

## secession

FRANCES STARK  
A TORMENT OF FOLLIES  
April 26 – June 22, 2008



Frances Stark, Secession 2008, Photo: Pez Hejduk

Frances Stark's work is characterized by her exploration of the manifold interrelations between art and literature and image and text. Her work on and with script encompasses both art and writing. She often investigates the process of artistic production and the creative act itself. Her finely assembled collages are closely meshed works of various found and invented characters, snippets of text and graphic elements, literary quotations and autobiographical references.



Frances Stark, Secession 2008, Photo: Pez Hejduk

In the Secession Frances Stark is presenting 22 large-format works on paper from her most recent group of works, *A TORMENT OF FOLLIES*. The starting point for her text-drawings is the 1937 novel *FERDYDURKE* by the Polish writer Witold Gombrowicz (1904-1969), which tells the story of Johnny and his struggle against how social norms define his life. Among the novel's main motifs, which Stark draws on, are how people use masks in their dealings with others and the right of the individual to immaturity and vagueness, two qualities that have a subversive potential regarding prevalent social conventions.



Frances Stark, Secession 2008, Photo: Pez Hejduk

In *A TORMENT OF FOLLIES* Stark develops a special form of adaptation, linking the process of reading and rereading the text. She not only integrates a sequence of the novel *FERDYDURKE* into her work, but also takes the original text as inspiration for visual interpretations; with ironic ease she connects the integrated quotations with vaudeville-like dance figures as well as playful ornamental and material details. The text fragments become like a form of reflection on her own artistic practice, raising issues of tormenting self-doubt, the ambivalence between the unique intensity with which Stark experiences her own creativity and an insecurity as to whether the nuances of this can be understood by others at all, and the ensuing questions of dependence on an audience, helplessness, and a sense of the ridiculous. Through her choice and use of motifs, Stark creates a puzzling interplay between direct gestures and their fixation in a pose, truth-fulness and mask-like deception, and seriousness and foolish-ness.



Frances Stark, Secession 2008, Photo: Pez Hejduk

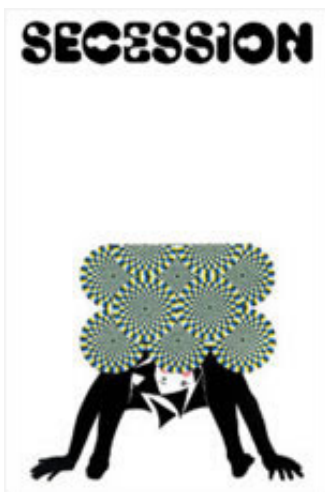
In a way that is comparable to the musical interpretation of a libretto in opera, Frances Stark translates Gombrowicz's

text into the synaesthetic unity of her pictorial language. The collages, whose formal tension is based on the balance between a minimal but playful use of material and large empty spaces, are full of both poetry and wit. Stark frequently interrupts any stringent dramaturgical development so as to highlight a few words and to unfold sentiments and emotions in more depth, so that scenes in the individual pictures become more autonomous in relation to the series of works or the exhibition as a whole.



Frances Stark, Secession 2008, Photo: Pez Hejduk

## Publication



FRANCES STARK

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[available in the shop](#)

Artist talk: April 25 2008, 6 pm

An event by the [Friends of the Secession](#)

FRANCES STARK, born. 1967 in Newport Beach, California, lives and works in Los Angeles, California.

SOLO EXHIBITIONS (Selection): 2008 greengrassi, London; The Fall of Frances Stark, Culturgest, Lisbon; 2007 The Fall of Frances Stark, Frac Bourgogne, Dijon; The Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven; 2006 Frances Stark: Structures that Fit my Opening, Marc Foxx, Los Angeles; Structures That Fit My Opening and Others Parts, Considered in Relation

To Their Whole, Glassel School of Art, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; 2005 In and on an Unergonomic Mind, CRG Gallery, New York 2004 Bless This Mess, greengrassi, London; Destroy Date, Daniel Buchholz, Cologne.

GROUP EXHIBITIONS (Selection): 2008 Whitney Biennial, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Yes No & Other Options, Art Sheffield 08, Sheffield Contemporary Art Forum; 2007 Learn to Read, Tate Modern, London; Fit to Print, Gagosian Gallery, New York; Romantic Conceptualism, Kunstverein Nürnberg, Bawag Foundation, Vienna; If I can't Dance., MuHKA, Antwerp; Blind Date Istanbul, Sabanci Museum, Istanbul; 2006 The Studio, The Hugh Lane Museum, Dublin; Dereconstruction, Barbara Gladstone Gallery, New York; Köln at Metro Pictures, Metro Pictures, New York; 2005 Monuments for the USA, White Columns, New York; Creeping Revolution 2, Rooseum, Malmö; 2002 Zusammenhänge herstellen, Kunstverein in Hamburg; Personal Plans, Kunsthalle Basel; Jim, Jonathan, Kenny, Frances and Sol, Stedelijk Museum Bureau Amsterdam.

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