

Theta

PINACOTHECA

May 3 - June 15, 2024

Ei Arakawa-Nash
Cosima von Bonin
Doris Guo

Ull Hohn
Molly Rose Lieberman
Ann Zhao

The world's first pinacotheca was set in the left wing of the Propylaea of the Acropolis— a public gallery of pictures which honored the gods.

In the early 1960s the Gutai Art Association, Japan's first postwar avant garde collective, opened the Gutai Pinacotheca in a renovated warehouse near the Osaka home of their leader, Jiro Yoshihara. Their movement began in 1954 in the wake of Japan's postwar reconstruction— a new cultural dawn. Yoshihara envisioned art-making as a rite of total freedom in experimentation, a push to “do what no one has done before!” Accordingly, much of the Gutai artists' early works focused on performance and installation— Kazuo Shiraga fought mud and Atsuko Tanaka wore a dress made of electric bulbs. By the time the pinacotheca opened, Gutai's focus had transitioned towards much more 2D work—painting—as their global ambitions forged internal competition to market towards and be recognized by Western audiences.

Ei Arakawa-Nash addresses the skewed relationship between painting, performance and network from a critical perspective here and elsewhere throughout his artistic practice. His handmade LED paintings simulate works by Tanaka and Shiraga produced around 1959, when Michel Tapié heralded them into France as examples of Art Informel. Arakawa-Nash's works are accompanied by a musical narrative that charts a comic tale of the group's passionate collectivity and falling-out. In 2011 the artist led a performance at Les Abattoirs setting the actual paintings, on loan from the museum's own collection, in motion. The spirit of the group and the pervasive foil of the market lives on in Arakawa-Nash's soft, digital reappropriations, endlessly performing themselves and reimagining the role that painting plays in the evermore connected networks of the art world.

This exhibition began as a picture-based exploration of art historical digestive patterns— “your form, my content; your content, mine to encode.” The project of postmodernism has, of course, outmoded Yoshihara's command in the 2D realm, so that we've come to look instead toward individualized means of enfolding what's come before into new personal expression. Painting stands beside itself, filtering information into striking little rectangles which accrue prestige if they hang on the right walls.

There are a number of distinct threads connecting the artists in this show— a resistant or probing attitude towards the end game of painting is one of them. The late Ull Hohn studied under Gerhard Richter in Germany before moving to NYC in 1986 at the height of the AIDS crisis and enrolling in the Whitney Independent Study Program. His notion of painting was recast by the ISP's critical discourse as being an antiquated and insufficient means of addressing his time. His fusion of the act of painting with “the specifics of his biography as a painter” took the form of a series of Richter-esque squeegeed abstractions, overlaid with patterned silhouettes of erect penises.

Doris Guo's diptych pairs a 1989 oil pastel drawing made by her mother, Weili Wang, with a pinhole photograph Guo captured in the process of sorting Wang's artistic archives. Guo's gauzy picture does not feature its companion drawing within it, rather it bears a compositional rhyme, the jagged geometric overlaps of Wang's landscape echoing in

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the clutter of material leftovers from a practice cut short by circumstance. Guo, an emerging artist, addresses the tender relationship of filial care in step with an inquiry into the end product of creative labor cut off from a network.

Molly Rose Lieberman's impressions are often material, by way of her day job as a museum archivist. Beyond the passive internalization of her clerical day-to-day with the ephemera of modern art history, Lieberman often builds her paintings out from the templates, here set by a handed-down frame that once housed a Mapplethorpe.

Cosima von Bonin calls her fabric-based works *Lappen*, or rags. The media she incorporates into them are clean, coy remixes of recognizable things: cotton shirting, Disney icons, and swaggering embroidery become glyphs in abstracted color fields. There are enough compelling visuals in the world, why bother making something up?

Ann Zhao approaches her medium with the self-awareness of a new generation overwhelmed by exposure to accumulated antecedents. What is there to say when it's all been said before? To Zhao, the point of painting is anything but the thing itself. Her works explore sentiments big and small that abstract an ongoing inquiry into the transformative cycle of creative work. A fugitive practice, her works forego style in favor of momentary inspiration. Zhao writes in her notes: "I want to completely purify myself. Hanging around art [I] was not able to do this."

