

**LU  
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# LUTZ BACHER

Lutz Bacher lives and works in New York. Recent solo exhibitions include Greene Naftali Garage, Brooklyn (2016); 356 Mission Rd., Los Angeles (2016); Secession, Vienna (2016); Greene Naftali, New York (2015); Aspen Art Museum, Colorado (2014); Greene Naftali, New York (2014); National Museum of Denmark, Copenhagen (2014); Kunsthalle Zürich, Zürich (2013); Cabinet, London (2011); MoMA PS1 Contemporary Art Center, New York (2009); and Contemporary Art Museum, St. Louis (2008).

Her work is in the collections of The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco; Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago; Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, Berkeley; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; and the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

<http://lutzbacher.com>

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2016

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# THE SECRET GARDEN, YALE UNION, PORTLAND



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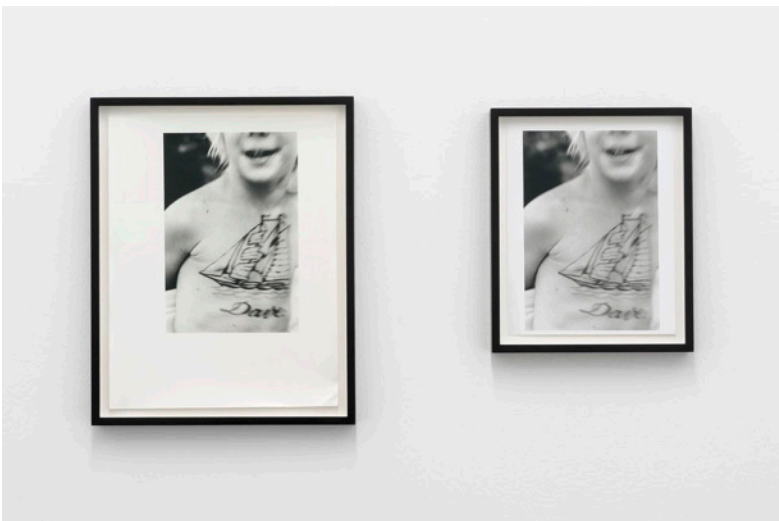
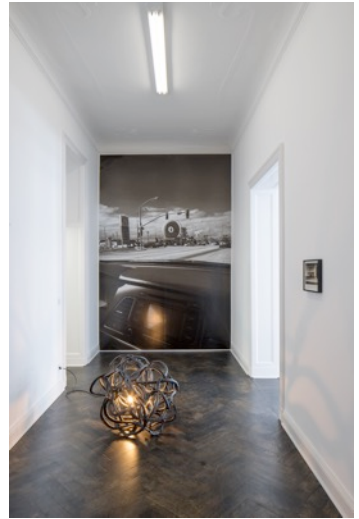
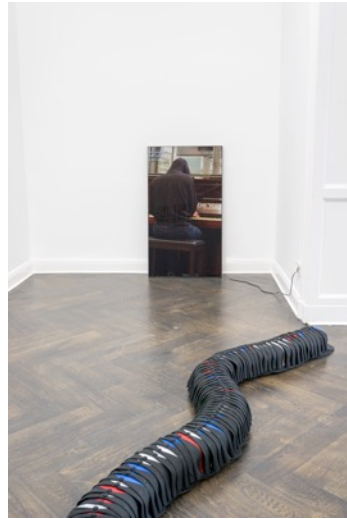
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# **“Divine Transportation” Galerie Buchholz, Berlin**

For her fourth solo exhibition with Galerie Buchholz, Lutz Bacher presents “Divine Transportation”, a constellation of works in various media spanning the American artist’s career, from 1973 through today.



# GALERIE BUCHHÖLZ, BERLIN, 2016



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# “Magic Mountain”

## 356 Mission

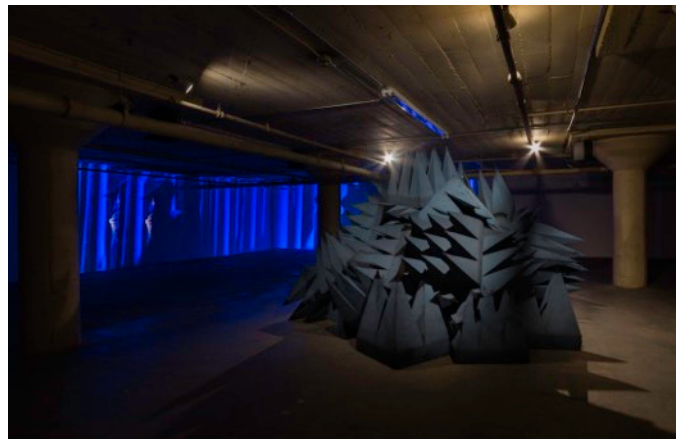
[Comin' Round the Mountain](#)

by Claudia La Rocco

Artforum

June 29, 2016

For *Magic Mountain*, the great central chamber of 356 S. Mission is left largely empty, the better for its scale to act on visitors. As you gaze up, over, across—at other people; at *The Alps*, 2015, a giant Mylar hanging of blue and white snowy crests; at *Blue Infinite (Horizon)*, 2016, a blue chalk line running the length of the back wall—Bacher is creeping up on you via *Divine Transportation*, 2016, iridescent glitter coating the floor like the barest dusting of snow.



# “More Than This”

## secession, Vienna, 2016

extracts from Press release

Bacher’s photographs, sculptural arrangements, videos, sound pieces, and expansive installations incorporate images and objects that are fixed in collective memory and easily retrieved: press photographs of public figures that, copied several times over, begin to lead a strangely aesthetic new life, everyday stuff and detritus from thrift shops she integrates into her installations as objets trouvés and secondhand readymades, or time-worn baseballs, marbles, and sand. Her appropriations draw on trivial pop culture sources such as dime novels, porn magazines, self-help literature, and paparazzi snapshots, and occasionally include references to art history. The human body, sexuality, power, and violence are key issues in her art, as are our current state of being and the deliberate blurring of the line separating the private from the public sphere.

For the large-format works in the *Jokes* series (1987–88), Bacher enlarged black-and-white photographs of 1970s politicians and celebrities with often crude one-liners. The scruffy look of the pictures—the artist smeared them with dirt and drove her car over them—emphasizes the critical overtones of the series. In *Closed Circuit* (1997–2000), a forty-minute animation composed of video stills, she created a portrait of Pat Hearn, the gallerist who had represented her for many years: a surveillance camera positioned above Hearn’s desk recorded everything she did—make phone calls, work, think, write, etc.—for almost a year. Hearn had recently received a diagnosis of cancer, and so *Closed Circuit* is not only a document of the day-to-day gallery business, but also bears witness to one of the last years in Hearn’s life.

Through abstraction, fragmentation, and the arrangement of things in unwonted orders, Bacher raises questions concerning the standardizing pressures that shape social models of identity and our individual life choices, confronting our preference for conformity with piles of sand, coal slag, or thousands of loose marbles in the exhibition space to create situations of literal as well as metaphorical instability: everything, we sense, may change in an instant. For her installation *The Book of Sand* (2012), she had twenty-five tons of sand transported to the Alex Zachary Peter Currie gallery in New York, where it covered the floor throughout the gallery’s downstairs space and spread out into the courtyard. Unlike Walter De Maria’s permanent installation *New York Earth Room* (1977) in SoHo, Bacher’s work was meant to be walked over; visitors’ footprints as well as the light coming in through the gallery’s windows lent the installation a constantly changing appearance.

*More Than This* (2016), Lutz Bacher’s new installation in the Secession’s main hall, is composed of a loose arrangement of found objects: a bunch of large tube joints made of industrial plastic and covered with dust and dirt are scattered over the floor, while a fragmented frieze runs across the walls, not without slight disruptions. The black-and-white painting shows stylized, leafless branches and twigs. Like the tubes littering the floor, the canvases have signs of usage like inexplicable cuts and tattered holes as the primary use of these apparently broken tools remains obscured. In this fresh setting, sure enough they may gain new meaning. The exhibition space and its visitors are immersed in the ambient sound of birdsong and the almost imperceptibly gradually changing light: two subtle interventions that nevertheless affect how the situation is perceived.

