

Press Kit

KW on location: Lynn Hershman Leeson

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Press Release Berlin, May 2, 2018

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KW on location

May – September 2018, various locations in Berlin

Lynn Hershman Leeson

First Person Plural

May 19 – July 15, 2018

Lynn Hershman Leeson

The Novalis Hotel

May 19 – June 17, 2018

Olaf Nicolai

Hier wird heute Abend ein Mensch wie ein Auto ummontiert / Ohne dass er irgendetwas dabei verliert. Brecht in der Auto-Werkstatt

June 29 – July 1, 2018

KW Production Series: Jamie Crewe and Beatrice Gibson

September 27 – November 25, 2018

For the first time during the Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art, KW Institute for Contemporary Art will vacate its premises and shift its program into public space, with various events and exhibitions taking place across the city. Berlin has changed rapidly in the years since KW was founded in the early 1990s, and we have identified this upcoming season as an opportunity to test out new grounds and collaborations in order to experience new dynamics in the ever changing (cultural) landscape of a growing city.

KW's on location season, which runs from May until September 2018, continues to investigate this year's main focus on the body and its relationships to politics, identity, technology, and architecture with a site-specific project in a hotel room in Berlin-Mitte and an exhibition in a former warehouse in Berlin-Kreuzberg, both by American artist **Lynn Hershman Leeson**. Hershman Leeson has made pioneering contributions to performance, conceptual art, new media, and film since the 1960s. The two projects affirm her position at the forefront of the debate around the use of media, innovation, and technology and their intrinsic relationship to the workings of society, employing her art over again as a tool of empowerment against censorship and political repression.

In Berlin-Kreuzberg, KW will present her exhibition *First Person Plural*, which brings together selected video works from the 1970s-90s as well as the installations *Lorna* (1979–83), and *Venus of the Anthropocene* (2017). In Berlin-Mitte, Hershman Leeson revisits her iconic installation *The Dante Hotel* in the form of a new commission entitled *The Novalis Hotel*. The installation presents an inversion of the historic project questioning how our understanding of identity is altered by forays in media technology and forensic science.

In June, KW will collaborate with the Berliner Ensemble and will present the performative play *Hier wird heute Abend ein Mensch wie ein Auto ummontiert / Ohne dass er irgendetwas dabei verliert. Brecht in der Auto-Werkstatt* by German artist **Olaf Nicolai** in a car workshop in Berlin-Prenzlauer Berg. This play will show the assembly and repair of a Mercedes-Benz Ponton, which once belonged to Helene Weigel, the former intendant of the Berliner Ensemble and Bertolt Brecht's wife. At the same time, Brecht's learning play *Man Equals Man* will be developed with actors.

KW continues its on location season in September with an exhibition of the first two moving image commissions of the *KW Production Series* by **Jamie Crewe** and **Beatrice Gibson** at the Julia Stoschek Collection in Berlin-Mitte.

The work *Pastoral Drama* by **Jamie Crewe** comprises two parallel videos that use allegory and animation to think about progress. Through intricate drawings in ink and pencil, speckled clay, and encrusted plasticine, Crewe reflects upon the evolution of mythic narratives, (inter-) personal change, and collective political time. In its double telling, *Pastoral Drama* envisions the collapse of mythic pasts with the dangerous after-world of the present. *Pastoral Drama* is a co-commission with Tramway, Glasgow (GB).

Beatrice Gibson's 16mm film, *I Hope I'm Loud When I'm Dead*, was developed with two of the USA's most significant living poets—CA Conrad and Eileen Myles—and explores ideas around gender, poetry, and disobedience. The film uses poetry as a means to reckon with the present, and casts the figure of the poet as a guide in times of chaos. *I Hope I'm Loud When I'm Dead* is a co-commission with Camden Arts Centre, London, Bergen Kunsthall (NO), and Mercer Union, Toronto (CA).

Furthermore, KW will continue to present its ongoing projects such as the project space *K, A Year with P. Krishnamurthy*, which is situated in Berlin-Schöneberg, as well as *REALTY*, a long-term investigation into the complexities of gentrification, which operates at various locations, both local and international and *Bob's Pogo Bar*, which will find its temporary home at Tropez, located at Sommerbad Humboldthain in Berlin-Wedding.

