

Gazed and Confused
An Exhibition in Two Parts
Work Descriptions & Bios

Chapter 1: 21.01.22 – 05.03.22

Opening: 21.01.22 from 18:00 – 21:00

Alvin Baltrop, John Berger, Samuel Haitz, Deborah Joyce Holman and Ursula Sulser

Exactly fifty years ago in January 1972 the BBC series *Ways of Seeing* was aired. In the second episode "Women and Art" author and artist John Berger examined the male gaze in western visual culture, be it traditional painting or advertising. Before its widespread use in feminist theory Berger used the term of the male gaze to critique how the gaze was inextricably linked to power. He spoke of women watching themselves being looked at. Soon after in 1975, feminist film theorist Laura Mulvey in her seminal essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" spoke of to-be-looked-at-ness and Freud's scopophilia addressing female sexual objectification in traditional cinema. Taking this as a starting point, *Gazed and Confused* is an exhibition in two chapters that tackles the complex, broad and challenging topic of the gaze. The exhibition reflectively combines older and newer positions that relate to earlier debates on the gaze as well as artists who recontextualize the topic within today's context. It brings together a multifaceted look at the gaze and explores themes such as gaze agency, the imperial gaze, the homosexual gaze, the artist's gaze, sexism, and voyeurism.

Alvin Baltrop

Untitled [from *The Piers* series], n.d. (1975-86), ten gelatin silver prints

"Although initially terrified of the piers, I began to take these photos as a voyeur [and] soon grew determined to preserve the frightening, mad, unbelievable, violent, and beautiful things that were going on at that time. To get certain shots, I hung from the ceilings of several warehouses utilizing a makeshift harness, watching and waiting for hours to record the lives that these people led (friends, acquaintances, and strangers), and the unfortunate ends that they sometimes met. The casual sex and nonchalant narcotizing, the creation of artwork and music, sunbathing, dancing, merrymaking, and the like habitually gave way to muggings, callous yet detached violence, rape, suicide, and, in some instances, murder. The rapid emergence and expansion of AIDS in the 1980s further reduced the number of people going to and living at the piers, and the sporadic joys that could be found there." (Text by Alvin Baltrop)

"The images here are a moving and powerful reminder that before there were safe spaces there were dangerous ones that nevertheless served as havens for those who had rejected lives of convention or, rather, had conventional lives that had rejected them. But it was in this peril that true freedom was made possible. Baltrop manages to not only illustrate the stakes of this life at the Piers but also what made it sexy and exciting. To view the images now brings up a complicated kind of nostalgia for an experience that has defined gay culture and is quickly slipping from cultural memory: to put oneself at risk for liberation." (Text by Gracie Hadland)

African American photographer Alvin Baltrop (born 1948, died 2004, New York City) spent most of his life living and working in New York City. From 1969 to 1972, he served in the Vietnam War and began photographing his comrades. After his return, he studied at the School of the Visual Arts in New York. It was during this period that Baltrop started documenting the gay communities in the West Village area and along

the piers. Baltrop captured the gay cruising spots and hookup culture that existed in New York City before the AIDS epidemic. In 2008, critic and AIDS activist Douglas Crimp wrote an article about Alvin Baltrop for *Artforum* that regenerated interest in Baltrop's work. Alvin Baltrop had very few exhibitions during his lifetime and his work gained international recognition only after his death. Posthumous solo exhibitions include *Alvin Baltrop*, Galerie Buchholz, Berlin (2021); *The Life and Times of Alvin Baltrop*, Bronx Museum of the Arts (2019) and *Perspectives: 179 Alvin Baltrop: Dreams into Glass*, Contemporary Arts Museum Houston (2012). Group exhibitions include *Natures Mortes*, Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2021); *Collection 1970-Present* (2021) and *A New MoMA* (2019) both at Museum of Modern Art, New York; *Around Day's End: Downtown New York, 1970–1986*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2020) and *Liebe und Ethnologie*, Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin (2019).

