

DINNER SERVICE

Wrecking Ball

Photography by
Volker Conradus

Words by
Gisela Williams

When *Lena Henke* enters a room, she looks at the walls, the floors, the objects on the counter, those discarded in the trash, and she sees more than just interior design: She sees history, power dynamics, traces of memories, boundless sources for inspiration.

Lena Henke can trace much of her inspiration to three almost lifelong obsessions: her childhood in the country, near a farm in North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany; urban architecture and master plans; and quirky sculpture parks created by one person. Ultimately, these creative triggers reflect a compulsion to excavate and examine the worlds and systems—big and small—that have impacted her life.

"I grew up working outside, feeding animals, cleaning stalls," the artist recalls inside her studio in Berlin, where she splits her time between New York. "I loved horses, but I could not wait to get a driver's license and move to a city." In fact, it was by selling her horse that she was able to buy a car. When she made it to the Städelschule art school in Frankfurt, she sold the car to buy a computer for making art.

120

Wrecking Ball
Family Style, September 3, 2024
Gisela Williams



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After graduating in 2010, Henke moved to New York City to kick off her career. One of her first shows was a kind of D.I.Y., bootleg exhibition that she organized with about 20 artist friends under the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway (BQE) where they set up installations and sculptures on dirty asphalt among pre-existing trash, like an unofficial and temporary art park. “That was when I got really into Robert Moses,” Henke says, referring to the infamous urban planner who essentially created the modern blueprint of New York City, including the BQE, which razed a path through several working-class neighborhoods. “He was so brutal. He wasn’t really interested in people; he was more interested in movement,” she explains in a video interview for the Swiss Institute about the work. “He created this outline, or this blueprint for New York, and I think this is what I am so interested in.”

For various reasons related to family and healthcare, Henke and her husband, the politician Dr. Friedrich Paulsen, decided to return to Germany at the start of Covid. She kept her studio in Bushwick, a space in a building that many of her artist friends also work in, just in case. Berlin was the obvious choice, and Henke was thrilled when a friend offered her a small studio in an Alvar Aalto building within the Hansaviertel, an iconic, protected neighborhood near Berlin’s Tiergarten park. The area was developed in the 1950s as a “city of tomorrow” by today’s most celebrated mid-century architects, from Walter Gropius to Le Corbusier.

“There’s an Oscar Niemeyer building,” Henke points out through her window, across the park, towards a structure on stilts. She gestures to a high-rise to the left of it: “And there, a Johannes van den Broek and Bakema.” Most people still lionize this starchitect-studded master plan—so much so that it’s almost impossible to find a space here. During the pandemic, with copious extra time to think and research in her new studio, Henke took a deep dive into the history of her new surroundings. Fairly quickly, she felt intrigued by the small kitchens. In the Giraffe building, a 17-story high-rise designed by Klaus Müller-Rehm and Gerhard Siegmann, separate wings are designated for men and women; the women’s studios are equipped with a full kitchen, while the men’s apartments only contain small cooking cabinets.

In the universal embrace of mid-century architecture, we rarely talk about the systemic misogyny that is often tangled up in the design. This became very clear to Henke while looking at the kitchens in the buildings around her, all of which were conceived by men. “Many of the kitchens are closed off, obscured with a curtain,” the artist describes, “hiding the gendered labor.” She also researched the kitchen equipment, more than half of which

was designed by German design hero Dieter Rams for Braun. That became the starting point for her 2022 exhibition “*Auf dem Asphalt botanisieren gehen*” (‘To go botanizing on the asphalt’) at Klosterfelde Edition, a gallery and publisher in Berlin that produces editions and publications for respected international artists.

Using textured rubber—which resembles asphalt, one of Henke’s favorite materials—and a 3-D printer, she replicated four of the Braun machines, from a mixer to a citrus press, that she found in the original kitchens. But the artist made them bigger and designed them with obvious flaws. The coffee machine is leaking; liquid explodes out of the mixer. Her remakes are a commentary on the ultimate failure of the design of systems that exclude women, “like female organic fluids oozing and spilling over and threatening the perfect, modern design of the objects.” Through this research, Henke also came across a video of a “kitchen designed for men,” by luxury kitchen company Poggenpohl in collaboration with Porsche. It sparked both a book and an exhibition that closed in January of this year, called “Good Year” at the contemporary art museum Marta Herford, located in her home state.

Often this research materializes in multiple ways. “I have fun doing books,” she says, flipping through the manual of the Porsche kitchen that she created, with collages and actual slogans like “Prepare to be Seduced.” The exhibition at Marta was her version of a sleek Porsche “kitchen for men” prototype, an installation of stainless steel and crushed tires. At the entrance to the show was an enameled pot on a plinth. Its lid partly removed, the pot gave off the smell, describes Henke, of “wet cobblestones, grass, hay, and something dirty, like oiled fur or even the scent of an old gas station.” Adding an olfactory experience to her work was somewhat groundbreaking for the artist. Inspired by childhood memories of soup on the stove mixed with the smell of the rubber tires, the scent referred to her dreams of escape and racing away on the autobahn.

In her German studio, Henke gestures to an experimental configuration of shapes squeezed through the center of tires. Reflecting on her current fascination with rubber, she explains she’s, “very drawn to certain materials ... They often follow me around like a little family.” Speaking of—Henke and her husband recently had their first child, a baby girl. The new addition to Henke’s world is already influencing her work in various provocative ways. She gestures to a drawing on a desk and explains she has started to draw with both hands at the same time, illustrating her new reality of consecutively caring, physically and mentally, for two things: her now-two-year-old daughter and her art. On the paper, dual columns of bright red spirals stand next to each other, like two fires spinning.

“I am very drawn to certain materials ... They
often follow me around like a little family.”
— Lena Henke

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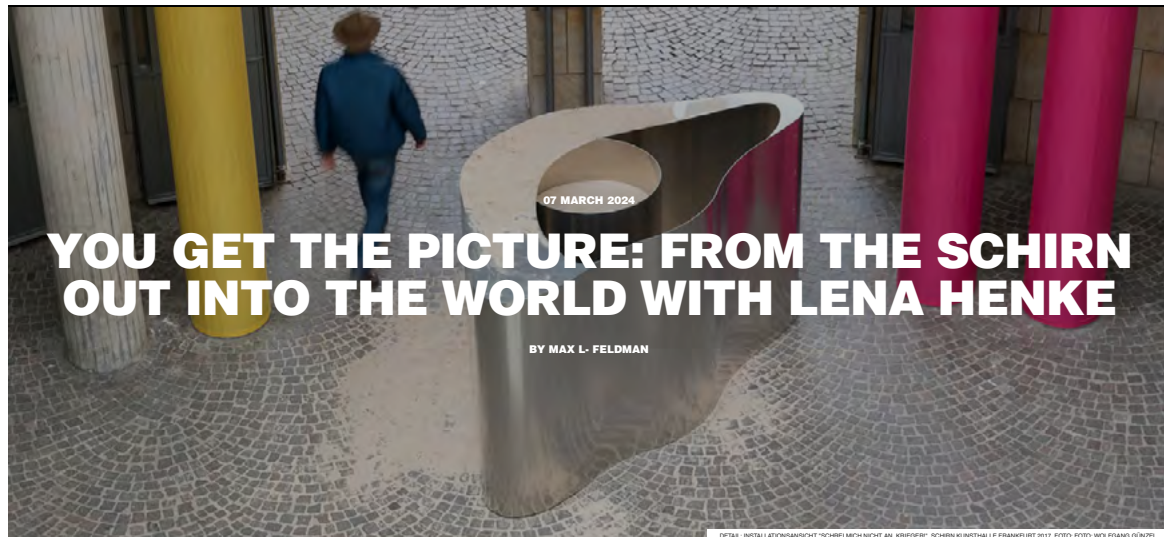
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You Get The Picture From The Schirn Out Into The World With Lena Henke

Schirn Mag, March, 2024

Max L-Feldman



The artist LENA HENKE already exhibited in the SCHIRN Rotunda in 2017. What are the secrets of her practice and where can you find her art today?

"I don't know," says Lena Henke, with a look of bemused mischief, "maybe I'm a fetishist!" Half-joking, she grins and looks up, as if searching for answers in her mind's eye, laughs, and shrugs it off. That's entirely appropriate. This isn't even the first time she's said this to me. She said it 5 years ago before the opening of her solo exhibition at LAYR, Vienna. It was funny back then, too. Both times, it provided a strange, crooked key to unlocking the secrets of her practice. But this was only clear the second time.

This characterises Henke's work: not just the jokes, but how she structures time so that what she's done only makes sense later. Analysing the gag gives us an insight into her practice. Her use of materials is always a response to the space they are in, physically and institutionally, making viewers question the way they normally use their senses, and renewing them by repositioning their bodies. This allows the different elements (materials and concepts, forms and places) to reflect each other, ultimately subverting the very idea of what is "inside" or "outside" a work of art at all.

Consider, for example, "**SCHREI MICH NICHT AN, KRIEGER! (DON'T SHOUT AT ME, WARRIOR!)**", for the SCHIRN Rotunda in 2017. Here, Henke placed two aluminium sculptures at each of the space's two entrances. The objects, open at the top, were filled with sand, as were the circular galleries surrounding the Rotunda. The sand then seeped into the sculptures, guided by rolling grills made of coarse-meshed metal, and the accidental (but still planned) actions of viewers, who influenced its circulation as they moved around the space. This made the true form of the aluminium objects – two oversized eyes – visible, but only if the viewer moved their own bodies or position in the museum space. The change in perspective thus gave them access to newly-visible combinations of shapes, colours, materials, lights, and reflections. The blunt implication is the pain of getting sand in your eye. The process by which Henke makes that point is more layered.



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DON'T SHOUT AT ME, WARRIOR! EXHIBITION VIEW SCHIRN KUNSTHALLE FRANKFURT 2017. PHOTO: WOLFGANG GÖNZEL

Just like her fetishism joke, “DON’T SHOUT AT ME, WARRIOR!” is an example of Henke’s process, whose structure we can find elsewhere: in “THEMOVE” at LAYR, Vienna a year later; in “Las Pozas” (2017), Henke’s contribution to the 2021 edition of Lichtenfels Sculpture; and “You and your vim” at Aspen Art Museum, Colorado (2023).

FROM THE SCHIRN TO VIENNA, LICHTENFELS AND COLORADO

She always starts off with the idea of something that the viewer can look at with their own eyes from a static position. In the case of the SCHIRN Rotunda, that’s the fact that the aluminium sculptures were there and how something Henke adds to the surrounding space completes them by changing them. Something the viewer couldn’t see at first (the sand, the filtering process), turns the original form into something new, concealing the first iteration and blocking viewers from being able to unsee the change. The work thus only fully reveals itself later, after the viewer has gone through a process guided by Henke, adapting their bodies to the space, which becomes part of the work.

In short, Henke always adds one external condition to the viewer’s simple act of looking, which they didn’t question at first, that permanently changes the work’s form and relation to the space around it. In the case of a work that is completed by the addition of the extra element, which requires us to do some work to have our vision completed for us, and then questioning the way we see anything in the first place. The extra conditions were the sand and the space of the SCHIRN Rotunda itself. However, the concept for this piece – including both the aluminium eye sculptures and the transformation caused by a secret third element – were built on yet another unseen layer: “Las Pozas” (2017).

"LAS POZAS"

This piece isn’t just a different or earlier iteration of the staring metal eyes, but another expression of the same conditions. In this case, Henke used mirrors to do it: strategically placed on walls and trees, the angles shaped the viewer’s gaze so they could look directly into the sculptures in a way that would otherwise have been impossible from the angle they were first standing in.



LENA HENKE, LAS POZAS, 2017, INSTALLATION VIEW, LICHTENFELS SCULPTURE 2021. COURTESY: THE ARTIST, LAYR VIENNA.



LENA HENKE, LAS POZAS, 2017, INSTALLATION VIEW, LICHTENFELS SCULPTURE 2021. PHOTO: MAXIMILIAN ANELLI-MONTI, COURTESY: THE ARTIST, LAYR VIENNA.

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LENA HENKE, LAS POZAS, 2017, ALUMINIUM, INSTALLATION VIEW, LICHTENFELS SCULPTURE 2021, PHOTO: MAXIMILIAN ANELLI-MONTI, COURTESY: THE ARTIST, LAYR VIENNA

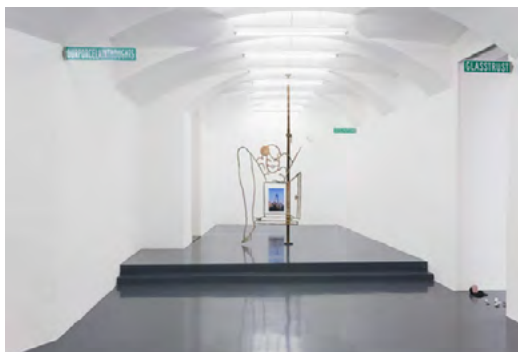
It doesn't matter that "Las Pozas" is from the same year as the SCHIRN Rotunda but shown later because the principle is this same. However, where it was the viewer's movement around the SCHIRN Rotunda that generated another process, "Las Pozas" relies on Henke creating a parallax view. This completes our act of seeing for us, and then fulfils the way we see Henke's other work – including "DON'T SHOUT AT ME WARRIOR!" – once we are aware of it, serving as a metaphor for Henke's artistic and the conditions under which we see things at all.

This structure is evident, again, in "THEMOVE" (Aspen) (2023), from "You and your vim" at Aspen Art Museum, Colorado. Here, however, we get not only the visual structure from "Las Pozas" and the SCHIRN rotunda, but the repetition of the sculpture from "THEMOVE" at LAYR, Vienna, and the bodily positioning needed to complete the work. The centrepiece of that exhibition was "THEMOVE" (2018), a bronze sculpture of a female body with a door where her vagina would normally be. If the viewer positioned their body in a very specific part of the space, they could see "Freedom Tower" (2018) a digital print of the New York City skyline, dominated by the blunt phallic imagery of One World Trade Center.

THEMOVE" (Aspen) renews the site-specificity of the Vienna sculpture. This time, however, the viewer's gaze looks not onto another image, but the museum's architecture and geographic setting. In the foreground, the reflective aluminium fence that surrounds the outdoor terrace, and with it a distorted reflection of the very sculpture we are looking at; then a functional-looking one-story building; beyond that a different version of an "American" landscape – not the crowded urban jungle of New York City, but the natural sublime of the snowy Rocky Mountains, crowded by fir trees.

