

# **Manon de Boer**

**Che bella voce**



Manon de Boer: Che bella voce

26 March to 9 October 2022

Kunstmuseum St. Gallen

Manon de Boer works mainly in the medium of film. The perception of time and the inspiration for creative processes are central to her work, as are the conditions of the production and reception of film. People appear in de Boer's works through their physical or sonic presence. Their gaze is directed inward, in relation to themselves. Or it is connected to others, a space, a city, or a landscape.

In these portrait-like films, de Boer plays with our accustomed hierarchies of sensory perception. The entirety of cultural production as well as the way we interact with each other are influenced by the weighting of the senses. We consume streaming services for music and films, and are familiar with radio, podcasts, as well as video, text, and voice messages. But are we also aware of the different levels of meaning of the respective media? And what natural phenomena do we pay attention to? Who are we when we must rely on ourselves, without access to electronic devices? What thoughts and ideas develop out of this?

In her work, de Boer suggests that the visual and sonic levels as well as the medium itself can also be viewed as independent narratives. Moreover, she gives a special status to the voice—not only as a means of communication, but also as a political or aesthetic bearer of meaning. The retrospective at the Kunstmuseum St. Gallen is the artist's first presentation in Switzerland. It offers a variety of listening and viewing experiences and also includes works from the museum's collection.

Guest curator: Fabian Flückiger

Manon de Boer (\*1966 in Kodaikanal, India) lives and works in Brussels, where she currently teaches at the École de recherche graphique. Her works have regularly been shown at biennials, such as the Venice Biennale in 2007, the Berlin Biennale in 2008, the Bienal de São Paulo in 2010, and Documenta 2012 in Kassel. In recent years her work has been recognised with solo exhibitions at institutions including the Secession in Vienna in 2016, KANAL – Centre Pompidou in Brussels in 2019, and the Calouste Gulbenkian Museu in Lisbon in 2020.

Fabian Flückiger (\*1987, Bern) works as an independent curator in Switzerland and Belgium. Between 2015 and 2020 he was assistant curator and curator at the Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein. He has realised exhibitions and publications on Nora Turato (2019), Steven Parrino (2020), and Miriam Laura Leonardi (2021).



1

Manon de Boer (\*1966 in Kodaikanal)

*Maud Capturing the Light "On a Clear Day", 2015*

Installation, 16-mm, colour, 4:3, no sound, 2 min. 20 sec.

Courtesy the artist and Jan Mot

«Agnes Martin is one of my favourite artists. A collector I know, Maud B., owns two screen prints by Agnes Martin from the series *On a Clear Day*. She has them framed behind glass in her apartment, hanging in a corridor close to a big window. In front of one of the screen prints I installed a 16-mm camera and left the diaphragm on 4, for an average light value.

I asked Maud to film the work whenever she passed by and would look at it – for as long as she watched it. She filmed it each time she was struck by the way the light was playing with the work and influencing her perception of it. The differences in light and colour in the film, due to the fact that the diaphragm was never adjusted, correspond to the different moments of looking at the work and make the image merge with its environment to various degrees.»

*Manon de Boer*



2

Oskar Schlemmer (\*1888 in Stuttgart, †1943 in Baden-Baden)

*Grosser Profilkopf und kleiner Kopf von hinten*, 1935

Oil on wax paper

23 × 20.3 cm

Kunstmuseum St. Gallen

The works from the collection of the Kunstmuseum St. Gallen create specific references to the works of Manon de Boer. At the beginning of *Ghost Party* (2), a painting by Schlemmer appears in the flash sequence. It shows the *Triadisches Ballett* with their typical costumes and their humorous, geometric exaggerations of the human body. Schlemmer called the dance a “party of form and colour.” Along with Elsa Hötzel and Albert Burger, Schlemmer developed this new form of ballet in Stuttgart between 1916 and 1922. It consists of various triads such as choreography (costume, movement, music), physical attributes (space, shape, colour), spatial dimensions (height, width, depth), as well as basic shapes (circle, square, triangle) and the primary colours (red, yellow, blue). Schlemmer was not only a stage designer and head of the stage workshop at the Bauhaus, but also a painter. The work *Grosser Profilkopf und kleiner Kopf von hinten* is indicative of his genuine interest in depicting people and space in an abstract, constructivist form.