Finally, with *I’m Yours* (2015), the installation continues in the exhibition space dedicated to Gustav Klimt’s Beethoven Frieze. The video shows a man playing the piano amid the everyday bustle of a train station. Paradoxically, he seems to be both present and absent as he is completely absorbed in his action, incessantly striving to play Beethoven’s *Moonlight Sonata* without taking any note of his surroundings. The viewer becomes a witness to an intimate performance in public space.

# SECESSION, VIENNA, 2016



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2014

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# Aspen Art Museum: Lutz Bacher

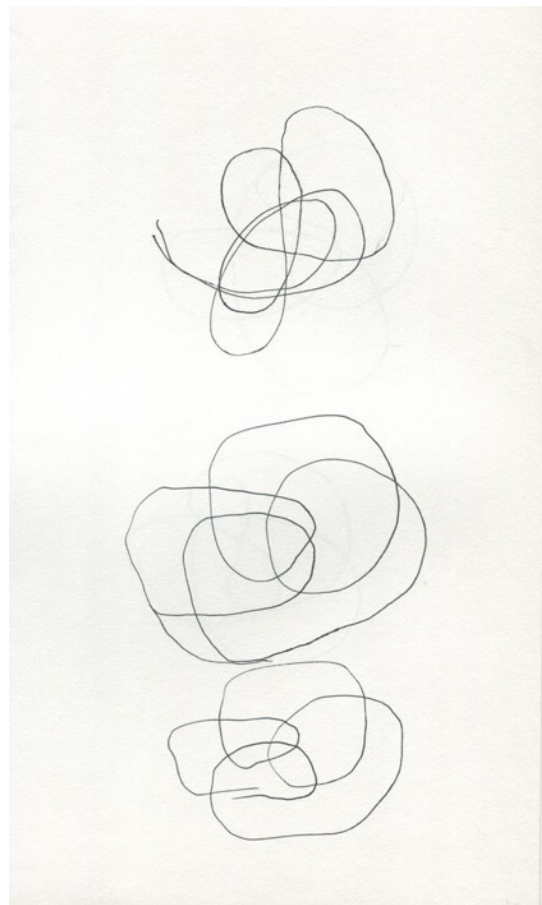
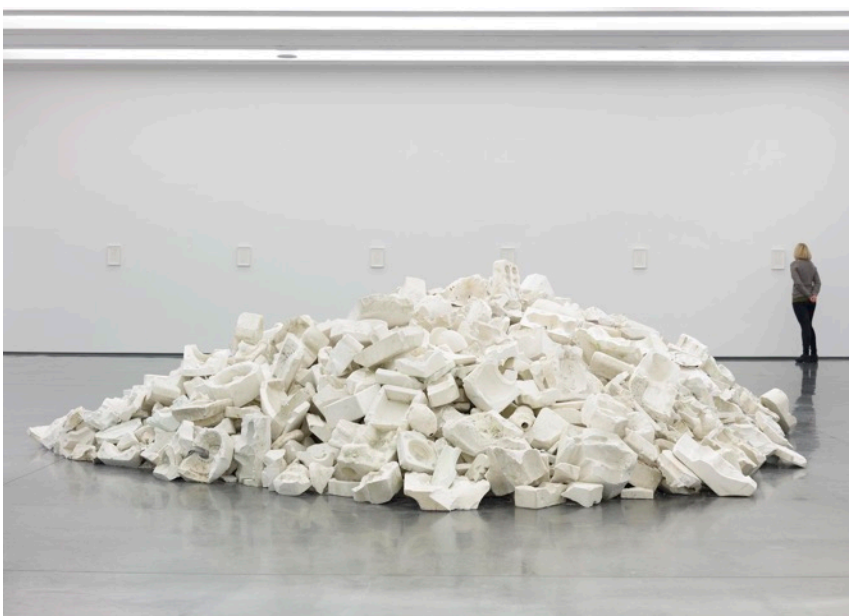
Oct 22, 2014-Jan 25, 2015

For her exhibition at the Aspen Art Museum, Lutz Bacher presents her Aspen drawings, a series of drawings recently uncovered from her archive, and which she produced in Aspen in June of 2010. In addition to these drawings, the exhibition includes a new installation comprising a monumental pile of plaster molds. Both bodies of work evoke Bacher's interest in articulating surface and volume while expanding her interest in converging seemingly disparate entities in unexpected ways.

*From Press release*



# ASPEN ART MUSEUM, 2014



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# Lutz Bacher: Into the Dimensional Corridor – Statens Museum for Kunst

6 November 2014 – 6 April 2015

*From Press release* : The *Star Trek* characters Odo, Quark, Major Kira Nerys, and Tom Paris, appearing here in the form of life-sized cardboard cut-outs; a sculptural installation of plates of coloured acrylic glass; luminously blue video projections; and framed portraits of famous scientists. These were some of the elements featured in the exhibition *Into the Dimensional Corridor* created by the American artist Lutz Bacher specifically for the x-rummet venue at the SMK.

## Star Trek / Cyberspace

Since the mid-1970s Lutz Bacher has explored how identities are presented in popular culture. She lifts familiar material, such as the *Star Trek* characters, out of its usual context and allows it to enter into entirely different scenarios, giving rise to new meaning.

The exhibition title has been drawn from an episode from the first season of the *Star Trek* series and refers to the transition from one state of being to another – from this world to another. This is a familiar rite of passage within science fiction culture, within spiritual thinking, and in literature, where it often signifies a main character moving from one moral level to the next.

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Premiering in 1966, the *Star Trek* TV show has created a universe of outsiders and an alternative world order that has been read as a critical comment on a succession of conflicts pertaining to race, gender, war, etc. More than anything, however, the series is a truly long-lived pop-culture phenomenon: through decades it has reflected and fed the desire for the unknown and the fantastical.

In the exhibition the fictitious *Star Trek* universe met a range of portraits of prominent scientists taken from a book entitled *Masters of Abstraction*. Each in their own ways, these scientists have all contributed to the development of cyberspace. With this move, Lutz Bacher linked pop-culture fantasies about outer space with sophisticated scientific research and explorations of e.g. the Internet. Both take place in an abstract space outside our physical realm.



# STATENS MUSEUM FOR KUNST, 2014



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# “Sex with Strangers, 1986”

## Galerie Daniel Buchholz, Cologne

9 April – 31 May 2014

*From Press release :* For her first exhibitions with Galerie Buchholz, the American artist Lutz Bacher will present three concurrent shows in the gallery's three locations. The first two exhibitions will open in the gallery's two spaces in Cologne (Neven-DuMont-Strasse and Elisenstrasse) on April 9th in conjunction with Art Cologne; the third will open in the Berlin gallery on May 2nd for Berlin Gallery Weekend.

At Neven-DuMont-Strasse, Lutz Bacher will show her historic series “Sex with Strangers” from 1986 alongside her more recent series “The Celestial Handbook”. In “Sex with Strangers”, a key early work, the artist made photographic enlargements of illustrations and captions from a book that purports to be a cautionary sociology study about female psychology and deviant sexual behavior but is, in fact, pulp pornography. As with her iconic “Jokes” (1985-8) and later “Playboys” (1991-3) series, this work pairs image and text in ways that complicate and transform an initial reading of the work, sending these explicitly pornographic scenes into a discourse around pop-psychology, feminism, obscenity, politics, humor, etc. On view in the gallery offices and in the window of the adjacent Antiquariat Buchholz will be Lutz Bacher's “The Celestial Handbook”, first shown at the 2012 Whitney Biennial in New York. Here, the artist has framed the illustrated pages from Robert Burnham's 1966 amateur astronomy book Burnham's Celestial Guide, showing the small-scale plates from this self-published, quasi-scientific manual which depict telescopic images of galaxies, stars and nebulae along with brief, surprisingly poetic captions. Both bodies of work highlight the poignant conjunctions between image and text in these found cultural artifacts, culling material from two very different books that each appear to be one thing but end up revealing quite another. In the case of “Sex with Strangers” pornography masquerades as a sociological study and in so doing reveals a range of political, psychological, and comical implications; in the case of “The Celestial Handbook” an amateur's attempt at scientific astronomy ends up revealing the poetic inadequacy of depicting and describing the cosmos.