The exhibition space for *Lynn Hershman Leeson: First Person Plural* is kindly provided by THE SHELF by Pandion. Olaf Nicolai *Hier wird heute Abend ein Mensch wie ein Auto ummontiert / Ohne dass er irgendetwas dabei verliert. Brecht in der Auto-Werkstatt* is a collaboration with the Berliner Ensemble and is funded by the Schering Stiftung. *KW Production Series* is made possible with generous support by the JULIA STOSCHEK FOUNDATION and OUTSET Germany_Switzerland. *REALTY* is funded by the Senate Department for Culture and Europe, Berlin.

KW Institute for Contemporary Art is institutionally supported by the Senate Department for Culture and Europe.

Lynn Hershman Leeson

First Person Plural

May 19 – July 15, 2018

Opening: May 18, 2018, 7 pm

Address: The Shelf, Prinzenstraße 34, 10969 Berlin-Kreuzberg

Opening hours: Wed–Sun 11 am–7 pm, Thu 11 am–9 pm

Admission: 5 € / reduced 3 €

Free admission on Thursday evenings between 6–9 pm

U8 Moritzplatz / Bus 140 Prinzenstraße/Ritterstraße

Partly accessible for wheelchair users

KW Institute for Contemporary Art presents *First Person Plural* by American artist Lynn Hershman Leeson (born 1941 in Cleveland, US). The exhibition, taking place in a large abandoned warehouse in Berlin Kreuzberg, brings together selected video works from the 1970s–90s as well as the installations *Lorna* (1979–83) and *Venus of the Anthropocene* (2017).

Hershman Leeson has made pioneering contributions to performance art, conceptual art, new media, and film since the 1960s. Her visionary technological experimentation is matched by her daring deconstruction of gendered identity in a misogynist and technologically-mediated world. This exhibition aims to show how Hershman Leeson has consistently been at the forefront of the debate around media, innovation and technology's relationship to the workings of society, and how, throughout her career, she has used her art as a tool of empowerment against censorship and political repression.

The title of the exhibition is taken from Hershman Leeson's long-term diaristic film project *First Person Plural, the Electronic Diaries of Lynn Hershman* (1984–96), which constitutes the central focus of the exhibition. The film records Hershman Leeson's struggle, transformation, and transcendence as her personal story unfolds before the camera; illustrating how the personal becomes political and cultural. Taking the form of a video confession, the work took 12 years to complete and covers psychological scars from childhood memories of physical and sexual abuse, struggles with self-acceptance, illness and domestic violence. These personal experiences are then paired with news coverage of the time. In the tradition of feminist performance work of the 1970s, the four-part film plays with the autobiographic construction of identity while repeatedly calling the truthfulness of the account into question. Despite its wide distribution, the work was staged as an intimate self-produced DIY confessional, asking how and for whom we construct ourselves and where our experience ends and another's begins. Just as her image multiplies on screen, the title suggests a schizophrenic splintering of identity. Whether this should be understood as a symptom of personal or of societal trauma is open to question.

Lorna (1979–83) is one of the first interactive media installations of its kind. It allows the user to explore and control the world of an agoraphobic woman named Lorna. Staged in her tiny one-room apartment, filled with clues to her situation, such as notes, magazines, pieces of clothing, a checkbook, etc., the TV and the telephone present Lorna's only connection to the outside world. With the help of the remote control the users are able to guide Lorna's life through various interactive chapters that allow the viewer to make decisions remotely for her and understand her potentials and limitations. The work ultimately ends in one of three possible endings and is accompanied by multiple soundtracks.

Venus of the Anthropocene (2017), Hershman Leeson's most recent installation, presents the visitor with a mirror and a vanity table—stereotypical sites of female introspection—paired with a white anatomical figure with golden organs and a blue wig. Instead of one's own reflection however, the mirror reveals itself to be a screen that employs facial recognition software to read the visitor's age, gender, and mood, exploring how we rely on technology for self-identification and the role of our bodies in an increasingly mediated world. Other films presented in the exhibition are: *Seduction of a Cyborg* (1994), *A Commercial for Myself* (1978), *Commercials for New York* (1974), and *The Dante Hotel* (1972).

The Novalis Hotel

May 19 – June 17, 2018

Address: Hotel Novalis, Novalisstraße 5, 10115 Berlin-Mitte

Opening hours: Wed–Sun 11 am–7 pm, Thu 11 am–9 pm

Free admission

U6 Oranienburger Tor / Tram 12, M5 Torstraße/U Oranienburger Tor

No wheelchair access

On the occasion of her solo exhibition *First Person Plural*, Lynn Hershman Leeson revisits her iconic installation *The Dante Hotel* in the form of a new commission entitled *The Novalis Hotel*.

