

## ***Humor and Trauma***

Textile works by Jakob Lena Knebl, Ulrike Müller and Verena Dengler

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Although an ancient traditional technique, tapestry is once again highly topical today. Since the 1960s, female artists have used it to address issues of feminism, corporeality, and gender roles. Not least with the textile works of Rosemarie Trockel from the 1990s, a feminist consciousness emerged and a re-evaluation of "female" artistic activities occurred. Like the women artists of the Wiener Werkstätte around 1900, women at the Bauhaus were compelled to focus on textile artworks, with Anni Albers (1899-1994) being the first to turn this predicament into a success story—ultimately having a solo exhibition at MoMA in 1949, the first ever by a woman.

Elements of pop and everyday culture, as well as art history and politics, are now used on an equal footing to find motifs for textile artworks, making them a particularly topical medium. Today, textiles in art are being re-evaluated by curators everywhere, insofar as strategies of self-empowerment of traditionally marginalized people flow into the motifs of carpet works.

The presentation at Galerie Meyer\*Kainer brings together significant works by female artists of a young generation, which are of course also about "art about art", whereby technically speaking, both centuries-old weaving techniques are used as well as innovative techniques such as tufting, in which the yarn is applied to the already woven fabric base from the outside, which can also create raised patterns.

Verena Dengler (\*1981 in Vienna) has chosen tufting as her preferred technique, whereby everyday materials and the depicted punchlines may serve as a barometer and mirror of the times. In doing so, she regularly tries to find, according to Mike Kelley's guideline, a "wonderful balance between humor and trauma".

In her textile works, the Vienna and New York-based artist Ulrike Müller (\*1971 in Brixlegg) examines the multi-layered aspects of social affiliations and identity, as well as relationships with the environment. Her carpets, produced in a Zapotec weaving mill in Mexico, shed light on artisanal traditions and ascribed material properties as well as socio-political and feminist concerns. As a material and cultural carrier of meaning, the textile medium is deeply inscribed in economic and political systems. Global trade flows and a critical examination of colonialism find their form of expression in textiles and it is therefore particularly suitable for addressing themes such as cultural appropriation or post-colonial approaches.

Jakob Lena Knebl (\*1970 in Baden) picks up pop-cultural contexts in her tapestries, constructed from colourful, often shimmering threads, in a way that is as impressive as it is poetic. She combines textiles with a haptic formal language that oscillates between hard, bulky, soft and flowing. Textiles that condense sculpturally, materials, forms and meanings of the works open up a broad spectrum of ambivalences, blurs and simultaneities, but are also intended to dissolve gender attributions. Through the use of flexible materials, "Soft Sculpture" expands the boundaries of sculpture and textile.