THE ESSENTIALLY FETISHISTIC NATURE OF LOOKING AT ART

If, however, the viewer looks at "THEMOVE" (Aspen) from yet another angle, they can see three examples from the "Combustions" series (2023), all of which are oil engravings on laser-etched leather – she discovered a technique for how to do this – based on photographs of bare male feet squeezed ungracefully into exploded condoms. This brings us back to her joke: "I'm looking for the connection between different fetishistic items," she says, "But it's not about sex. It's about something else: how you go through life, and the surfaces of materials and objects".



INSTALLATIO VIEW, LENA HENKE, THEMOVE, LAYR, 2018, COURTESY THE ARTIST, LAYR VIENNA.



INSTALLATION VIEW, LENA HENKE, YOU AND YOUR VIM, ASPEN ART MUSEUM, 2023, PHOTO: DANIEL PÉREZ

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DON'T SHOUT AT ME, WARRIOR EXHIBITION VIEW SCHIRN KUNSTHALLE FRANKFURT 2017.
PHOTO: WOLFGANG GÜNZEL

This is crucial, emphasising how this dynamic is present in all her work. It's not, then, that Lena Henke is a fetishist. Nor is anyone else. She is, rather, exposing the essentially fetishistic structure of looking at works of art. The eyes, vaginas, pole dancers, feet, or condoms are less important than the relation between the gaze, the object, and the space, mediated by the artist, to make a basic point about what counts as "inside" or "outside" the work. What we think is inside is only there because of some extra thing Henke brings to it from the "outside", but we can only see it for ourselves once she's made us move – that includes our bodies and the space we occupy.

The SCHIRN works, for example, were placed in a covered area in between the museum and the café. This repositions the museum-goer's fetishistic gaze by emphasising the relationship between spaces for art and non-art (in this case, eating, drinking, chatting, looking at souvenirs from the gift shop). The conditions in Lichtenfels don't require a critique of art's commercial status, but they do make other physical demands on the viewer, since they have to go out of the way to see it for themselves before Henke upends the very act of seeing. In Aspen, meanwhile, the works were placed on the rooftop terrace – Henke reminds us that such a space is "between a white cube and outdoor space" – that part of typical museum architecture, looking out over the epitome of raw, wild nature that humans can't tame by building things on it.

The link between all these exhibitions is then very clear. Henke exposes us not just to the static, fascinated gaze that is expected of us when we go to see works of art, but a suppleness to the act of looking. We have to be willing to let someone restructure our gaze for us. This is a far more comfortable commitment when it's a work of art, but it has lessons to teach us about how to do this in non-artistic situations, too.

USING OUR FEET AS MUCH AS OUR EYES

This sneaky playfulness is what leads the artist to, say, steal leathery works from deserted ranches in Utah, or risk burying SCHIRN's **Magritte** exhibition – on display at the same time as her Rotunda intervention – in sand. It's the kind of playfulness that secretly, laughingly guides the viewer's act of looking and walking as they create "desire paths" as they move between the works. And that means using our feet as much as our eyes. You get the picture.

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"It's All Fear, No?": Lena Henke in Conversation With Urs Fischer

Interview, January 3, 2024

Urs Fischer

Interview

"It's All Fear, No?": Lena Henke, in Conversation With Urs Fischer

By [Urs Fischer](#)

January 3, 2024



Lena Henke, photographed in her exhibition *Good Year* at MARTa Museum, Herford, 2023. © Gunnar Meier.

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Spread across three floors of the Aspen Art Museum are [John Chamberlain's](#) infamous sculptures of scrap car parts, deconstructed, crushed, and twisted. The man in charge of interpreting and contextualizing Chamberlain's body of work is none other than the visual artist and sculptor [Urs Fischer](#). “It almost sounds a little Christian, but don’t do to others what you don’t want to be done to yourself,” he jokes as he explained to [Lena Henke](#) his curatorial philosophy when approaching a new show of Chamberlain's works, *THE TIGHTER THEY'RE WOUND, THE HARDER THEY UNRAVEL*. Henke, the fellow sculptor, photographer, and visual artist, opened her own show, *You and your vim*, on the same day, right overhead on the museum's rooftop. Henke's exhibition tackles her long-standing fascination with figure and environment and features a soaring bronze figure of a woman and an oversized mirror that reflect visitors legs back to them as they explore. Once they returned home from Aspen, the two artists got on Zoom to discuss Chamberlain's legacy, how their tastes have changed with age, and the solitary nature of art-making.—EMILY SANDSTROM

LENA HENKE: Good to see you. Did you get back okay from Aspen?

URS FISCHER: Yeah. I caught a cold, but the rest is good.

HENKE: Oh my God, I got sick, too. I had a 15-hour flight back and arrived here and my baby is sick. I'm going from one extreme to the other, from the mountain ski resort, very exclusive, back to cab work.

FISCHER: It's always an interesting contrast. On one hand, you change diapers and the evening before you had opening.

HENKE: I know, yes. I never thought that would happen, but here we are and I quite like it. I wanted to say, and maybe this sounds cheesy, but you really put fresh blood into [John] Chamberlain for me. I think it was the best show of Chamberlain works I've ever seen. I think it's an epic, epic show. When I had my long flight back, I looked through the catalog and I thought about how important it is for you to curate, because you have been doing it since you started your career, right, basically 30 years ago?

FISCHER: It's similar to looking at works by others. You can learn for yourself, for your own practice. It's interesting to try to understand what the whole thing is actually about. Not that you will ever have a conclusive answer, it's an ever-unfolding journey to me. When I was young, I was pretty opinionated about what's good and bad. But this order starts to disintegrate and you start to appreciate or see other things. I used to have a practice where I looked at works of artists I never liked.

HENKE: That's good, because you want to try to understand them.



John Chamberlain: THE TIGHTER THEY'RE WOUND THE HARDER THEY UNRAVEL, installation view. Courtesy of the Aspen Art Museum. Photo by Daniel Pérez.

FISCHER: Even things that are only 10 years old already look kind of irrelevant and stupid to you. I remember one of the first people I looked at was [Marc] Chagall. I never understood Chagall. Up in Zurich, they have this Chagall window, Chagall this, Chagall that. I just never understood. It always felt kitschy or something. But when you get into it, it's very beautiful. You allow yourself to explore a bit about what it is rather than the parameters you prop up for yourself. To curate the show with Tony Shafrazi was very

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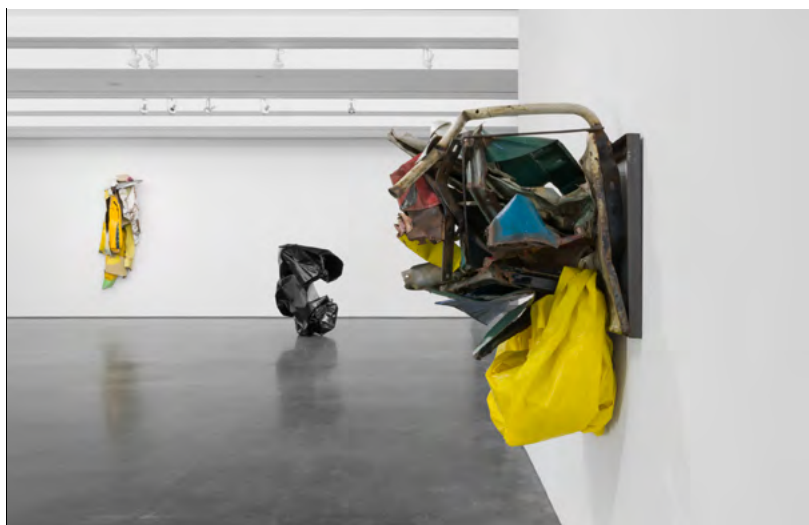
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different. That was much more about a sampler platter of a mythology of the New York art world. The works were well really chosen, but it was more about a story. The difference was that I was never tasked with the responsibility of working with another artist that is not alive anymore, you know?

HENKE: Yes.

FISCHER: An institution always has an educational thing. It’s not an experimental ground. You go there and you want to get a full menu. Going to a museum is almost like going to a banquet. You get the starter and you get the main dish and then you get the dessert. There is a kind of an order to that. It almost sounds a little Christian, but don’t do to others what you don’t want to be done to yourself. [Laughs] It’s about trying to make somebody’s work look as good as possible.



John Chamberlain: THE TIGHTER THEY'RE WOUND THE HARDER THEY UNRAVEL, installation view. Courtesy of the Aspen Art Museum. Photo by Daniel Pérez.

HENKE: Absolutely, that’s why I like to switch it. I started curating shows when I came to New York, 2011 or 2012, after the crash. Money came back in and I was so disappointed with the New York art scene, especially very easy, sellable works in shows. I was pretty bored. So I started curating these shows with a friend of mine with no budget at all, and we used the city as a backdrop. The first show was called Under the BQE [Brooklyn Queens Expressway]. And you know what I liked the most? The install and the de-install, because we had 20 artists, super young kids, but we also had well-known artists. This energy they had created, that was the best for me. I love that so much.

FISCHER: Yes, there is the communal aspect, too, the installation or working with people. I mean, I don’t particularly like making art as a practice because I like *people*.

HENKE: I get that from you.

FISCHER: A lot of what we do, we do alone. For a painter, you just lock yourself in your studio for 10 hours.

HENKE: Tell me about it.

FISCHER: I don’t do anything if I don’t think there is a need for it or a place for it. I don’t have a way to relax in my work, in a way. Because I like the communal part, the most fun I ever had with art was when I did this project *Yes* at the Geffen [Contemporary MOCA]. We had between 30 to 200 people everyday. All the divisions fell down and everybody had so much fun because you’re just doing something together. I’m a firm believer in synergy. Synergy is the key to anything.

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Lena Henke: You and your vim, installation view. Courtesy of the Aspen Art Museum. Photo by Daniel Pérez.

HENKE: Looking more into your work now, before Aspen, I realized now what it brings you, working with the community. When I saw your piece where you invite the public to come in and change the work, I didn’t get that. I was like, “Why?” I remember that piece on the Lower East Side, at JTT, right?

FISCHER: Oh, yeah.

HENKE: But now seeing the Geffen work, I really understand what you get out of it and I find it very impressive.

FISCHER: Well, there are two different things. One is the communal energy, as we said. The other is more a proposition. You have this work by [Aristide] Maillol, which I really always was a bit creeped out by. Most of his figures look like they’re a little too young, you know? Then at the very end of his life and as Europe slides into turmoil, he makes this fully mature woman that is kind of falling. It’s such a strong sculpture. To have this kind of figure that’s already distressed invites people to interact. We as humans are pretty strange when somebody shows weakness. You can respond in various ways. One is to care and to protect. Then what often happens is the insecurity throws people off, so some people do something nice with it and for other people it brings out aggression. They want to rip off an arm. You know, you could at any point repair the work as much as you could rip it apart. People like to tear things apart, and once things are a bit torn, they tear more and more. It’s like what we do to the planet.



Lena Henke: You and your vim, installation view. Courtesy of the Aspen Art Museum. Photo by Daniel Pérez.

HENKE: True, yes. It’s so interesting because the moment of fear pops up in several interviews with you. I looked back at the first interview you did with [Gavin \[Brown\]](#) in 2008, and he asked you that fear question: “Are you afraid of something?” I had this sentimental moment on the airplane as I was watching a movie and there was this quote by a monk that goes, “You should live neither in fear nor hope.” I was thinking maybe you would like that.

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FISCHER: Yes. [Laughs] Try to have children and not live in a monastery. But fear is always interesting. I mean, it’s all fear. No? You are at the mercy of your fear. Your fears go so deep, sometimes you don’t understand what they are. Like this morning I woke up and I had this dream. It was just a simple image, I fell to the floor and I was holding some things and then came this big dog. I am usually afraid of dogs, but I was not showing that I was afraid of the dog. Then the dog became kind of just a big dog, and it was good. [Laughs]

HENKE: That’s funny because I had a dream last week when I was reading so much about you, where I made a clay piece with you. I think it has to do with the fact that in 2018, when I prepared my show at the Kunsthalle in Zurich with Daniel Baumann, I was in awe going there because they have this archive of over 3,000 materials and you feel like an alcoholic in a wine shop. That’s where I saw your clay models. I was thinking about scale a lot and how I always need a reason or a concept in my work to relate to scale. When did you start working so large? What is your perfect scale? And how do you scale them up, the stamp clay pieces?

FISCHER: I don’t know. You do the same in your work. You think a lot in space, no?

HENKE: Yes.

FISCHER: I mean, we’ve been tossed into a world with a lot of large exhibition spaces. So, logically, we all respond to it, and the work gets bigger on average across the board. Some things just make sense when you’re in a spatial scenario. There is a physical scale, but there are also emotional scales. Sometimes, if you have a simpler image, maybe that contains itself, there are broken images that are kind of fractured where you move through.

HENKE: You said, “3D is reality somewhere.” I like that.

FISCHER: In a way, when you make a sculpture, you compete with the physical space. You don’t produce a two-dimensional image, but you can enter and see at any scale from a thumbnail, like a big cinematic projection in a way where you kind of engage into a dream. There’s not much dream in sculpture, as you know.

HENKE: That’s true. There’s a lot of dreams in the current book [*John Chamberlain Against the World*]. I was wondering if you could ever see these juxtapositions between Chamberlain and all the artists you put him together with from the past 100 years or so? Although I read in the book, Chamberlain preferred to be shown alone.

FISCHER: Yeah, that’s how it started with this book. A person like him, to me, being born 50 years later, always seemed kind of cool but old. [Laughs] Maybe it’s more of a visual formal orchestral concept that you kind of can communicate with on that level. But other than that, it is a part of history in a way, you know? So out of this came the idea, we juxtapose it with other artists. Some of them small, large, it could be an image, it could be a physical thing. A big problem we will all see unfolding more and more is the cost of putting on any institutional show. Like, a lot of the big retrospectives you have in museums will disappear entirely, like the Rothko show that was in Paris. That’s probably the last time someone could afford all of the insurance values to bring all of these works together.

HENKE: Absolutely.



John Chamberlain: THE TIGHTER THEY'RE WOUND THE HARDER THEY UNRAVEL, installation view. Courtesy of the Aspen Art Museum. Photo by Daniel Pérez.

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“It’s All Fear, No?”: Lena Henke in Conversation With Urs Fischer

Interview, January 3, 2024

Urs Fischer

FISCHER: When I grew up, not even that long ago, there were provincial museums that had a Van Gogh show or a Dali show, or whatever. These kinds of shows disappeared because of the costs. The cost of transport, insurance, the values, nobody wants to lend them. I realized pretty soon that’s a really uneconomical way of bringing a new context to Chamberlain’s work. Each thing would come with a courier and a fee or you will not get the good work. In the photo you get the best one. So, digitally is even easier, but the liberty of how you can send and juxtapose and share images, that’s what I love about books, still. I’m antiquated this way.