At Elisenstrasse, Lutz Bacher will show two recent groups of painting and sculpture and an early video slideshow. The “Gray Paintings (Loxodonta)”, is a suite of 23 paintings on raw canvas in which a field of monochrome gray paint, some flecked with bright red, has dried, creased, and cracked, pointing to the materiality of the paint and canvas itself and also suggesting a primordial landscape, stone or elephant skin. Next to these paintings, Lutz Bacher's “Organ Pipes” will be arranged inside 2 intricate foam core boxes. This sculptural work is comprised of 43 pipes from a dismantled organ that range from 10 cm to 250 cm long, describing the musical scale of this grand instrument. The organ itself – an instrument the artist has investigated in previous works – registers as an object at the junction between music, technology, architecture, and religion, and these pipes, wrested from their original function, take on other morphological forms, appearing at once anthropomorphic, phallic, or torpedo-like, resting in their protective foam cases. In both the “Gray Paintings (Loxodonta)” and the “Organ Pipes”, the materiality of the objects open up to suggest a vast scope of cultural production – the elemental tin transformed into the majestic pipe organ, an achievement of pre-industrial design on par with horology; the “Gray Paintings (Loxodonta)”echoing the stone surface of prehistoric cave paintings and also the modernist tradition of the monochrome. “James Dean”, a video slideshow from 1986, the same year as “Sex with Strangers”, shows a sequence of images from the iconic “torn sweater” photo shoot of the actor by photographer Roy Schatt in 1954. The slideshow cycles through pairs of images presented on a pair of monitors, and these looping still photographs show the Hollywood icon self-consciously posing, reflecting, brooding, and generating a model for the construction of identity through images. Central to Lutz Bacher's work over the past 40 years, and striking in the bodies of work on view, is the particular way that meaning in each image or object expands from its original context into something simultaneously personal and monumental.

# GALERIE BUCHHÖLZ, COLOGNE, 2014



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# "Homer"

## Galerie Buchholz, Berlin

2 May – 7 June 2014

*From Press release :*

In our Berlin gallery, the American artist Lutz Bacher will present a new suite of 14 photographs entitled "Homer". This series depicts three off-duty Greek soldiers from the 1970s as they pose in an office, lounge on a couch, and smoke cigarettes on the street at nighttime. Duplications and repetitions of particular photographs in the sequence upend a narrative progression as the cycle of images seems to stutter, shift, and repeat. Evoking with its title both the ancient and the literary, this series uses images from the recent past to animate ideas around the structure of history and myth, the dynamics of male social relations, and the performative qualities of these posing subjects. Alongside these photographs, Lutz Bacher will show "Bison", a group of 4 large sculptures made of wood, burlap, clay, paper and wire. This herd of grazing ancient beasts recalls the subjects of Paleolithic cave paintings.

Accompanying these pieces will be "Yamaha" (2010-12), a sculpture in which an electric organ is programmed via computer and rigged with wooden hammers to play random notes for random durations. "Yamaha" was previously on view at the 2012 Whitney Biennial. A selection of 4 pages from Lutz Bacher's upcoming artist book "Shit For Brains" line the front hall of the gallery. Two videos will also be on view: "Snow" (1999) shows the Manhattan skyline through an apartment window with the World Trade Center appearing and disappearing in a snow storm; "Olympiad" (1997) records a walk through the Olympic Stadium in Berlin with footage that has been corrupted with various forms of digital disturbances.

For her first exhibitions with Galerie Buchholz, Lutz Bacher presents three parallel shows in the gallery's three exhibition spaces in both Cologne and Berlin. The first two exhibitions just opened in the gallery's two spaces in Cologne, and this third show opening in the Berlin gallery on May 2nd for Berlin Gallery Weekend will complete this very special constellation of exhibitions conceived by the artist.

Living and working under the pseudonym "Lutz Bacher" since the 1970s, the artist's diverse conceptual practice spans photography, film, video and sculpture, often using found material, objects and images recontextualized from contemporary culture. Central to Lutz Bacher's work over the past 40 years, and striking in the bodies of work on view, is the particular way that meaning in each image or object expands from its original context, probing at psychological, political and emotional implications, and transforming into something at once highly personal and simultaneously monumental.

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# GALERIE BUCHHOLZ, BERLIN, 2014



THE TITLE  
OF THIS <sup>BOOK</sup> WORK  
IS THE THEORY  
OF  
EVERYTHING

2013

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# GALERIE GREENE NAFTALI BRÖOKLYN

## Some Dreamers of the Golden Dream

September 5 – October 5, 2013



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# “Snow”

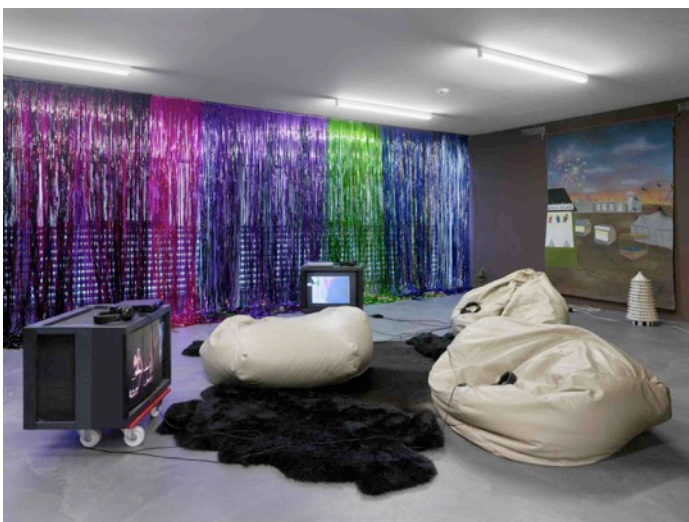
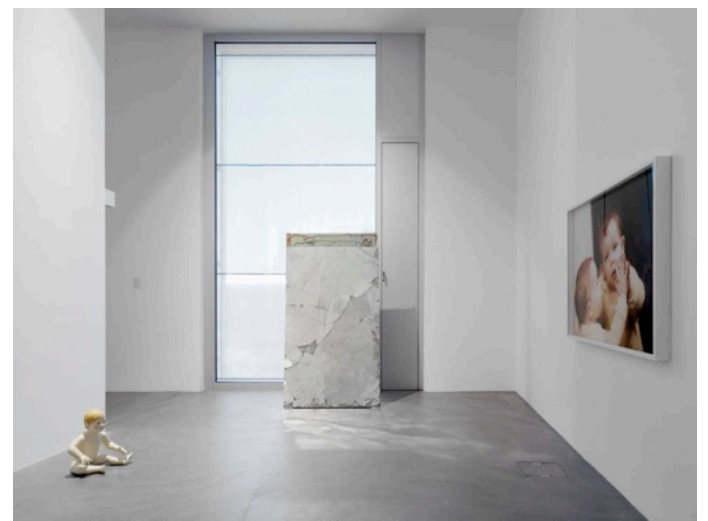
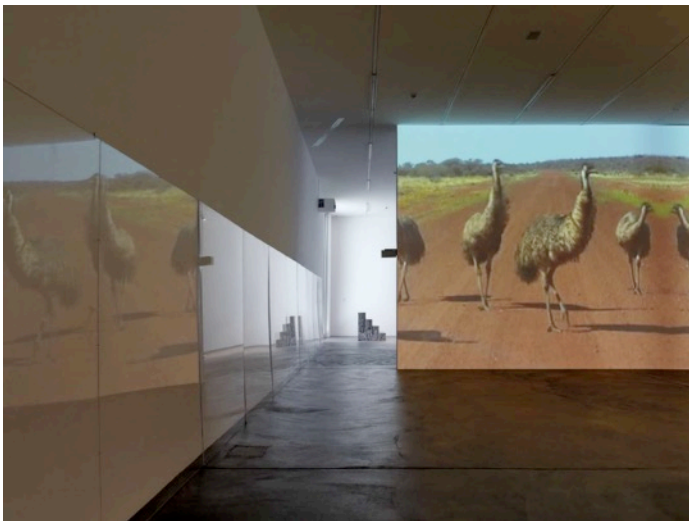
## Kunsthalle

### Zürich

23.11.2013–02.02.2014

Lutz Bacher (lives and works in New York) has been questioning the medialisaton and commercialisation of individual life choices and models of sexual and social identity since the early 1970s through the alienation and deconstruction of their familiar manifestations. Accordingly, since the beginning of her career as an artist, she has concealed her true identity behind a misleading and deceptive male pseudonym and rarely appears in person on the art scene. With «SNOW», Kunsthalle Zürich presents an exhibition, in which the artist incorporates an overview of her work from the 1970s to the present day into the ensemble of an installation created specially for the exhibition.

