

Heidi Bucher
26/04 - 28/05 2022

We paste the rooms and then listen. We observe the surface and coat it. We wrap and unwrap. The lived, the past, becomes entangled in the cloth and remains fixed there. Slowly we loosen the layers of rubber, the skin, and drag yesterday into today.
– Heidi Bucher

Mendes Wood DM is proud to present its first exhibition of Heidi Bucher's work across the whole of its expanded Brussels gallery space, in collaboration with the Estate of Heidi Bucher.

With the recent landmark retrospective at the Haus der Kunst, Munich, along with the current exhibition at Kunstmuseum Bern and the upcoming one at Muzeum Susch, Switzerland, Heidi Bucher and her work continue to be re-contextualized within the canon of 20th-century art history, consecrating her as a major creative force whose depth and breadth of practice are beginning to be truly understood by wider audiences.

The show at Mendes Wood DM brings together a wide selection of works intended to shed light on the entirety of the artist's practice, from Bucher's most notable series, the *Skinnings*, produced by the Swiss artist from the end of the 1970s until her death in 1993, but also collages, works on paper, frottages and drawings that carry traces, each in their own intimate way, that conceptually link them to the *Skinnings* that would later define her artistic career.

Following her early and extremely accomplished nude drawings from the early 1950s, Bucher continued to experiment with silk collages of organic abstract forms and colorful abstract watercolors, examples of which will be on view at the gallery.

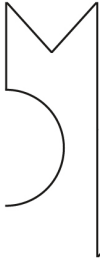
Beginning in the late 1970s, Bucher embarked on a new line of enquiry and began developing her *Skinnings* series, a study into the relationship and boundaries between architectural structures and the human body, using latex as her artistic medium of choice.

The show includes many of these latex castings from this period and from throughout the rest of her career, charting not only her artistic but also her personal life as she always worked with buildings and architectural elements that were meaningful to her, from her first studio in Zurich, to her ancestral family home near Winterthur, Switzerland, and the buildings of Lanzarote, in the Canary islands, where she spent much of the later part of her life.

Among the many important works on show, *Untitled*, *Wall with Window*, *Abnenhaus Obermühle*, *Winterthur* (1980 –1981) will be on view in the gallery's main exhibition

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space. This skinning constitutes a unique and highly significant milestone in the artist's oeuvre. Bucher created this work in Ahnenhaus, her family's ancestral home in Obermülhe, near Winterthur. The family home was so psychologically significant to the artist and her research that she made many of her most important large-scale *Skinnings* there, including enormous parquet floors as well as entire rooms. This particular work is the only surviving wall skinning from the house, and it was once part of an entire room installation which was later destroyed, making it incredibly unique within Bucher's body of work.

Bucher saw the often gendered architectural spaces that she inhabited and interacted with as more than just bricks and mortar. They were receptacles of memory and experience that were very much a living, breathing part of her life. By casting these spaces in latex and then "skinning" them by peeling the latex membrane off gradually to reveal an impression of the architectural features of the space, she sought to capture the essence of a room, or an entire building, that had played a significant role in her life.

This exhibition aims to physically bring as much of Bucher's work as possible to public view because of its essential nature. Neither painting nor sculpture, radical both in concept and in execution, the work begs to be seen in person to be truly understood, whether monumental or intimate in scale.

Heidi Bucher (1926 - 1993, Switzerland).

The artist distinguished herself particularly through her legendary *Skinnings*, focusing and exploring the architectural space and the body through sculpture. It is a transformative and poetic work, that deals primarily with private spaces and belongings, architectural fragments from mostly the 19th century, feminism, domestication and the individual or collective experiences and memory. Heidi Bucher's artistic legacy is concurrently a visionary and aesthetic testimonial, as well as a conceptional liberation from an old, patriarchal affected world.

Her work is included in numerous museums and private collections worldwide, including Museum of Modern Art, New York; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Guggenheim Museum, New York; The Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Centre Pompidou, Paris; The Israel Museum, Jerusalem; Kunsthau Zürich, Zurich; Kunsthau Zug, Zug; Kunstmuseum Lucerne, Lucerne; Kunstmuseum Winterthur, Winterthur; Migrosmuseum für Gegenwartskunst Zürich, Zurich.

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