

KW W

**The Making of
Husbands:
Christina Ramberg
in Dialogue
14 September 19 –
5 January 20**

The Making of Husbands:
Christina Ramberg in Dialogue
14 September 19 – 5 January 20
Opening: 13 September 19, 7 pm

Alexandra Bircken, Rachal Bradley, Sara Deraedt,
Gaylen Gerber, Frieda Toranzo Jaeger, Konrad
Klapheck, Ghislaine Leung, Hans-Christian Lotz,
Senga Nengudi, Ana Pellicer, Christina Ramberg,
Richard Rezac, Diane Simpson, Terre Thaemlitz,
Kathleen White

“Containing, restraining, reforming, hurting, compressing, binding, transforming a lumpy shape into a clean smooth line,” is how American artist **Christina Ramberg** (1946–1995, US) once described the drawings of corsets in her sketchbooks. Ramberg was one of the most intriguing painters to emerge within a generation of Chicago Imagists. She left behind a significant body of comic, formally elegant, erotically sinister paintings. Her cropped torsos, sharply delineated and bound in bizarre variations, explore the body in traction with its environment, shaped by corsets and hairstyles, as well as behavioral conventions. A selection of paintings and drawings by Ramberg form the core of the exhibition at KW Institute



Christina Ramberg, *Willful Excess*, 1977,
Copyright the Estate of Christina Ramberg,
Courtesy Collection of Karin Tappendorf.

for Contemporary Art. Shown alongside are works by further artists in order to expand the understanding of the type of framing devices that construct identity—physically, psychologically, and metaphorically.

The exhibition title *The Making of Husbands* stems from a BBC documentary that traced the making of John Cassavetes’ 1970 film *Husbands*, picking up on Cassavetes’ interest in the construction of semi-improvised behavioral and gender performances and complicating these through the meta-level of the documentary, which attempts to record the supposed “natural” behavior behind the scenes on set. By doing so, however, it reveals the artificiality of stereotypical roles such as “the husband,” the complexities of “acting natural,” and the constructed nature of gender itself.

Artist and educator Christina Ramberg was a dynamic presence in the Chicago creative community from the 1960s up until her death in 1995. Through a plethora of small obsessive drawings, studies in sketchbooks, and a number of highly finished paintings in acrylic on Masonite, Ramberg observed the human body in various forms of modulation and metamorphosis. For her, this pictorial investigation doubled as an inquiry into larger questions concerning power dynamics, hierarchies, gender construction, desire, fetishism, and the increasing standardization thereof. From the early small-scale depictions of women in a state of undress to the later torso paintings, Ramberg’s surfaces and structural devices gradually merge with the body and become an androgynous prosthetic, a cyborg half-being.

Ramberg’s extraordinarily rich and eccentric personal reference collection of 35 mm photographic research slides (parts of which are reproduced in the exhibition catalogue) reveals a wide range of visual influences on her painting including printed advertisements, fashion layouts, medical illustrations, S/M bondage, hosiery, comic books, folklore and self-taught art, costume history, and quilting. The slides delineate a specific way of looking at the world, at the then contemporary everyday and at canonized visual culture alike. Equally, her collection of collages made from comic books expresses an interest in social conventions and how they are preprogrammed and perpetually re-inscribed through everyday visuals.

Ramberg’s investigation of the body as a kinetic site in reciprocity with its environment is further explored in the accompanying group exhibition. The artistic positions articulate a relation of interdependence between the body and everyday objects, built constructions and infrastructure. They expand our understanding of how governing principles are at work and how they leave imprints on personal expression and social interaction.

Marking the thresholds of the exhibition,
Ghislaine Leung’s (born 1980, SE) new commission

GATES makes spatial circulation and questions of accessibility apparent and relatable, while her work **SHROOMS** highlights what is often overlooked or deemed neutral within an institutional body. Similarly accentuating KW's infrastructure, **Gaylen Gerber's** (born 1955, US) *Backdrop*, fabricated from gray commercial photographic background paper and fitted to cover the gallery walls, draws attention to what is presented and how it is presented, both physically in the space and metaphorically by the institution. In close proximity **Sara Deraedt's** (born 1984, BE) photographs span a covert dynamic between desire, household objects and bodies.

Kathleen White's (1960–2014, US) video documentation of her performance *The Spark Between L and D* alludes to the complex position of women within the narrative of the AIDS crisis and its biased commemoration. The body as a site that is overly programmed through historical, social, and technological mechanisms is further articulated in the multi-media-based practice of **Terre Thaemlitz** (born 1968, US). Thaemlitz brings to the fore how the existence of humankind at all times has been grounded by all-defining organizational structures.



Kathleen White, *The Spark Between L and D*, 1988, Video still, Courtesy the Estate of Kathleen White and Martos Gallery, New York.

The sexualized gaze of **Konrad Klapheck** (born 1935, DE) onto the objects that we produce, such as technical equipment, machines, and everyday tools epitomizes Ramberg's call for a reassessment of our built environment and its effect on the body. Similarly interested in a surrealistic, excessive take on everyday objects surrounding us, between 1978 and 1986 **Ana Pellicer** (born 1946, MX) created a series of oversized copper jewelry pieces to fit the Statue of Liberty in New York City for its centenary.

