

Nadja Abt

OBSESSION

24 September – 3 December 2023

DORTMUNDFR

In her painterly, sculptural and performance works, **Nadja Abt** explores the narrative potential of text–image combinations, as they appear in diaries, storyboards, moving images with subtitles or typography in public space. Her exploration is characterised by a reflection on her own role as an artist and the status of artworks.

The three groups of work and the performance devised for this exhibition are a critical examination of obsessions, of the way in which these are still seen as the pathological precondition for the creation of art. But the work also deals with the ambivalence with which obsessions are marketed for profit at the intersection of art, consumerism and capitalism – at the latest, symbolically, when Calvin Klein brought out the perfume *Obsession* in 1985 – and with how obsessions play a fundamental role in Abt's own work.

The 83 diary pages in *Morning Writings, Midday Paintings* (2023) recapitulate Nadja Abt's research visit to New York from March to June 2023. Here she reveals her passion for literature, film, commercial art, consumerism and the work of other artists, and shows how the conscious experience, construction and description of her intellectual and creative processes as an artist is translated into a form of feminist autofictional narrative.

The term 'autofiction' goes back to the French author Serge Doubrovsky (*Fils*, novel, 1977), and denotes the appropriation of the genre of autobiography by all those previously excluded from it because of their social status, and therefore with good reason to strengthen and reinvent their own identity through description and fictionalisation.

The double, almost screenplay-like approach of being both figure and author, of both describing and thus defining one's own life, is reflected in this work by the fact that all the diary pages were initially written using the screenplay programme

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Final Draft, then printed out, mounted, painted over and subsequently annotated, revised and defamiliarised. It is a process of editing one's self in which the fiction ultimately outgrows and challenges real experience. *Morning Writings* ... establishes a double moment of reflection: on the one hand the observation of the artist's observations by the exhibition visitors, on the other the dispersal of their boxing-ring-like presentation in the exhibition space into the urban reality beyond the windows.

The large-format letters of the work *OBSESSION* (2023) take their typographic form from the lettering of the HOLLYWOOD LAND sign erected in 1923 to advertise property in Los Angeles. Since the removal of the word LAND in the 1940s the lettering has symbolised the dream factory of the movies. Nadja Abt's letters have buckles on the reverse, enabling them to be worn and activated in the performance, and they hold screenshots of the film *Seduction: The Cruel Woman* (1985, directors: Elfi Mikesch & Monika Treut).

Sex and the City – Ruhrpott Archive (2022), which is mentioned in the diary (DAY 35), was created during Nadja Abt's residency Visiting Urbane Künste Ruhr from March to June 2022. It draws on her interest in text in public space, and interprets the anachronistic, nostalgic consumerist promise which these Ruhr-area shop typographies attempt to evoke.

The site-specific wall painting *Leque* (Fan, 2023) is a recurrent element in Nadja Abt's work, and consists – like all the artist's work – of a changing palette of secondary colours only. The fans convey the political dimension of colours, in an advocacy of variety and nuance. Abt's strong colours resist the chromophobia of the Western world and the othering accomplished by its fear of colour (David Batchelor). Also inherent in the fan is the movement it can accomplish. The way it is flourished and twirled as a form of communication and in dance signals rejection or consent – or enthusiasm for the voguers in the ballrooms. In the wall painting its form is a homage to the director Kenneth Anger.

The nine film stills in the series *Obsession I–XXIX* (2022), mounted on a wooden fan, draw attention to the so-called 'male gaze' (Laura Mulvey, 1973), which still characterises the majority of film productions and describes the objectivation of female bodies. In these collages Nadja Abt combines stills from 1970s and 80s films with cuttings from the Portuguese gay magazine *Korpus*

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*Nadja Abt (*1984, lives in Berlin) studied literature, art history and visual arts in Berlin and Buenos Aires. Her works have been part of international exhibitions, among others at HKW Berlin, Casa Triângulo São Paulo, Kunsthalle Freeport Porto and Hamburger Bahnhof Berlin.*

The exhibition is curated by Rebekka Seubert.

The exhibition is accompanied by an artist's booklet, designed by Ten Ten Team and hand-produced by Unterdruck in Dortmund.

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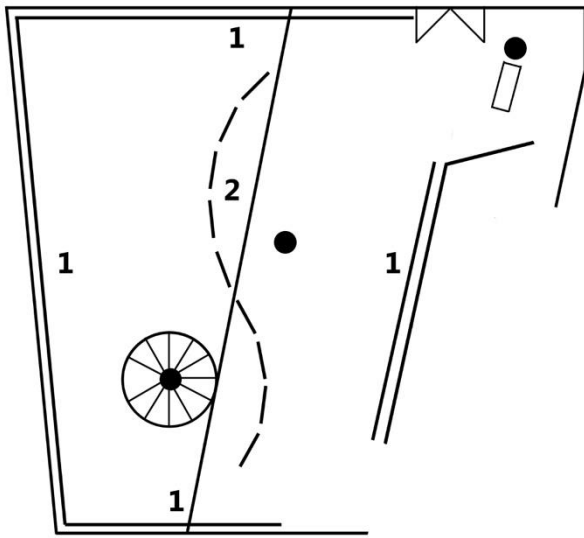
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1 *Morning Writings, Midday Paintings*
[Morgens Schreiben, Mittags Malen], 2023
Gouache on Paper
each 27,8 x 21,3 cm, in wooden rail (37 m)

2 *OBSESSION*, 2023
wood, paint, metal frame
190 x 75 x 50 cm

OG

3 *Sex & The City – Ruhrpott Archive*, 2022
Gouache on Paper
je 27,8 x 21,3 cm

4 *Leque* [Fächer], 2023
site-specific wall painting
245 x 245 cm

5 *Obsession I-XXIX*, 2022/23, Gouache on Paper
je 27,8 x 21,3 cm, v.l.n.r.:

- a) *Obsession XI, Telefonar?...Telefonar para onde? / Call?...Call Where?*, film still “Ludwig” (1973)
- b) *Obsession X, Technofilm, film still “Oncle Yanco”* (1967)
- c) *Obsession VI, O Conflito Sexual, Lass das sein! Oder willst du enden wie Nadia? / The Sexual Conflict, Cut it Out! Or do you want to end up like Nadia?*, film still “Diva” (1981)
- d) *Obsession V, Corte de Pénis, Bist du allein? / Penis Cut, Are you alone?*, film still “La Piscine” (1969)
- e) *Obsession III, Fuga de um Sentimento / Escape from a Feeling, film still “Diva”* (1981)
- f) *Obsession XII, Public Nuisance, Sie scheinen sich sehr wohl zu fühlen / You seem to be very comfortable, film still „Interview with Romy Schneider“* (1970)
- g) *Obsession IV, Interiores Masculinos, Ist er in der Gegend? – Ja. / Male Interiors, Is he around? – Yes., film still “La Piscine”* (1969)
- h) *Obsession IX, Com Moral / With Moral, film still “Ludwig”* (1973)
- i) *Obsession VIII, Clube Amigo: Férias Forçadas, Da ist Nadia. / Club Friend: Forced Vacation, There is Nadia., film still “Diva”* (1981)

