 6 to September 3, 2017

Press conference
May 5, 2017, 10 am

Opening
May 5, 2017, 7 pm



Alexis Hunter
Approach to Fear: Voyeurism, 1973/2006
Silver bromide photography, painted with
colored ink and lacquer (from a twelve-
part series)
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Saltoun, London / SAMMLUNG
VERBUND, Wien

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From May 2017, mumok is presenting more than 300 artworks from the SAMMLUNG VERBUND collection that show how women artists in the 1970s first began to collectively redefine their own image of woman. As this significant artistic movement has been neglected in art histories to date, the collection director, Gabriele Schor, coined the term "feminist avant-garde" and introduced it into art-historical discourse—with the aim of highlighting these artists' pioneering work. This thematic exhibition at mumok and a comprehensive scholarly catalogue both contribute to expanding the male dominated avant-garde canon.

In the 1970s women artists emancipated themselves from the roles of muse and model, rejecting their status as objects in order to assert themselves as subjects actively participating in social and political processes. One-dimensional role ascriptions as mothers, homemakers, or wives were radically challenged—often using strategies of irony. Key themes were the discovery of female sexuality, the use of women's own bodies, countering clichés and stereotypical images of women, the dictate of beauty, and creating awareness for violence against women. The women artists of this generation were united in their committed rejection of traditional normative notions of how women were expected to live. "It is exciting to see that these artists developed comparable strategies of the image, even though they did not all know each other," Gabriele Schor explains.

The exhibition is divided into four sections:

- The Reduction to Mother, Housewife, and Wife
- Alter Ego: Masquerade, Parody, and Roleplays
- Female Sexuality versus Objectification
- The Normativity of Beauty

At a time when civil rights and women's movements were gaining ground, women's issues were increasingly the subject of public debate. One important slogan was "the private is political," gaining women and their quasi-private concerns greater influence and resonance in public life. Women set up feminist networks, organized exhibitions, wrote manifestoes, and founded numerous journals and magazines. In their art, as a contrast to the male-dominated genre of painting, they made strategic use of historically untainted media such as photography, video, and film, and performances and actions.

Using costume and masquerade, these artists explore everyday and historical clichés, and they unmask notions of identity and femininity as social constructs. Martha Rosler (born 1943) exaggerates the role of the woman responsible for house and home. Birgit Jürgenssen hangs a stove around her neck as if it were an apron. Cindy Sherman (born 1954), Hannah Wilke (1940–1993), Martha Wilson (born 1947), and Marcella Campagnano (born 1941) stage photographs that scrutinize the roles of women.

Lynn Hershman Leeson (born 1941) created and embodied for many years a fictitious artificial character named Roberta Breitmore. Rita Myers (born 1947), Ewa Partum (born 1945), and Suzy Lake (born 1947) question ideals of beauty in their works—using irony to undermine attributes of perfection. In her action *Tap and Touch Cinema*, VALIE EXPORT invited passers-by at Munich's Stachus to touch her breasts by putting their hands through a box affixed to her torso, thus thematizing male voyeurism in film. Often, women's own bodies are starting points for art. Artists like Ana Mendieta (1948–1985) and Gina Pane (1939–1990) engaged in self-mutilating actions that pushed at the limits of physical and psychological endurance.

“It is important and fortunate for both the city of Vienna and mumok to be able to show these works on the feminist avant-garde from the SAMMLUNG VERBUND collection. These works complement mumok's own collection with its focus on socially relevant art of the 1960s, such as Vienna Actionism—a movement that was implemented entirely by men. Here, many questions and issues were raised that were to play a role in the 1970s with a new and broader perspective—this time in developments that were largely implemented by women. In their works, they formulate answers to the ways in which men approached their work as artists. I am delighted to be able to present this significant collection at mumok,” says mumok general director Karola Kraus.

The outstanding quality of this exhibition is based on thirteen years of research by the SAMMLUNG VERBUND (founded in 2004), resulting in a presentation of works by both well-known and hitherto undiscovered women. Many of these works have been waiting nearly fifty years to be discovered, as artist Renate Eisenegger explains: “For over forty years, no one took any interest in my works. They were all in the attic.” These works are now presented for the first time in an international context. Most of the pieces in the exhibition are original works from the 1970s that have lost none of their presence and dynamism over subsequent decades. “It is fascinating that these works of a feminist avantgarde derived from an existential necessity,” Schor says.

This exhibition is not a women's exhibition, but a thematic exhibition. It brings together artists born between 1930 and 1958. There is a total of 48 European, North and South American artists, including eight Austrians: Renate Bertlmann (born 1943), Linda Christanell (born 1939), VALIE EXPORT (born 1940), Birgit Jürgenssen

(1949–2003), Brigitte Lang (born 1953), Karin Mack (born 1940), Friederike Pezold (born 1945), and Margot Pilz (born 1936).

Curated by Gabriele Schor (director, SAMMLUNG VERBUND), with Eva Badura-Triska (curator mumok)

Participating Artists

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

We would like to thank our media partners Der Standard, Ö1, Falter, and Wienlive

Exhibition Tour

The exhibition *FEMINIST AVANT-GARDE of the 1970s* has been on tour in Europe since 2010 (Rome, Madrid, Brussels, Sweden, Hamburg, London). Since the tour began, the number of participating artists and works has tripled. After the mumok show, the exhibition will be at:

ZKM | Center for Art and Media Karlsruhe Germany
November 18, 2017, to April 1, 2018

Stavanger Art Museum, Stavanger, Norway
June to September 2018

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

Catalogue

The catalogue, edited by Gabriele Schor, is a standard work on the feminist art movement of the 1970s.

Fact Sheet

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Opening	May 5, 2017, 7 pm
Exhibition venue	mumok, MuseumsQuartier, Museumsplatz 1, 1070 Wien, levels 3 and 4
Curators	Gabriele Schor (SAMMLUNG VERBUND) with Eva Badura-Triska (mumok)
Exhibition production	Ulrike Todoroff
Catalogue	<i>Feministische Avantgarde. Kunst der 1970er-Jahre</i> <i>SAMMLUNG VERBUND, Wien</i> Ed. by Gabriele Schor, 560 pages ISBN 97-3-7913-6740-8 (Prestel Verlag)
Opening hours	Mondays: 2–7 pm, Tuesdays to Sundays: 10–7 pm Thursdays: 10 am–9 pm
Entrance	Normal € 11, concessions € 8.50 or € 7.50
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