3

Manon de Boer (\*1966 in Kodaikanal), Latifa Laâbissi (\*1964 in Grenoble)  
*Ghost Party* (Part 2), 2022

HD video, colour, 4:3, in French with German subtitles, 58 min.

Courtesy the artists and Jan Mot

Since 2015, artist and filmmaker Manon de Boer and choreographer and dancer Latifa Laâbissi have engaged in an ongoing dialogue about the numerous voices that inhabit their thinking and bodies. The performance *Ghost Party* (Part 1) and the film *Ghost Party* (Part 2) emerged from a long process of exchange and “cannibalisation.” In the film, de Boer and Laâbissi create small fictions with vases, rocks, and other materials while giving voice to texts by “ghosts” from their joint genealogical research such as Marguerite Duras, Serge Daney, Casey, and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro. In this polyphony of voices and accents, their beings mingle with others and subtly question the politics of language and identity.

Performance, visual art, and cinema are playfully interwoven in *Ghost Party* (Part 2). In this heterogeneous form, the voices, bodies, and objects appear in a different light each time, underlining the fundamental theme of transformation and creation.

Screening of *Ghost Party* (Part 2), 2022 in the auditorium

Each hour at quarter past

**Cinematography** Charlotte Marchal **Additional cinematography** Léo Lefèvre **Vases (in order of appearance)** Lygia Clark, Donald Winnicott, Valeska Gert, Oskar Schlemmer, Oum Kalthoum, Beyoncé, Martha/Dan Graham, Sophie Taeuber-Arp, Hélio Oiticica, Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, Hijikata Tatsumi, Mina, Frantz Fanon, Jack Smith, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Delphine Seyrig, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Latifa Laâbissi, Manon de Boer, Lina Bo Bardi, Maya Deren, Alain Cavalier, Marguerite Duras, Anne Carson, Angela Davis, Octavia Butler, Chantal Akerman, and Casey **Editing** Manon de Boer **Sound recording, editing, and soundscape** Laszlo Umbreit **Sound mixing** Laszlo Umbreit and Rémi Gérard with Empire Digital **Colour grading** Paul Millot with Cobalt **Graphic design** Goda Budvytyte **Produced by** Auguste Orts and Figure Project **Supported by** Flanders Audiovisual Fund, Vlaamse Gemeenschap, WIELS, FRAC Bretagne, Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens, kunstencentrum BUDA, Kunstmuseum St. Gallen, Jan Mot, On & For Production and Distribution, Friends of Auguste Orts Fund, KASK & Conservatorium



4

Sophie Taeuber-Arp (\*1889 in Davos, †1943 in Zurich)

*Gelbe Form*, 1935

Oil on canvas

60 × 55 cm

Kunstmuseum St. Gallen

At the beginning of *Ghost Party* (3), two pictures by Sophie Taeuber-Arp appear in the flash sequence. The first picture shows one of her marionettes in a Dada dance, and the other is an abstract painting. In addition, in the film *Ghost Party* (3), Taeuber-Arp embodies a “ghost” in the form of a vase. Taeuber-Arp created a total work of art that combined dance, applied art, and painting.

Taeuber-Arp was part of the international avant-garde and opposed the bourgeois view of art during her Dada years in Zurich. In her drawings and paintings, she strove for a generally understandable abstraction with the optimal compositional balance, without resorting to mathematical formulas or symmetry. She lent her abstract works a great dynamism, in which the depicted forms appear to be in motion. The reduced composition *Gelbe Form* embodies these characteristics and seems to bring an understanding of space influenced by dance and puppet theatre into painting.