John Berger

***Ways of Seeing* (Episode 2, *Women and Art*, 1972) Produced by Mike Dibbs Courtesy of BBC**

"A woman must continually watch herself. She is almost continually accompanied by her own image of herself. Whilst she is walking across a room or whilst she is weeping at the death of her father, she can scarcely avoid envisaging herself walking or weeping. From earliest childhood she has been taught and persuaded to survey herself continually. And so she comes to consider the *surveyor* and the *surveyed* within her as the two constituent yet always distinct elements of her identity as a woman. She has to survey everything she is and everything she does because how she appears to men, is of crucial importance for what is normally thought of as the success of her life. Her own sense of being in herself is supplanted by a sense of being appreciated as herself by another.... One might simplify this by saying: men *act* and women *appear*. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. This determines not only most relations between men and women but also the relation of women to themselves. The surveyor of woman in herself is male: the surveyed female. Thus she turns herself into an object -- and most particularly an object of vision: a sight." (Text by John Berger)

Ways of Seeing is the 1972 thought-provoking and influential BAFTA award-winning four part TV series with John Berger which was later adapted into a book of the same name. In the exhibition we feature the second episode of *Ways of Seeing*. This episode was the only one that included other speakers. It starts with Berger discussing the history of the female nude and the male gaze in Western art and society. We later get to hear the comments of five women who are discussing together in a group: the artist Carola Moon; the publisher, feminist scholar and activist Jane Kenrick; Barbara Niven, the art critic of the *Daily Worker*; Eva Figes, who had recently published *Patriarchal Attitudes: Women in Society* (1970), and Anya Berger, writer and translator. Anya (1923-2018) got married in the 50s until the 70s, but later remained friends. In Chapter 2 of *Gazed and Confused* we will be featuring drawings by John Berger of Anya Berger, portraying an intimate look at the artist's own gaze.

"Today, the idea of the male gaze may seem well established, and Berger and his all-male team didn't claim to invent the concept which would later be christened by film critic Laura Mulvey. But this was 1972 – the Sex Discrimination Act was still three years away, contraception wasn't yet covered by the NHS, and it would be almost a decade before women could take out loans in their own names without a male guarantor. And yet, here they were, on one of only three channels on mainstream television, sitting in a group and discussing issues such as agency, empowerment, and their relationships to their own bodies and to men. Of course, not everyone was pleased about it – according to the *Guardian*, *Ways of Seeing* was derogatorily compared to Chairman Mao's *Little Red Book* "for a generation of art students"." (Text by Emma Hope Allwood)

John Berger (born 1926, London, died 2017, Antony, France) was an art critic, poet, novelist, painter and author. As a novelist, he won the Booker prize for *G.* in 1972, donating half his prize money to the Black Panthers. As a TV presenter, he changed

the way we looked at art with *Ways of Seeing*. As a storyteller and political activist, he defended the rights and dignity of workers, migrants, and the oppressed around the world. "Far from dragging politics into art," he wrote in 1953, "art has dragged me into politics." Before he was a critic and novelist, John Berger began his career as a painter. In the late 1940s he exhibited at the Wildenstein, Redfern and Leicester Galleries in London. Berger taught drawing at St Mary's teacher training college. He later became an art critic, publishing many essays and reviews in the *New Statesman*. Along with painting, he formed associations with the Communist Party of Great Britain early in his career: although he never formally joined the party, he was closely tied to the broader communist movement, and his Marxist values would underlie his artistic work for the rest of his career. Berger moved from urban London to a small town in the Alps, Quincy in 1973, where he would live for the next 40 years of his life.

