

Kunstmuseum Luzern is pleased to present *Milena, Milena* an exhibition and screening program of American artist Sharon Lockhart. Lockhart's filmic and photographic work is a psychological study of communities, individuals, and their everyday, anti-heroic activities of life, labor, and leisure. Engaged yet markedly without emotion, Lockhart's "documentary theater" captures rare moments of human vulnerability where authenticity and spontaneity are challenged by her own long-term commitment and research as well as a desire to choreograph particular situations and behaviours. Both her photographs and films are tableaux of space and time, inhabited by culture and people in harmony and discord. With a disarming subtlety, Lockhart unveils the striking beauty of the ordinary and the unique dimension of the world we live in, touching upon the fundamental philosophical récit of human existence and condition. Carefully measured and registered, each moment unfolds in real time; yet precisely identified space turns abstract, phantasmagorical and non-defined; the characters, singular or collective, named or anonymous, become mythologized and uplifted. Her photographic works and architectural film installations are the result of extensive field work where anthropological, ethnographic and sociological research give way to a studied structure and composed image.

*Milena, Milena* is the third in a series of exhibitions that grows from Lockhart's relationship with Polish teenager Milena. Lockhart befriended Milena for the first time while working on the 2009 film *Podwórka* in Łódź, Poland. *Podwórka* is an uncanny document of the microcosmic world and social order that rules Łódź's courtyards. Though the then-nine-year-old Milena does not appear in the film, her presence and charisma during production contributed significantly to *Podwórka*'s evocative power and resonance. As an exhibition, *Milena, Milena* is both an affectionate beckoning (the parents' call for the child to return home) as well as a poetic gesture of appreciation, an artistic tribute. Several years later, Lockhart rekindled her friendship with a teenaged Milena and discovered Milena's desire to write a book about her life. Galvanizing an on-going dialogue between Lockhart and Milena, this imagined autobiography has become the impetus for exploration of the ambiguous autonomy of the young adult.

Spread across three institutions and unfolded over a span of three years, each iteration of *Milena, Milena* features a slightly varied selection of works and marks an organic progression of the overall project. Comprising research (CCA Ujazdowski Castle Warsaw, 2013), production (Bonniers Konsthall, 2014), and contextualization (Kunstmuseum Luzern, 2015), *Milena, Milena*'s trajectory aims at reflecting both highlights of the artist's career and her focus on a single character's choreography of selfhood and identity.

The exhibition trilogy includes a series of strategically selected identifications that claim the

biographical dimension of Lockhart's work, thus operating as portraits as well as projections. As such, the exhibition is framed by two works with a subtly biographical background: opening with the cinematic tour de force that is *Double Tide* (2009) – filmed in Maine, USA, where Lockhart spent her childhood – and concluding with the rarely exhibited series of works *Untitled Study* (created from 1993 on) that operate as the artist's photographic diary, composed of re-photographed snapshots found in her own family's album. At the centre of the exhibition's narrative is Milena, an enigmatic figure who remains disquietly absent, distilling different threads of identification with her non-presence.

It is within the framework of this exhibition that concepts of identity and representation play out. Sharon Lockhart's ethnographically-influenced examination of authenticity, conditioned by sociological and psychological factors as well as by behavioural signs of culture and the influence of collective consciousness, is echoed in the series of three photographs of Milena (Milena, Jarosław, 2013), capturing her ambivalent relationship to the camera and her sense of agency towards her own representation. Lockhart's ongoing conceptual investigation of the ontological qualities of the image is also celebrated in her experimental work *I, Milena*, Jodłówka, 2013; executed in stained glass by Piotr Ostrowski, S.G. Żeleński Krakow Stained Glass Workshop, Muzeum Witrażu, 2014, 2013. In this monumental stained-glass tableau of Milena, Lockhart moves between photography, painting and the moving image, generating a sense of uncanny instability corresponding with the psychological condition of the portrayed, who is caught within the frame of the work while writing the letters of her own name.

With the new four-part silkscreen *Untitled* (2014), Lockhart adapts the groundbreaking work of Polish-Jewish educator, paediatrician, and children's author Janusz Korczak (1878-1942), referencing his innovative newspaper supplement *Mały Przegląd* (Little Review). Created in October of 1926, *Mały Przegląd* was published as a weekly insert to a Polish-language Jewish newspaper until the outbreak of World War II in 1939. Written by and dedicated to children, the articles in *Mały Przegląd* were generated from letters, phone calls, and personal meetings with children, presenting the non-fictional language of the Polish youth in an honest, empowering forum that enabled Korczak to live his philosophy of "[speaking] not to the children but with the children".

For the exhibition in Lucerne, Sharon Lockhart will present her latest film, which takes Milena as its protagonist and uses the same camera setup and soundtrack as the final scene of François Truffaut's film *The 400 Blows* (*Les quatre cents coups* / *Sie küsstest und sie schlugen ihn*, 1959). Functioning as an allegory for the transition to adulthood, Lockhart's newest project takes Milena's biography as inspiration for this cinematic re-enactment, allowing reality and fiction to merge,

typifying the artist's filmic oeuvre.

curated by Adam Budak and Fanni Fetzer

in cooperation with CCA Ujazdowski Castle, Warschau, and Bonniers Konsthall, Stockholm

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