HENKE: And the book is free, which is a really cool move. Instead of shipping another Chamberlain work, you decided to print out the book and give it away.

FISCHER: I mean, I know you made books in the past.

HANKE: Yes, I made many books.

FISCHER: You gave me one manual that looks so beautiful, so you know how much time it takes to put that together.

HANKE: Absolutely. I wanted to take one last turn. I was thinking about cigarette boxes because my favorite room of your Chamberlain show is the foam room, the second room of the show. The foam works, especially the models, they’re so beautiful and inspiring. Can you talk a little bit about your idea about putting the foam works in the front and then you end with these two boxes?

FISCHER: Yes. I’ll give you a bit of context. He started using car parts in 57’, 58’, and then he thinks, “I’m going to move onto the next thing,” because, you know, you have endless new ways in front of you. I had two theories about the foam. One is, I think he started carving his couches and the foam is a lot of garbage, so he would probably tie it together. [Laughs] That’s a personal theory. And then the ducts, if you think in the context of the mid-sixties and him not being part of a minimalist movement, there is more of an honesty of materials, you leave things be. You don’t have a decorated sculpture, a painted sculpture, like a [Alexander] Calder, you don’t have a bronze cast. You use the *raw* thing. This is very different from the car parts, because they already have a story inherent in terms of their shape, their paint, and then the force he applied to that. But these things, the duct and the foam, they’re kind of just raw materials where he kind of left his not very refined mark. One is just tied together and the other one was crushed at the place around the corner from his house. So he bought these ducts and they were just crushed together.

HENKE: I heard many rumors about the ducts. Some of them are from [Donald] Judd, who was a big fan of his work and tried to understand Chamberlain. He had some leftovers. That’s a rumor, right?

FISCHER: Could be, I don’t know. But they’re industrial products. They were new at the time they were crushed, just left bare, unpainted. In that room, it’s all simple action taken to some raw thing. And funny enough, the raw thing travels through time and takes on a lot of patina, which gives it his history. Not dissimilar to the car paint, but the patina brings in the history to the action.

HENKE: Another rumor is that he would always crumble the cigarette boxes at Max’s Kansas City. And then I read about your very minimalistic booth with Gavin [Brown’s Enterprise], where you just showed a crumbled cigarette box in the booth?

FISCHER: Yeah, well it had some mechanisms, so it started to move around and then, at times was like flying off and then landing and moving.

HENKE: Nice. Should we leave it at this?

FISCHER: Yes, thank you.

HENKE: Thank you.

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MOUSSE

Lena Henke "Good Year" at MARTa Herford



Lena Henke "Good Year" at MARTa Herford, 2023. ©2023 Lena Henke, Marta Herford. Photo: Gunnar Meier

In an installation created specifically for the Lippold Gallery, Lena Henke, who grew up in Westphalia and now lives in New York and Berlin, opens up a space that mediates between feelings of homeland, childhood memories, and society's ideals of a nuclear family and consumer goods. Olfactory impressions play a distinct role, as do sculptural questions of the pedestal, and the presentation and staging of works of art. Lena Henke is the fifth artist to be honored with the Marta Award by the Wernhöner Foundation.

In connection with the Marta Award, Lena Henke has developed a scent for the Marta Collection that will set the mood for the exhibition as soon as one enters the gallery: the work titled *Marta L. Henke* (2023). The fragrance functions as a sculpture which spreads out into the room, evoking in turn the invisible spaces of the imagination. The idea for this scent originated in memories of the smells that can be found among the buildings, streets, and fields of Westphalia.

In addition to this regional connection, another of Herford's characteristics offers a point of contact: In recent years, Henke has worked intensely with the kitchen, a space which is extremely relevant to eastern Westphalia. The artist has grappled in particular with the social significance of the kitchen and its furnishings. Her research initially focused on the Hansaviertel in Berlin: A West German architectural project of the 1950s and a utopia of democratic ideas for housing. Internationally renowned architects found fulfillment in their buildings, but Henke was above all interested in the roles that women played in developing the neighborhood and its apartment buildings. "How might the futures of design affect the labor of our desires? The task of reimagining the embodied experience of space animates Lena Henke's artistic practice."

The sculptural result of this research is an edition of four versions of iconic kitchen appliances, all designed by Braun, with which the apartments of the Hansa Quarter were equipped. Digitally altered, enlarged one and a half times, cast and covered in rubber granules carrying monochrome colors typical of the 1950s. *Better Be Old Iron Than New Tin (Mixer)*, *The Mind Is Like An Umbrella It's Most Useful When Open (Saftpresse)*, *Every One Of My Buildings Begins With An Italian Journey (Kaffee)* and *Form Follows Feminine (Kueche)* (2022) represent symbols of their era. The titles of the works are quotations from star architects of the time: Egon Eiermann, Alvar Aalto, Walter Gropius, and Oscar Niemeyer. At Marta, these works reappear in the newly produced, spatial installation *P7340LH* (2023).

The black formation of car tires and wooden elements that dominates the main space consists of around 2,000 car tires pressed into cubes, each segment of which measures 120 by 100 by 80 centimeters and weighs 600 kilograms. In their layout, the artist makes reference to the P7340: a kitchen “designed for men,” by the company Poggenpohl in Herford in cooperation with Porsche Design. It was intended to speak to a “new” clientele with its carbon and aluminum, a smooth, pure aesthetic, and a dark color scheme. The domestic environment meets the ultimate promise of freedom of the street: the kitchen and the car are combined in the design but also in the impressive installation. In addition, while alluding to John Chamberlain's sculptures made of crushed and compressed cars, Henke employs the malleability of rubber from tires that are no longer usable and combines it with the reduced form of the cube in a gesture that recalls Minimal Art. This interplay of kitchen furnishings, sculpture, and display becomes an ambiguous object in the museum space.

Here, issues of sculpture as power symbolism but also references to the masculine and the feminine are physically juxtaposed. Anti-sensual, pure material is recomposed and supplemented by other works of art: On top of one of the many cubes, reminiscent of a large kitchen table, the promotional film *The Critic Laughs* (1980) by Richard Hamilton plays in an endless loop. It explores the language of design while also making reference to designs by Braun.

Black cables run through the room along the ceiling. Going beyond the kitchen, they are part of a group of sculptures titled *The Baby Will Always Be Me* (2020). The assembly forms a diagonal line in the gallery, consisting of the figure of a cyborg-like child, an oversized rotary clothesline, and a downscaled utility pole. The square outdoor laundry rack called a “Hills Hoist” was first produced in Australia a hundred years ago and was an attempt to modernize domestic labor. Power lines extend from the utility pole and connect the three elements. Determined to create a work of brutal realism, Henke turned her child-ego into a sculpture. But one leg has been replaced by the tip of the Chrysler Building in New York and one hand by a horse's hoof.

In the final room, the sculpture *Dreihasenbild (Three Hare Picture)* (2015), is a metaphor for fertility as well as for the hare's speed. It is a variation on the iconic late Gothic window in the cloister of Paderborn Cathedral. Here the three hares forming a circle are made of wrapped fiberglass rope and straw straps that have been “frozen” in synthetic resin. The circular arrangement causes the ears of the hares to overlap, so that only three ears are visible, even though each hare appears to have two. This motif, known as a triskelion, is significant in different ways in many cultures worldwide. The most widespread meanings are the triads of birth–life–death and of past–present–future.

Lena Henke "Good Year" at MARTa Herford
Mousse Magazine, October 19, 2023

Lena Henke's work is marked by a questioning of her sociocultural surroundings. She studies power structures and hierarchies, developing many of her installations in situ and relates to the existing qualities of a space as well as to its interpretation and formation. Her work is also characterized by a strong awareness of art history and sculptural traditions. She often deliberately borrows from existing works and transforms them into her own forms. At the same time, she creates her own iconographic pictorial systems within her oeuvre in that certain motifs recur again and again and are continuously further refined. Not least is Henke testing the conditions and possibilities of sculpture using different methods of production. In the process she creates engaging sculptures that open onto a complex system of reference.



Lena Henke "Good Year" at MARTa Herford, 2023. ©2023 Lena Henke, Marta Herford. Photo: Gunnar Meier



Lena Henke "Good Year" at MARTa Herford, 2023. ©2023 Lena Henke, Marta Herford. Photo: Gunnar Meier

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Mousse Magazine, October 19, 2023



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Lena Henke Discusses Distances and Desires

From fetishistic sculpture gardens in Italy to a giant breast in New York, the artist speaks with Carina Bukuts on what role gender and sex play in public art

+2 BY [CARINA BUKUTS](#) AND [LENA HENKE](#) IN [INTERVIEWS](#) | 15 APR 21



Carina Bukuts With many galleries and museums closed due to the pandemic, public art has become more important than ever. How has the notion of public space changed for you over the past year?

Lena Henke With private spaces feeling claustrophobic during lockdown, public spaces have had to step in to meet our needs. In these unprecedented times, however, we have had to redefine public space, rejecting the banal passivity of our former daily commutes and, instead, engaging with our surroundings more actively. Resourceful curators have been able to harness this renewed interest and enthusiasm for public spaces by organizing exhibitions that transform our perception of the everyday. **'Werner Düttmann Building: Berlin'** – an exhibition of the architect's postmodernist buildings in Berlin, organized by the Brücke Museum – is one shining example.

'I'm inspired by spaces that reflect the influence of their surroundings: local history, architecture and socio-economic conditions.' – Lena Henke

LH I'm inspired by spaces that reflect the influence of their surroundings: local history, architecture and socio-economic conditions. By walking through such places, our bodily experience is also intensified. The architecture of a garden or park can both limit and expand the visitor's own physicality in relation to their environment.

Lena Henke Discusses Distances and Desires

Frieze, April 15, 2021

Carina Bukuts



Lena Henke, *Las Pozas*, 2017/2019, and *Delirious*, 2019, installation view, Lustwarande, Tübing. Courtesy: the artist and LAYR, Vienna; photograph: Gert Jan van Rooij

CB Art presented outdoors – especially in nature – demands a different physical commitment.

LH Yes, gardens enclose your body. Mounds, hedges and openings inspire not only visual but also tactile participation. Plants serve as organic matter to build an emotional landscape. The ever-changing conditions of an outdoor environment function as an antidote to the inertia of the white cube.

CB Your 2016 exhibition ‘My History of Flow’ at SALTS, Basel, took inspiration from the mannerist Sacro Bosco (Sacred Grove) in Bomarzo, Italy, commissioned in the 16th century by patron Pier Francesco Orsini. Colloquially known as the Park of Monsters, it features gigantic sculptures of mythical creatures such as syrens, titans and nymphs. However, for your show, you created a miniature ceramic model of *The Leaning House* [1552]. Why did this house catch your attention rather than the fantastical creatures?

LH After visiting various sculpture gardens, I discovered that those designed by a single mind are often eccentric, fetishistic, irrational and the result of compulsive behaviour. Orsini’s park is a good example of that. *The Leaning House* breaks down the stable figuration of architecture, playing with your body and mind. You contort yourself to the house.

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Lena Henke, *Bumblebee House after Orsini*, 2021, glazed ceramic on plexiglass pedestal, 8.3 × 40.6 × 73.7 cm. Courtesy: the artist, LAYR, Vienna, and Bortolami Gallery, New York; photograph: Vleeshal Center for Contemporary Art Middelburg, Netherlands, Gunnar Meier

CB In your exhibition, however, *Mulberry House after Orsini* [2016] was the only element that was standing straight.

LH In fact, I tilted the floor and walls of SALTS at a four-degree angle to make the sculpture appear straight. In altering the physical structure of the gallery, and in challenging visitors' spatial perceptions, I was thinking of the Ganzfeld effect – whereby the brain, attempting to locate the missing visual cues in an unstructured field, is induced into a hallucinatory state. This effect was explored by artists such as James Turrell and Barnett Newman to break down stable configurations of space. In a later version of the house, however, I added titled plinths.

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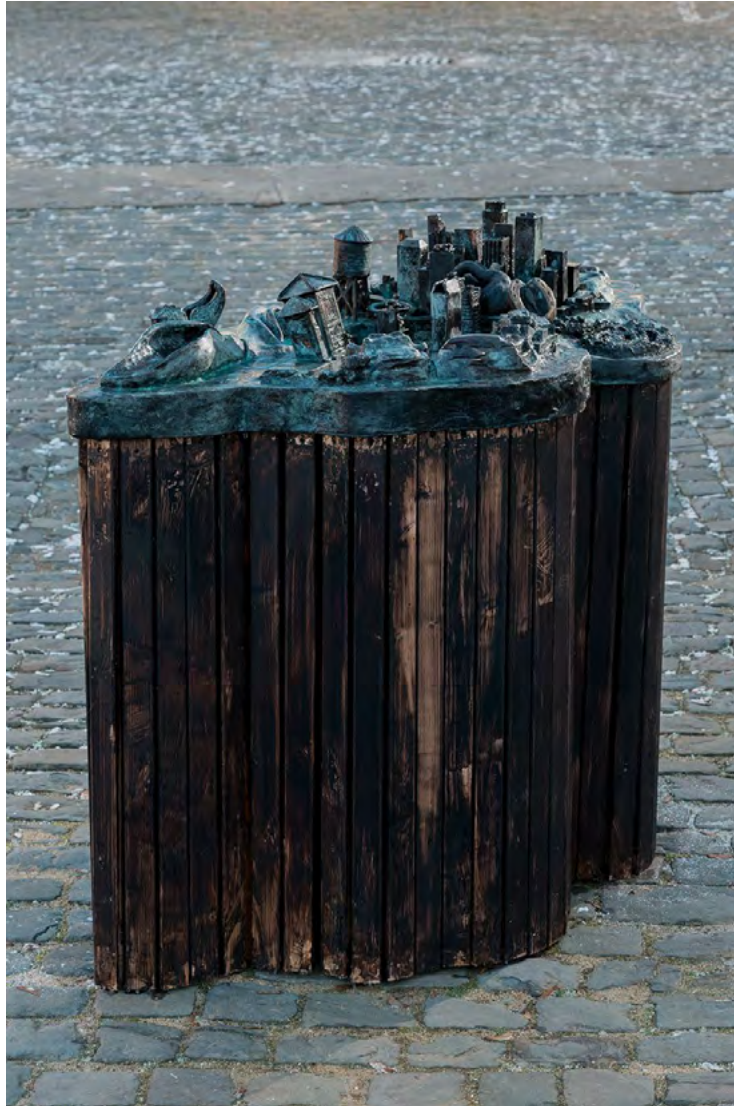
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Lena Henke, *City Lights (Dead Horse Bay)*, 2016, bronze and painted wood, 105 x 125 x 65 cm. Courtesy: the artist, Bortolami Gallery, New York, and LAYR, Vienna; photograph: Stefan Stark

CB Your work *City Lights (Dead Horse Bay)* [2016], a bronze model of Manhattan, also plays with perspectival shifts. Contoured to fit onto a horse head-shaped base, the work not only references Dead Horse Bay in Brooklyn (famously used as a landfill site by New York city planner Robert Moses in the 1950s) but also cites iconic works of land art, such as Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* [1970].

