

## Esther Kläs & Linda Matalon

05/19 – 07/08/17

### Retracing our steps

Most people like to live their lives as easily, as smoothly as possible. They – or we, or I, in any case – like to go about our day unencumbered with thoughts about money, free from worry about health, our own or that of others, or about war, or the state of the universe. You don't need to read Sigmund Freud's essay on 'Civilization and its Discontents' to know that there are people who say that they like difficulty, that they long for it; who knows, they might even believe it. You may have heard that Friedrich Nietzsche, one of history's most radical philosophers, certainly did – for a while he condemned those who wished peace and comfort as the "last men" whilst celebrating warmongers as "supermen." But few of those who lack the finances to buy food or shelter, who suffer from illness – even if it's just the flu – or find themselves lost amidst the violence and uncertainty of a conflict will still feel that way. We like our lives easy, comfortable, smooth. Indeed, we are so set on living smoothly, that we put in the work to erase any signs or memories of roughness – a process that in and of itself may of course be anything but serene or harmonious. We renovate our homes and pave over holes in the roads,



Esther Kläs, *Here / Her*, 2015  
graphite, colored pencil, wite-out on paper  
80×60×4 cm (31,5×24×1,5 in)



Linda Matalon, *Untitled*, 2001–2002  
cast aluminium,  
54,6×5×5 cm (21,5×2×2 in)

patch up wounds and gloss over mistakes, repress and disavow what we did or what was done to us. Look at what we have done to our environment: it's all surface and shine, facile façade and mirroring glass: skyscrapers and open offices, eco homes and smart phones, meticulously groomed beards and hairless bodies – our whole world is child-proofed to the point of sterility.

People say that a fox is not caught in the same snare twice. Do you know why? It's not because they pay more attention the second time; but because after the first incident, they drag the damned thing out of their way. To live smoothly, more often than not, means not to adjust yourself to the world, to align your movements with the environmental challenges or attune your mind to its demands, but to impose your corporeality, your biorhythm, your spirit, onto your surroundings. Freud called this process culture, Henri Lefebvre abstraction, Jean Baudrillard – still remember him? – simulation. Along the way, you could say, we got more than we bargained for – to be sure, the economic metaphor here is no coincidence, since this process, or the logic underpinning and uplifting this particular process, is as far as I know historically tied to the logic of the market. We may have set out to pave a road to refrain from stumbling over rocks and sinkholes, but it was running – and riding, and driving, and taking off – that it gave way to once it was finished.



Esther Kläs, Cercato / d'Oro, 2016  
 concrete, iron, pigment  
 diameter: 105 cm, height: 20 cm  
 (diameter: 41 in, height: 8 in)

What I mean to say here is that by imposing our corporeality onto the world, we, as Marshall McLuhan might have put it, extend our body – what it can do – at the cost of its immediate and indirect milieus. The extension of one thing requires the erasure of another; our body develops only as its context disappears.

As we begin rethinking how to live smoothly, begin rethinking our relationship to our earth, to what remains of our earth, it seems to me we also need to rekindle our sense of our body, not as a being, but as a becoming: as a reality that drove before it could take off, that rode prior to it being able to drive, that ran, that walked, that stumbled. The works of Esther Kläs and Linda Matalon share with us this sensation of steps being retraced: a process in which our body's relationship to its world, to its worlds, is felt out into all directions, recovering that world, those worlds, or imagining to recover them, or rather still imagining what may be recovered, along the way.

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Esther Kläs, born 1981 in Germany, lives and works in Barcelona.

Solo exhibitions include “Better Energy”, MoMA PS1 New York (2012), “Girare Con Te”, Museo Marino Marini, Florence, Italy (2014), “Our Reality”, Fondazione Brodbeck, Catania, Italy (2015), “Whatness” (with Johannes Wald), Kunsthalle Bielefeld, Germany (2016). Her group exhibitions include “Drawing Redefined”, DeCordova Museum, Lincoln, MA, USA, (2015), “Playing by Heart”, Kolumba, Cologne, Germany (2014), KölnSkulptur #7, Cologne, Germany (2013), 6th Prague Biennale (2013), “Champs Elysées”, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, France (2013), “Knight’s move”, Sculpture Center, LIC, New York (2010), “Immaterial”, Ballroom, Marfa, TX, USA (2010). Her works are part of institutional collections such as Kolumba Museum Cologne or Kunsthalle Bielefeld.

Linda Matalon, born 1958 in the United States, lives and works in Brooklyn, NY.

Her works are in the collections of Centre Pompidou, the Deutsche Bank Collection, and the Hood Museum at Dartmouth College. International exhibitions include Risk at Turner Contemporary, UK (2015), The Circle Walked Casually at Museo de Arte Moderno de Buenos Aires, and Deutsche Kunsthalle Berlin (2014 and 2013), Linda Matalon, Agnes Martin, Joyce Hinterding at National Art School, Darlinghurst, Australia (2014), The 11th Biennale de Lyon (2013), Immaterial, Ballroom, Marfa, TX (2010) and 7th Mercosul Biennial, Brazil (2009).



Linda Matalon, Untitled, 2013  
 graphite, wax and walnut ink on paper  
 30,5 x 22,9 cm (12 x 9 in)