

Opening Sunday 7 May 2023 - from 3 till 6 pm  
Exhibition until 18 June 2023

Open: from Thursday to Sunday from 2 – 6 pm and by appointment

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## Keren Cytter

### Double Standard

*When I was 10-12 years old I didn't know that artists existed.*

*As a teenager I wanted to be a journalist, in my early twenties I was an art critic (in a daily newspaper - Maariv) and a journalist (in a financial newspaper - Globes), but I also published zines and drew, painted and made videos. After a while I was fired from my job as an art critic and quit my job as a journalist. I published my first novel, in 2009 translated into English "The Amazing True Story of Moche Klinberg". I wanted to be a writer, a novelist.*

*My aim is to find meaning in what I do and to develop and improve my work.  
Whatever that means...*

*My first solo show in Europe was at the Stedelijk Bureau in Amsterdam, right after I finished my studies at De Ateliers (2002-2004). Nothing came of it. Nobody wrote about it and nothing happened. I was afraid I'd have nothing to do and would go back to Israel. But half a year later, Nicolaus Schafhausen came to my studio to see if my work would be suitable for a group exhibition. They didn't choose me, but a few months later he offered me a solo exhibition on all floors of the Frankfurter Kunstverein (2005). Shortly after that, Beatrix Ruf suggested a show at the Kunsthalle Zürich (2005). I wrote a novel that both institutions published as a catalogue for the shows. I was very worried because I didn't have a gallery yet and hadn't sold anything... But then, after the show in Zurich, Elisabeth Kaufmann offered to be my gallery. But I hadn't sold anything yet and I didn't know how I was going to make a living. She proposed me for the young section of Art Basel (Art Statement) in 2006 and I won the prize of best booth and sold a lot of videos. From that moment on I was able to support myself.*

*The biggest change was moving from Tel Aviv to Amsterdam. I didn't speak English very well and it was difficult for me to make friends. When I moved to Europe, I focused more on cinematic structures in my videos.*

*When I moved to the U.S. it was like going to a parallel universe, instead of the European Union there was the United States and instead of Mediterranean influences there were Mexican and South American influences. I could also understand the language of the people on the street, which made me feel less isolated. The exoticizing of European cinema was my comfort zone, and in the U.S. I suddenly had to deal with dialogue that I couldn't hide with subtitles or a foreign, enigmatic vibe.*

In one of our conversations you mentioned that in the US, unlike in Israel, misogyny is a more widespread form of discrimination than racism...

*Yes, in the U.S. they don't acknowledge the period when women had no human rights (no right to vote, their signature had no legal meaning, ...) They don't teach about it in schools, as if it wasn't really part of their history. When they mention women's rights, they mention women's resistance, but they do not mention that what they are resisting against is systematic oppression. They've never had a woman president and women couldn't vote until 1920. In the U.S., men have the full title of human being, while women are some kind of 'side kick of humanity'.*

Your film *Object* is very misogynistic...

*Yes, it is an issue specifically in this work. But not generally in my work. I prefer not to have recurring themes in my work (although I have them uncontrollably).*

*Object* (2016) explores several current social themes. Human behaviour, love, sex, power, violence and murder are all expressed in a fictional world. Keren Cytter creates this world through an absurd storyline where the chronology of the sequences does not provide the viewer with a grip.

The film consists of nine shots, each of which situates the characters within the immediate surroundings of a house. The dialogues refer to previous scenes and repeat themselves. Some objects, such as the bottle of vodka, the lipstick, the naked and half-naked body form a kind of leitmotif throughout the film. The screenplay is divided between four characters: two brothers and a couple. They are mentioned only through nicknames such as "the psycho". Except for the woman, who remains submissive and is reduced to sexual object and/or servant, the relationship among the characters and the roles they assume shift throughout the story.

Cytter's static film style shows a kind of interplay between presence and absence. A character's presence is sometimes alluded to by other visible characters or sound. Outside the picture frame, however, the storyline continues. Through the windows, the viewer can observe the action taking place outside. *Object* displays a cacophony of layers of meaning that brings confusion and discomfort.

The pornographic elements in *Object* are more humorous, but still...

When and how did you decide to include them?

How do found footage and acting intertwine in your work?

*I hardly ever use found footage. Everything is always scripted. In Object I wanted every shot to have something unbearable/difficult to watch. Exposing penises was often the easiest choice, but unlike real porn none of the penises are erect. In Object I wanted the acting to be partly constructed with posing. The camera doesn't move, so the actors move in the frame instead of the camera zooming in and out. The acting is somewhere between traditional acting and a "presentation".*

Your drawings are almost the opposite of your video work. They look peaceful and quiet, unlike your films that often contain violent elements, anger, pain and conflicts. How do you make decisions in what you draw?

*Yes, I agree that they are very different from my videos. I draw what surrounds me, but no people! In general I do it for myself, while watching series with a lot of voice-overs of dialogues, so you don't need to watch the screen. The blue ones are like a calendar, the interiors of where I live, my shoes, my cat. I've been making drawings for a long time. Then when I started to show videos I stopped, until I met someone who said he admired me while I only did one discipline (i.e. video). Then I started to show my drawings. For me, doing just one thing is too simple!*