

Cosima von Bonin is one of the most well-known artists of her generation. Especially since her participation in the last documenta, at which a large number of the works was spread over the entire course of the show, she is no longer an insider-tip and so-called artist's artist. Nevertheless it is not easy to classify her artistic production. Even though in some of her works references to historical Conceptual Art and Minimal Art can be noticed, and critics like to cite her as an example of a feminist artist, her oeuvre eludes any straightforward label.

She first drew attention at the beginning of the 1990s when, instead of showing works of her own at her New York solo exhibition, she invited other producers of culture such as art critics, musicians, and artists to present their photos, paintings, or performance contributions. With her questioning of the function of the author, which clearly comes to expression in her early participatory gestures, sometimes she has intentionally, or unintentionally, directed herself against co-option by the art-system. If today, with canvas paintings made of found fabrics and cloths, or large textile mushrooms and cuddly toys, she controls this system or chooses to expose herself to it in a kind of over-affirmation, this is always associated with the stance that every work could be the last one and she could withdraw as an artist at any time. The titles, *Relax—It's only a Ghost* or *Roger and Out*, describe this contradictory strength in a humorous, melancholy way.

The title of her exhibition for the Kunsthau Bregenz, *THE FATIGUE EMPIRE*, could also be understood in this way, just as if, from the outset, she wanted to deflate expectations associated with a large solo exhibition at a renowned exhibition institution. All the more surprising then is the multitude of works made especially for Bregenz which lays out the differentiated repertoire of Cosima von Bonin in an unusually epic density, starting with her large canvas paintings and spanning from textile sculptures and estranged reconstructions to voluminous installations. The architecture of the three floors of the KUB becomes a stage on which the textile and wooden figures seem to be actors—a move reinforced by soundtracks composed by Moritz von Oswald especially for Cosima von Bonin that can be heard at various points in the spaces of the KUB.

Similar to earlier occasions, Cosima von Bonin has called in reinforcements also for her presentation in Bregenz. Apart from Moritz von Oswald and his Trio, which will give a concert in the program of accompanying events, for the opening of the exhibition, the "Produzentin" from Toronto will present a performance. As quasi-local/Austrian support, and at the request of Cosima von Bonin, the KUB will show a series of films on Thomas Bernhard. With him she shares not only the proclivity for extended walks in natural surroundings, but also and especially the critical and psychologically charged view of one's own (art) system.

Anyone who thinks, however, that they can really come closer to Cosima von Bonin's work through references to other cultural producers will experience at the Bregenz exhibition that, if at all, they constitute merely one facet of her creative work. For the understanding of her work, the specific choices of everyday objects estranged in their sizes and materials as well as their emotional and cultural connotations play as decisive a role as their formal shaping, their proportions, and combinations of color. And when Cosima von Bonin reconstructs a room in the Kunsthau with its particular formal and significant characteristics on a slightly smaller scale or enrobes a car bursting with masculinity in red-and-white checked fabrics made in Vorarlberg, thus making it effeminate, worlds open up here provoking at one and the same time social, cultural, or even work-immanent readings.

That this Empire is in a fatigue state cannot really be believed, even when viewing the exhaustion of some of its inhabitants that is demonstrably put on show. Rather, this most comprehensive presentation to date of new works by Cosima von Bonin evidences the strength of an artist who, despite all self-doubt, knows exactly what she wants.

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