The Dante Hotel (1972–73) was one of Hershman Leeson's early site-specific installations, marking the beginning of her work around the character Roberta Breitmore. The artist developed this alter ego over many years in private and public performances, which ultimately led her to produce her visionary works investigating the relationships between humans and technology, identity and surveillance. *The Dante Hotel* was presented in a run-down hotel in the North Beach neighborhood of San Francisco for almost one year from late 1973 to mid 1974. The hotel offered 24-hour access and anybody could sign in at the reception to receive the key to room number 47. The room had signs of a female guest, wax figures, a sound installation of a person breathing heavily and various other accouterments—all clues to the identity of the resident, putting the viewer in the role of a voyeur and thus opening up new perspectives on various forms of surveillance.

For *The Novalis Hotel*, the artist presents an inverted version of *The Dante Hotel*. Here, identity is probed as no longer a body shaped by societal conventions, but identified as generative reproduction of information that is both disembodied and directly tied to our genetic material and the entities that control its surveillance. Upon arriving at Hotel Novalis, visitors are given the opportunity to have their forensic traces analyzed by drinking from a plastic cup. Thereafter they are presented with the key to room number 5, in which Hershman Leeson offers visitors a glimpse into the life of the enigmatic woman staying at the hotel. The room contains clothing, toiletries, a computer, and cryptic notes, entries, and text conversations on her phone, allowing the visitor to slowly assemble an idea of the identity of the woman, namely Roberta Lester, and why she resides in Berlin. Other clues give insight into various scientific protocols linked to forensic analysis and the study of genetics. The traces left behind by the visiting audience will undergo further forensic analysis and the results will be presented in a conversation between Hershman Leeson and the forensic scientist Lutz Roewer, presented on the last day of the installation (June 17, 2018). The conversation will be accompanied by a screening of Hershman Leeson's science fiction film *Teknolust* (2002).

The Novalis Hotel continues Hershman Leeson's fascination with the ethical consequences of scientific advances, especially tied to identity formation and personal freedom. The installation prompts us to reflect on our own responsibility in how far we can take control of these innovations, and to what degree we can foresee the consequences that our current actions may have on future generations. Through continuously situating her work alongside the latest developments in science, she is affirming our responsibility to imagine and actively influence how innovation is implemented.

Biography

Lynn Hershman Leeson (born 1941 in Cleveland, US) is among the first and most influential media artists. During the past five decades she has achieved pioneering work in the fields of photography, video, film, performance, installation, and interactive and net-based media art.

First working in drawing and sculpture, Hershman Leeson turned to performance and conceptual art in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Her innovative works deal with topics, which can be understood as keys to societal questions—relations between the human and the machine, the construction of identity surveillance, the proportion between the real and the virtual as well as the use of media as a tool against censorship and political suppression. Further, she is a strong voice within the feminist movement.

Her most influential performance work is *Roberta Breitmore* (1973–78)—the fictional character that she, then three subsequent female personas, enacted in real time and space, using artifacts of the time. Roberta Breitmore's conceptual idea of fractured identity and multiplicity of contemporary life anticipated the exploration of surrogate identities that flourished in the digital and virtual worlds several decades later. Hershman Leeson's investigation of identity and various modes of surveillance developed into a variety of works, ranging from *Lorna* (1983/84), one of the first interactive projects on video disc, to *Teknolust* (2002) which addressed cyber-identity, artificial intelligence, cloning, and the decoupling of sexuality and human reproduction.

In the past years Hershman Leeson gained great international attention. Among others, her works were shown in a comprehensive retrospective in 2014 at ZKM | Zentrum für Kunst und Medien, Karlsruhe, DE, at Moderna Museet, Stockholm (2012), at the Museum of Modern Art, New York and at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (2013), and in 2017 at the Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris.

Public Program

Lynn Hershman Leeson in conversation with Lutz Roewer

followed by a screening of *Teknolust* (2002), moderated by Anna Gritz (Curator at KW)

June 17, 2018, 5 pm

Venue: Gropius Bau, Niederkirchnerstraße 7, 1 0963 Berlin

Admission: 5 € / reduced 3 €

Mediation

Public guided tours

through the exhibition *Lynn Hershman Leeson: First Person Plural*

Every Thursday at 7 pm (in German)

Every Saturday at 3 pm (in English)

Address: The Shelf, Prinzenstraße 34, 10969 Berlin-Kreuzberg

Included in the exhibition ticket

Guided group tours

Duration: 60 minutes

70 € / reduced 50 €, plus reduced admission fee/person

For further information on guided tours, please contact Duygu Örs at do@kw-berlin.de or +49 30 243459-132.

