

Introduction

Rosemarie Trockel is considered to be one of the most influential women artists of our time. She has been recognised since the early 1980s as one of the most prominent postmodern artists, mainly through her free, associative ideas and unconventional language of forms that mixes several styles and genres. According to the artist herself, she is more interested in internal contradictions and incoherence, than in systematic analyses and grandiloquent symbols. She prefers a pictorial language and materials that are metaphorical, associative and poetic. In her work, resemblances between human activities and the objects that surround us, often looked at from a very personal or biographical perspective, form starting points for surprisingly simple works. The artistic inheritance of Joseph Beuys, or other artists who devise poetic metaphors rather than systems, is a clear influence.

With her most famous work - the wool paintings with logos and cooking rings – her feminist gaze brought a new dimension into the post-minimal debate about painting that deconstructed emblems critical of society and consumerism and forced open the taboos within the mainly male art world. And all this with the original, and unmistakable ‘feminist’ reuse of materials traditionally associated with women. Trockel’s interest in other scientific disciplines, especially biology and animal behaviour, translate themselves into installations that explore social differences, from behavioural processes and expectation patterns to frivolous and playful situations. The multiple forms that her work takes, and the manoeuvrability of her flow of ideas, permanently shifts meaning in a process of resemblance and reproduction. Each attempt to classify the work is thus a precarious venture, but certainly an exercise that the artist understands as a departure point for developing ever-new associations, references and meanings. The artist does not gladly submit herself to academic rules such as the retrospective, a format she is reluctant to engage with because it suggests that there is a logical and direct link between the development of an oeuvre and a lifetime. Instead she opts for chance factors and open interpretation. For this reason, Rosemarie Trockel has chosen a presentation that exposes the complex links and huge contrasts in styles, metaphors, themes, forms, content and materials within her work, which ranges from shimmering fear to sharp humour.

Flagrant Delight - the title plays as much on the sensual as it does on the penetrating and uncomfortable nature of her work - is a continuation of the exhibitions *Die Verflüssigung der Mutter* (The Fluidity of the Mother, 2010, Kunsthalle Zürich) and *Post-Menopause* (an all-encompassing retrospective in the Ludwig Museum in Cologne, 2006). In these exhibitions, Trockel also proposed a simple selection criterion alongside a complex installation. On the one hand, there is the grouping by room according to medium, and on the other hand there is a presentation that makes the complexity of evolution visible in the cross-references and associative links between the different themes, issues, materials and installations. This principle is a departure point that is also found in her collages. There is thus no clear beginning or end to the installation. Works from several periods can be found in each grouping, which is diachronically built. The visit can just as easily begin on the second floor, as it can on the third. Trockel thus aims to create a situation where everything is in relationship to everything else. The works can reinforce or perfectly contradict each other. The different starting points of her work become visible and are, at certain moments, incompatible.