

Cosima von Bonin

GRANDVILLE AND THE DECISION AT GRANDVILLE

28 September – 26 November 2011

opening reception on Wednesday, 28 September, 7-9 pm

A title turned in on itself, beginning and ending with "Grandville". "The Decision at Grandville" could be the title of a chapter of a picaresque novel, a military history, or a Hercule Poirot mystery. Formally, the title is a loop, like Andy Warhol's From A to B and Back Again. A-B-B-A.

From 1993 to 2011 and back again. In line with her longstanding collaboration with the musician Moritz von Oswald, Cosima von Bonin has conceived this exhibition as a quodlibet, looping her earliest work through her most recent.

The early pieces on view include a prison window, made from cardboard and masking tape, shown at American Fine Arts in 1993. During the exhibition, von Bonin positioned parakeets in birdcages on top of the works, resulting in an irregular spray of bird droppings still visible across their surface. Other early works – such as the bikini draped over a door at the "Kunstverein Kippenberger" at Fridericianum Kassel in 1994, and a grid of men's handkerchiefs stitched together – are recreated entirely in white.

A group of furniture legs, without their tops, from 1992, are presented on white pedestals, like troops gathered for an offensive maneuver. A plywood truck and its cardboard opponent, first shown in "The Fatigue Empire" at Kunsthaus Bregenz in 2010, have been stripped of their loads, possibly to be replaced with something else, or with nothing.

Inverting the uncanny animism of J. J. Grandville's satirical engravings (in, say, *Un autre monde*, from 1844), von Bonin has presented her animal-avatars, such as the red hermit crab slumped over an ersatz mid-century biomorphic table, as limp and exhausted since the exhibition in Bregenz last year. Here, this draining effect is extended to color, in a new sculpture of colorless soft creatures heaped on a white table top. White, unusually, dominates the exhibition.

While living in Düsseldorf and preparing his "Section Cinéma", Marcel Broodthaers once referred to himself the "vampire of Düsseldorf". Like Broodthaers in his self-consciously late work, von Bonin has moved from vampirizing others to an auto-vampirization. A vampire of herself as much as a vampire of Cologne, von Bonin operates within an auto-vampiric loop, a.k.a. the Moebius strip of Cologne 1993-Berlin 2011, displayed in a gallery whose rooms are arranged in the form of a loop, with looped soundtracks attached to each work.

Out of her undead network of references and social relations, von Bonin seems to have created a Document of the Dead (to quote the title of the documentary video on zombie filmmaker George Romero included in the exhibition).

Michael Sanchez