

Configured as a sequence of spaces, environments, passageways, and films, the exhibition *Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster 1887 – 2058* is a genuine “time machine” that transports us simultaneously into the past and the future. At the K20, approximately 30 richly associative works invite visitors to engage with highly diverse situations, spaces, and personalities. In the works of Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, who was born in Strasburg in 1965, everything revolves around experiences of and reflections on spaces and times. The exhibition at the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen was organized jointly with the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris. The largest retrospective on this artist to date, with elaborately coordinated and interrelated installations in two different exhibition halls, the exhibition offers an overview of this French artist’s oeuvre over the past 25 years.

Using to some extent minimal resources, Gonzalez-Foerster evokes places, people, and themes that reside in one way or another in our collective memory. Using just a few elements, she arranges spaces, deploys self-made sounds, produces films, or appears herself as a historical figure. In all of her projects, literature serves as a recurring point of reference.

It is not a question of the consummate illusion of a specific moment or individual, but instead of a state of suspension between recognition and wonder, memory and speculation. As the artist herself says, an exhibition should be “not a model narrative, but instead a stimulus.” The perplexing title of the exhibition *1887 – 2058*, consisting of two year dates (actually the names of two works by the artist), while alluding to the fact that for Gonzalez-Foerster, time is a flowing continuum. Her works invite us to absorb diverse perceptions and impulses, to investigate various associations and references, to retell stories.

A spectacular supplement to the Paris version of the exhibition is the installation K.2066 in the Grabbe Halle of the K20. Animated by the extraordinary dimensions of the space, the artist decided to create a new version of a work she realized in 2008 for the gigantic Turbine Hall of the Tate Modern in London. The space becomes a sanctuary for works of art and people after life changes caused by years of rain. Alongside numerous bunkbeds on which books featuring dystopian themes are laid out opened for reading purposes, sculptures from the vicinity of the Kunstsammlung NRW have been brought to safety here: works by Henry Moore and Alexander Calder, Claes Oldenburg and Joel Shapiro, Johannes Brus and Katharina Fritsch, each enlarged in scale by one third.

Gonzales-Foerster: “The unremitting rain has had a curious effect on sculptures found in the public

spaces of cities. Like gigantic tropical plants, they have begun to grow, to becoming even more monumental. In order to halt this growth, it was decided to bring them inside and to set them up together with numerous bunkbeds, to be used by people who seek refuge from the rain, by day and by night...” Running continuously on gigantic monitors are images from *The Last Film*. With manipulated segments from sciencefiction and experimental films, it calls to mind images of our collective memory and is suggestive of a state of ongoing catastrophe.

The second supplemental work relates to the opening and terminus of the exhibition: it begins with a passageway, now immersed entirely in a pink that is familiar from the façade of Benrath Palace in Düsseldorf. In the mid-1980s, Dominique GonzalezFoerster studied briefly at the city’s art academy. At the end of the exhibition, visitors again encounter a wall covered in this color. Hanging on it is a painting by Paul Klee, *Black Prince* (1927), from the collection of the Kunstsammlung. This work plays a central role in a story by the Spanish author Enrique Vila-Matas, who is not only a good friend of the artist’s, but who also occasionally mentions her and her works in his texts.

In 2014, the Palacio de Cristal in Madrid inspired a major installation by Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster. In and together with this glass palace, erected in 1887, the artist used old rocking chairs, numerous books, carpeting, and various objects to create a spatial image (*Splendide Hotel (annexe)*, 2014-2016) that elicit associations with the late 19th century and the beginnings of modernism in all of their contradictoriness. The title *Splendide Hotel* refers among other things to Arthur Rimbaud. In *Après le Deluge*, the first poem of the collection *Illuminations*, which appeared in 1886, he prefers to a greenhouse and to a Hotel Splendide that were constructed under chaotic and inhospitable circumstances.

With *Chronotopes & Dioramas (Desertic)* (2009/2016), Gonzalez-Foerster takes up the old presentation form of the diorama, so familiar from museums of natural history and ethnology. Created in a highly constricted space and set behind a sheet of glass is the illusion of a desert landscape. Books and individual pages from novels with thematic links are scattered about like the remnants of a culture or references to its inhabitants.

A copy of a photograph of Rainer Werner Fassbinder, a brown bed, a brown armchair, fluorescent bulbs, a brown carpet, and brown painted walls are components of the installation *RWF (chambre)* (1993). Here, the artist produces a space that can be associated with various functions: it can be a bedroom or a hotel room, a disco, a cave, a burial chamber, or a film set. All of the above seems to correspond to the bedroom of the filmmaker Rainer Werner Fassbinder, as described by Robert Katz in his book *Love is Colder than Death: The Life and Times of Rainer Werner Fassbinder*.

In the early sculpture *Bibliothèque* of 1985, a bookcase – an everyday item of furniture – becomes an object that is rich in associations. Now, books acquire a tragic role – in a literal sense. This construction, and its title (which means “library”), once again emphasize the enormous significance of books and literature in the work of Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster.

In 2014, the artist assumed the role of the scandal-ridden dancer Lola Montez for a performance in a Berlin circus that was entitled *apparition*. The film, entitled *Lola Montez in Berlin (M.2062)* of 2015, which is screened in the exhibition, plays with notions of selfstaging and theatrical performance practices. Lola Montez was one of the most glamorous personalities of the 19th century. Accounts of her life are mixture of reality and fiction. In 1955, Max Ophüls directed the film *Lola Montès*, regarded as a masterwork of opulent cinematic artistry.

The sound installation *Promenade* (2007), installed in a long corridor, recalls a sustained tropical rain shower. The space, equipped with numerous concealed loudspeakers, immediately generates a singular atmosphere, and evokes reflections on life, nature, and the designed environment. “Water is the point of departure of organic life as we know it; it is perhaps the most primitive and important form of life on the planets.” (Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster).

An exhibition organized by the Centre Pompidou, Musée National d’Art Moderne, Paris, in collaboration with the Stiftung Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf.

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