# KUNSTHALLE, ZÜRICH, 2015



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# “Black Beauty” at ICA, London

article : <http://mousse magazine.it/lutz-bacher-ica/>

The ICA is delighted to present *Black Beauty*, the first major solo exhibition in the UK by American artist Lutz Bacher. Occupying an important position in contemporary art practice, Lutz Bacher’s work is receiving increasing levels of international recognition. *Black Beauty* provides a unique opportunity to see Bacher’s new works made specifically for the ICA together with recent work for the first time in London. Since the beginning of her career in the 1970s, Bacher has drawn upon disconnected information from popular culture and her own life, producing works that play with the interchangeability of identity, sexuality and the human body. Bacher uses images and objects in a physical, sometimes visceral manner, conducting arrangements of seemingly disparate entities and allowing them to interact in new ways.

The artist’s expansive work explores human identity as it is defined through gender, sexuality and the human body. Lutz Bacher is as elusive as her work is ambiguous, perhaps preferring not to dictate how her works should be viewed.

The exhibition at the ICA will present new and recent works which combine striking installations with film, sound and sculpture. At the core of the exhibition will be *Black Beauty* (2012), several tons of black silicate, which will flow throughout the lower gallery. This piece will be paired with a sound work, *Puck* (2012), which will envelope the viewer as they move through the space. The audio recording of the character Puck at the conclusion of Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* is repeated with different emphases and pronunciations. In addition, *Angels* (2013), a found broken mirror, will be reconfigured and placed within *Black Beauty*. *Black Magic* (2013) is a new site-specific work made from black vibrating ‘astroturf’ that will be displayed along the full length of the concourse in the lower gallery.

The entrance to the upper galleries will feature *It’s Golden* (2013), a new work made from iridescent gold mylar. Accompanying this will be *Chess* (2012), featuring a looped audio work of Elvis Presley crooning in the background. Bacher’s interpretation of narratives is further explored in the new installation *Horse Shadow* (2010–12), which will slowly rotate, casting shadows across the gallery walls. This will be paired with *Horse Painting* (2010).

The enigmatic and eclectic mixture of ideas that Bacher brings together are full of personal and philosophical significance and are frequently driven by tactical humour.



# ICA, LONDON, 2013



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# Portikus, Frankfurt

*From Press release :*

Lutz Bacher's exhibition at Portikus is the first in a series of three solo shows this year, presenting Bacher's work to a European audience in the most encompassing way to date. Following the project in Frankfurt, the artist will present exhibitions at the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA), London, and Kunsthalle Zürich in the fall and winter of 2013. The three institutions will co-publish an extensive publication on the artist's longstanding practice and all-embracing oeuvre.

Lutz Bacher, who lives between Berkeley and New York City, occupies an important position in contemporary artistic practice. As an artist whose nationality, age and gender have been occluded for over four decades, her work becomes as much a refuge as a vehicle to respond liberally to the urgency of political and social conditions, especially in her native America. While the imagery, objects and physical spaces Lutz Bacher creates are informed by studies of ignorant and oftentimes violent human conduct such as physical abuse, treason, and complacency, she manages to escape any sort of unilateral categorization towards political, feminist, or gender-related art. Instead, Bacher's work allows itself to be assertive and esoteric at once, humorous and intimate, real and fictitious. There is a continual reversal of roles taking place, as the person behind the artist wants to remain anonymous and the artist behind the person wants to act as an intermediary. This becomes especially visible in the many conversations and interviews that Lutz Bacher has orchestrated with and about her.

The 1976 work titled *The Lee Harvey Oswald Interview* illustrates this blurring of established interpersonal boundaries and notions of distance. Here, Bacher interrogates herself on the figure of President Kennedy's assassin:

Question: Why Lee Harvey Oswald?

Answer: It's a topic that's always fascinated me.

Question: Assassinations?

For the main exhibition space at Portikus, Lutz Bacher presents an installation with sculptural pieces made over the past years, on show for the first time. The installation is a giant chessboard. Bacher's chess pieces are not the usual white and black players, but figures that range from Elvis to a Tyrannosaurus Rex to a replica of Marcel Duchamp's bicycle wheel. It comments on the structurally complex nature of certain microcosms (such as the art world) in the much larger context and endless variations of the universe. Lutz Bacher cautiously exposes her own interest in belief systems such as fate, serendipity, and universal interconnectivity. By pointing towards the mechanisms inherent in a game of chess, she invites us to strategize about the complex correlations between conditions, persons, and objects.

The temporary upper floor at Portikus as well as the monumental window space in the attic extend the exhibition's modular, rhythmic leaps from white to black throughout the building. While the chessboard is set in a classic white cube, the multichannel video piece *Blue Moon* (1996) is shown upstairs in a room filled with sparkling black sand. The attic window in turn becomes a billboard that emanates one of Lutz Bacher's trademarks, the "Duck/Bunny", into the public realm of the city. The drawing – depending on how you look at it – can be a duck's head or a rabbit's head, and was used by philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein to visualize his cognitive and behavioral theory. Lutz Bacher grants us the investigation into what we actually see when we look at art, how we process the seen, and what we eventually convert it into.

# PORTIKUS, FRANKFURT, 2013



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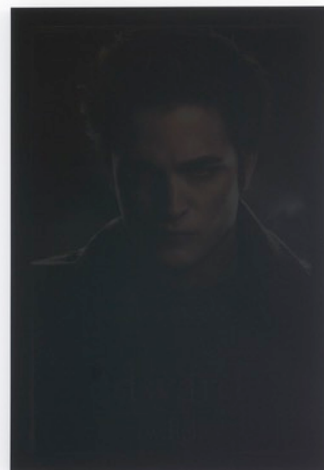
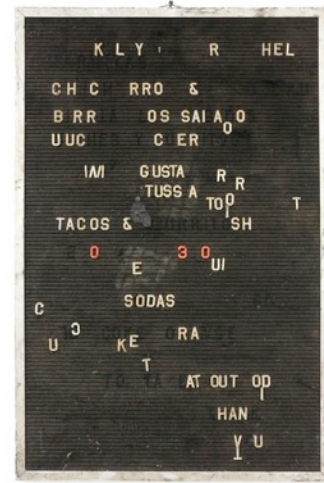


2012

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# RATIO 3, SAN FRANCISCO, 2012



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# ALEX ZACHARY PETER CURRIE, 2015



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2011

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# CABINET, LONDON, 2011



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# CABINET II, LONDON, 2011



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2019

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# "Do you love me?"

## Kunstverein München

*From Press release* : Kunstverein München is pleased to present the first comprehensive solo exhibition of American artist Lutz Bacher in Europe. "Do you love me?" is the last episode of Lutz Bachers' exhibition trilogy that further encompasses "Spill", (Contemporary Art Museum, St. Louis) and "My Secret Life", (PS1/MoMA, New York City).

Working in Berkeley, California since the 70s and during the 80s Lutz Bacher, whose real identity remains hidden from the art public, stages herself as a shape shifting character. Lutz Bacher creates a body of work that is formed by interferences, superposition and dissolution while constantly constructing fractured and conflicting identities.

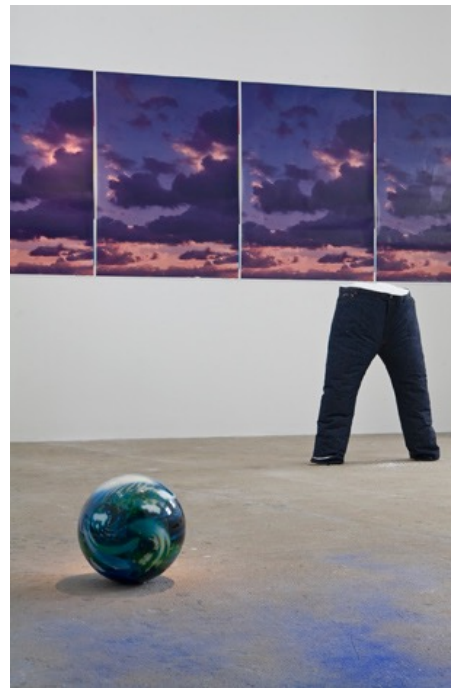
The especially for Kunstverein München produced exhibition "Do you love me?" attends via video works, fanzine-like books or space installations to Bacher's humorous picking away of the American Dream, respectively to its media manifestation.