LH *City Lights (Dead Horse Bay)* addresses the 'urban-planning gender gap' – to use a term coined by Argentine architect Ana María Falú in a 2016 lecture for UN-Habitat – of New York, which is a heavily male-oriented city in its planning and architecture. Land art still has very gendered connotations, too. Therefore, my *Spiral Jetty* is embedded as the fluffy cum created by two of my sculptures fornicating in a 69 position and I placed Nancy Holt's *Sky Mound* [1984–ongoing] in New Jersey as a counterbalance, which transformed the problem of waste into a fertile ground for art.

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CB There are only a few examples of women artists who have executed large-scale public art projects. Addressing this gender imbalance, your proposal for the High Line Plinth in New York, *Ascent of a Woman* [2017], took the form of a giant breast.

LH I planned on sculpting a gigantic, upturned breast out of sand. The work built upon my series 'Female Fatigue' [2015] and continued my exploration of urban space and the depiction of the female body.



Lena Henke, *Milkdrunk I*, 2017, sand and glue, dimensions variable. Courtesy the artist and Galerie LAYR, Vienna, at Art Basel Parours, Basel Switzerland, 2017; photograph: Gina Folly

CB By alluding to breastfeeding, the piece also addresses the vast amount of invisible labour carried out by women.

'For me, art is a mode of reproduction that has explicit sexual, sculptural and biological implications.' – Lena Henke

LH For me, art is a mode of reproduction that has explicit sexual, sculptural and biological implications. While my 'Female Fatigue' series placed mental projections of the architecture of New York in dialogue with the female body, *Ascent of a Woman* further blurred the relationship between the two, presenting the city and the body in a surreal entanglement with one another. The High Line was once the lifeline of New York, transporting goods into Manhattan; in my work, the breast and its milk became the lifeblood of the city.

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Lena Henke, *Yes, I'm Pregnant!*, 2014, comic love story. Courtesy: the artist and Skulpturenmuseum Glaskasten Marl

CB In your comic love story *Yes, I'm Pregnant!* [2014], you further address the dominance of public art created by men by rewriting the history of modernist sculptures from the perspective of a female bronze figure, who finds herself pregnant and receives little support from her fellow sculpture friends.

LH In *Yes, I'm Pregnant!*, the pregnancy signalled cultural casting of moulds of female subjectivity that I adopted, triggered and changed, while putting them in relation to the history of sculptural production. In my practice, I highlight approaches and sensualities that often escape the male gaze and therefore also pursue different ways of generating sculpture than my male colleagues.

This interview is part of a series on public art that will appear in the May issue of frieze.

Main image: Lena Henke, R.M.M. (Power Broker Purple), 2020, and R.M.M. (Organ, Organ, Organ Red), 2020, installation view, Frieze Sculpture, Rockefeller Center, New York. Courtesy: the artist and Bortolami Gallery, New York

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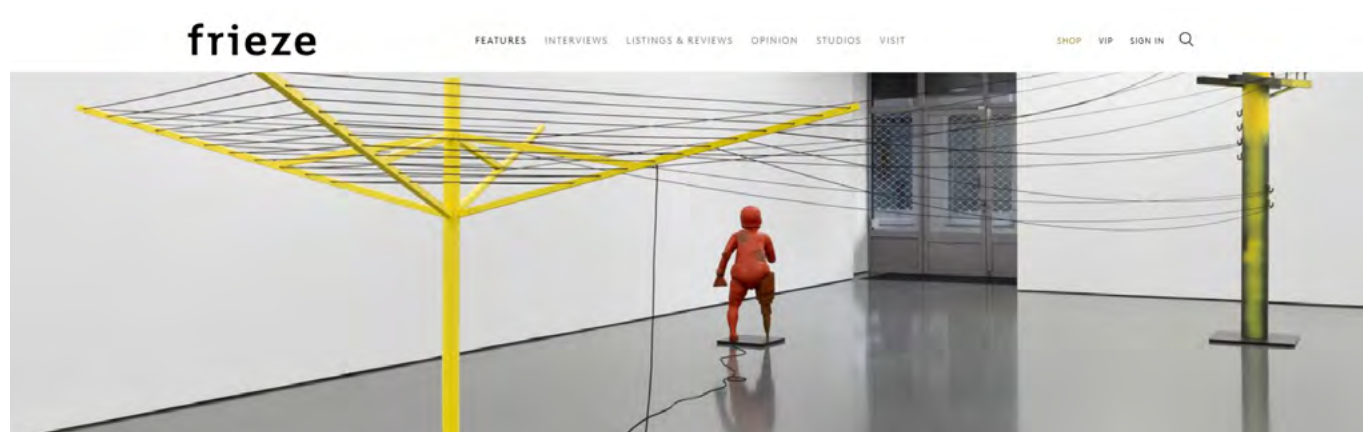
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Lena Henke Sculpts the Surreal From the Mundane

Frieze, October 28, 2020

Bárbara Borges De Campos



At the heart of Lena Henke's solo exhibition, 'Ice to Gas', at Galeria Pedro Cera, is *The Holy Trinity or Three Points in Time* (all works 2020), a large installation mirroring a surreal family constellation. Comprised of a utility pole (her father), a yellow Hills Hoist outdoor drying rack (her mother) and a rust-hued sculpture of a toddler (Henke as a child), the three elements are interconnected by various elastic cords or what the artist refers to in an interview accompanying the show as 'lifelines'. The infant's right leg has been substituted by an inverted Chrysler Building, while her left arm has morphed into a horse's hoof.



Lena Henke, *The Holy Trinity or Three Points In Time*, 2020, iron rack, iron pole, and a Forston and steel baby sculpture, variable dimensions. Courtesy: the artist, Galeria Pedro Cera, Lisbon, and LAYR, Vienna; photograph: Bruno Lopes

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Frieze, October 28, 2020

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These chimerical embodiments of the artist's autobiography and childhood memories have appeared in earlier works, such as *City Lights (Dead Horse Bay)* (2016) – a bronze cast of the Manhattan skyline in the shape of a horse's head. Here, however, with its allusion to Christian symbolism, *The Holy Trinity or Three Points in Time* mythologizes Henke's family as a collation of urban idols; reliquaries for the artist's reimagined memories.



Lena Henke, 'Ice to Gas', 2020, exhibition view, Galeria Pedro Cera, Lisbon. Courtesy: the artist, Galeria Pedro Cera, Lisbon, and LAYR, Vienna; photograph: Bruno Lopes

In the second gallery, the equestrian motif resonates in a series of ceramic hooves displayed on orange plinths. Inspired by Lisbon's 18th-century Águas Livres Aqueduct, these supports anchor the installation to its location. Likewise, the sculptures' titles (e.g. *Water Doesn't Run* and *Water, a Luxury Object*) hint at the city's reliance on water, while the untitled series of blue-painted wall tiles references the Portuguese ceramic tradition of *azulejo*. Two mirrors placed at either end of the installation serve to magnify its length illusorily, creating a synonymous effect to Henke's credo in the show's accompanying text: 'Fuck with my perspective, transmogrify my nostalgia.' Informed by the artist's biography and her desire to reimagine the architecture of cities, 'Ice to Gas' casts the surreal in the mundane.

Lena Henke's '**Ice to Gas**' runs at Galeria Pedro Cera, Lisbon, until 31 October 2020.

Main image: Lena Henke, *The Holy Trinity or Three Points In Time*, 2020, iron rack, iron pole, and a forton and steel baby sculpture, variable dimensions. Courtesy: the artist, Galeria Pedro Cera, Lisbon, and LAYR, Vienna; photograph: Bruno Lopes

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Lena Henke: Ice to Gas
Contemporânea, October 20, 2020
Cristina Sanchez-Kozyreva

Contemporânea

Issue 10-11-12 / 2020



Lena Henke: *Ice to Gas*



— by Cristina Sanchez-Kozyreva

Dreamscapes,

from New York to Lisbon

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Lena Henke: Ice to Gas
Contemporânea, October 20, 2020
Cristina Sanchez-Kozyreva

In his *Interpretation of Dreams*, published in 1899, Sigmund Freud proposes that studying dreams offers an effective tool for unpacking the unconscious activities of the mind. He suggests writing down all that we can remember, without instant-judgement, but relying on a natural, creative human penchant for associative ideas and descriptions. In doing so, we are able to reveal even the oddest fragments of narratives. In fact, the dreamer herself is the only one who can approximate an interpretation. Nothing is linear with dreams, their elucidation being as personal as the dream itself. Dreams have been a primary source material for the Surrealists, who openly included them as part of their artistic process, but also for many other artists before them, and after. New York-based German artist Lena Henke is one of them. Disclosing that the idea for this show came to her from a dream, and following her unconscious string of imagery, Henke created *The Holy Trinity or Three Points In Time* (2020), a large installation that takes over the front space of the gallery. Greeting the visitor: a red steel and forton (an architectural material used for outdoor ornaments) baby sculpture (representing the artist) faces the entrance door. It is connected in its back by a black cord (or wire) that is attached to a Hills Hoist yellow drying rack (representing the artist's mother), and the rack is connected to a large black and yellow utility pole (representing her father), both in iron. The black wires, which interconnect in the air above the rack and the pole, form a dark cloud impression above the child's figure. She's turning her back to the scene formed by her parents, and seems to be edging away.

The whole, not unlike a film set or a diorama, makes sense the way a dream does, where people we know can be represented by an idea, an object, somebody else, or even a situation. The sculpture of the infant was made to the artist's likeness when she was three years old. The child's right leg, like a prosthetic pirate leg, is a model of the Chrysler building upside down, and instead of her left hand, she has a horse hoof. Henke moved to New York, where she lives and works now, but in Germany, when she was a kid, she grew up on a farm, with horses. Elements of New York and horse hooves are recurring autobiographical leitmotifs in her work. The infant seems to be on the run, crystallised, as sculpture does, in a moment of precipitated fleeing. More than therianthropic (part human, part animal), this child merges with architecture too, in the style of Greek-Italian painter de Chirico, a reference Henke accepted in previous works. In this exhibition, she tenderly refers to the sculpture as a mini-her, a cyborg, robotic especially because of the Chrysler prosthesis. The holy trinity is here a familial one: the child (the sculpture), the father (multifunctional utility pole) and the mother (open drying rack). And these images come with some recognisable social constructs: static domestic realm for the mother, fixed but itinerant sign of industrial and economic advancement to represent the father, as well as many attachments (societal emotional, appearances?) in between (cords). To my knowledge, Henke has a sibling, but accuracy when working with dreams and surrealistic metaphors is far from a necessity.

The installation projects Freudian undertones in a
surrealistic creative expression.

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Cristina Sanchez-Kozyreva

It is also a little uncomfortable. Is this monochrome handicapped child-skyscraper-horse even safe? Perhaps it doesn't matter. The three elements of the installation seem familiar together—probably for the cords, and the yellow colour common to the pole and the rack—but it is also awkward. More than a holy family, it could be that the installation is about continuation and life moving forward, no matter the hurdles. The baby, attached to the mother-rack by a black cord the artist calls lifeline, is looking far away, right hand reaching up, hopeful or determined, as if moving away from the structure and moving forward to something else. This way, it is time in motion.

In the gallery's second room, several modular pedestals are arranged diagonally from one wall to the other. A visual homage to one of Lisbon's historical baroque architectural infrastructure, the 18th-century Águas Livres Aqueduct, the installation comes with mirrors placed at each end, and ceramic sculptures all along on each plinth. This simplified representation of the aqueduct's outline with mirrors creates an infinity mirror effect, a smart visual illusion that makes it look infinite on both extremities. Visible in parts, the characteristic arched monumental silhouette of the aqueduct is a landmark of the Portuguese capital. Hints to de Chirico's architecture-infused dream paintings—abundant with classic but simplified architectural elements, notably arches in public piazzas—come to life with the terracotta colour of the plinths. Their simplicity evokes both vastness and solitude in what could have been an empty room (except for some superfluous small ceramic tiles on the walls, blue and white *azulejos* with bird and hooves motifs, *Untitled 1, 2, and 3*). On each plinth stands one of Henke's ceramic sculptures. Among those, an off-white form that resembles a horse hoof titled *Spreading its waters over the marble city!* (2020), in relation to the aqueduct, for it collected and transported water across Lisbon through kilometres using gravity. Another reference is brought by *The poetry of fresh water!* (2020), where two blue hybrids between horse hoof and canalisation face each other. Nearby, *No more colds, no more bronchitis* (2020), represents two interlaced horse hooves with a cord winded around them in pale yellow ceramic; and, in *Lisbon 39° in the shade* (2020), two darker blue, twisted, tube-like forms bend in front of each other. The ceramic has the polished aspect of tiles, the same finish that can inhabit interiors or exterior spaces, a concept very characteristic of Lisbon—a city known for its tiles in public squares as well as the interiors of churches and accommodations. The scale here is approachable, contrasting with the first room where we have been disorientated to some extent. This interest for the aqueduct spans from the artist's interest in water. The ceramic objects are common to her work and can draw from various elements including foot fetish. In contrast with the museum-like independence of the first installation, the series of ceramic sculptures on their plinths reminds me of an assembly line, especially because of the alignment, and the infinite mirrored reflections. But unlike on an assembly line, each ceramic comes from a malleable form, and thus column-shaped or tube-like, they are ultimately idiosyncratic (yet they seem easy to grab).

