

This fall, the first museum exhibition by artist Paulina Ołowska (b. Gdansk, Poland, 1976), one of the most fascinating artists of her generation, will open at the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam.

Leontine Coelewijn, curator of the exhibition, said, “Having followed the work of Paulina Ołowska for over 10 years, I am thrilled that, after showing her work at the SMCS, we are now able to mount a more comprehensive survey. By creating connections between fashion, art, and feminism, and proposing alternatives to the roles that visual art and design can play within our society, Ołowska is a unique voice in contemporary art.”

This comprehensive solo presentation encompasses painting, drawing, collage and neon signage and brings together central themes in the artist’s multifaceted oeuvre. Exploring relationships between historical avant-garde movements and the present, as well as between art, design, and ideology, Ołowska reflects on current realities by reactivating and reflecting on utopian moments of the past.

The title of the exhibition, *Au Bonheur des Dames* (The Ladies’ Paradise / The Ladies’ Delight), is here imagined as a metaphor for what the artist calls ‘different aspects of the female consumer.’ The title is taken from Émile Zola’s novel, which describes 19th-century Paris and the first wave and subsequent expansion of luxury department stores, as well as the changing nature of private life for the *petit bourgeoisie*. In this installation, Ołowska suggests women as figures both targeted and implicated in multiple angles of commodity culture—the spectacle of fashion, the seduction of extravagant displays and visual advertising, the leisure experience of merely parading through town, and the phantasmagoria of urban experience and modern consumerism. In her critique, Paulina Ołowska compares 1960s Eastern European consumerism with the theme of the book.

She investigates the revolutionary potential of modernist art and design from a specifically female perspective in works that explore diverse typologies of presentation, not only those of art exhibitions but also those of bar and shop interiors, graffiti art, and neon advertising.

Ołowska invited Amsterdam artist Mick la Rock to create a work of graffiti as a backdrop for her installation. One of the first female graffiti artists in Europe, la Rock has been active on the scene since 1983. The title piece, *Au Bonheur des Dames*, was executed in her signature style, developed during the early 1980s, and combines the tags of Kazimir Malevich, Émile Zola, with various female graffiti artists and groups. Collaboration with other artists (such as Bonnie Camplin, Lucy McKenzie, and Frances Stark) is at the heart of Ołowska’s artistic practice.

The large gallery presents paintings, collages, and neon works in a theatrical setting. Two adjacent

gallery spaces are devoted to the project Café Bar (2011) and the series Accidental Collages. Olowska created this series for the exhibition Time and Again at the Stedelijk Museum CS in 2004, inspired by a group of 22 large educational charts by Kazimir Malevich in the collection of the Stedelijk Museum. In Accidental Collages, recently acquired by the Stedelijk Museum, the artist combined photos of herself and her friends with historical visual material, featuring artworks, architecture, and fashion, from 1960s and 1970s magazines such as Ty i Ja Magazyn Ilustrowany, a women's magazine that supplemented fashion reportage with articles on avant-garde art.

Paulina Olowska grew up in Poland in a time of great political, economic, and cultural upheaval. For several years, she studied in the United States (at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago), followed by the Rijksakademie in Amsterdam. Olowska's work debuted in the Netherlands at the Stedelijk Museum Post CS in the 2004 group exhibition Time and Again.

Olowska's work was recently featured in a number of important international exhibitions: 5th Biennial for Contemporary Art, Berlin (2008); Ostalgia, New Museum, New York (2011); Ecstasies Alphabets, Museum of Modern Art, New York (2012). Her solo presentations include: exhibitions at Portikus, Frankfurt am Main (2007); Tramway, Glasgow (2010); and Kunsthalle Basel (2013). Paulina Olowska will take part in the 56th Carnegie International, at the Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, at the end of this year.

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