In "Do you love me?" mermaids cross the path of alligators, great apes bite the 'Wizard of Oz' while penetrating 'Gap' advertising campaigns. Lutz Bacher contaminates assumed visual worlds with traces of idiosyncrasy and sexual ambiguity, creating fractures that reveal the material as well as the psychological contradictions of a dream cum nightmare that is constantly driven by the question "Do you love me?".

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# KUNSTVEREIN MÜNCHEN, 2009



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# MY SECRET LIFE

P.S.1

## Contemporary Art Center

February 12–September 14, 2009

*From Press release : P.S.1*

Contemporary Art Center is pleased to present *MY SECRET LIFE*, Lutz Bacher's first museum survey exhibition, which spans several decades of the artist's wide-ranging conceptual practice. Bacher's career is marked by restrained yet comprehensive interventions into exhibition frameworks, highlighting her particular pairing of work and context.

For P.S.1, works from the mid 1970s to the present are organized according to the sequential layout of the Second Floor Main Gallery, with its central hall as the installation's frenetic epicenter.

Navigating from still to moving, spatial to flat, and silent to loud, the exhibition emphasizes Bacher's positioning of the image, which, although persistent in its mirroring and shaping of experience, is also consistently engaged in a process of imminent breakdown.

A deliberate subversion of apparent signature style is also related to the unstable status of the image that Bacher insinuates through works in photography, painting, drawing, and video.

Early works in still photography and its various reproduction methods, such as *The Lee Harvey Oswald Interview* (1976) and *Jackie and Me* (1989), delineate a constellation of concerns involving gender, sexuality, violence, and power. The intersection of Bacher's two-dimensional work with time-based projects such as *Olympiad* (1997), *Closed Circuit* (1997–2000), and *Manhatta* (1999), further reveals that in Bacher's work, the processes of illumination and obliteration (of image, of subject, of author) are consistent, perhaps cumulative across mediums and timeframes.

The accompanying publication *SMOKE (Gets In Your Eyes)*, was published by Regency Arts Press and produced as a companion to both P.S.1's *MY SECRET LIFE* and Lutz Bacher: *Spill* at the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis.

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# PS.1 CONTEMPORARY ART CENTER



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**PRESSE**





# Art in America

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# LUTZ BACHER

by Andrew Berardini (/Search/Andrew+Berardini/)

View of Lutz Bacher's exhibition "ODO," 2008, showing a continuous line of original and appropriated photographs. Courtesy Ratio 3, San Francisco.



HOW ARE WE SUPPOSED to view the work of Lutz Bacher? This pseudonymous artist who so weirdly plays with so many kinds of images, changing her exhibitions midstream and always slinking into more ambiguity, more noise, more dis-comforting slippages? Her work, though frequently driven by tactical humor, has an unexpectedly heartbreaking resonance. How are we writers supposed to assemble all the fragmentary information into a narrative, an artist, summarizing it in a short few words so that the astute reader can remark to others, "I now understand the work of Lutz Bacher?"

I might be reluctant to explain the work to you, but Bacher doesn't seem to want to, either. The press release for her 2008 exhibition at Ratio 3 in San Francisco consisted of a recipe for butterscotch pudding, and the artist is evasive in many other ways as well. It's easier to be told how to see than to actually see, and Bacher, it seems, wants us to see for ourselves.

Ever since her career began in the 1970s, this Bay Area artist has drawn upon fragmentary information from popular culture and her own life to produce works that play with the fungibility of identity and the all-around trickiness of images. In artist's books, installations, sculptures, videos, photographs, paintings and screenprints, Bacher uses images and objects in a physical, visceral manner. Her closed-circuit anarchy always calls authority—especially her own—into question. Desire and entropy happily shape her work.

Meaning is situational and, unstuck, it can evolve, change, deteriorate. I love Bacher's distressed pictures of politicians and celebrities wisecracking and shit-talking: a concerned looking Jane Fonda saying "I'm really weird. I'm really all fucked up," or a smirking Henry Kissinger stating in a cartoon speech bubble, "The illegal we do immediately; the unconstitutional takes longer." (Both are from Bacher's series "Jokes," 1987-88.) We can't always be sure if Bacher is making up their remarks, if they're real quotes or just sharp witticisms. I love how fugitive Bacher's prints are, how she crumpled or buried each of them before they were framed. Later in her career she sent her pictures through the rough repro-graphics of

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the photocopier, and each of her videos crackles with (in the artist's own words) "sporadic signal glitches, stoppages, tracking problems, burnouts and other artefacts of a corrupted or damaged videotape."<sup>1</sup>

But images aren't the only fugitives. There are also the numerous interviews that Bacher has conducted over the years, which, as published, have become a genre in themselves. In them, all the nonsense of speech that our ear filters out is included, as well as accidents of transcription—another kind of noise. Either way, the interviews lurch and trip, pause and stutter, as the speakers look for the right phrase, or change conceptual streams. Perhaps they stumble out of shyness, perhaps mendacity, each word measured and then recalled and remeasured: they know they're being recorded.

The interviews ostensibly address the loaded question, "Do You Love Me?" That phrase has been recycled as a title more than a few times in the artist's work, and names her most recent artist's book, published by Primary Information in New York, which collects transcripts of interviews (interspersed with seemingly random imagery) in which Bacher asks a variety of people to talk about her and her work. The "Me" of "Do You Love Me?" is, of course, the artist, though in the many interviews she never actually asks that specific question. Her queries run more along the lines of: "How did we meet? What do you think I'm like? Am I a diva?" Most of the time, the questions aren't canned, but fresh, always drawing her subject out: "What do you mean by . . . ?" Bacher just lets her subjects talk, allowing them to reveal more of themselves, really, than any clear truth about the artist or her work. The interviews are almost frustratingly unreadable, or just readable enough, and then the conversants pause and stutter, and the noise creeps in.

I think that the hyper-fidelity to the interviewees' stumbles and pauses and change-ups, and the mistakes of transcription, and all the noise of the images being translated through one machine or another, seem natural. Yes, natural. Naturalism is a kind of put-on, realism another kind of fiction.

AS A HOST OF HER FRIENDS and colleagues has found out in sundry interviews, describing Bacher's work is difficult. In each exhibition, she carefully arranges seemingly disparate objects and images, each time making them interact in new ways. Composed of cultural and personal detritus, the assemblies might be confusing, except that there is something distinctly funny and strange about them. Their language is too familiar to be alienating and too unfamiliar to dismiss.

In the shifting terrain of Bacher's endeavors, exhibitions of the same work can be quite different, so let's take a single one as a point of reference. Her show at the Kunstverein Munich in 2009—another project titled "Do You Love Me?"—had 22 works in it. A plastic army tank crawled on the wall where the show's title, in vinyl, appeared; scraps of a huge car advertisement covered another wall, in front of which were posted two incredibly detailed and, well, disturbingly ripped naked male mannequins; not far off stood a huge

pair of disembodied jeans stuffed with tiny foam balls; and behind that, mounted on the wall, a series of identical photographs of lavender sunsets. Cardboard cutouts of the Cowardly Lion, the Scarecrow and the Tin Man from the 1939 film *The Wizard of Oz* stood in a gallery with the Tin Man's finger seemingly pointing out a giant naked male pincushion doll displayed on a table with uneven legs. The doll is an oversize version of the ones used by children to show authorities how they might have been sexually abused. Thus the doll, for all its benign boyish looks, is, unsettlingly, anatomically correct.

There's a special challenge in making connections among these disparate objects. There is the creepy sexuality, the kitschiness, the double-dip pop references. The tank and anatomical doll are outsize toys that hint at violence, and the car ad feels too big for the gallery, though it is the ad's actual size. Filled with foam balls, the pants stand seemingly ready to collapse, leak or fall to pieces at any minute. All the sizes feel slightly off; everything looks like it's hanging a bit precariously. There's always something a little satisfying in putting together a puzzle or handily solving a whodunit—and there are mysteries that seem to be waiting for solution in each of Bacher's installations. All the things in her shows seem intimate and uncanny but are always infused with humor and sexiness, so that unraveling their intricacies never feels like a dry exercise in smart-set theoretical twaddle. With their confluence of sex, violence and commerce simmering beneath the surface, they conjure childhood with its own confluence of sex, violence and commerce always prowling beneath the surface. These are just stabs: in this whodunit we can never be sure who actually did it.