Like a series of suggestive riddles, associative speculations may be necessary to find cohesive meaning in this two-fold presentation. There are those ideas we attribute to the artist's psyche, and those that come from the constructions of our

Lena Henke: Ice to Gas
Contemporânea, October 20, 2020
Cristina Sanchez-Kozyreva

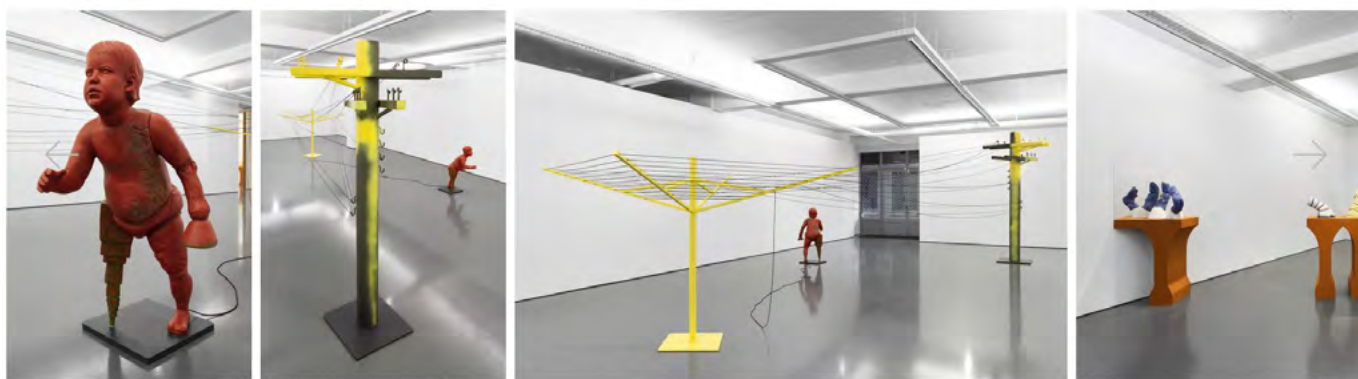
own inner world. Not one single lecture would do, which is reflected in the eccentric exhibition text the artist provided to accompany the show: perhaps it is describing a trance, certainly it has the tropes of a dream. In any case, it seems full of significant keywords. Part of living in a modern urban environment is to make ours the landmarks that surround us. Images could be our teacher, a way to understand and reorganise the world. Fragmented thoughts and ideas infuse Henke's interest in urban planning and city development, creating a place where urban design can be the creator of aesthetic meaning. As a result, it seems constructing mental landscapes in a gallery space could be done with city-large dimensions in mind, yet it also can be comprised of memories, fantasies, and personal interests.

Lena Henke (<http://lenahenke.com/>)

Galeria Pedro Cera (<https://www.pedrocera.com/exhibitions/lena-henke-ice-to-gas/>)

Cristina Sanchez-Kozyreva is an art critic, curator and writer. She is a regular international contributor to art publications such as Artforum, Frieze, Hyperallergic, and other publications including the South China Morning Post. She was the co-founder and editor-in-chief of Hong Kong-based independent art magazine Pipeline that ran print editions from 2011 to 2016 where she curated thematic issues with artists, curators and other art contributors. She has a Masters degree in International Prospective from Paris V University.

Proofreading: Diogo Montenegro.



Lena Henke: *Ice to Gas*. Exhibition views at Pedro Cera Gallery. Photos: Bruno Lopes. Courtesy of the artist and Pedro Cera Gallery.

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Frieze Sculpture at Rockefeller Center Cultivates an Urban Garden with Mighty Artworks
Galerie, September 1, 2020
Stephane Sporn

Galerie



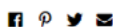
Lena Henke, *R.M.M. (Power Broker Purple)* and *R.M.M. (Organ, Organ, Organ Red)*, 2020.
PHOTO: COURTESY OF DIANE BONDAREFF/AP IMAGES FOR TISHMAN SPEYER

Frieze Sculpture at Rockefeller Center Cultivates an Urban Garden with Mighty Artworks

Featuring pieces by Ghada Amer, Thaddeus Moseley, and Andy Goldsworthy, the initiative's second edition evokes what all city dwellers are yearning for: a retreat to nature

BY STEPHANIE SPORN

SEPTEMBER 1, 2020



As one of the first major art fairs to fall victim to the COVID-19 pandemic, Frieze New York took its booths online this spring, and its London and Masters iterations are also going digital in October. Offering a much needed sign of optimism, however, the fair's latest initiative is fully meant to be experienced in person. Presented by Frieze New York and developer Tishman Speyer, Frieze Sculpture at Rockefeller Center will see the work of six renowned artists occupy the Manhattan landmark's plaza from September 1 to October 2. They include Andy Goldsworthy, Ghada Amer, Thaddeus Mosley, Beatriz Cortez, Lena Henke, and Camille Henrot.

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This will be the second edition of Frieze Sculpture, which was supposed to take place in April but was postponed and has been reduced by approximately half in order to follow city and state guidelines for social distancing. Curating the free and public initiative for the second time, Brett Littman (director of the Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum in Long Island City) meticulously adapted the initial programming to be strictly outdoors. Originally slated to open on the 50th anniversary of Earth Day, the exhibition is themed around nature and organic material, which Littman believes will be even more resonant with visitors after having quarantined for months.

"Whereas last year I was juxtaposing works around the urban architecture and existing art, this year I was more focused on the idea of the urban garden and nature in the middle of the city," Littman, who cites Noguchi's philosophy on the relationship between art and nature as inspiration, tells *Galerie*. "I was also interested in thinking about how in the 1800s, there was a botanical garden on the original site of Rockefeller Center. When you look at old photos of New York, it's fascinating to see how much farmland and raw nature there was."

A native New Yorker, Littman has found a renewed connection to nature that has been vital to his mental health during the pandemic. "I started driving about two hours outside of the city to refuel and re-understand how much nature is around us in New York State. It's actually stunning. I've taken the most incredible hikes," says Littman on visiting sites like the Blue Mountain Reservation in Peekskill and Innisfree Garden in Millbrook for the first time. "While we can't exactly re-create that experience at Rockefeller Center, I hope the project is evocative of that desire, which many of us are having right now."

Littman shares that British contemporary sculptor Andy Goldsworthy, who travels often for site specific commissions, hasn't left his Scotland studio in six months. Instead, he has been working on *Red Flags*, which will temporarily replace *Rockefeller Center's iconic flags* with those colored by earth gathered from each of the 50 states. "One can read something optimistic, political, or fatalistic with this piece. It has many layers of meaning," says Littman.

Taking over the center's Channel Gardens is Ghada Amer's *Women's Qualities*. Two decades ago, the Egypt-born, New York-based artist first conceived and installed the work, in which she asked people in Pusan, South Korea, to share the qualities they associate with women. For the revival of this piece, Amer combined responses from 2000 with new ones from 2020, both of which are written with flowers to create a living portrait of the impossibly ideal woman. Stereotypes like "good cook" and physical attributes like "sexy," composed of orange nemesia and blue ageratum blooms, are, therefore, contrasted with characteristics such as "resilient" and "independent" in red and pink calibrachoa.

Another highlight comes from Pittsburgh-based artist Thaddeus Mosley, who, at 94, makes a career first with editioned work for outdoors. Three monumental bronze sculptures, entitled *Illusory Progression*, *True to Myth*, and *Rhizogenic Rhythms*, sit at the apex of the Channel Gardens on Fifth Avenue. Experimenting with weight, balance, and physics, these represent the first casts the self-taught artist has ever made of his wood sculptures of the same name.

Also in the Channel Gardens is Camille Henrot's *Inside Job* sculpture, which resembles the shape of a shark and the beak of a bird. With this bronze piece, the Paris-born, New York artist explores ideas of threat versus tenderness and nurturing. Henrot also presents a plant-based series of small-scale, bouquet-like works where each piece takes its name from a book, forming a library of flowers.

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Frieze Sculpture at Rockefeller Center Cultivates an Urban Garden with Mighty Artworks

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German artist Lena Henke also brings animal imagery to Rockefeller Center with two new monumental sculptures, *R.M.M. (Power Broker Purple)* and *R.M.M. (Organ, Organ, Organ Red)*. The colorful horse hooves mirror nearby stallion artwork, such as Robert Garrison's stone bas-relief featuring Pegasus, *Morning, Present, Evening* (1932), at the center's entrance at 1270 Avenue of the Americas. Their inspiration also stems from more personal sources, including the artist's upbringing in an equestrian family and her readings of Robert Moses and urban planning. "I love the idea of a giant horse galloping over 30 Rock," adds Littman. "It's like this ghost image of a horse running wild in New York City."

The inaugural recipient of the FriezeLIFEWTR Sculpture Prize, multidisciplinary, Los Angeles artist Beatriz Cortez created a new piece with a steel frame and sheet metal. *Glacial Erratic* evokes an ancient boulder, like those found in Central Park, representing geological formation, migration, and the passage of time.

Whether grounded in reality or the fantastical, the works featured in the Frieze Sculpture exhibition present a thought-provoking, wide-ranging commentary on nature's past, present, and future. "In the end by rejiggering things, we were able to retain the strongest pieces to tell the story in the most concise way," says Littman. "It's a little bit like writing a poem from a long book—it's about trying to pick the right words."

Artist as Mapmakers: Lena Henke Interviewed by Owen Duffy
BOMB Magazine, January 2020
Owen Duffy

BOMB

Artists As Mapmakers: Lena Henke Interviewed by Owen Duffy

Sculpture that connects architecture and the body.



Installation view of *Lena Henke: My Fetish Years*, Museum für Gegenwartskunst Siegen, Germany, 2019. Courtesy of the artist, Bortolami Gallery, New York, and Galerie Emanuel Layr, Vienna/Rome. Photo by Gunnar Meier.

Lena Henke exudes an animated warmth. When we met in

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her studio, we discussed her attention to New York's spectrum of architectural and design forms. I was immediately drawn to how her work reveres urban space, but also how it scrutinizes German nationalism, which is ascendant today, alongside so many other chauvinisms. In the interview that resulted from multiple conversations over the past few months, we floated from the mysticism of Hilma af Klint to the history of Germany's Teutoburg Forest and Elder Futhark.

—Owen Duffy

Owen Duffy

I wanted to start off our conversation by discussing your exhibition *My Fetish Years* at the Museum für Gegenwartskunst in Siegen, Germany. Can you share some details about this project, and how it might depart from your previous museum shows?

Lena Henke

Next year it will be ten years since I graduated from the Städelschule in Frankfurt, definitely not enough time for a retrospective, but long enough for a number of nooks and crannies to develop in my practice. This show will delve into some of those fixations and hopefully create throughways between them. The show is tied to an art prize, the Rubenspreis, named after the Flemish painter Peter Paul Rubens. He was born in 1577 in Siegen and died in Antwerp where I also lived for a small period of my life before moving to New York City. The museum in Siegen gave me a whole floor with fourteen rooms to work with. This is a fairly

monumental exhibition opportunity for me, and I'm eager to use the maze-like structure to analyze my own recent creative output and create new ways forward. The show will spill outside the museum; sculptures will surround the whole building as well as a twenty-four-hour outdoor projection. As a nod to Lutz Bacher's video of the Empire State building, I will show my archive of photographs of New York City's iconic water towers.

I'm taking a break from my active production in the studio and looking back at my work, how it has changed and developed over the years. The show will be built around my work's relationship with several systems in each topic, such as architecture and urban atmospheres. There is a discrepancy between how I perceived what I was doing in the past versus how I perceive it now, which will be a point of tension.



OD

Your recent exhibition at Bortolami, *Germanic Artifacts*, seamlessly fuses a specific place—the Teutoburg Forest—with various aspects of your working environment in the New York City metropolitan area. Teutonic folklore about the forest comes alive through TriBeCa neon and casts of New Jersey trees. What does this associative way of working offer your practice?

LH

Artists are mapmakers and we can shape space in an independent manner. Making sculpture is about that desire to shape space through decision-making, and seeing how those decisions run up against their confinements. Maybe I am an objectophile—I'm particularly susceptible to the physicality of architecture and spatial relations, and I'm interested in making work that explores that field.

Teutoburg Forest is a historic woodland adjacent to my childhood home. Reflecting on this historical site, in the minutiae of the Battle of Teutoburg Forest in 9 CE, which was the last of the Roman attempts to conquer Germania, helped me understand where I came from. I was a teenage goth and went to the forest there for midsummer rituals. Since leaving Germany more than seven years ago, I became interested in how a historical myth was created there and how the nation sought to invent itself by fabricating history. From there I zoomed into the very small, tiny detailed surface of the bark of the only tree in front of my New Jersey studio, and created a cast of it. These casts hung side-by-side—horizontally—along the wall of the gallery like a fallen tree. Around the time

I was creating that show, I was reading *From Fire and Memory: On Architecture and Energy* (2000) by Luis Fernández-Galiano. I was fascinated by the process of “decay and regeneration, art and entropy” as well as the question, “The hut and the bonfire, what came first?” This text, in conjunction with the ingenious simplified living structures of the Germanic tribes, influenced the layout of my show.

OD

This recent project felt infused with elements of mysticism. I feel like we twenty-first century individuals have formed a recently newfound culture around the mystic, as evidenced by the popularity of Hilma af Klint and obsessions with astrology. What’s your take on the “mystic”?

LH

My mother studied anthroposophy, so I always had a soft spot for other worldly theories and the relation of spiritual beliefs to psychology. Seeing Hilma af Klint’s work reassured my interest. The seeming contradictions between faith, belief, and tactility interest me. Leonora Carrington’s idea that “The task of the right eye is to peer into the telescope, while the left eye peers into the microscope” opens up quite a lot for myself, professionally as well as privately.

Artist as Mapmakers: Lena Henke Interviewed by Owen Duffy
BOMB Magazine, January 2020
Owen Duffy



Detail of *Your Trust and My Trust*, 2019, leather, fabrics, Forton, metal, 59 x 98.5 x 7.75 inches each. Installation view of *Lena Henke: My Fetish Years*, Museum für Gegenwartskunst Siegen, Germany, 2019. Courtesy of the artist, Bortolami Gallery, New York, and Galerie Emanuel Layr, Vienna/Rome. Photo by Gunnar Meier.

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OD

Germany, like many other parts of Europe, has experienced a surge of anti-immigrant nationalism in recent years. How might your investigations of Germanness be tied to this?

LH

I connected folkloric iconography with the sculptural works in *Germanic Artifacts*. It was a gesture that subverts long-standing chains of nationalistic and radicalized associations. So much of German history is fabricated and lost to time, so anyone who tries to define the true German character is full of it.

OD

Would you say that you satirize ideals of Germanness? I can't help but think about your self-titled neon work, which illuminates your name in ancient Germanic runes. Is this work connected to Germanic nationalism, nostalgia, or mysticism?

LH

The idea of an essentialized German character really needs to be poked at. I would say that work [*Lena Henke*] subverts mythic, nationalistic usage. It also connotes Chinatown, where I live, with its red and green neon, which advertises many of the neighborhood's restaurants. Elder Futhark, which is the oldest form of runic characters, is usually used for mythic purposes. But at the end of the day it is just a way of writing, and it needs to be de-escalated. That's why I wanted to use it to write something as personalized as my signature. A signature acts as a daily stand-in for so much of

what we do. It is the end of a contract, it is the proof of who we are, it gives validity. The signature, in its own way, is a totem.



Lena Henke, *Lena Henke*, 2019, neon, 9.25 x 45 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Bortolami Gallery, New York. Photo by John Berens.