5

Manon de Boer (\*1966 in Kodaikanal)

*Sylvia, March 1 and March 2, 2001, Hollywood Hills, 2002*

Super-8 blown up to 16-mm, colour, 4:3, silent, 4 min. 57 sec.

Manon de Boer made two films about the Dutch actress Sylvia Kristel: a short version in 2001 and a long version in 2003. De Boer repeatedly visited Kristel to film her and ask her about the periods of her life in Paris, Los Angeles, Brussels, and Amsterdam. Kristel is the protagonist in the erotic cult classic *Emmanuelle*, which symbolised liberation and chic eroticism after the prudish cultural policy under Presidents Charles de Gaulle and Georges Pompidou. The film attracted more than half a billion viewers in cinemas around the world. De Boer's long version of *Sylvia* is a film about the fuzziness of biographical memory and its presentation in the medium of film. The short version shows Kristel reflecting as she smokes in the garden and not in an erotically tinged aesthetic. De Boer thus resists the reduction of the actress to the single film *Emmanuelle*.

**Concept and cinematography** Manon de Boer



6

Manon de Boer (\*1966 in Kodaikanal)

*For C.A. (Her Voice)*, 2020

16-mm film, b/w (2 × 1.5 sec.), metal

10.5 × 24 × 20 cm

Courtesy the artist and Jan Mot

The Belgian filmmaker Chantal Akerman (1950–2015) was important for Manon de Boer's early work. Akerman was a pioneer of experimental film and blurred the boundaries between feature, documentary, and experimental film. De Boer describes her film *News from Home* as particularly influential for her work. Akerman made the film in New York in the late 1970s, which was marked by poverty due to economic stagnation and the exodus of the middle class. Picturesque urban scenes are overlaid with a voiceover by Akerman. She reads letters she received in New York from her mother in Brussels. The mother-daughter relationship and the experience of living as a foreigner in a faraway place are the topics of the audio track. The matt colour scheme of analogue film typical of the 1970s and the precise still shots of urban avenues, brick houses, diners, and passers-by in bell bottoms and wide collars capture the character of the city and time. There is no specific plot. The passage of time with the overlapping letters from her mother and the portrait of the city define the film. This combination of exterior and interior views can also be found in de Boer's film works.

*For C.A. (Her Voice)* is an homage to Chantal Akerman, who is alluded to in the initials. De Boer dedicates a sculptural work to her and her voice, each with one and a half second of film (36 frames). Three seconds of film become a memorable image that evokes the fact that film is composed of individual frames assembled in a sequence.



7

Chantal Akerman (\*1950 in Brussels, †2015 in Paris)

*A Family in Brussels*, 1998

Reading by Chantal Akerman, 100 min.

Recorded at the Dia Center for the Arts, New York, 11–13 October 2001

Recorded by Alex Noyes at Mercer Media, New York

Translated from the French by Deborah Theodore

Courtesy of the Chantal Akerman Foundation and Marian Goodman Gallery

In an almost two-hour stream of consciousness, Chantal Akerman speaks in her deep, warm smoker's voice about the daily life of a family in Brussels and the relationships between the mother, father, and two daughters. The recited text comes from a novella she wrote, which she performed as a monologue for audiences in Paris, Brussels, and New York. The text does not follow a specific plot with dramaturgical sequences. Instead, it is a continuous narrative in which the family's actions convey an increasingly precise picture of their lives over time. The portrait of the family offers insight into the life of any family. But it is also a specific portrait of Akerman's family. As in the film *News from Home*, Chantal Akerman shifts perspective and speaks from her mother's point of view. Socio-psychological observations and biographical narrative intermingle. The stylistic device of rhythm and the peculiarities of the auditory medium merge and result in a simultaneous portrait of people and the city.



8

Manon de Boer (\*1966 in Kodaikanal)

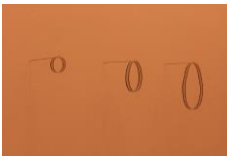
*Attica*, 2008

Digitised 16-mm film, b/w, 4:3, stereo, 9 min. 55 sec.