Though Bacher has had a three-decade career, it's only in the last few years that she's migrated from cult status to something more mainstream. Some of her most recent exhibitions—her show in 2011, for example, at London's Cabinet gallery, in which one room presented a scatter piece of used baseballs and another a tableau that included photos of a rural highway, a shaggy tree trunk and a mannequin in woodland camouflage—have been particularly beautiful. There has been a wave of female artists from the '60s and '70s recently receiving late-career revivals for a host of reasons, including Dorothy Iannone, Simone Forti and Barbara T. Smith, to name only a few. Their work, like Bacher's, speaks to our particular moment better than that of their peers who hit it big at the time. Bacher's mixture of bodies and ideas, pop and personal, while always remaining somehow elusive, feels entirely relevant to problems in art and life now. I can imagine a hard-headed '70s art world filled with Minimalists and later on Pictures Generation wunderkinder who might have dismissed her oeuvre as not serious enough, or too messy, and dinner-party Neo-Expressionists in the '80s writing it off as too smart. But now, it seems, we like things both messy and smart. With the meaning of art regularly dictated to us by press releases and often art critics, it can be a relief to just get a recipe for butterscotch pudding.

*CURRENTLY ON VIEW A solo show by Lutz Bacher, at Alex*



# One building, three works, many ideas in conceptual artist's 'Secret Garden' (review)



Painted lines of a basketball court overlay the lines of a soccer field in Lutz Bacher's "The Secret Garden." (Leif Anderson)

By [Briana Miller](#) | Special to [The Oregonian/OregonLive](#)

[Email the author](#)

on October 29, 2016 at 5:00 AM, updated November 10, 2016 at 2:16 PM

Just three pieces take up the entirety of [Yale Union](#)'s capacious exhibition space in the current show of site-specific work by the artist [Lutz Bacher](#).

"Final Days" sprawls across two facades of the building's exterior; "The Secret Garden" occupies the full length of the contemporary art center's inside exhibition space; while the installation "KMS, Radios, F.M. 87.9" appropriates an interstitial space en route to Yale Union's upstairs kitchen. The three pieces are pared down, deceptively simple, and ephemeral, so much so that "Final Days" could be missed entirely if visitors don't know to look for it. Which gives the show its force as a creative act: It performs the neat trick of taking over the entire building -- inside and out -- while having virtually no objects in it.

Despite its brevity, Bacher came into this project with a lot of ideas. There was, for example, the initial concept of bringing a mass of white objects from her own stockpile to install in the gallery, with the intention that that they would be taken one by one by visitors until nothing was left: Once everything had been dispersed in Portland, nothing would be left to ship back to New York, where the artist lives and works.

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But in the 18 months since those early conversations with the show's curators, Jordan Stein and Robert Snowden, the exhibition became more and more edited. The most visible piece is "The Secret Garden," which overlays the distended lines of a basketball court with those of a soccer field. Painted directly onto the floor, the intersecting white lines stretch the length of the gallery. They shoot across the scarred wooden floors of the former industrial space and ram into the walls on either side, as if they'll extend out beyond the bounds of the building or maybe continue across the face of it on the outside.

The elusive "Final Days" does play on the face of the building. Bacher originally planned to hang a large banner -- the kind that announces the final days before a store closes -- on the outside of the building. Instead, she opted for the far subtler version that extends across the top of one facade of the building and down the edge of another. Painted in monumental red block letters on the building's red-painted bricks, the two-word phrase is bold, but only in certain lights. The words may allude ominously to the political climate or world events, but, painted red on red, they almost whisper.

The final piece in the show, "KMS, Radios, F.M. 87.9," takes its name from a pirate radio station. Four transistor radios, antennae up and placed around the nearly empty space between the main exhibition space and the second-floor restrooms and kitchen, play overlapping loops of an excerpt from Roberta Flack's version of "Killing Me Softly with His Song." Bacher spent time in the space gauging whether the repetition of the wordless clip read as boredom or torture or whether it was tolerable. It's not only tolerable, but in its insistence, it feels slightly powerful.

Bacher came up as an artist in Berkeley, California, in the 1970s, only recently moving her practice to New York. Her work has become increasingly prominent over the past several years, with back-to-back shows across Europe and the U.S. Her solo show at Yale Union is her first in the Northwest.

What Bacher has created here might seem like a departure for an artist known for her rambunctious, often quixotic groupings of found objects and sly, sometimes erotic mash-ups that incorporate a mix of media. It is, though, the result of an established conceptual practice, refined over four decades.

In Lucy Lippard's seminal work on conceptual art, "[Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972](#)," published in 1973, she wrote about the still-new movement: "Conceptual art, for me, means work in which the idea is paramount and the material form is secondary, lightweight, ephemeral, cheap, unpretentious and/or 'dematerialized.' "

Bacher's work in "The Secret Garden" feels solid but isn't; the title piece, after all, is just lines painted on the floor. It's almost as if Bacher had decided to strip her work down to its most elemental and start again with a simple idea -- or three. These ideas have been given free rein in Yale Union's quirky building, where they masterfully evince the thinking of an artist who knows full well what she's doing but who will still take the opportunity to veer off course if given the chance.

--Briana Miller, for The Oregonian/OregonLive

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**"The Secret Garden,"** solo exhibition by conceptual artist Lutz Bacher

**When:** On view 2-5 p.m. Thursday-Sunday, through Dec. 11

**Where:** Yale Union, 800 S.E. 10th Ave.

**Admission:** Free; [yaleunion.org](http://yaleunion.org) or 503-236-7996





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## Lutz Bacher's Secret Life



By Ernesto Menéndez-Conde

The display of the art pieces in “My Secret Life” -the personal exhibition of the artist Lutz Bacher, which is currently at PS1, the New York dependency of the MoMA- offers the impression of a group of isolated shows, rather than a retrospective of a single artist. There is a sense of fragmentation which is stressed by the compartments of the second floor of the building. Each hall is devoted to a single series of works. Bacher plays with the idea of the disintegration of authorship through artistic appropriation, which paradoxically is how she emerges as an author.

However, this fragmentation and this disintegration of authorship is rather a simulacra. In fact, the artworks are somehow connected in a dialogical way. Polyphony is perhaps a word that could help to define the installations. Bacher works in appropriations from several sources in order to produce a body of work in which the “stylistic” unity is one of a dialogue among different styles and media (from drawing, to photography, to video). In a playful and politically meaningful way, Bacher seems to hide herself in this plurality. “My Secret Life,” therefore invites the spectator to find the hidden meanings in the artistic display.

I would like to mention few examples of hidden meanings in Bacher's work. In *My Secret Life* - the installation located in one of the halls in which the show is segmented- Bacher presents pieces from different moments in her career. There are four leitmotifs, alternating with each other. First, in the drawings and paintings of Playboy girls (Bacher hired some professionals to make the copies), the artist added some sexual and political jokes alluding to female desire, and therefore subverting the Playboy girls drawings which tend to portray females as sex objects. There are also pictures of politicians referring to power with nasty language, which is probably occult behind the politeness of their public image. The written joke exposes the visual as

appearance, ideological montage and mass-media spectacle. There are photos of actors, and finally, color pictures of the popular, sexually ambivalent Troll puppets. The spectator might feel this is political art, but nothing is taken for granted, since he must construct his own meaning. Is the artist suggesting that well-known politicians -the Kennedys, Carter, Lyndon Johnson- share something in common with puppets or Playboy girls? Are they like movie stars? In what sense could sexual jokes be articulated into political partisanship? The four thematic motifs, by dialoguing with each other, by influencing one another, evoke an undefined chain of associations.