OD

Since moving to New York, you've become quite the student of the city's history and architecture. How have your studies of such places as, say, Rockefeller Center and Queens, affected your understanding of how we negotiate space and urban landscapes?

LH

There are so many entry points thanks to timeworn urban landscape planners that allow me to analyze and explore how people used to live, or how large-scale urban planning psychologically impacts its inhabitants. And then there is so much space within sculpture to fixate on what fascinates me. The intersection of architectural systems and the body is a recurring motif that I don't think I'll ever move past.

Lena Henke: My Fetish Years is on view at the Museum für Gegenwartskunst Siegen, Germany, until January 26.

Owen Duffy is the Director of the Yeh Art Gallery at St. John's University in New York.

[sculpture](#) [installation art](#) [architecture](#) [the body](#)

Lena Henke at Kunsthalle Zürich

Topical Cream, July 2018

Julia Moritz

Moritz, Julia. "Lena Henke @ KUNSTHALLE ZÜRICH," *Topical Cream*, 05 July, 2018. [online] [ill.]

TOPICAL CREAM

Lena Henke @ KUNSTHALLE ZÜRICH



Ayşe Erkmen's Endless Knee, 2018.

Yes, I'm pregnant! This was my first introduction to German-born, New York-based artist Lena Henke's work. The exhibition took place in 2014 at Skulpturenmuseum Glaskasten Marl (which translates to "sculpture museum, glass box of the city of Marl"). Back then, I found it odd, that an up-and-coming contemporary artist-friend seemed to comply rather easily with the traditionalist mono-media politics of a museum. However, I was taken by the title, the ballsiness, the confusion. And I have learned a lot from Henke's use of titles ever since: the nuanced narrative counterpart to her work's technical daring.

Take, for instance, *An Idea of Late German Sculpture; To the People of New York*, Henke's solo exhibition at Kunsthalle Zurich this spring 2018. Here too, the exhibition title performs a tongue-in-cheek *vorausseilenden gehorsam*, a sort of anticipatory obedience to a set of expectations swelling forth from the patriarchal association of sculpture — particularly in conjunction with Germanic tradition and the notion of a late, matured body...of work.

Big names ring a bell; big balls welcome you at the door. The show starts with two massive twin sculptures coated in bright green rubber titled *Ayşe Erkmen's Endless Knee* — Erkmen being a Berlin-based Turkish artist, sculpture teacher, and exception in her male-dominated field. One of the irregular spheres sits on the floor, the other atop a shelf. While this mode of display suggests the fate of many artworks in the museum, these sculptures are not willing to be shelved. Rather they look like fresh from production.

To produce this pair of sculptures, Henke completed an extensive residency at the Swiss Kunstgiesserei Sitterwerk, a foundry famous for, as well as among, top-notch sculptors. The foundry's clients tend to drop off a sketch, and trust the facility to do "the rest." Then the artist shines at the opening. There's nothing unusual, let alone unethical, about art production companies, which have mushroomed with the maturing of conceptual art. But the exceptionality of Henke's hands-

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Lena Henke at Kunsthalle Zürich

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Julia Moritz



Mom (after Henri Laurens), 2018.

on involvement, working the facilities, investing her very self, provokes meditation on how art's break from the artisanal sits with the "idea of late German sculpture" of the show's title. Henke further underscores her own bodily investment in her choice to scale *Ayşe Erkmen's Endless Knee* (according to Le Corbusier's Modulor standard) to her height of 1.829 meters.

With *Mom (after Henri Laurens)*, a sculpture in a series of smaller-scale busts cast in bright purple, the artist goes even a step further in restituting the body to the work: by including her family's faces as portraits — or rather portraits of the family as artists. And here too, by way of the titles, Henke references male artists, sculptors, and stonemasons like Henri Laurens (1885–1954), the Cubist and Orientalist, whose elongated flattened portraits resemble disembodied African masks. The bodily concerns of *Mom (after Henri Laurens)*, to some degree, seem an attempt to reconcile the male lineage of deformation with matriarchal matters.

Resting her case, the bust sits on the second step of a white abstracted staircase. The staircase-support is a sculpture in its own right, modestly forming a stage-prop-like middleground between white cube wall and Cubist bust, and thereby also providing an infrastructure which intrigues. The steps are a part of a series of white abstracted pedestal-sculptures, designed to elevate as well as to echo the show's idea of kinship. Archetypal architecture on the one hand, sculptural syntax on the other, they form a late descendant in the genealogy of the plinth.

Vulnerable in the Moment of Control is the show's most apparent juxtaposition of the paternal Modernist vocabulary of sculpture with contemporary feminist practice. A juxtaposition as movement, which according to guest exhibition curator Fabrice Stroun, reperforms the double bind of mobility: the sculptural requirement of perception in motion as well as personal development in the sense of social mobility. It further demonstrates, I would add, the two-fold nature of political mobilization: for the personal remains the political always. The work references psychoanalyst Wilhelm Reich's notion of "character armor" which Henke transposes to a web of hand-knitted patches of metal rings — a feminism of steel versus stitch. A kinetic piece: the chainmail seems to creep back and forth on the gray concrete floor — like a crushed serpent. Or like the moment you realize the run in your shirt just when you were trying to look "serious." It's that sense of creeping dysfunctionality that truly nuances Lena's works' tight technicality and critically twists the narrative of "the People of New York" with the "Idea of Late German Sculpture."

Julia Moritz is a curator, critic, and mom based in Zurich and Berlin.

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Lena Henke, Portrait
Monopol Magazine, 2018
Elke Buhr



55

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Porträt.LENA HENKE

Neben dem Monstrum von Ofen, in dem im Sitterwerk in St. Gallen die Bronzen gebrannt werden, steht die Skulptur einer Frau, die einen Turm in den Händen hält. Die heilige Barbara ist die Schutzheilige der Bergleute, der Architekten und Helferinnen bei Blitz- und Feuergefahr. Sie passt auf das Brenngut in diesem Ofen auf, und wann immer in der Schweiz ein Tunnel gebohrt wird, ist sie die Erste, die die Röhre passiert. Ein paar Monate lang hat die deutsche Künstlerin Lena Henke hier in St. Gallen gearbeitet, und sie fand die heilige Barbara faszinierend. Kein Wunder. Ist doch auch Lena Henke eine Art heilige Barbara – eine Frau, die Architektur liebt und gern Hand an sie legt. Eine sehr zeitgenössische Version allerdings.

die sich seit fünf Jahren im noch kompetitiveren New York als Künstlerin durchbeißt und die es jetzt gerade so richtig geschafft zu haben scheint? Ihre Antwort: ein klares Ja. Sie findet es wichtig, dass Frauen in der Kunst sich zusammenschließen, so wie bei der aus #MeToo entstandenen Bewegung #notsurprised. Den Feminismus in ihrer Arbeit zu sehen, überlässt sie eher dem Betrachter oder auch der Betrachterin – und frau findet ihn schnell. Ganz oberflächlich in den vielen starken Farben. Dazu in der Körperlichkeit, die auch die abstrakteren Arbeiten von Henke grundiert. Und in dem Feld, das sie sich erobert: Da, wo Lena Henke sich bewegt, an der Schnittstelle zwischen Bildhauerei, Architektur und Konzeptkunst, hängen bislang doch eher Männer herum.



„MY HISTORY OF FLOW“, 2016,
 INSTALLATIONSANSICHT S.A.L.T.S., BASEL

Bei der Ankunft an dem Komplex von Werkstätten und Hallen in dem Tal bei St. Gallen, in dem Lena Henke gerade ihre Ausstellung für die Kunsthalle Zürich vorbereitet, winkt sie schon von Weitem: groß, schwere Arbeitsschuhe, die Lippen rot, der Scheitel platinblond. Eine selbstbewusste Frau, die an einer Prise Riot Grrrl ihren Spaß hat. Wobei – als die Riot Grrrls in New York erstmals dicke Stiefel mit Mädchenfrisuren kombinierten und dazu Rockgitarren spielten, war Lena Henke ungefähr zehn Jahre alt und fütterte die Pferde auf dem Hof ihrer Eltern in der nordrhein-westfälischen Kleinstadt Warburg. Ist Gender noch ein Thema für eine Künstlerin Jahrgang 1982, die sich an der kompetitiven Städel-Schule durchgesetzt hat,

Es ist nicht einfach, Lena Henkes Kunst auf einen Begriff zu bringen. „Ich verstehe mich als klassische Bildhauerin“, sagt sie. Aber am Anfang stehen eher Themen als Formen: „emotional research“, nennt Henke ihre Strategie der Recherche, die bei bestimmten Gegebenheiten oder Gestalten ihren Ausgangspunkt nimmt und sich dann immer weiter verzweigt, bis es surreal wird. Die Ausstellung „Heartbreak Highway“ beispielsweise, die 2016 in ihrer New Yorker Galerie Real Fine Arts stattfand, drehte sich um New Yorks berühmtesten und brutalsten Stadtplaner Robert Moses, der von den 30er- bis zu den 60er-Jahren des 20. Jahrhunderts die Metropole modernisierte, indem er mit Straßen und Autobahnen in die gewachsenen Strukturen

Fotos: Gina Folly (vorherige Doppelseite), Gunnar Meier Photography, Wolfgang Gurnel (2). Courtesy the artist and Galerie Emanuel Layr

hineinschlug wie mit einer Axt. Es waren Frauen, die sich damals – vergeblich – unter dem Namen Heartbreak Highway zusammenschlossen, um gegen die Vertreibung ihrer Familien aus den Häusern zu protestieren, die den Autobahnen weichen mussten. Und so produzierte Henke große Keramik-Pferdefüße, aus denen nährnde Milchcontainer aus Plastik wachsen: absurde Minihäuser, die auf dem Dach der Galerie dem nahen, von Moses gebauten Brooklyn-Queens Expressway trotzen. Und drinnen konterte sie die Strukturen der Metropole mit Symbolen des Ländlichen: Wer in die Galerie hineinwollte, musste zwei Gatter beiseiteschieben wie auf einer Ranch, die mit Pferdefiguren aus Seil behangen waren.

Die Pferdefüße ziehen sich durch ihr Werk. „Sie sind wie ein Ideenhalter, ein Sockel, ein Standbein, der die Arbeit mit dem Boden verbindet. Daraus und darauf darf sich dann eine ganz eigene Form entwickeln, oft ein Hybrid zwischen etwas Architektonischem und einer surrealen Landschaft“, sagt sie.

Und auch die Stadtansichten kehren immer wieder, nur ohne Axt. Das Startbild ihrer Homepage ist eine Zeichnung Manhattans, auf der die harte, steinige Insel aussieht wie ein riesiger Wundergarten. Eine gigantische Zahnpastatube tropft Robert Smithsons Land-Art-Ikone „Spiral Jetty“ in den Hudson River, und im größten Hochhaus, das aussieht wie eine Schaltzentrale, liegt eine Frau auf dem



„SCHREI MICH NICHT AN, KRIEGER!“, 2017,
 SCHIRN KUNSTHALLE FRANKFURT

In der SCHIRN KUNSTHALLE FRANKFURT schüttete LENA HENKE tonnenweise Sand in die oberen, schreiend pink gestrichenen Etagen. Die Besucher durften durchstapfen, der Sand rieselte langsam ins Erdgeschoss und landete dort in einem „Auge“ aus Stahl (links unten)



„LAS POZAS“,
 2016

hattans, auf der die harte, steinige Insel aussieht wie ein riesiger Wundergarten. Eine gigantische Zahnpastatube tropft Robert Smithsons Land-Art-Ikone „Spiral Jetty“ in den Hudson River, und im größten Hochhaus, das aussieht wie eine Schaltzentrale, liegt eine Frau auf dem

Bauch und schlenkert mit den Beinen.

Henke zerstört Architektur nicht wie ein Robert Moses. Sie macht sie sich lieber zu eigen, schmiegt sich an sie. Wie in der Serie „Female Fatigue“. Diese „müden Frauen“ sind aus Sand gefertigt, mit Kleister haltbar gemacht, sie lagern ihre schweren Körper auf Nachbildungen derjenigen Hochhäuser New Yorks, die seit dem Umzug dorthin Henkes Alltag am meisten bestimmen.

Henke liebt Sand: „Es ist ein altes Material, das oft in der Bronze-Produktion genutzt wird. Beim Bronzeguss wird die Negativform in Sand eingepackt, um dem Original zusätzliche Stabilität zu geben. Nach dem Brennen im Ofen ist der Sand dann komplett schwarz verfärbt“, erzählt sie. Der Sand, den sie im vergangenen Jahr in der Rotunde der Schirn Kunsthalle auf die Balkone der oberen Etagen kippen ließ, war aber hell wie am Strand. Drei Tonnen davon ließ sie holen, sie rieselten langsam durch das Geländer Richtung Erdgeschoss, wo zwei große Aluminiumbe-

hälter standen, die aussahen wie eine minimalistische Skulptur à la Donald Judd, sich aber, von oben gesehen, als zwei Augen entpuppten. Liefen die Besucher oben auf den Galerien herum,

»Sand ist ein altes Material, das oft in der Bronze-Produktion genutzt wird«, erklärt LENA HENKE

streuten sie automatisch Sand in die Augen. Und sie trugen ihn an ihren Schuhen durchs ganze Haus, auch in die Matisse-Ausstellung, die damals lief. „Ja, wir haben durchaus vom Sand im

Lena Henke, Portrait
Monopol Magazine, 2018
 Elke Buhr



59

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Lena Henke, Portrait
Monopol Magazine, 2018
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60

Foto: Oliver Hill, Kunstfeld, Vienna, Germany; Barbara, Gallery, Museum of Contemporary Art, New York



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Portrait.LENA HENKE



„MY PIECE OF CAKE +
 HIS PIECE OF CAKE“, 2016

Bildhauerei mit neuem Twist: Mit den Formen an der Wand
 kann ein Sammler die Sandskulpturen selbst anfertigen

Getriebe des Kunstbetriebs geredet“, grinst Henke. Was man vielleicht noch erwähnen sollte: Die Wände der Rotunde der Schirn waren schreiend pink gestrichen, die Säulen silbern. „Schrei mich nicht an, Krieger!“ lautete der Titel der Installation. Die Geschichte dazu darf man sich selbst vorstellen.

