

Sturtevant, the surname to Elaine.

In 2004, she is in Frankfurt to deliver a lecture on her work at the Frankfurt Museum für Moderne Kunst. Summarizing a practice of nearly 50 years, she says:

The brutal truth of the work is that it is not copy.

The push and shove of the work is the leap from image to concept.

The dynamics of the work is that it throws out representation.[1]

Sturtevant's eagerness to distance her work from the term "copy" stems from a radical and unwavering commitment to what it does in the present. She was never interested in producing exact replicas of well-known artworks, but in forcing the viewer to look beyond the work's surface into its "understructure," where the "insistent murmur of resemblance" is most resonant. Here, the status of "copy," "replica" or "fake" always leaps into its opposite-- simultaneously folding in and out of itself. Sturtevant's project was always rooted pragmatically in the redefinition of 'originality' through 'source-work' and art's potential to radicalize the social order.

Early in her career, she omits her given name in favor of Sturtevant, a gender-neutral moniker that labels artworks and exhibitions with an exteriority of sameness and an interiority of otherness. The dialectic disrupts assumed structures of power to foreground the "uncertain content" of "pure masculinity and femininity" as theoretical constructions. The question as to how her objects and images should be received, processed and interpreted is never constant but persistently destabilized by its own terms. Taking to task the immediacy of appearance, she transforms the potentiality of embedded content in an artwork into an anxious play of singular/plural identities.

Not an appropriationist, Sturtevant asserts that a "copy" has the "absolute beauty of looking just like the real thing. But copy conceals dangerous gaps." [2] She situates herself comfortably in these chasms of doubling and re-doubling, exposing the power of thought by way of repetition. Charging toward the not-so-distant past in the production of her "work of a work" (many of her artworks were authored shortly after the source), Sturtevant outpaces the history of her sources into individuation. The objects she creates are things that are not something else, but echo the familiar.

Sturtevant (who died in 2014) lived and worked in Paris as of the 1990s. In 2010, her work was featured in a significant exhibition at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris. The following year, she received the Golden Lion Lifetime Achievement Award at the 54th Venice Biennale. In 2012, the exhibition *Image Over Image* was presented at the Moderna Museet in Stockholm and the Kunsthalle in Zurich. The Serpentine Gallery in London devoted an exhibition to her work in 2013.

In 2014, the MMK Museum für Moderne Kunst in Frankfurt, the Albertina in Vienna, as well as the Hamburger Bahnhof in Berlin presented Sturtevant, *Drawing Double Reversal*, which brought together for the first time a unique ensemble of drawings produced throughout her career. That same year, the MoMA in New York inaugurated Sturtevant's first major American retrospective, which was then shown in 2015 at the MOCA in Los Angeles.

[1] Sturtevant, 'Shifting Mental Structures', lecture delivered in 2004 at the Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main, quoted in U. Kittelman and M. Kramer, 'Preface', in U. Kittelman, M. Kramer and L. Macaulen (ed.), *Volume 1: Sturtevant - The Brutal Truth*, p.19.

[2] Sturtevant "Inherent Vice or Vice Versa". in *Sturtevant: The Razzle Dazzle of Thinking*, Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris and JRP Ringier, 2010, p. 29.

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