

"And can you tell me, *tovarishch*,"

Time to rip down the curtain.

This little Russian *teeleh*, this dwarf, was playing with him.

"You can trust me *dushka*;

I will not tell anyone."

"*Vspyshka gneva*,"

"Total loss of control."

the well-documented *besnovati* emerges, the demoniac."

"Your plan. It is *genial'nyi*, ingenious.

"*Nevezhda*, ignoran

All right,



You are here and you have me and we are daring and desperate and dangerous operatives saving the world and planning the destruction of evil

B L U E W A V E
L u t z B a c h e r

Organized by Monica Majoli
October 5 to December 14, 2019, University Art Gallery & Contemporary Arts Center Gallery



Rocket, 2018, Color photograph printed on vinyl, 10 x 40 feet

Throughout her unorthodox career, Lutz Bacher determined the values that would define her practice and the terms of its circulation. Her surprising decision to undertake a significant, multimedia installation at a university gallery rather than at a museum or high-profile gallery, was committed to at the same moment it spontaneously occurred, during a casual studio visit with me—an artist and longtime friend. Her choice demonstrated her ceaseless drive to stay closely aligned with the freedom that fueled her work.

Taking shape over the seven months before her unforeseen death of a heart attack on May 14th, 2019, the composition of work on view is characteristic of the alchemy that defined Bacher's enigmatic practice. The particular selection and placement of works in this exhibition—three of the four are new—were determined in totality by the artist. *Blue Wave* is the final multimedia exhibition she created in a career that spanned over forty years.

Rocket (2018), situated in the lobby of the Contemporary Arts Center building, is a work that was originally commissioned for and exhibited at SITE Santa Fe (2018) and serves as the opening salvo for the composition of work in **BLUE WAVE Lutz Bacher**. The American rocket lies lamely, in ordered sections on a grassy field, much like wreckage reconstructed for clues to a loss. No longer the potent symbol of American progress and world power, instead the U.S. rocket is a husk to be examined, its fault lines exposed. The sculptural iteration of this installation, I decided posthumously, inspired by Bacher's use of the shaped banner and the lens distortions in the image itself. I was familiar as well with her past work that

used ramps and wedges, and her overall embrace of phenomenological glitches.

Moskva (2019), installed in the Contemporary Arts Center Gallery, is a trilogy of three books Bacher created through cutting, pasting, occasionally white-outing, and then Xeroxing and scanning collaged text culled from Russian spy novels she regularly consumed. Lutz Bacher is known for extending the concept of the Readymade through her strangely affecting use of found materials and objects. Yet, the things she

made (her definition and designation) held particular value for her. *Moskva* is one of the most epic of her made objects, harkening back to her seminal work *The Lee Harvey Oswald Interview* (1976). *Moskva* is a stand-alone work in her oeuvre for its scale (96 unique prints) and its handmade quality in two-dimensional form.

Bacher's books are installed as she designated the pages would read, chronologically, from left to right. The fragmented nature of the narrative she drew compounds the disjointed

voice of the author, further confuses translation, and increases the conspiratorial quality of the tales. Spy fiction is a genre born in the early 20th century, a period when fascism and communism were arising proceeding World War II. The language in Bacher's scrambled text is redolent with historical romance, eroticism conjoined with power, camp, melodrama, and metaphors, all typical of this literary form. Within the complex poetics of its visceral text, Bacher embeds personal references to past works and exhibition venues for close followers of her work. Her books are ironic for their emphatic unreadability. While the books' content is opaque, the tone of Books 1, 2, and 3 grow markedly agitated through formal complexity, as the scraps of previous books become the ground or punctuation for increasingly abstract, pictographic, and diagrammatic pages. Geometric interventions act as an expressive stand-in for the redaction of classified documents. Invoking intrigue and nefarious plots involving Russia and America is particularly pointed as the United States and the world at large anticipated the revelations of the Mueller report and the possible consequences of its release. Having never installed this multipart work, in preparation for the exhibition, Bacher enlisted Exhibition Designer Cole Root, formerly with Greene Naftali Gallery, New York, to assist in its inaugural installation. Bacher's verbal descriptions and particular notes of instruction guided us as we realized its final configuration.