Die Schirn-Installation war groß, die neue Ausstellung in der Kunsthalle Zürich, die Henke hier in der Schweiz gerade vorbereitet, wird größer. Unten in der Werkhalle stehen mehrere Meter hohe Styroporformen herum, aus denen gerade die Skulpturen aus einem leichten Kunststoff geschlüpft sind. Der abstrahierte Pferdefuß als Sockel ist wieder da, aus dem sich eine Serpentinstraße herauswindet: „Robert Moses besucht seine Mutter im Wallis“, so der ironische Titel. Dazu kommt eine organisch runde Form, die Henke aus zwei übereinandergeschlagenen Knien entwickelt hat, das „endlose Knie“, und eine Art auf der Seite liegender Tierfigur, die sie in Erinnerung an einen weiteren maßgeblichen Designer und Architekten des 20. Jahrhunderts „Aldo Rossis schlafender Elefant“ nennt. Die Skulpturen werden mit einem weichen Gummigranulat besprüht,

das normalerweise für Bodenbeläge auf Sport- oder Spielplätzen verwendet wird. „Wie große Ellenbogenschützer“, erklärt die Künstlerin. Und die brauchen sie auch, denn in die Wände der Kunsthalle wird ein Stoff aus Aluminiumringen wie ein riesiger Ringpanzer installiert, der sich jede halbe Stunde hin und her bewegt und rasselnd über die Skulpturen gleitet. „Ich stelle mir vor, dass die Wände der Kunsthalle so selber zu einer Maschine werden“, erklärt Henke.

Es sollen noch viele andere Objekte die Ausstellung bevölkern: Kopien klassischer Skulpturen des 20. Jahrhunderts zum Beispiel, die für sie ihre Eltern und Geschwister symbolisieren und die sie wie eine Familienaufstellung im Regal arrangiert. Es werden noch viele Geschichten und Recherchen und frühere Arbeiten in dieser Ausstellung aufgehen, man kann sie gar nicht alle aufzählen. Insgesamt soll es wie eine Stadtlandschaft aussehen, eine frühe Bronzefassung der Ausstellung hat sie schon gegossen, wie die eigenwillige Variante eines städtebaulichen Modells. Wahrscheinlich



„UNTITLED (1)“,
 2017

Fotos: Georg Peternichl, Courtesy the artist and Galerie Emanuel Layr, Courtesy the artist and Borrolami, New York

geht es am Ende um die Möglichkeit von Bildhauerei an sich: „An Idea of Late German Sculpture; To the People of New York, 2018“, so der Titel der Ausstellung, der sich unter anderem auf Blinky Palermos berühmten abstrakten Bilderzyklus „To the people of New York City“ von 1977 bezieht, schon wieder so ein Mann aus der Kunstgeschichte.

Dann erzählt Henke noch von ihrer größten Obsession. Sie ist Fan von Skulpturengärten wie dem Sacro Bosco, den ein exzentrischer Adliger im 16. Jahrhundert in Italien errichtete: eine magische Welt voller Monster, in der man in riesige Mäuler hineinspaziert, durch schiefe Häuser wandert und an Sirenen und Löwen, fremden Göttern und Fantasiewesen vorbei.

Es hat in der Geschichte immer wieder Leute gegeben, die sich solche surrealistischen Welten erbaut haben – „bislang allerdings fast nur Männer“, sagt Henke. Sie reist seit über zwei Jahren um die Welt, oft gemeinsam mit der Kuratorin Anna Goetz, um diese Gärten zu besuchen – und man kann sich vorstellen, dass sie am liebsten selbst mal so etwas entwerfen würde, ganz frei, jenseits des üblichen Ausstellungsbetriebs. Sie ist fasziniert von dem radikalen Raumverständnis dieser Garten- und Landschaftsanlagen, von dem ganzheitlichen künstlerischen Ansatz, von der Besessenheit, mit der diese Utopien umgesetzt werden.

LENA HENKE klagt sich angstfrei, was die Geschichte der Bildhauerei und der Architektur so zu bieten hat

Lena Henke klagt sich angstfrei, was die Geschichte der Bildhauerei und der Architektur so zu bieten hat, und sie nutzt alle Energie, die sie umgibt. Vielleicht ist deshalb auch New York die richtige Stadt für sie, dieses lebendige Kraftwerk, trotz aller Gentrifizierung. Gemeinsam mit der Künstlerin Marie Karlberg hat sie unter dem Namen M/L Artspace eine Serie von Ausstellungen organisiert, die nur eine einzige Nacht lang liefen – unter dem Brooklyn-Queens Highway fing es an. „Es ging nicht um Profit, sondern darum, eine Energie des Machens zu erzeugen. Mein Traum war schon lange, eine rein auf Skulptur basierende Ausstellung draußen auf dem rohen Asphalt New Yorks zu zeigen. Die Schau lief so lange, bis die Polizei kam, drei Stunden lang“, erzählt Henke.

Wie gern würde man in einer Stadt leben, in der Lena Henke die Rolle der Oberstadtplanerin hätte! Es wäre eine Stadt für Monster und Menschen, mit Platz für Körper aller Art, eine starke, laute, weibliche Stadt. Auf ihrem Wappen wäre die heilige Lena zu sehen, und der Turm in ihrer Hand sähe aus wie ein Pferdehuf.

AUSSTELLUNG:

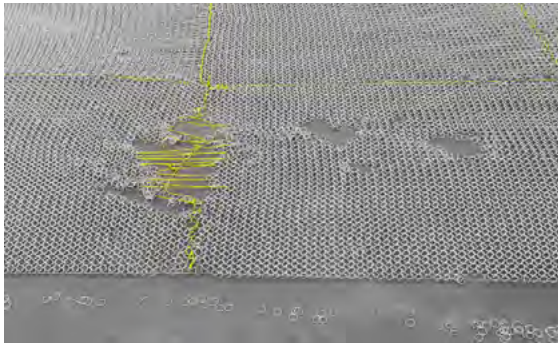
LENA HENKE: „An Idea of Late German Sculpture; To the People of New York, 2018“, Kunsthalle Zürich, 3. März bis 13. Mai

Lena Henke, Zooms
Flash Art, June 2018
Tenzing Barshee

66–71 Zooms

Lena Henke (b. 1982, Germany; lives in

New York) creates objects that pervert the canonical verticality and solidity of modern sculpture yet remain outside the postmodern aesthetic.



Ayşe Erkmen's *Endless Knee*, 2018. Plaster, fiberglass, rubber, paint. 165 × 165 × 165 cm. *Vulnerable in the Moment of Control*, 2018. Detail. Chainmail, cord, steel wire, motor. 600 × 1200 cm. Photography by Gunnar Meier. Courtesy of the artist; Bortolami, New York; and Galerie Emanuel Layr, Vienna / Rome.



"An Idea of Late German Sculpture; To the People of New York, 2018," installation view at Kunsthalle Zurich, 2018. Photography by Gunnar Meier. Courtesy of the artist; Bortolami, New York; and Galerie Emanuel Layr, Vienna / Rome.

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In the artist's words, they are made "to play a new role in history," one that situates the object in a looping trajectory between its production and reception. In this interview, Henke talks with Tenzing Barshee about her concerns with notions of materiality and ephemerality, the search for the intimate dimension of urban space, and the exhausted representational function of sculpture.

Tenzing Barshee: In your recent exhibition at Kunsthalle Zürich – "An Idea of Late German Sculpture; To the People of New York, 2018" – you presented an updated version of an older work (*Geburt und Familie*, 2014) in which you superimposed the facial features of your family members onto canonical modern sculptures. Originally, you had them photographed in an empty pool in front of the Skulpturenmuseum in Marl, gesturing at the desolate financial situation of the institution, as well as the postindustrial socioeconomic situation of the German provincial region. How did you update this piece?

Lena Henke: I remodeled the faces of my family members, but I also reconfigured the "family constellation" of the work, so that each sculpture-relative of mine is in new correspondence with

the others, since relationships change over time. For the show, I also wanted to have an older work, installed on the only freestanding wall, which is right in the middle of the room. On one side of the gigantic wall, the original 2014 drawing, also titled *Geburt und Familie*, is installed. On the other side, the new family constellation (*Die Kommenden*, 2017) stretches along the entirety of the wall's nine-meter length. The sculptural figures are DIY casts from the works of my twentieth-century idols, like Ewald Mataré, Eduardo Paolozzi, and Wilhelm Lehmbruck. It was calming not only to work with familiar faces – those of my family – but with art pieces that were familiar to me as well.

How else has the work changed from its earlier iteration, and how does the new "family constellation" manifest itself?

In an earlier show at the Sprengel Museum, Hannover, the heads were exposed to the outdoors, so the sun bubbled up their surface and bleached out their deep purple color – which came from last year's Balenciaga collection. It's a family portrait so it's not perfect. Functioning, but not in a full sense. What's more important, the sculptures sit on shelving elements now. Columns, arches, and bridges

seem to have grown out of the wall, holding heads in new positions. I built a wall display inspired by Giorgio de Chirico's ideas of painting humans as architectural elements. The painting I used as a guideline is called *The Archaeologists* from 1927.

What was the general idea for your exhibition at Kunsthalle Zurich?

For the show, I was questioning how each sculpture exists in space, and how each draws attention to its environment. I explored their limitations and was curious how the works address their own conditions. Three pairs of large-scale sculptures (*Aldo Rossi's Sleeping Elephant*, *Robert Moses Mother Drives Through Wallis*, *Ayşe Erkmen's Endless Knee*, all 2018) were situated in a state of waiting – waiting to get used, outdoors for instance, as public art, made to withstand all weather conditions; or waiting to be rolled around, covered with a soft tennis-court rubber surface, able to absorb impact. One piece sits on a large storage shelf, waiting to get into the "supply line." To begin with, I hand-built a set of smaller models in unfired clay. Out of this batch, I selected three prototypes to be digitally blown up into two identical objects. Relating their size to Le Corbusier's idea of Modulor, I opposed those larger works with a scaled,

68



Geburt und Familie, 2014. Pencil on paper. 45 × 33 cm
Photography by Gunnar Meier.
Courtesy of the artist

69 head-size version of the family portrait we talked about earlier. The room got divided by those two different-sized works; but also by a very large floor installation (*Vulnerable in the Moment of Control*, 2018) made out of chain mail and moving forth and back on the floor, between the walls of the room, every half an hour, like an incoming train. The idea for the show stems from my thinking about the labor of industrial machines, which are usually designed to move things around – or to build architecture. The walls of the institution became the machine and the sculptures itself were like “sculptural stand-ins.” The chain mail, at some point, fell apart due to the steady movement. The sculptures describe a state “before” or “after”

something I'm interested in at this moment, which neither adheres to the standard modern or postmodern expectations of sculpture.

Talk more about your interest in using existing sculptures and directly referencing art history.

It started with the show that I did at the Skulpturenmuseum in Marl, one of the last mining cities in Germany. The museum, which houses significant works by Alberto Giacometti, Isa Genzken, and Alice Aycock, was built by the architects Broekbakema. There's a lot of amazing mid-twentieth-century architecture around the town. For instance, the shopping mall has a unique, air-cushioned roof

in history, to play a new character. I'm afraid of becoming pregnant or, at least, I used to be earlier in my life. I was an accident myself, and my mother had me when she was very young. Fertility, pregnancy, and birth are some of the oldest subjects in art. Yes, *I'm Pregnant* taps into these issues without coming to a conclusion.

Where do you place yourself in the narrative of modern art and the discourses that critique it?

I'd like to be personal in my work, to create tension between power and vulnerability. The genealogy that emerges within my work is something which I let happen naturally. It's an unconscious decision, part of my



– the show, for instance – like the production itself or the storage afterwards. I was thinking about the archival function of institutions. Each piece exists twice, an exact clone of the original work. Each sculptural pair referred formally to early works but its shape evokes more a mechanical tool instead of an architecture. Rosalind Krauss said that modern sculpture absorbed its base. Maybe postmodern sculpture is *nothing* but its base, like Piero Manzoni's *Socle du Monde* (1961). So, to open the space around the sculpture and let it mesh with its surroundings is

that gives an appearance of a UFO. There's also a primary school built by Hans Scharoun in the 1970s, that embodies radical and humane ideas about architecture's potential to shape social interactions. The town's wealth – which stemmed from industrial resources – has been crumbling, which led to the link between modernity and “failure” in that show. For the show, I made a comic book – Yes, *I'm Pregnant* (2014) – that deals with a teenage pregnancy: a Marino Marini sculpture gets knocked up by a horse sculpture by Paul Dierkes. I'm “casting” sculpture to play a new role

own history, which I sometimes push, squeeze, or deny. And oftentimes, you only see in retrospect what things have connected. History is the raw material I draw upon, which began when I had access to a collection of mostly twentieth-century sculpture while working a student art job in Frankfurt. Works which are deeply personal touch me. As Rainer Werner Fassbinder said, “The more honestly you put yourself into the story, the more that story will concern others as well.” But then there is also the other story that draws from the city I live in, New York – the ultimate modern city. I like to explore

Die Kommenden, 2017. Silicon rubber, foam, pigment. Dimensions variable.
Installation view at Kunsthalle Zurich, 2018. Photography by Gunnar Meier.
Courtesy of the artist; Bortolami, New York; and Galerie Emanuel Layr, Vienna / Rome.

Lena Henke, Zooms
Flash Art, June 2018
Tenzing Barshee



First Ladies, 2009.
Exhibition view at KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin, 2011.
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Emanuel Layr, Vienna / Rome.

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71

the intimate space of urban space, to build on it as if it is a material that I can make malleable and shape. It feels almost like a fantasy to me. It triggers my imagination and allows me to fold my personal history within, to imbue it with meanings.

But let's zoom out of the grid of the city for a moment and hover above for a while, enjoying the bird's-eye view, only to zoom in again, and this time, get very close, touching base with the white space of a gallery or a museum. I am always thinking about how to shift the physical momentum of the viewer's eyes. As of now, I try to guide the gaze away from the typical or traditional ways of viewing things in art spaces. By using tools like scaling, water, or even stepping stones in sculptural installations, I'm offering a variable to the visitor, giving hints or alternative routes on how to navigate through my space. I'm interested in movement, weight, dimensions, and the connections to the ground. This brings me from the white cube to the outdoors and now, more and more, to public spaces. I seek to create an interchangeable landscape where the relationship between the viewer and the physical foundation of urbanism becomes increasingly visible; where the interruption of the process itself is usually needed to introduce new standards; and where the artworks need to unfold slowly over time in real space and to which the audience needs to keep their attention, stay focused. I look for the possibility to prod us toward an understanding for the framework that conditions our experience of art.

You've repeatedly used sand in your work, which produces quite fragile sculptures. At the Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt you spread sand over different levels of the institution, which was kicked down or carried away by visitors stepping into it (*Schrei mich nicht an, Krieger!* [Don't Shout at Me, Warrior!, 2017]). I understand your use of sand as questioning the stability of sculpture and its temporality. Sand is also used in the making of bronze sculpture. What is it about sand that intrigues you?

