

PRESS RELEASE**Ulrike Ottinger**

January 24 - March 3, 2019

Organized with Julia Trotta

Bridget Donahue is pleased to present photographs and flat works by the radical German artist and filmmaker, Ulrike Ottinger.

Ottinger's complex and transgressive practice defies boundaries and hierarchies. In film, she would be considered an *auteur*, but such a term is limited when considering the films, exhibitions, operas, radio plays, photographs, paintings, costumes, collages, and more produced by Ottinger over a fifty year period.

This exhibition marks Ottinger's first in New York in nearly 20 years and includes a selection of photographs taken over the span of her career, many of which were shot on set of her most iconic films. These photos give a kaleidoscopic and idiosyncratic lens into the themes and characters that inhabit Ottinger's highly stylized universe where power, history, culture, gender and normative storytelling is collapsed and put back into burlesque disorder.

While many of the figures and sites represented in the works on view have been pulled from their elaborate, and often allegorical, cinematic context, Ottinger's precision and agility as a maker of static images becomes more porous, but no less potent. Art Historian Katharina Sykora describes Ottinger's archive as a 'photographic hoard': "There is no predetermined form, no established sequence... It is the event of appearance, of showing and seeing, which is at the core of their being. They vibrate sympathetically as pre- and post-images in every new performance and bring forth an overlapping of superimpositions that grow constantly denser."

Alongside the photographs are four map collages made in 2011 on the occasion of Ottinger's exhibition "Floating Food" in Berlin at Haus der Kulturen der Welt. Antique pulldown maps, typical of what would be found in a 1960s schoolroom are embellished with photos, postcards and correspondence, either found by or addressed to the artist. Elements are connected by a diagrammatic web of red yarn or semi obscured behind cutout windows like those in an advent calendar. On these maps, time and place are unfixed, layered, invented and synthesized. Ottinger's travels, ethnographic research and investigation of the politics of colonialism have defined her work, especially the more recent experimental films which take place in Mongolia, the Bering Sea, Southeast Europe and the Echigo Province in Japan. The Museum of Modern Art will be screening Ottinger's 2011 film, *Under Snow* from March 1st - 3rd, 2019, which corresponds to the closing of the exhibition at the gallery.

— Julia Trotta

Ulrike Ottinger was born in 1942 in Konstanz, Germany and began her art career as a painter in Paris in the 1960's, where she studied with figures such as Claude Lévi- Strauss, Louis Althusser and Pierre Bourdieu. In 1969 she moved back to her hometown of Konstanz to run a film club called "Visuell" and a gallery/press called "galeriepress," producing and showcasing work by contemporary artists Wolf Vostell, David Hockney, and many others.

Ottinger premiered her first film *Laocoon & Sons*, starring the German actress Tabea Blumenschein, in 1973 at Arsenal Berlin, after which time she moved to Berlin. Blumenschein continued to feature in many of Ottinger's films that followed, including *Madame X* (1977), *The Berlin Trilogy: Ticket of No Return* (1979), *Freak Orlando* (1981), and *Dorian Gray in the Mirror of the Yellow Press* (1984). Other collaborators who appear in the films of the late 70s and early 80s included Veruschka von Lehndorff, Yvonne Rainer, Delphine Seyrig, Eddie Constantine, and Magdalena Montezuma, Irm Hermann, Kurt Raab and Barbara Valentin - recognizable as icons from the films of Rainer Werner Fassbinder.

Ottinger's early films tended toward Surrealist storytelling that celebrated difference and satirized conventions of power, gender and beauty. She then evolved into a style of ethnographic, observational filmmaking including *Taiga* (1992), an eight and a half hour piece that explored the culture of Northern Mongolia, *Exile Shanghai* (1997), which profiled six Russian and European Jews who sought exile in Shanghai and *Southeast Passage* (2002), a journey through the cities and villages of southeast Europe from Berlin to the Black Sea. Her most recent film, *Chamisso's Shadow* (2016) is a three chapter, 720 minute interpretation of the writings of Adelbert von Chamisso, a poet, botanist and explorer at the turn of the 18th century who traveled the Bering Sea.

Ottinger has exhibited her visual art at venues including Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin; the Witte de With, Rotterdam; Documenta 11, Kassel; the Goetz Collection, Munich; The Renaissance Society, Chicago; NTU Center for Contemporary Art, Singapore; The Hungarian Art Gallery, Glasgow and galleries such as David Zwirner, New York and Contemporary Fine Art, Berlin. Her films have screened extensively throughout the world, with retrospectives at the Museum of Modern Art and Cinémathèque Française.