It is worth stressing the analogy between the artist's "secret life," disguised in several identities, and that hidden in the appropriation of mass-media images (from Hollywood celebrities, to Playboy's Vargas Girls), politicians, Playboy girls, and actors disguised with spectacles. This analogy could be read as a critique of critical art. With a subtle irony, Bacher's "My Secret Life" suggests that critical art is another mass-media construction. The critique of the *status quo* is unmasked as spectacle. In Bacher's "My Secret Life," critical art contains its own negation. Appropriation of mass-media images, political jokes and simulated disintegration of authorship support a critique against critical art, which, as the French thinker, Jacques Rancière has observed:

"Critical art that invites you to see the signs of capital behind everyday objects and behaviors risks inscribing itself into the perpetuation of a world where the transformation of things into signs redoubles the very excess of interpretative signs that makes resistance disappear" (1)

The idea of an identity which is impossible to grasp seems to be one of the topics in two other installations. In *Lee Harvey Oswald Interview*, Bacher's appropriation of documents -which she merely photocopied- renders a blurred portrait of the character she apparently attempts to define. The notion of the secret is also present. The documents are turned into the fragmentary layers of a puzzle which remains unfinished or incomplete, as if some pieces were missing. The spectator ends up not knowing whether Lee Harvey Oswald was working for the Soviet Union, the CIA or if he embodied the masculinity of a macho society. The psychological portrait of Lee Harvey Oswald is also unclear, oscillating between ingenious answers, and the psychotic. His face is reproduced to the point that Lee Harvey Oswald becomes an empty image. Some sentences of the interview are overlapped, thus making it difficult to even read the written words.

In *Jackie and Me* (1989) there is also an identity that cannot be exposed. The woman hides her face from the photographer, as if she were trying to keep it a secret. The story, which is told through both written testimony and pictures taken by the paparazzo, depicts Jackie Kennedy avoiding mass-media representations that have defined her identity from a masculine perspective. *Jackie and Me* could be read in at least two directions: Jackie and the paparazzo (who tells the story in the first person), and the identification between Jackie who, while running away shows that she wants to hide something and the female artist, who seems to expose an unnamed secret through artistic appropriation.

*Jackie and Me* is also a story of surveillance, since the paparazzo claims he is being watched by a bodyguard, at the same time that he is watching Jackie Kennedy. In the same room, surveillance is once again present in the video installation *Closed Circuit* which is a view - compressed in 40 minutes- from a camera located at the desk of the Pat Hearn Gallery, shot during nine months from October 1997 until July 1998. As in *Jackie and Me*, the public is interfering in the realm of the private.

Video installations are a supplementary part of the show, which goes, as Lia Gangitano stated, "from still to moving, spatial to flat, silent to loud"(2). I would like to mention a last example of how Bacher produces suggestive meanings through the dialogue between texts and images, and the display of the artworks in the show. In a video installation called *Blue Angels*, there are

two screens placed in a corner of the room. Here the title is a kind of humorous pun alluding to the pure visuality of the installation since the two videos of the blue sky are at a 90-degree angle. The name *Blue Angels* could therefore refer to the visual “blue angle” created by the screens. The videos are shots of planes participating in a military maneuver. The noise of the engines turns the view of the sky into a hell. Noise is ironically subverting the text. In a contiguous room there is another video installation called *Crimson & Clover* (2003). In this case the artist filmed the performance of the band *Angel Blood* during a well-known concert for the land. The titles of the installation and the rock band (*Blue Angels* and *Angel Blood*) are related and perhaps opposed to each other. Also the noise of the engines is associated with the sound of electric instruments in contemporary music.

In “My Secret Life,” artistic appropriation is a way in which Bacher emerges as a very personal and imaginative artist. It is a show in which there is an entanglement between the private and the public, Eros and the political, feminism and mass-media representations, political power and sexuality, the visual and the text.

Notes.

- 1) Rancière, Jacques. “Problems on Critical Art,” in *Participation*, edited by Claire Bishop, Cambridge, Massachusetts, The MIT Press, 2006, p.43.
- 2) Gangitano, Lia. “Lutz Bacher. My Secret Life” in *PS1 MoMA Spring 2009 Newspaper*, New York, 2009, w/p.

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## My Secret Life: Lutz Bacher

### Lia Gangitano

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Lutz Bacher, *Closed Circuit*, 1997-2000. Digital video, 40 mins. Image courtesy of Ratio 3, San Francisco

Although Lutz Bacher, since the mid-1970s, has engaged in practices that resist stylistic categorisation, imply assumed identities and reject the necessity for epic art statements, it seems that her work, either because or in spite of these efforts, is both monumental and highly personal in its intensity.

Reviewing Bacher's projects sequentially, variations (from still to moving, spatial to flat, silent to loud) indicate that the image, although persistent in its mirroring and shaping of experience, is also consistently engaged in a process of imminent breakdown. A deliberate subversion of apparent 'signature' style is perhaps related to the unstable status of the image that Bacher seeks to insinuate throughout her practice.

While her early work in still photography and its various methods of reproduction, such as *The Lee Harvey Oswald Interview* (1976) or *Sex With Strangers* (1986), delineated a constellation of concerns involving 'authorship, gender, sexuality, violence and power', they also served to confound easy allocations of labels - feminist, for example - due to their cool aggression and vague authority.<sup>1</sup> Hiring others to execute her paintings and drawings for *Playboys* (1991-94), or appropriating mass-produced imagery and text for works such as *Jokes* (1987-88) drew a certain general branding of Bacher as a 'mysterious California conceptualist', but this postmodern label was resisted by her deliberate migration from strict methodologies (of appropriation, for example) to other ways of working.<sup>2</sup>

However, Bacher's alignment with the presumed depthlessness of the appropriated image (as infinite copy) is thrown into further question when her body of work is considered to succumb to the corrupting effects of 'real-time'. It seems that Bacher considered this question all along. Beginning with her subtle mediation of images and texts taken from such popular sources such as pulp fiction, self-help manuals, pornographic magazines, celebrity interviews and gossip columns, she has put the sources of her work through some form of physical or psychic 'damage'. While she has, during the same period, worked in image- and text-based 'flat' work such as *Jackie and Me* (1989), *Playboys* and *Jokes*, as well as time-based video pieces - *Huge Uterus* (1989), *Olympiad* (1997), *Closed Circuit* (1997-2000) and *Crimson & Clover (Over & Over)* (2003) - she has addressed in both the same set of concerns. The processes of illumination and obliteration (of image, of subject, of author) are consistent, perhaps cumulative across media and time-frames.

*From the beginning my work in video has used long, unedited recordings. This reflects a bias towards 'real time' task-type processes, which incorporate 'chance' occurrences while embracing the continuous and the sustained. At the same time I have made strategic use of repeated fragments or other circumstantial disruptions or breaks in the flow. I understand both of these tendencies as the inherent content and structure of video technology - the capacity to transmit or record 'anything' indefinitely and the inevitability of technical intervention, disruption, or breakdown.<sup>3</sup>*

The opportunity to exhibit *Huge Uterus* for the exhibition 'Spectacular Optical' at Thread Waxing Space, New York, in 1998 was the occasion of my first meeting with Lutz, instigated

by Simon Watson, who had shown the work in 1990.<sup>4</sup> Our discussions involved 'the weird conjunction of the conceptual and the visceral that we all juggle...', as she put it to me later.<sup>5</sup> The show explored the work of the filmmaker David Cronenberg, and Bacher's spare installation, made almost ten years earlier, was configured as 'body/monitor/hook-up' (with exposed cassette and videotape players, speakers and monitor). It included a six-hour unedited video recording of an operation on Lutz's own uterus, paired with a self-help soundtrack provided to help patients relax before surgery. Although in observable dialogue with historical precedents that made visible bodily limits through performative, real-time endurance works, *Huge Uterus* also complicates its visceral subject matter through medicalised distancing, mild language programming and stark presentation. By placing the viewer in a position of experiencing, at once, the interior of a body (the artist's), an eviscerated body (of equipment) and a disembodied voice, the work creates an undulating, yet unrelenting, sense of intangible unease.