Ei Arakawa-Nash (b. 1977, Fukushima, Japan) lives and works in Los Angeles, CA. Selected exhibitions and performances include National Art Center, Tokyo (forthcoming, 2024); Galerie Max Mayer, Düsseldorf (2024); Taka Ishii Gallery, Tokyo (2023); Kunsthalle Friart Fribourg, Switzerland (2023); Artists Space, New York (2021); Tate Modern, London (2021); Honolulu Biennial (2019); Skulptur Projekte Münster (2017); The 9th Berlin Biennale (2016); Gwangju Biennial (2014); Whitney Biennial, New York (2014); Carnegie International, Pittsburgh (2013); The Museum of Modern Art, New York (2012).

Cosima von Bonin (b. 1962, Mombasa, Kenya) lives and works in Cologne. She participated in the 59th Venice Biennale (2022), Skulptur Projekte Münster (2017), Glasgow International (2016), and Documenta (2007). Selected solo exhibitions include Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt (2024); Galerie Neu, Berlin (2024); Petzel Gallery, New York (2023); House of Gaga, Mexico City (2020); Kunsthalle Nürnberg, Nürnberg (2020); CCS Bard, Annandale-on-Hudson, New York (2018); SculptureCenter, Long Island City, New York (2016); Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (2007); mumok, Vienna (2014); Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum, St. Louis (2011); Museum Ludwig, Cologne; Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain, Geneva (2011); Kölnischer Kunstverein, Cologne (2004); and the Kunstverein Hamburg (2001), among others. Her work is included in the collections of the Museum Ludwig, Cologne; mumok, Vienna; de la Cruz Collection, Miami; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Museum of Modern Art, New York; and Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam among others.

Doris Guo (b. 1992, San Francisco) lives and works in Oslo. She received her BFA from Pratt Institute in 2014 and graduated from the Oslo National Academy of the Arts in 2023. Solo exhibitions include Empty Gallery, Hong Kong (2023); VI, VII, Oslo (2023); Veronica, Seattle (2023); Inge, Plainview (2022); Éclair, Berlin (2019); Derosia, New York (2019); and Real Fine Arts, New York (2017). Selected group exhibitions include VI, VII, Oslo (2022), Post Box Group, Copenhagen (2022), and Thierry Goldberg, New York (2021).

Ull Hohn (b. 1960, Trier, Germany) lived and worked in Berlin and New York (d. 1995). Solo exhibitions include Greene Naftali, New York (2023); Kunsthalle Bern (2016); Peephole, Milan (2015); Galerie Neu, Berlin (2015, 2006, 2000); Albus Greenspon, New York (2010); Between Bridges, London (2009); Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin (1996); and Colin De Land, American Fine Arts, Co., New York (1993). Selected group exhibitions include MACRO Museum of Contemporary Art, Rome (2023); mumok, Vienna (2018, 2015); Walker Art Center, Minneapolis (2016); Museum Brandhorst, Munich (2015); Kunsthalle Bern (2015); and KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin (2013). Hohn's work is in the collections of Museum Ludwig, Cologne; mumok, Vienna; and the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, among others.

Molly Rose Lieberman (b. 1994, Brooklyn) lives and works in New York. Solo exhibitions include: Theta, New York (2023); Gern, New York (2021); and Fonda, Leipzig (2020). Selected group exhibitions include: Matthew Brown, Los Angeles (2023); Greene Naftali, New York (2022); Chapter, New York (2022); Theta, New York (2022); and Thierry Goldberg, New York (2021).

Ann Zhao (b. 2002) lives and works in Providence, Rhode Island. Zhao is currently studying for a BFA at the Rhode Island School of Design. Previous group exhibitions include Derosia, New York (2023); Daisy Sanchez's Window, New York; and Estrella, New York (both 2022). Curatorial projects include 'Ann's Research' at Maxwell Graham/Essex Street, New York (2022).