A contemporary of Ramberg, **Diane Simpson's** (born 1935, US) sculptures are abstractions of salient



Diane Simpson, *Box Pleats*, 1989, Courtesy the artist and Herald St, London. Photo: Tom Van Eynde

gendered garments that make the regulations and liberties that fashion and clothing leave to the body ever more apparent. Associated with a subsequent generation of Chicago artists, **Richard Rezac's** (born 1952, US) objects are masterfully balanced structures of contrasting forms, substances, and functions that raise questions about structural and aesthetical integrity. Their inversion of an object's qualities is akin to Ramberg's formal transpositions.

Alexandra Bircken (born 1967, DE) explores in her sculptures the boundaries between inside and outside, fragility and protection, visibility and concealment. Bircken's mechanical and industrial-looking shells become an interface where the body and the world come together, coalesce, and clash. In a similar negotiation between an inner and outer sphere, the painterly installation by **Frieda Toranzo Jaeger** (born 1988, MX) reconsiders the gendering of the car as an archetypically masculine machine. She repositions the interiors of contemporary, soundless, electric vehicles made by imperialistic manufacturers as intimate, female spaces, in order to question the autonomy of the individual body within a world increasingly characterized by automated control. Embodying this notion of automatization against the

autonomy of the artwork, **Hans-Christian Lotz's** (born 1980, DE) electric readymade sliding door suggests on the other hand a reading of aesthetic space as something intrinsically transmitted and mediated—it traces the viewer's movement as they step in and out of its realm of attention.

While articulating yet another structural tension—that of technical devices taken apart, as well as nylon tights reminiscent of skin—A.C.Q. / by **Senga Nengudi** (born 1943, US) outlines the brinks of a potentially performative space, referring to Nengudi's ongoing involvement with acts of embodiment and ritualistic environments as sites for political negotiation.

The exhibition is accompanied by a substantial publication that brings together newly commissioned writing on Ramberg by art historians and theorists including Anna Gritz, Larne Abse Gogarty, and Judith Russi Kirshner, alongside experimental fiction texts by Jen George and Dodie Bellamy.

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Opening hours

Wednesday–Monday 11 am–7 pm
Thursday 11 am–9 pm
Closed on Tuesday

Admission

8 € / reduced 6 €
Combined Day Ticket KW / me Collectors Room Berlin
10 € / reduced 8 €
berlinpass holder 4 €
Free admission to visitors under 18, holders of the *KW Lover** card, and on Thursday evenings from 6 to 9 pm

Guided tours

KW offers free guided tours through the exhibition during regular opening hours. For further information on tours for large groups (over 10 people), please contact Duygu Örs at do@kw-berlin.de or +49 30 243459-132.

BERLIN
ART WEEK
11–15 SEP 2019

The opening takes place in conjunction with the Berlin Art Week 2019.

Colophon

Curator: Anna Gritz
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Technical Management: Wilken Schade
Head of Installation, Media Technology: Markus Krieger
Installation Team: KW Installation Team
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49 NORD
6 EST
FRAC
LORRAINE

BALTIC



TERRA
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The exhibition is produced by KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin, in collaboration with 49 Nord 6 Est – Frac Lorraine, Metz (FR) and BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead (GB), where it will be presented in 2020. The exhibition is made possible through support from the Capital Cultural Fund and Terra Foundation for American Art.

Senate Department
for Culture and Europe

berlin Berlin

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Public program

... And yet we are becoming

Performance by Frieda Toranzo Jaeger

15 September 19, 5 pm and 6 pm

Venue: KW hall

In English

Berlin Session: Elvia Wilk

Launch and Reading of Elvia Wilk's debut novel

Oval, followed by a conversation

17 September 19, 7 pm

Venue: KW Studio, front building, 1st floor

In English

Guided tour through the exhibition with Curator

Anna Gritz

19 September 19, 6 pm

In German

Guided tour through the exhibition with

Assistant Curator Léon Kruijswijk

25 October 19, 5 pm

In English

The Erotics of Infrastructure

A program of workshops, readings, and talks
conceived by Rachal Bradley

28 October – 10 November 19

See backside for more information

Venue: KW Studio, front building, 1st floor,
and other locations

In English

Conversation between Julia Bryan-Wilson,
University of California, Berkeley, and Eva Ehninger,
Humboldt University of Berlin

21 November 19, 7 pm

Venue: KW Studio, front building, 1st floor

In English

Guided tour through the exhibition with

Assistant Curator Kathrin Bentele

5 December 19, 6 pm

In German

ALLER-RETOUR ET ALLER

A reading by Karolin Meunier in dialogue with a film,
an actress, and a novel: *Wanda*, Barbara Loden,
Nathalie Léger

13 December 19, 7 pm

Venue: KW Studio, front building, 1st floor

In German

The Erotics of Infrastructure

The Erotics of Infrastructure is a series of workshops, readings, and talks conceived by artist **Rachal Bradley** (born 1979, GB) to constitute a discursive body on the notion of infrastructure—primarily in, but also outside of the arts.

If infrastructure can be understood as obliquely involved in processes of conditioning and regulation, the program examines where and how the idea of the erotic might serve as an approach to sustain and regain agency within these structures. Over the course of the events, the discussions evolving at KW will explore how the pleasurable, the charged, and the circuitous might recalibrate infrastructure from a non-neutral to a negotiable framework underlying our perception and our behavior in manifold ways. As such, it is suggested as highly inter-dependent with the people and things inhabiting it. *The Erotics of Infrastructure* is the second, Berlin-specific iteration of an ongoing program that began at Gasworks, London, in 2017, and is curated by Kathrin Bentele.

The program series *The Erotics of Infrastructure* takes place at KW from October 28 until November 10, 2019. Further information will be published on the website.