Around this time, just prior to the exhibition of *Olympiad* in New York in 1998, I learned that Bacher's father worked in baseball, suggesting that she spent time in sports arenas while growing up.<sup>6</sup> This lent personal significance to her particular approach to stadiums, such as the one depicted in *Olympiad*. The installation of the silent, black-and-white video at Rupert Goldsworthy Gallery used a portable Sony lamp projector, producing an image that was dim and unassuming in scale. Yet this modesty, combined with relatively hidden biographical details, did not detract from *Olympiad*'s overwhelmingly large and menacing presence. Bacher noted:

*In the late 1990s I made a number of pieces that focus on urban space and monumental architecture with echoes of events cultural and political, and phenomena both technical and natural. Olympiad [is] a video record of a walk through the Olympic Stadium in Berlin [that] displays the sporadic signal glitches, stoppages, tracking problems, burnouts and other artefacts of a corrupted or damaged videotape. Paradoxically, this graphic degradation intensifies at the same time as it disturbs the classical aspirations of this haunted site.*<sup>7</sup>

It was perhaps this accidental, 'found' damage that led Bacher to notice similar effects in video post-production, specifically her use or exploitation of compression, or variable frame rates to 'interrupt image flow, modifying a "naturalistic" sense of things and movement as well as at the same time unhinging image from synch sound'.<sup>8</sup> Bacher further noted that the enhancement of the degraded image, with its 'implication of decay, dissolution, etc., goes all the way back to *Men at War* (1975) and *The Lee Harvey Oswald Interview*'.<sup>9</sup>

Bacher's restrained, yet comprehensive, interventions into these unassuming exhibition frameworks (the group exhibition 'Spectacular Optical' and the relatively small 17th Street gallery of Rupert Goldsworthy) spark an understanding of her particular pairing of work and context; but, more importantly, they elucidate Bacher's exacting practice of adapting specific works to their exhibitor. To call this a 'collaboration' with curators or dealers seems almost too impersonal, and in the late 1990s Bacher took this process to an entirely deeper, more symbiotic level with the works that would follow.

Bacher's long-term affiliation with Pat Hearn Gallery (with solo exhibitions including 'Playboys' in 1993, 'Do You Love Me?' in 1995, and 'Men at War' in 2000) comprised the vast 'content' of *Closed Circuit*, one of her most enduring projects to date. Having worked closely with Hearn in the mid-1990s, my numerous visits to the gallery in subsequent years would be presided over by a static video camera positioned above the desk in Hearn's private office, feeding real-time surveillance video to a monitor in the passageway of the public exhibition space (from October 1997 through July 1998). The general historical precedents for this time-based installation (in durational performance, site-responsive installation and closed-circuit and surveillance video works) were apparent. But this project unfolded in its afterlife into a demonstration of the intimate differentiation between making work with, or with the permission of, someone else, and making work that could only be made for that person - in this case, Pat Hearn.

*Closed Circuit is the 40-minute digital animation of video stills taken from a year of time-lapse video recordings, which show a fixed camera perspective of the office of my NY art dealer, Pat Hearn. In the autumn of the year the animation unfolds in narrative - like sequences around the working interactions of the woman at the centre of the universe of her small office. Into the winter and spring this orderly and legible context is transformed by a changeable light source and disrupted by the rapidly accelerating montage. Finally, in the heat of the summer our main protagonist and the space in which she now fleetingly appears have transmuted to a suspension of glowing translucent images which are no longer animated by nor anchored to the former reality - where we began - 40 minutes ago - a year ago.*<sup>10</sup>

The first presentation of the completed *Closed Circuit* installation occurred at the Whitney Museum of American Art for the exhibition 'BitStreams' in 2001, seven months after Hearn's death.<sup>11</sup> The video, silent, with time-code dates and images of the closely-framed confines of Hearn's office space, was shown on a 20-inch LCD monitor suspended in a small rectangular room. During my first viewing of the piece, I was joined in this room only by Hearn's husband, the equally legendary art dealer, Colin de Land. Bacher's intensive, frame-by-frame distillation of still images from this particular year of time-lapse motion video created an altogether different sense of space and time; this, and the image of the woman on screen rendered us motionless for the 40-minute duration of the piece. Later, Bacher would write:



At the Oscars the man from *The Incredibles* [Brad Bird, director, 2004] said, "Animation is about creating the illusion of life", and of course I thought of you and *Closed Circuit* and the scene of the room (inside the room) with Colin.<sup>12</sup>

Bacher's notes from the period in which *Closed Circuit* was made mainly cite Adorno's aesthetic theory, particularly ideas about organic/inorganic imagery, technical imperfection and issues of transparency. In relation to the second half of *Closed Circuit*, she highlighted the following passage, which was an epigraph from Louis Aragon: "The whole useless body was invaded by transparency. Little by little the body turned to light. [...] And the person was no longer anything but a sign among the constellations."<sup>13</sup> From the first to the second half of *Closed Circuit*, the transition from the visceral to the conceptual is once again dramatised - in this case, a shift to some other type of inorganic image emerges due to the repositioning of a desk lamp. This light, together with the faster montage, causes a slippage from the naturalistic image and narrative cohesion, to the point at which the person at the centre of the story, Hearn, and her personal history recedes, literally, into a large field of light. As this moment unfolds, the sense that someone is leaving the room becomes palpable - the piece, once built on a lived symbiosis, has now been transformed into a crystalline work. No longer an organic process structured around a 'we', the work ultimately reaches an inorganic form.

Bacher's long history of affiliation with Pat Hearn and Colin de Land - she exhibited at de Land's American Fine Arts in 2003 and 2004 - also provides the elegiac context for the single-channel video installation *Crimson & Clover (Over & Over)* (2003). The video recreates one of the performances in a memorial concert for de Land by the band Angelblood. An epic rendition of the classic rock song, Bacher's video begins amidst the chaos of an interminable sound check on stage at CBGB, New York's legendary punk club.<sup>14</sup> Gradually, over the course of thirty unedited minutes, this gritty tangle of performers, equipment and screaming feedback mutates into an ecstatically focused collaboration among a searching camera, piercing guitars, whispering vocalists and shimmering stage lights. In the process, this messy territory and repetitious refrain transform into something unexpectedly eloquent and sublime. Fulfilling the age-old desire for synaesthesia - *Crimson & Clover (Over & Over)* functions as an extended family portrait, recombining personal and formal elements that span Bacher's career.

As the video moves from recognisable figures towards increasing detail, a glowing white 'horizon' line and dust particles suspended in a strangely coloured atmosphere punctuate this epic terrain. Sound undergoes a parallel evolution, from crackling feedback and partial melodies, to conclude with the plaintive refrain of voices and guitar: 'you just have to love her, over and over, over and over, crimson and clover'. Video and soundtrack are deployed as an accumulation of fleeting moments in an unending process, whereby increasing abstraction, not unlike the transparency that haunts *Closed Circuit*, comes to signify an unrepresentable immanence.

— Lia Gangitano

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#### Footnotes

1. Maura Reilly, 'Lutz Bacher at American Fine Arts and Participant Inc', Art inAmerica, April 2005.↑
2. Walter Robinson, 'Weekend Update', Artnet Magazine, 5 February 2003: 'Playboy too in the back room at American Fine Arts on West 22nd Street, where mysterious California conceptualist Lutz Bacher has one of her 1993 blowups of a Vargas girl done by sign painters for hire. Who doesn't remember the fuss that greeted this particular act of feminist appropriation? [...] In the front is a videotape, Manhatta, a digitally fractured aerial tour of Manhattan island. Lutz's Closed Circuit, a video year in-the-life of the late art dealer Pat Hearn, was acquired by the Metropolitan Museum, of all places.' See <http://www.artnet.com/Magazine/reviews/Wrobinson/robinson2-5-03.asp> (last accessed on 25 November 2007).↑
3. Lutz Bacher, unpublished artist statement, 2002.↑
4. 'Spectacular Optical', Thread Waxing Space, New York, 28 May-18 July 2008.↑
5. Lutz Bacher, correspondence with the author, 3 March 2005.↑
6. 'Olympiad', Rupert Goldsworthy Gallery, New York, 18 April-16 May 1998.↑
7. Lutz Bacher, unpublished artist statement, 1998/2002.↑
8. Lutz Bacher, 'Hover Clutch', compilation of artist's notes, n.d.: 'This scan converter derived post "effect" I named the "hover clutch" because of the suspended movement produced ... on [a] computer monitor while entering digital video - at first my video editor maintained that it isn't possible to record [it] as it is not an effect, merely a playback anomaly, but he eventually figured out how to record the anomaly and later purchased a scan converter to perform the process...'↑
9. Ibid.↑
10. L. Bacher, artist statement, 2002, op. cit.↑
11. 'BitStreams', Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 22 March-10 June 2001.↑
12. Lutz Bacher, correspondence with the author, 1 March 2005.↑
13. Quoted in Shierry Weber Nicholson, 'Subjective Aesthetic Experience and its Historical Trajectory', *Exact Imagination, Late Work: On Adorno's Aesthetics*, Cambridge and London: The MIT Press, 1997, p.38.↑
14. 'Crimson & Clover' was released by Tommy James & the Shondells in 1968.↑

