

## ULLA WIGGEN

1942, Stockholm  
Lives in Stockholm, Sweden

1968 was a peak moment in systems-based art, made possible by artists' burgeoning access to computing resources via universities, research institutions, and communications corporations as well as theories handed down from scientific fields. In exploring the limits and possibilities of cybernetics as a fusion between art and science, British critic and curator Jasia Reichardt's landmark exhibition *Cybernetic Serendipity* at the ICA London showed works from a range of media, including computer-generated graphics, music, poems, robots, and games. Also included in this context were a series of acrylic and gouache paintings on wood panels portraying the interior circuitry of electronic devices by the Swedish artist Ulla Wiggen. Titled *TRASK* and *Vägledare* (both 1967), these paintings capture an archetype of technological culture in an impeccably precise style. While Wiggen's paintings are representations, rather than demonstrations, of machine operations, their style of flattened objectivity conveys complex themes about the haptics of technology.

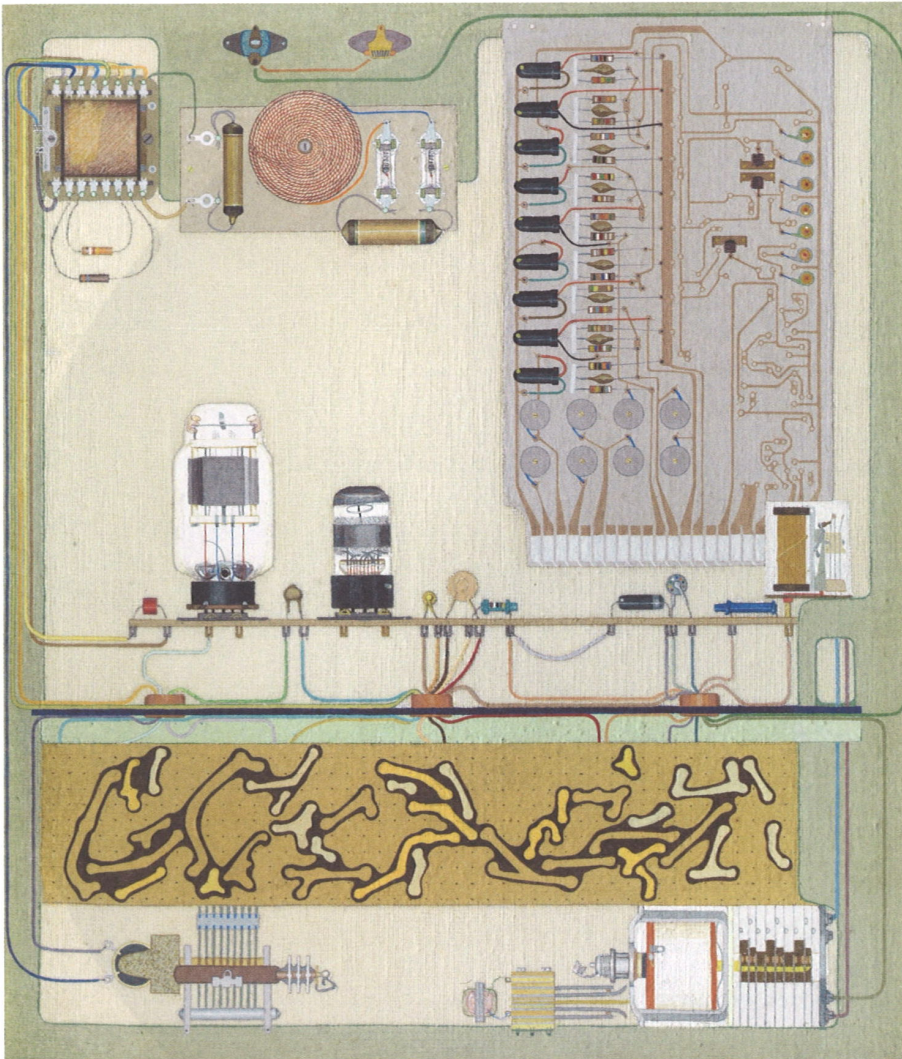
Wiggen was closely involved with the art and technology scene in Stockholm that coalesced around the Moderna Museet, then directed by Pontus Hultén. In her first gouache paintings of circuit boards and electronic bits, like *Förstärkare* and *Kretsfamilj* (both 1964), Wiggen created extraordinarily defined layers of paint, an effect achieved by using woven medical gauze in place of canvas. After 1969, she studied to become a clinical psychotherapist, which became her primary focus for the next four decades. Enthusiastic reception to a 2013 solo exhibition of her *Computer Paintings* at the Moderna Museet reignited her inspiration to paint.

In her later work, Wiggen's interest in the circuitry of brains and eyes supplants that of manmade machines, exploring the way that decontextualised organs evoke a sense of engaging with the world that is both logical and incomprehensible. In her *Iris Paintings* (2016–ongoing), Wiggen laboriously paints human irises in blues, greens, and hazels on round panels. The artist has stated that she wanted to visually express the blurring of her vision due to cataracts prior to treatment – a state between clarity and ambiguity. The irises take on an uncanny quality: visitors are made aware of their movement and position, as if being surveilled by a phantom voyeur. Seen from the position of the artist, even in her attempt to break it down to parts, the body is no less enigmatic. –MW



Ulla Wiggen, *Iris XVIII Line*, 2020. Acrylic on panel, 113.5 × 119 cm. Courtesy the Artist; Belenius, Stockholm; Galerie Buchholz. © Ulla Wiggen





Ulla Wiggen, *Kretsfamilj*, 1964. Gouache on panel, gauze, 35 × 30 cm. Photo Åsa Lundén. Bonnier Group Art Collection. Courtesy the Artist; The Bonnier Group, Stockholm, Sweden; Moderna Museet, Stockholm. © Ulla Wiggen

Ulla Wiggen, *TRASK*, 1967. Acrylic on panel, 150 × 80 cm. Photo Åsa Lundén. Collection of Moderna Museet, Stockholm. Purchase 1968. Courtesy the Artist; Moderna Museet, Stockholm. © Ulla Wiggen