Guided bike tours with *slimgirl fat*

10 € / reduced 8 € (incl. admission fee), Limited up to 10 people

Please RSVP to Duygu Örs at do@kw-berlin.de. Please bring your own bike. Liability is excluded.

Sunday, June 3, 2018, 11 am–12.30 pm / German

Lynn Hershman Leeson: First Person Plural and *The Novalis Hotel*

Sunday, June 17, 2018, 2–3.30 pm / English

Lynn Hershman Leeson: The Novalis Hotel and *First Person Plural*

Saturday, September 29, 2018, 2–4.30 pm / English

K, A Year with P. Krishnamurthy – KW Production Series – Pause: Evelyn Taocheng Wang

slimgirl fat is a small fish in a big pool. You might know her through her further projects *Gaddafi Gals* and *Nalan381*. *slimgirl fat* loves what comes around – just as J. Timerlake does – and so her music will sound like. There is nothing released yet but she is working hard, working on her first solo record. She locks herself in a tiny room and keeps chanting all night long. Her sound “is an emotional collapse of improvised gesture”. Occasionally, *slimgirl fat* is riding with her bike through the city. Not feeling like fare-dodging anymore.

Collaborations

KW's mediation program is driven by the needs generated through long-term collaborations with different stakeholders such as artists, art mediators, schools, universities as well as diverse communities from all over Berlin. This has meant moving beyond the institution's own context of ambitious exhibitions and events, and exploring aspects that are touched upon in these programs through educational settings. To enable such a process, KW organizes individual workshop and project settings with each collaborator.

Please contact Katja Zeidler at kaz@kw-berlin.de, if you would like to receive more information on KW's mediation program.

Upcoming Exhibitions

Olaf Nicolai

*Hier wird heute Abend ein Mensch wie ein Auto ummontiert /
Ohne dass er irgendetwas dabei verliert. Brecht in der Auto-Werkstatt*
In cooperation with Berliner Ensemble
June 29 – July 1, 2018

Pause: Evelyn Taocheng Wang

September 27–30, 2018
Opening: September 26, 2018

KW Production Series: Beatrice Gibson and Jamie Crewe

September 27 – November 25, 2018
Opening: September 26, 2018
Venue: Julia Stoschek Collection, Leipziger Str. 60 (Entrance: Jerusalemer Straße), 10117
Berlin-Mitte

Beatriz González

October 13 – January 6, 2019
Opening: October 12, 2018, 7 pm

Tamara Henderson**Steve Bishop****Sidsel Meineche Hansen**

November 3, 2018 – January 13, 2019
Opening: November 2, 2018, 7 pm

10th anniversary Videoart at Midnight: Christian Friedrich

December 8–16, 2018
Opening: December 7, 2018, 7 pm

Partners



The exhibition space for *Lynn Hershman Leeson: First Person Plural* is kindly provided by THE SHELF by Pandion.