Courtesy the artist and Jan Mot

In collaboration with several musicians, De Boer staged a performance for camera of Frederic Rzewski's 1972 composition *Attica* as well as the related work, *Coming Together*, also composed in 1972. Rzewski, who was living in New York at the time, composed *Attica* in a circular structure of euphoric crescendo and denouement. The basic canon structure of the music, which invites improvised elements, is mirrored by the cumulating and then diminishing articulation of a sentence: *Attica— is—in—front—of—me*. The words were reportedly spoken by Richard S. Clark, a participant of the uprising, upon his release from Attica prison on 8 February 1972, or more precisely, when asked the question of how it felt to leave the prison behind.

**Music** *Coming Together* (fragment) and *Attica* (1972) by Frederic Rzewski **Musicians** Laurent Blondiau, George van Dam, Emmanuel Louis, Jan Rzewski **Image** Sébastien Koeppel **Sound recording** Aline Blondiau **Final sound mixing** Aline Blondiau and Gilles Bénardeau (Alea Jacta Production) **Editing** Stempel sprl **Produced by** Fine Arts Unternehmen video + film, Berlin **Co-produced by** Jan Mot



9

Manon de Boer (\*1966 in Kodaikanal)

*Suspension*, 2019

16-mm film, b/w (1 sec., 2 sec., and 3 sec.), approx. 35 sec., metal

80 × 30 × 25 cm

Courtesy the artist and Jan Mot

Manon de Boer's sculptural 16-mm film objects consist of one or more seconds of film, each with 24 frames, and a simple aluminium mount. The film sequences are presented at eye level on the wall as a loop. In *Suspension*, the word "Faith", which is centred in each frame, is visible as a motif.

The film as a sequence of moving frames is frozen. Since Tziga Vertov's film *The Man with a Movie Camera* (1929), the "frozen frame" has been a common stylistic device in cinema. De Boer uses the "frozen frame" literally—not as a special effect for a dramaturgical narrative as in cinema, but as a revelation of the cinematic skeleton. Light, composition, rhythm, and montage remain important creative elements in the 16-mm film objects. However, they lack movement and sound as well as a predetermined temporal sequence. The reception is completely different in *Suspension*, even though the object consists of the material of film. It is the stopping of the film that creates the character of the work and questions our trust in the constructed cinematic narrative as something true based on its disenchantment by its physical, mounted reality.



10

Manon de Boer (\*1966 in Kodaikanal)

*An Experiment in Leisure*, 2016–2019

Digitised 16-mm film, colour, 16:10, stereo,

Dutch, English, and French spoken, English subtitled, 32 min.

Courtesy the artist and Jan Mot

Excerpts of texts by psychoanalyst Marion Milner (1900–1998) on concentration, the body, repetition, daydreaming, and open-ended time as conditions for creation are read and reflected upon by different artists. These voices and the silences between them, images of a seascape in Norway and of the artists' workspaces, as well as sounds from the Norwegian coast create parallel spaces, each following their own rhythm. The resulting experience of time resonates with Milner's idea of leisure: not a moment opposed to work, but a time allowing us to perceive and think freely without an immediate objective.

**Voices** Sara De Roo, Sirah Foighel Brutmann, Latifa Laâbissi, Michael Schmid **Cinematography** Léo Lefèvre **Interior shots and image editing** Manon de Boer **Sound recording, editing, and mixing** Laszlo Umbreit at Herculeslab **Film scan** Gilles Bissot at FilmiK **Colour grading** Léo Lefèvre, Loup Brenta at Cobalt **Produced by** Auguste Orts **Supported by** Flanders Audiovisual Fund, Trondheim Faculty of Fine Art, Secession Wien, Herculeslab – KASK School of Arts



11

Manon de Boer (\*1966 in Kodaikanal)

*Resonating Surfaces*, 2005

Digitised 16-mm film, colour, 4:3, stereo, French and Portuguese, English subtitles, 39 min.

