

Jackie took Jack's claim that he can do everything away from him. The Jackie of all Trades is Verena Dengler (*1981 in Vienna, lives in Vienna). Verena Dengler is aware of how little future-oriented and extremely apolitical it would be to continue adhering to patriarchal notions of skill in the dawning matriarchy. But what are you supposed to do if you can do everything?

When women still found the thinking of poststructuralist theorists relevant and wore themselves out working on the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, she might have spoken of "deconstruction". But Dengler doesn't. She prefers Sigmund Freud, who was specialized in psychic life, and his concept of the woman who presumes to want a lot – and hides her fantasies of omnipotence behind the mask of a universal amateur, which she divides and proliferates.

Dengler's works and anti-works are mostly appropriative and allusive bricolages of paintings, drawings, sculptures, texts, self-made, purchased, and found objects arranged in the gallery space. Dengler makes use of the bricolage in the broadest sense, for many of her pieces are based on her interest in the cycles of cultural products, in the transitions between cheap mass taste and refined culture, and in the alterability of aesthetic symbols.

Her show at the Kunsthalle Bern is kicked off with the term "radical chic" which was coined by the American writer Tom Wolfe in his 1970 essay of the same name. Wolfe commented on how wealthy members of the educated middle classes supported the radical political Black Panther Party just because it was fashionable. Since then, the term has undergone several changes, but it still stands for varying combinations of fashion, art, lifestyle, and political radicalism.

Verena Dengler broaches these kinds of conceptual relations not to elucidate them, but to deal with them in a humorous manner. In doing so, she is aware of how problematic it is to demand that art be politically effective, also and especially in a time when ongoing responses to current topics are asked for. Fashions and their play with appearance are deemed unstable and superficial, according to Dengler's diagnosis: It is not considered good form for serious people and serious art to be fashionable. These conventional and bourgeois ideas of preserving and maintaining pose a challenge to Verena Dengler, and she even enjoys them, without her works lacking subtle seriousness.

Her Radical Chic Academy, in which she drilled her students at the art academy in Geneva and that led to a film, installs nonsense that according to its purpose leaves meaningful expectations unfulfilled.

As a member of the Hysteria Fraternity in Vienna, she proclaimed the unlimited matriarchy. Verena

Dengler invited the artist HC Playner, also a member of the Fraternity, to exhibit in the main room of the Kunsthalle Bern. Hysteria with the crest symbol of a hyena mimics symbols of right-wing, nationalistic fraternities. Like Hysteria, Verena Dengler often pursues a sort of *détournement*, meaning misappropriating and reevaluating codes and symbols to employ them against something.

But there is more behind many of Dengler's masks of flippancy: artistic ambitions of right-wing extremists in Austria, male sexism, "regretting motherhood," Dengler's family relations. In the subtext of these weighty themes, she reflects on her role as an artist in the wake of *contemporary art* and social expectations on art. Dengler underfulfills the unwritten agreements on good taste and the proper tone in the sense of aesthetic models and originals. But she is not interested in the polemic demonstration of ennoblement processes. The pleasure she takes in gestures of exaggeration that can become satirical is at the fore.

Dengler's impositions constantly question what is regarded as good form, for example, when she includes private affairs in her artistic work. But these impositions simultaneously maintain a distance, through humor and also her ongoing play with alter egos and fictitious characters.

Works by Verena Dengler (*1981 in Vienna, lives in Vienna) have recently been presented in solo or group shows at among others Museion, Bolzano (2016), Zabriskie Point, Geneva (2016), Thomas Duncan Gallery, Los Angeles (2015), New Museum, New York (2015), Hacienda, Zurich (2015), Galerie Meyer Kainer, Vienna (2014), Kunsthalle Wien (2014), MAK, Vienna (2013), mumok, Vienna (2013), 21er Haus, Vienna (2012), Kunsthalle Düsseldorf (2011), Kunsthalle Zürich (2011).

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