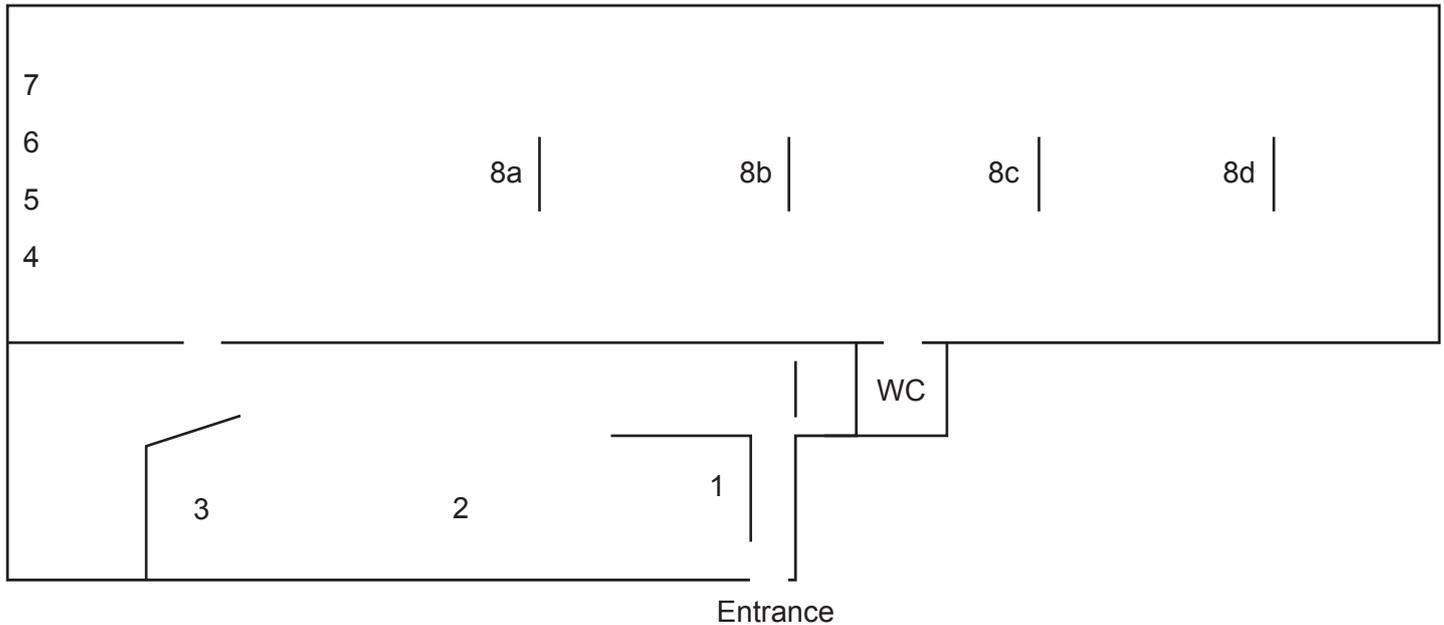
Senate Department
for Culture and Europe



KW Institute for Contemporary Art is institutionally supported by the Senate Department for Culture and Europe.

Lynn Hershman Leeson

First Person Plural



- 1 *Venus of the Anthropocene*, 2017
Anatomical model, facial recognition software
Mac mini, medicine bottle, mirror, wig
Dimensions variable
- 2 *Seduction of a Cyborg*, 1994
Single-channel SD video, 4:3, color, sound
Duration: 8:00 minutes
Video collection ZKM | Zentrum für Kunst und Medien, Karlsruhe (DE)
- 3 *Lorna*, 1979–82
Interactive videodisc, mixed media
Dimensions variable
- 4 *Lynn Turning Into Roberta*, 1978
16mm film transferred to single channel SD video, 4:3, color, sound
Duration: 5:30 minutes
Video collection ZKM | Zentrum für Kunst und Medien, Karlsruhe (DE)
- 5 *A Commercial for Myself*, 1978
Single channel SD video, 4:3, color, sound
Duration: 1:24 minutes
Video collection ZKM | Zentrum für Kunst und Medien, Karlsruhe (DE)
- 6 *Commercials for New York Hotel Rooms (Plaza, Chelsea and Y.W.C.A.)*, 1974
U-matic transferred to single channel SD video, 4:3, b/w, sound
Duration: 2:00 minutes
Video collection ZKM | Zentrum für Kunst und Medien, Karlsruhe (DE)
- 7 *The Dante Hotel*, 1972–1973
U-matic transferred to single channel SD video, 4:3, b/w, sound
Duration: 10:00 minutes
Video collection ZKM | Zentrum für Kunst und Medien, Karlsruhe (DE)

8a–8d

First Person Plural, the Electronic Diaries of Lynn Hershman, 1984–96
(in four parts)

- 8a *Electronic Diaries – Part 1: Confessions of a Chameleon*, 1985–90
Four channel SD Video, 4:3, color, sound
Duration: 9:05 minutes
Video collection ZKM | Zentrum für Kunst und Medien, Karlsruhe (DE)
- 8b *Electronic Diaries – Part 2: Binge*, 1985–90
Four channel SD video, 4:3, color, sound
Duration: 28:00 minutes
Video collection ZKM | Zentrum für Kunst und Medien, Karlsruhe (DE)
- 8c *Electronic Diaries – Part 3: First Person Plural*, 1985–90
Four channel SD video, 4:3, color, sound
Duration: 25:00 minutes
Video collection ZKM | Zentrum für Kunst und Medien, Karlsruhe (DE)
- 8d *Electronic Diaries – Part 4: Shadows Song*, 1990
Four channel SD video, 4:3, color, sound
Duration: 32:00 minutes
Video collection ZKM | Zentrum für Kunst und Medien, Karlsruhe (DE)

All works courtesy the artist and Bridget Donahue, New York