Samuel Haitz

Anthology (The Male Nude, p. 288+289), 2022, C-Print

Anthology (The Male Nude, p. 292+293), 2022, C-Print

Samuel Haitz's work deals with the legacy of queer art history and literature and their occupation with several forms of desire. He uses pre-existing material to consider modes of artistic production in the 21st century, reflecting upon the relevance of terms like appropriation or originality. In this instance his operation of appropriation has resulted in these two prints wherein he has scanned pages from another anthology, namely the *The Male Nude* by Taschen. We see in total four nudes by George Platt Lynes (1907-1955) an important figure in the history of photographic images of the male body as well as fashion and commercial photography. His nudes remained private, unknown and unpublished for years due to the potential legal and social consequences of showing such work in a time where there was more open hostility towards homosexuality. The titles that figure as captions in the image are the names of the models, visually in contrast to the postures and compositions of concealed faces or partially revealed faces reminiscent of anonymous erotica.

Since 2019 Samuel Haitz has been working on his *Anthology* series in what might be considered a gesture to incite bonds between artistic legacies, personal projections, zeitgeists and our contemporary moment. Part assembly of personal and cultural artifacts and part a reflection of his own framing we come to discover what he holds in high regard. Be it art historical references or poetry, we get an insight, at times discreet or sometimes more overt, into what makes Haitz tick.

Samuel Haitz (born 1997, Muri AG, Switzerland) works and lives in Berlin and Zurich. He received his BFA from Zurich University of the Arts in 2020 and is currently doing his diploma in Fine Arts at Berlin University of the Arts. He was nominated for last year's Kiefer Hablitzel | Göhner Art Prize at the Swiss Art Awards, Basel. Together with Milena Langer, he curated the exhibition space Saint Luke in 2019. Recent solo exhibitions include *Neue Arbeiten* at Sangt Hipolyt, Berlin, Germany (2022); *Memorabilia* at Cabaret Voltaire, Zurich (2021) and *on the filmy foundation of my dreams* at Plymouth Rock, Zurich (2019). Recent group exhibitions include *... von möglichen Welten* at Kunsthalle Basel (2021); *Plattform 21* at MASI, Lugano (2021); *The Crossdresser and the Phoenix*, Nevven, Gothenborg, Sweden and *Period S01E02* at Longtang, Zurich (2021).

Deborah Joyce Holman

Untitled (for scale), 2021, bitumen paint on cardboard, steel

"*Untitled (for scale)*, life-sized cardboard cutouts, continue my exploration of refusal and retention of agency. The shapes are taken from memes and images that follow meme-esque logic - mostly Black people doing nothing in particular, and importantly enacting a non-performance in their mundane poses. The works explore the circulation of images online and follow the question of what happens when a body is captured and circulated (metaphorically, in images). Online, through repeated sharing and re-posting, images lose their quality as pixels are continuously compressed. Follow-

ing US-American scholar Tavia Nyong'o's thought on 'fabulative reading' of archival material, I employ this loss as a generative space, which enacts a refusal and points towards the space that is not shown. The cutouts are painted with multiple layers of bitumen paint, re-enacting a loss of information through accumulation with its deep black colour and re-/deflective qualities. They are presences, witnesses or ghosts, in their fragility and makeshift materiality. As such, they point towards something that is not shown, the portrayed bodies as vectors both in circulation (of images, bodies), and directly also of the space they occupy. Conceived as a performative intervention, they intend to reflect back onto the space they inhabit, the viewer and gesture elsewhere." (Text by Deborah Joyce Holman)

Deborah Joyce Holman (born 1991, Basel) lives and works between Basel and London. Holman's work deals with politics of representation and strategies of refusal. She explores these through a variety of media including text, sculpture, installation, film- and image-making. Recent exhibitions include Explorers Film Club, Basel (2021); Athens Biennial 7 (2021); The Shed, New York City (2021); House of Electronic Arts, Basel (2021); Conceptual Fine Arts Live, Milan (2021); Cherish, Geneva (solo, 2021); Centre d'Art Contemporain, Geneva (2021); La Quadriennale di Roma (2020); Material Art Fair, Mexico City (2020); Mikro, Zurich (solo, 2019); Fondation Entreprise Ricard, Paris (2019); Auto Italia, London (2019); Alienze, Lausanne (2018). She was nominated for last year's Kiefer Hablitzel | Göhner Art Prize at the Swiss Art Awards, Basel. Holman was co-founder and director of 1.1 (2015-2020) which was a platform for a young practice in arts and music in Basel, and worked at Auto Italia as Associate Director, then Associate Curator (2020-2022).