The two-channel video projection *Blue Wave* (2019) was shot by Bacher from her apartment balcony in the Lower East Side in New York over several days in November 2018. On November 5th, 2018, the day of the mid-term election in the United States, as political possibilities hung in the balance,



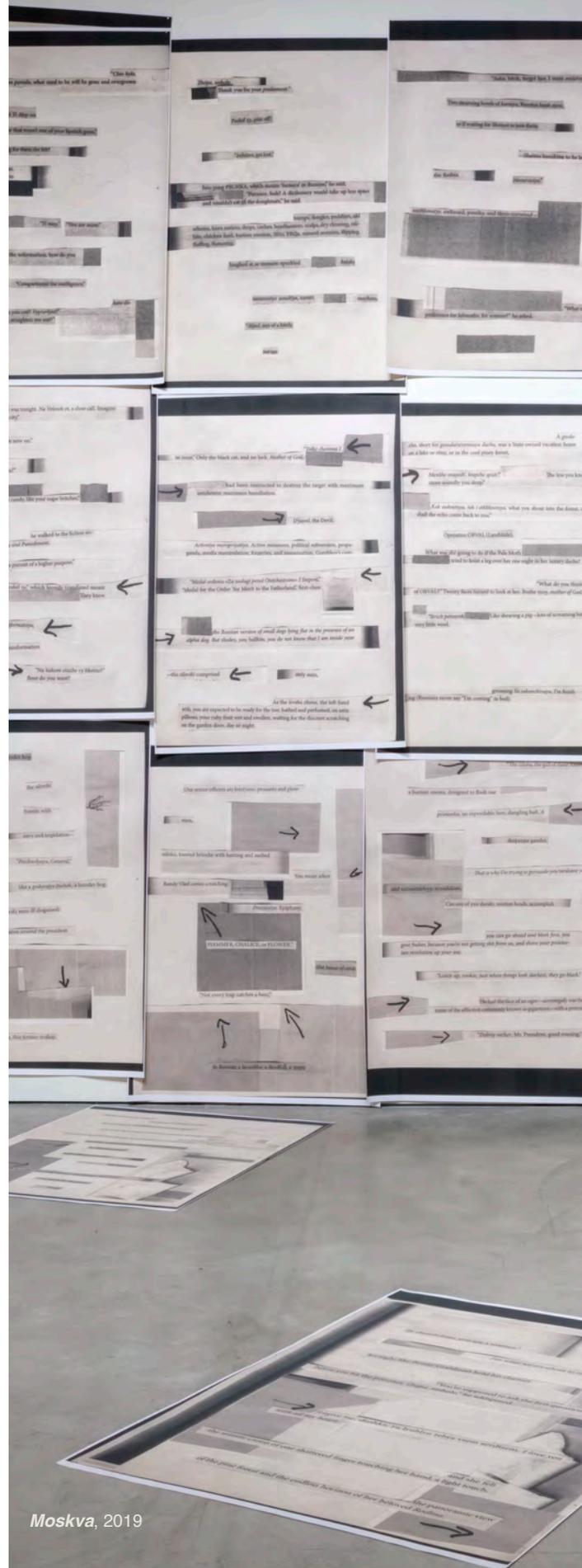
Modules, 2018-2019, HD video, color, sound, 30 videos, total run time 2:05:46

Bacher noted that at a nearby construction site a massive blue tarp billowed in high winds. She documented the occurrence briefly and circulated the video in a text among friends as a positive omen that the day might deliver a blue wave, coined by the media, to signify a tidal shift in the balance of power between the Democratic and Republican parties in the House of Representatives and Senate. The tarp quickly disappeared and once it reappeared for a series of days, Bacher set out to document the event throughout its duration.

The dual cornered, doppelganger projection of *Blue Wave*, as installed in the University Art Gallery, creates a doubling of refusal of the architecture itself. The projected image and its placement assert the two-dimensionality of a flat-screen; momentarily dissolving the three-dimensionality of the room. Thus, the blue wave of Democratic victory takes on the appearance of a mirage, a future fortune, or a metaphysical feat based on the perceptual shift owed to Bacher's singular decision regarding image placement. The choreography of the moving camera proclaims the artist's body central to this phenomenon. As Bacher pointedly moves the camera, the swirl of the tarp buffeted by strong winds is echoed, and her movements destabilize the solidity of the buildings in the frame. The fragmentation within the image allows the three-dimensionality of the gallery architecture to emerge. The corners of the room appear and dissolve visually as the image loses equilibrium. The amplified ambient sound of the original recording transforms the wind into an unrecognizable and immersive physical presence in the gallery. Jason Hirata, Bacher's studio assistant, was instrumental in relaying critical studio experiments undertaken with her in preparation for this exhibition, which determined its installation.

Modules (2018-2019) are a series of thirty short videos that play continuously over two hours, acting as a chronicle of years of Bacher's exhibition-making, installations, and random studio research. Her primary engagement with the site of exhibition led her in the instance of this installation to think specifically about the concept of administering lessons to university students. In viewing and situating *Modules*, it was essential to Bacher that the viewer could not alter the pacing or ordering of viewership of the lessons. Notably enforcing her control over the process of intake of the material, Bacher additionally specified that *Modules* should be shown on a monitor only, not projected onto a larger screen. The viewer/student is schooled with tangible limitations of independence and physical mobility while undertaking her instruction.

– Monica Majoli



Moskva, 2019



Blue Wave, 2019, HD video projection, color, sound, 13:59

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