Courtesy the artist and Jan Mot

Screams of death open *Resonating Surfaces* on a whitened and scratched film. It is on this image medium where no image is to be found that the two female voices—opera parts of Alban Berg's *Lulu* and *Wozzeck*—act out a bodily vibration, a pure vibration which manifests life and which is succeeded by silence and a dark screen. The darkness slowly gives way to shots of São Paulo, searchingly gliding over the surface of the elusive city and skirting around the rhythmic bodies and portraits of some individuals. All the while there is a song-like voice, voices loosely uttering words and memories, making the sound have its own mental room which never derives from the one that is occupied by the image. A voice of an individual starts telling a story and becomes language as well as text while, in a punctuated offbeat rhythm, the image moves to the portrait of that individual. As Suely Rolnik's personal story grows, the voice comes to the foreground and the image vanishes into dark shots of her and bright shots of Paris, into under- and overexposure so as to give room to that voice, its physical presence, and the images it summons.

**With** Suely Rolnik **Image** Sébastien Koeppel **Editing** Manon de Boer **Soundtrack concept** Manon de Boer and George van Dam **Composition and violin** George van Dam **Sound recording** Manon de Boer, Bastien Gilson **Sound editing** Bastien Gilson, George van Dam **Final sound mix** Christian Cartier – Le Fresnoy, studio national des arts contemporains **Produced by** Blitz vzw, Manon de Boer **Co-produced by** Le Fresnoy, studio national des arts contemporains, Jan Mot, Transmedia – LUCA\_Sint-Lukas Hogeschool Brussel **Supported by** the Flanders Audiovisual Fund



12

Manon de Boer (\*1966 in Kodaikanal)

*A Pause*, 2022

16-mm film, b/w, metal

57 × 370 × 12 cm

Courtesy the artist and Jan Mot

*A Pause* is based on the same concept as *For C.A. (Her Voice)* and *Suspension*. *A Pause* consists of a 16-mm film sequence that is shown as an object and not as a projection. The suspension of the projection and the temporal sequence significantly alters the reception of the film. The reception now corresponds to that of a painting or a sculpture without a specified temporal sequence. The viewer determines the length of reception. *A Pause* has a very physical and choreographic quality. The cresting wave in the film loop corresponds to the time the artist takes to inhale. The trough of the wave corresponds to her exhalation. With these breaths, de Boer restores the temporal element that she removed from this “suspended film” in a literary and conceptual manner.





13

Manon de Boer (\*1966 in Kodaikanal)

*The Untroubled Mind*, 2013–2018

10 prints on baryta paper (12 × 16 cm each),

mounted on cardboard (36 × 40 cm each)

edition of 10 and 2 AP

Courtesy the artist and Jan Mot

*Untroubled Mind* consists of cinematic sequences with a length of 20 seconds. It features installations by de Boer's son, which he built as a child using objects from their home. Consisting of building blocks, dishes, and cutlery as well as textiles and coins, the constructions always contain an aspect of balance.

De Boer filmed the installations with a Bolex handheld camera and assembled the sequences into a film with a length of 7 minutes and 39 seconds. The photographic series on view here at the Kunstmuseum St. Gallen consists of film stills. The work was created over several years and shows de Boer's son in moments of particularly deep reflection and concentration. Its existence in two media, photography and film, offers two different viewing possibilities.



14

Katinka Bock (\*1976 in Frankfurt am Main)

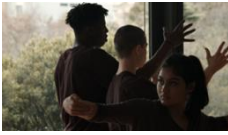
*Jonathan (ceramik becher)*, 2014

Football, ceramic, polyester ribbon

Dimensions variable

Kunstmuseum St. Gallen, permanent loan from private collection

Katinka Bock works with materials and spaces that have a social, political, or historical aspect. Her sculptures often feature ceramic elements, but she also works in the media of photography and film. Before the firing process, she embeds found objects in clay. After the firing, the negative impression remains. The processes between the development of the work and the exhibition are fluid. Bock connects the hermetic exhibition space with the space outside. Air, water, and noises enter through open windows or transitions in the installations. The football for the installation on view here was given to her by a gallerist's son. This open and playful approach to the inclusion of random objects presents a parallel to Manon de Boer's work *Untroubled Mind*. The two artists also share an interest in the parameters of time and space.