Ursula Sulser

Mittelholzer's Doppelgänger, 2018/21, three artist books: Departure / Arrival; The Other; The Tourist

Mittelholzer's Doppelgänger, 2018/21, nine light boxes

Research in collaboration with Roland Lüthi

Photo credits: Walter Mittelholzer, ETH Library, Image Archive

The starting point for Ursula's Sulser's *Mittelholzer's Doppelgänger* was the project for an exhibition at the Swiss National Museum in 2018. On the occasion of the exhibition, Ursula Sulser and Roland Lüthi were invited to view the photographs by the Swiss photographer, pilot, and businessman Walter Mittelholzer. In particular his travels to Africa between 1926 and 1934. Among them were photographs of landscapes and people. These had a tremendous impact on the artists who after having spent a considerable amount of time studying them, noticed how the gestures and looks of the portrayed people had an imbedded colonial gaze to them. This culminated in the 2018 video installation *Mittelholzer's Doppelgänger* consisting of a rhythmic sequence in the form of a slide-show of close-ups and crops of photos by Mittelholzer portraying both subjecting and subjected gazes.

In *Gazed and Confused Mittelholzer's Doppelgänger* acts as a further exploration by the artist on the colonial and Eurocentric gaze, and in particular the white tourist gaze. Sulser's work reflects upon the problematic portrayal of the encounters between Mittelholzer and Ethiopians, Kenyans, Sudanese, Eritreans and Tanzanians and the potential underlying violence surrounding the context of the images. The colonial gaze is perhaps not reversed, but it is scrutinized through a strategy of intervention. Through the use of tools of appropriation be it cropping and hence fragmenting there is a centering in on the power inequalities and racial politics at work in regard to the seduction power of images.

When taking on a sharp critical eye, Mittelholzer's photographs can be framed within postcolonial theory, namely Edward Said's *Orientalism* in what has been termed "the Consumption of the Other." It was a prevalent practice during the 19th and 20th century that travel writers, anthropologists, artists and novelists brought back documents to introduce the "common" Westerners to their "foreign" counterparts. His photographs and travel reports were featured in the news magazine *Schweizer Illustrierte* as

well as the NZZ newspaper.

An extensive body of photographs are presented in three artist books which can be explored at the library near the entrance of Last Tango. They are titled *Departure / Arrival*, *The Other* and *The Tourist*. Three images from each publication are presented in the nine lightboxes. If we take the image *The Other 042221*, one cannot fail to see elements that simply accentuate the desire of witnessing an Other: a naked body, of a different color from the one photographing it, a beaded waist band seducingly framing the portrayed body's hip.

Ursula Sulser (born 1964, St. Gallen, Switzerland) lives and works in Zurich. Ursula Sulser primarily works in the media of video, sculpture, sound and text. Solo exhibitions include *Comets in Counter Space* (with Roland Lüthi) (2015) and *Words In My Head Are Like Voices Underwater*, Counter Space, Zurich (2013). Group exhibitions include *Werk- und Atelierstipendienausstellung der Stadt Zürich*, Helmhaus, Zurich (2018); *Posterity Is A Form Of The Spectator*, Galerie Sobering, Paris (2014); *Was macht die Kunst*, Helmhaus, Zurich (2006); *Hof in Halle*, Kunsthalle Zürich (2005); *Memory/Cage at the New Museum Store*, New Museum, New York (2002) and *Drei Positionen*, Kunsthalle St. Gallen (1994). In 1996 she received the Michel Jordi Prize of Photography.

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