15

Manon de Boer (\*1966 in Kodaikanal)

*Caco, João, Mava and Rebecca. From nothing to something to something else (Part 2)*, 2019

HD video, colour, 16:9, no dialogue, 49 min.

Courtesy the artist and Jan Mot

*Caco, João, Mava and Rebecca* follows four teenagers improvising with dance and movement. The camera follows each of them in long continuous shots, observing an intimate process of play and research into the body's possible movements. The subjectivity of each dancer is made palpable through the closeness of their breathing, emphasized by the contrasting sounds of the outside world and the other dancers off screen. The film avoids building up tension and deviates from working towards an aim. Instead it explores the timespan between the already and the not yet, the time of potentiality.

**With** Caco Lebre, João Pataco, Mava José, Rebecca Axt **Cinematography** Artur Castro Freire  
**Cinematography and image editing** Manon de Boer **Sound recording, editing and mix** Laszlo Umbreit **Camera and sound assistant** Mona Convert **Production assistant** Leonor Azedo  
**Colour grading** Loup Brenta at Cobalt **Produced by** Auguste Orts **Commissioned by** Calouste Gulbenkian Museum, Lisbon

# Manon de Boer: *Che bella voce*

## Fabian Flückiger

With *Che bella voce*, the Kunstmuseum St. Gallen is presenting the first exhibition in Switzerland by the artist Manon de Boer. As a retrospective and the most extensive solo exhibition to date in the middle of de Boer's career, this presentation featuring sound and the human voice is particularly worth listening to. The focus on the voice expands the tension between image and sound in de Boer's work in film. Like images, the voice is both a medium of information and an aesthetic object. In addition to the special importance of the audio track, de Boer's work exhibits a polyphony that emphasises other people's thinking in our own thinking and stands for the heterogeneous soundscape of a democracy.

### Work and Leisure

Amid the continual acceleration of society, de Boer questions the individual rhythm of a person in relation to the rhythm of society. In the film *An Experiment in Leisure* (10), for example, we see the slow changes in weather over a Norwegian fjord. We hear the sound of the wind and the sea and the cries of the seagulls. It is a soundscape without the noises of civilisation. Voiceover sequences feature excerpts of fellow artists speaking about moments of leisure and inspiration. In *An Experiment in Leisure*, de Boer contrasts the brisk rhythm of processes of production and consumption in capitalist society with daydreams and listening to one's inner voice as brief moments of freedom.

De Boer's motifs always go hand in hand with the examination of the medium of film. In *An Experiment in Leisure* there are sequences in which the visual information is greatly reduced in favour of the soundtrack. For a short time, the voice or ambient noise becomes the sole source of information. She thus makes the image and the soundtrack apparent as two independent narrative threads that influence each other. "One technique that I regularly work with is the displacement of the visual image in favour of the soundtrack and/or voiceover. I'm interested in shaking up the traditional hierarchy of image and sound, exploring the disjunction between sound and image, and thus creating a tension or doubt between what you see and what you hear." The slow cinematic shots open up spaces of experience for the viewers, allowing them to continue imagining what they have heard and seen in their own stream of consciousness.

### Body, Space, and Time

In her works, de Boer dispenses with a specific plot or dramaturgy typical of film. The images and sounds are circular and not linear. The sequences of spoken words and images are not directed toward a climax, but constantly generate the present. The projected interior and exterior space, the voices that speak, and the bodies that appear follow a choreography and a certain rhythm. Since de Boer decouples the visual and audio tracks from each other, a parallel narrative emerges: a narrative of the moving image and a narrative of the sounds and spoken sequences. Normally we watch films from the filmmaker's point of view through the camera eye and listen to the soundtrack through the microphone. However, the parallelism and the circular narrative in de Boer's experimental films lead to a different illusion of visual and sonic space than that in conventional cinema. She breaks the illusion of the merged audio-visual world and creates a contemplation that includes the viewers with their body and mind.

In her circularly structured films, de Boer creates a counter-narrative to the linear narrative. Offerings such as streaming services for music and film, radio, podcasts, video clips, and voice messages are usually consumed in a functional and linear manner without giving thought to the different levels of meaning and conditions of the respective medium. The seemingly outdated analogue film technology in de Boer's work makes it possible to better understand the abundance of possibilities of reception by recognising not only language as a conveyor of information in a voice, but also its tone.

### Freezing Frame

In a series of works, de Boer freezes film as a medium and thus reveals its skeleton. Her 16-mm film objects are exhibited as objects and not played as a film. De Boer thus removes the possibility of viewing the film in a linear manner. We are reminded of the need to combine 24 frames to produce one second of film. In these film objects, the passage of time becomes a material expansion and is reflected in a variety of film loops.

**A Pause** (12), which was produced specifically for this exhibition, consists of 16-mm film in the form of a wave. The words "Breath in" are visible in the individual frames of the wave crests, and "Breath out" in the wave troughs. The approximately four-meter-long work corresponds to two breaths by the artist. The artist's brief moment of reflection translates her breathing rhythm into a choreography in which the basic conditions of the medium meet those of human and artistic existence.

In this short sequence, the artist combines the disciplines of performance, film, and visual art with the aliveness of her breathing. In Greek philosophy, the breathing process as a basic function of every organism is called *pneuma* and stands for the connection with the world and the ability to communicate and empathise.

### Inspiration

As with the constant repetition of inhaling and exhaling, the painter Agnes Martin writes about inspiration: "It [inspiration] is an untroubled state of mind. Of course we know that an untroubled state of mind cannot last, so we say that inspiration comes and goes, but it is there all the time waiting for us to be untroubled again. We can therefore say that it is pervasive." This quotation is from the text *Untroubled Mind*. In it, Martin reflects on her aims for painting and moments of inspiration. She writes that early childhood and its carefree spirit, in which socialisation and self-consciousness have barely begun to develop, are when we have the most creative stimuli. De Boer recorded such moments with her son in a sequence of 20-second videos with a Bolex handheld camera (13). They show constructions that he built out of coins, chairs, umbrellas, cutlery, dishes, and wooden blocks. The work exists as a film and as a printed series of film stills. Another quotation from Martin's *Untroubled Mind* applies to this translation into different media: "If there's life in the composition, it stimulates your life moments, your happy moments. Your brain is stimulated." This statement clarifies the relationship between the art object and the viewer as well as the need for liveliness in the work and its reactivation by the viewer.

### Polyphony and Deidentification

De Boer's works always contain a reflection on their own genesis. They are often inspired by other voices, such as that of Agnes Martin for the work *Untroubled Mind*. For de Boer, the thinking of others or the voice of others is on the one hand a possibility for a circular narrative. Voices such as that of the filmmaker Chantal Akerman (*For C.A. (Her Voice)*), the psychologist Marion Milner (*Experiment in Leisure*), and the civil rights activist Richard X. Clark (*Attica*) remain in the present despite their death and create a parallelism of time and historical awareness. On the other hand, they are a method of marginalising singular authorship.

This polyphony is particularly evident in the new work ***Ghost Party* (2)**. It is a co-production with the choreographer and dancer Latifa Laâbissi, consisting of a performance and a film. "Deidentification is a fundamental theme in both of our works, understood as enabling change by taking in different influences that have shaped and continue to shape our thinking, our gestures, and our existence in the world." The two artists speak. The film includes an extensive dialogue between Laâbissi and de Boer.

However, their dialogue is constructed out of statements by the writer Marguerite Duras, the film critic Serge Daney, the rapper Casey, and the anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro. At the beginning of the dialogue, Duras and Daney speak through the two artists. They talk about television from the point of view of a cinephile and the resurgence of cinematic ideas in television productions that can be negatively or sometimes positively surprising.

### Body, Language, and Voice

The body and the voice are closely linked in de Boer's work. In ***Resonating Surfaces*** (11), Suely Rolnik talks about how the history of Brazil affects the body. The displacement of the indigenous population by the colonisers, slavery, and military dictatorship is inscribed in the body as a sensitive surface. For Rolnik, her flight from the Brazilian military dictatorship to France in the 1970s was also a flight to another language. In this work she tells how she was able to leave behind the wounds of history in Portuguese and that French enabled her to communicate in a way that was not linked to the violent history of her homeland.

De Boer's exhibition brings out the nuances and richness of meaning of the voice. The voice not only transports current emotions with its timbre, but also the biography and history of the person speaking, which begins long before their own lifetime. The voice contains the achievements and failures, the privilege and oppression of previous generations. Thus the voice itself is polyphonic, and this is a focus of de Boer's work. In the connection to the sound of the respective medium, a heterogeneous soundscape is created. It is the voice of democracy, consisting of the sound of the system and its society. ***Che bella voce!***

# Edition Kunstverein St.Gallen



Manon de Boer (\*1966 in Kodaikanal)

Cast, 2022

Polaroid

10.7 × 8.8 cm each

28 unique copies, with signed certificate

Edition for the Kunstverein St. Gallen

The vases are dedicated to the protagonists from the film and the performance *Ghost Party*. They embody Hijikata Tatsumi, Sophie Taeuber-Arp, and Marguerite Duras, among others, and represent their influence on Manon de Boer's thinking and body. In this polyphony of voices and accents, their beings intermingle with others and subtly question the politics of language and identity.

CHF 550

CHF 450 for members of the Kunstverein St. Gallen





Hijikata Tatsumi

01  
Hijikata Tatsumi



Sophie Taeuber-Arp

02  
Sophie Taeuber-Arp



Marguerite Duras

03  
Marguerite Duras



Mina

04  
Mina



Jack Smith

05  
Jack Smith



Frantz Fanon

06  
Frantz Fanon



Alain Cavalier

07  
Alain Cavalier



Hélio Oiticica

08  
Hélio Oiticica



Gena Rowlands

09  
Gena Rowlands



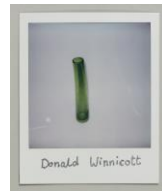
Oskar Schlemmer

10  
Oskar Schlemmer



Oum Kalthoum

11  
Oum Kalthoum



Donald Winnicott

12  
Donald Winnicott



Octavia Butler

13  
Octavia Butler



Beyoncé

14  
Beyoncé



Angela Davis

15  
Angela Davis



16  
Valeska Gert



17  
Manon de Boer



18  
Maya Deren



19  
Lygia Clark



20  
Felix Gonzalez-Torres



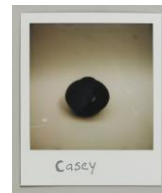
21  
Pier Paolo Pasolini



22  
Josephine Baker



23  
Anne Carson



24  
Casey



25  
Chantal Akerman



26  
Latifa Laâbissi



27  
Delphine Seyrig



28  
Eduardo Viveiros de  
Castro



Manon de Boer: Che bella voce  
26 March to 9 October 2022  
Kunstmuseum St. Gallen

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Museumstrasse 32  
9000 St. Gallen  
+41 71 242 06 71  
info@kunstmuseumsg.ch  
www.kunstmuseumsg.ch

Guest curator  
Fabian Flückiger

Proofreading  
Flora Peyrer

Research assistant  
Lorenz Wiederkehr

Installation photographs  
Stefan Rohner

Communications and marketing  
Sophie Lichtenstern, Gloria Weiss

Installation team  
Urs Burger, Hugo Borner, Thomas Kolter, Lea Regenass,  
Herbert Weber, Michael Zwimpfer

Art education  
Claudia Hürlimann, Daniela Mittelholzer, Sabrina Thöny

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