Sand gives me freedom to work with what I call a surreal way of making sculpture. My work is pure material, and ephemeral in a way. The relation between the material/sculpture and the environment in the show at the Schirn Kunsthalle was constantly changing through movements caused both by gravity and the visitor. Negative space became positive: sand is omnipresent; you will always find a sand grain in your pocket. At the same time, sand as a

material is high-demand. It's the building staple of civilizations both modern and ancient. And even if sand is an infinite resource, people are constantly mining it, fighting for it. It's in every building and in all glass panels. It's very New York. However, it's not lasting, as my sculptures are not lasting, but you can remake them because they come with their custom-made cast.

At the Kunsthalle Zurich exhibition, every sculpture exists twice in the space: an exact copy of the first one is on display, ready to get picked up from the storage shelf in the exhibition — an endless supply of sculpture.

You've talked about the importance of public sculpture and access to art in general. Have you worked on any public sculpture?

Last year I proposed a sculpture that would occupy the High Line in New York (*Ascent of a Woman*, 2016) and take the space itself as a point of departure. It would have had the form of a singular, gigantic upturned breast, entirely sculpted from sand. The visible outer layer would slowly erode and morph at the mercy of the weather. The High Line was once the lifeline of New York City, transporting goods — meat, produce, milk, and more — into Manhattan. It embodies this notion of a "lifeline" as well as recalling the legend of the founding of Rome. This public sculpture builds upon my "Female Fatigue" series (2015–ongoing), continuing my exploration of urban space, the depiction and abstraction of the female body, and shows how these topics overlap. Where the "Female Fatigue" series placed mental projections of the architecture of New York City in dialogue with the female body, the sand breast further blurs the relationship between the two, presenting the city and the body in a surreal entanglement with one another. I hope that my sculptures will draw some kind of attention to how their materiality exists in relation to the environment.

I've always admired some of your early projects, especially the series "First Ladies" (2011).

I did that series during the time when Michelle Obama would show her upper arms and everybody would ceaselessly comment on it. I did seven sculptures, each of the first ladies from different countries, in which I explored the themes of girl power, high-class party and style culture that were distinct to each of these women's circumstances. I used feminist humor to hackle around the age-old question of representational

sculpture on a pedestal. It was my very first solo show, in a small space in the south of Germany.

Then there was your exhibition "Hang Harder" at the Neuer Aachener Kunstverein in 2012, which seemed to be reminiscent of Steven Parrino's work. You basically applied tar paper and resin to wooden boards, which you placed on foldable metal chairs. I was always interested in this almost forced casualness, which is paired, and perhaps challenged, by a material complication, a finickiness. I guess this is something that I see in many of your works: a line that can be easily followed until it gets distorted, complicated, and corrupted by one of your artistic gestures.

That was my first institutional show. I used raw material on folding chairs. At that time, I was already thinking about urban materials in relation to the psychospace, the so-called "third place."

Have you acquired a repertoire of gestures, ideas, or material results that you can recurrently rearrange? Or do you feel a drive to reinvent those previously learned ways of making work?

I certainly do, but it's hard to articulate them discreetly.

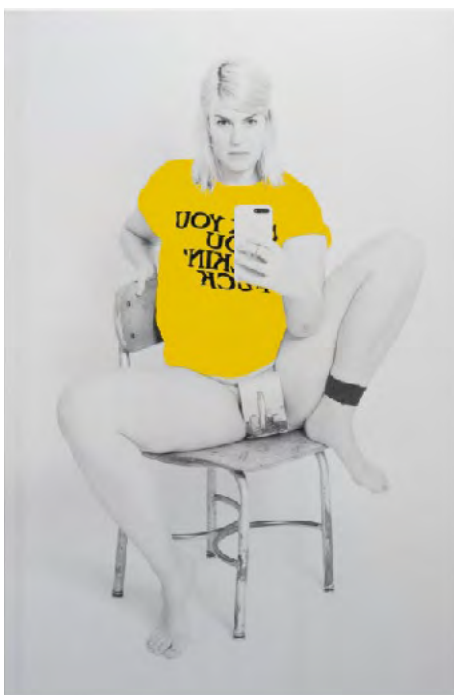
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Lena Henke at Emanuel Layr
Spike Art, May 2018
Max Feldman

L. Feldman, Max. "Opening: Lena Henke at Emanuel Layr Interview", *Spike Art Magazine*, May 2018. [online] [ill.]

SPIKE

Opening: Lena Henke at Emanuel Layr Interview



An interview with the artist as she puts the finishing touches to her solo exhibition "*THEMOVE*," opening at Galerie Emanuel Layr in Vienna.

Instantly engaging New York-based German artist Lena Henke (*1982), studied at the Städelschule in Frankfurt in the class of Michael Krebber. Since then, she has developed a distinctive transdisciplinary practice backed up with post-conceptual theoretical smarts. I talked to her as she set up her show "*THEMOVE*" at Vienna's Galerie Emanuel Layr about possible turning points in her practice and the distinctive role of place in her work.

It looks like there are some continuities with some of your earlier work—issues like the distinctiveness of place, and your use of a certain sort of 'urban' design and materials. How does that play out here?

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Lena Henke at Emanuel Layr

Spike Art, May 2018

Max Feldman



Lena Henke - "THEMOVE", Installation view at Galerie Emanuel Layr Vienna

The name of this exhibition, "THEMOVE", is significant because it connects up my own autobiographical details with my interest in place. It mirrors what it says on the street signs placed on the walls of the gallery. Designed like New York street signs, and visible at the same height, their names, like "INNERCIRCLE" and "OURPORCELAINTHOUGHT" come from words and sentences from my own psychotherapy and the materials I'm using in my work. Then there is the context of this specific exhibition. This is coming off the back of a solo show at Kunsthalle Zürich. Switzerland gave me the solitude to dive into my work, but it feels like I've found myself in a new place, but I'm trying to work out what that means.

I'm sceptical about newness and novelty. I find it hard to believe that anything can be truly "new" except longing for the new. What is particularly "new" here?

I'm using my own body as material for the first time. The first thing that you see when you walk into the gallery is a half-naked self-portrait. It's a two colored screen print on aluminium, and I'm wearing a yellow t-shirt that says "Fuck You You Fucking Fuck", which I saw people wearing in New York last summer. The yellow is the same yellow as New York taxis, and ties into the merchandise store we have at the back of the gallery. They're all specifically New York references, and I never thought I'd find myself using my body like this, but Zürich helped me get there. The show itself, however, is about idols.

Do you mean idols as in people you idolise like heroes, or idols in the religious sense of idolatry?

I mean heroes. My idols for this show are 1850s female gangsters in New York City. My self-portrait is the point of continuity, but the centrepiece of the show is a huge bronze female body with a door where the vagina would normally be. To make it, I had to draw into a big sand-bed. It's fantastic, switching from 2D to 3D. The backside is flat, but you can see the scorch marks from where we poured the bronze. Plus, if you use a glove, you can turn the who thing around. I think it looks like a poledancer. This is a very interesting subject—who is looking at who, who is looking back, where the power lies. The front side has a pinkish, greeny patina on it that is really hard to get. It's what a Barbie would look like if it fell into a patch of oil.

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Lena Henke at Emanuel Layr

Spike Art, May 2018

Max Feldman

It looks like something from an archaeological dig into the fossilised Miami of the future, an eerie rendering of those famous pastel shades. Is this another point of continuity between the sense of place, your use of materials, and the particular shape or structure of the gaze?

That's funny, because I went to Miami very recently. Put it this way, I live in New York because it kicks my ass. I live very close to the area I'm talking about in terms of mid-19th century gang activity: the old Five Points, which you might know from *Gangs of New York*. Gangs like the Bowery Boys or the Dead Rabbits always had a sign to show who they were, but in my imagination we ended up in 2018 on Canal Street with all these trashy t-shirts with different printed material on them.

I put it on for the photoshoot, and it's mirrored because I'm taking a selfie. The Freedom Tower is on a postcard between my legs, like a perfect but anonymous glass and steel phallus. The original image is from a shitty 99c postcard that I scanned at the highest resolution possible. I don't think people will actually buy this postcard, but it's the perfect symbol of New York's distinctive hyper-masculinity: the pace of life, the constant noise, the relentless rational grid-form. That's one of the things I'm trying to capture.

Lena Henke

"THEMOVE"

Galerie Emanuel Layr Vienna

15 May – 7 July 2018

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Casting Call

LENA HENKE's sculptures propose new manners of dwelling and co-existence *by Laura McLean-Ferris*



FRIEZE NO.194

128

APRIL 2018

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WHEN A GARMENT — LET'S SAY A SHIRT — seems to overpower a person, the insult goes: 'That shirt is wearing you.' This light put-down describes a struggle for presence between the wearer and the worn. But what other objects are wearing you, dominating you, casting you to work for them? The sculptures of New York-based German artist Lena Henke are typified by an apprehension of site and occupancy and the quiet tug-of-war between personality and control. Ranging from table-top models of cities and buildings through human-scale sculptures to larger architectural interventions in public space, Henke's work proposes a built environment that might suit her better.

The artist displays a particular fondness for outdoor sculpture, the history of urban planning and natural-artificial features such as the grotto. She wrangles with the materials, designs, palette and tools that construct our fabricated environment, employing them to suggest other possibilities. Why do we have to live in a world that looks and feels like this one? It's a question Henke has explored most directly in relation to the city of New York, where she relocated after completing her studies at the Städelschule in Frankfurt. Coincidentally, she arrived in the city at the same time as I did, in 2013. I've never perceived anywhere as completely fabricated as New York: whenever I walk near the intersection of Broadway and Lafayette Avenue, the landscape reminds me of a film set, an entirely constructed surface with shallow roots, populated by character actors.

In her recent works, Henke has taken on New York by placing her own body in direct relation to its urban structures, playing with the relative scales of bodies and buildings and evincing psychological turf wars between the city and the self. In a series of sculptures titled 'Female Fatigue' (2015), pared-down metal models representing landmark Manhattan buildings — such as the Chelsea Hotel (*Your Chelsea Hotel*) and the New Museum (*Their New Museum*) — are occupied by moulded-sand sculptures of reclining, statuesque women, outsized in relation to their environments so that they take up around half the floor-space. Though this is certainly a kind of battle for occupation, the large bodies are not positioned aggressively, as in the sci-fi film *Attack of the 50 Foot Woman* (1958), but in restful belonging. Titles such as *My Crane Collapse on 57th Street* (2015) also humorously hint at the way New Yorkers colloquially claim sites through naturalizing language: *my deli*, *my UPS guy*, *my subway stop*. Elsewhere, Henke has entirely redrawn the city as an unstable psychogeography, re-organizing its landmarks around her own memories, fantasies and propositional works. The map *Dead Horse Bay* (2015) reconfigures New York as a horse's head, in which the 'Female Fatigue' buildings loom larger than life on the landscape. The screaming head of *Orcus* (Ogre, c.1550), a cave-like stone sculpture by Simone Moschino from the Pirro Ligorio-designed Gardens of Bomarzo in Italy, has been transplanted to Harlem, as an open hellmouth into the city. Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* (1970) is, in Henke's vision, installed close to the Chelsea Piers. For the artist's 2016 solo exhibition at Kunstverein Braunschweig, she showed the related bronze sculpture, *City Lights* (*Dead Horse Bay*) (2016), transforming the map into an architectural model. Miniature versions of earlier works appear in the piece, including one of the full-sized water tower that she created for her 2016 exhibition at SALTS, Birsfelden: 'My History of Flow'.

The surrealist and mannerist histories in Henke's sculptures suggest a psychological treatment of architecture and space. Yet, if the bodies in this work are the repressed returning, they come back with a gently subversive attitude — for example, in the form of a lone female breast. Soft hills of sculpted-sand breasts were installed around



OPPOSITE PAGE
'Heartbreak Highway',
2016, installation
views, Real Fine Arts,
New York. Courtesy:
the artist and
Bortolami, New York;
photograph:
Joerg Lohse

THIS PAGE ABOVE
Golden Ages, 2017.
Courtesy: the artist
and Galerie Emanuel
Layr, Vienna/Rome;
photograph:
Maximilian
Anelli-Monti

THIS PAGE BELOW
Boob (detail), 2017,
sand, resin, steel,
dimensions variable.
Courtesy: the artist
and Bortolami,
New York



a private garden in Basel in 2017 for Henke's contribution to the Art Basel Parcours programme, together with industrial sandbags from which the moulded shapes of female body parts – legs, breasts and buttocks – emerged. There is an undercurrent of violence in these sculptures of female bodies in bags. But breasts summon softness, warmth and nourishment, too: the generous shape can seem gently witty, especially in isolation (*Boob*, 2017), or highly sexualized. The sand breasts, delicate as sandcastles, are often exhibited with their moulds, such as in the 'Milkdrunk' series (2017), in which various coloured casts are hung on the wall, bound with rubber bands, conferring a sadomasochistic quality. While the moulds suggest a potentially endless supply of breasts – a production line of female body parts – this interpretation is complicated by its associations with the intimacies of childbirth and feeding.

For a competition to propose a large sculpture for the High Line in New York last year, Henke submitted a design for a towering, sculpted-sand breast that, vulnerable to the weather, would require constant remaking and maintenance. The High Line, a former train line turned park, was originally designed by Robert Moses, the legendary New York City planner immortalized in Robert Caro's biography *The Power Broker* (1974). Moses took a radical approach, carving up the city, as he himself put it, with a 'meat axe', in order to build his bridges, tunnels and parks. The Brooklyn-Queens Expressway (BQE), close to Henke's studio, is also the work of Moses: an aggressive line sliced out of the city that upsets the logic of the pedestrian neighbourhood beneath in order to allow cars to speed overhead. Moses acts as a simultaneous icon and nemesis for the artist: in

"If the bodies in Henke's work are the repressed returning, they come back with a gently subversive attitude."



some ways, Henke's ambitions for sculpture aspire to the work of the radical planner; yet, her practice also critiques his brutal approach. New York was shaped by men like Moses, and the construction of roads, bridges and big buildings – which influence movement, behaviour and consciousness – has, so far, been mostly the work of men. Henke's breast sculptures appear as objects of desublimation: the return of soft, protective forms that have been suppressed in the building of the city.

For a 2016 exhibition at Real Fine Arts in New York, 'Heartbreak Highway', Henke dedicated small sculptural doll houses in the shape of horses' hooves to the former inhabitants of the area who had been displaced by the BQE. Henke placed these works on Lazy Susans, which were treated like dining tables. The installation map for the exhibition showed a different person's name every 90 degrees: an imagined family from a former world sitting down to dinner. The horse-hoof houses, another surrealist part-object, make reference to Dead Horse Bay, an area of South Brooklyn where the bones of dead carriage horses would be ground and boiled down to make glue. Today, the beach is known for the mid-century trash that still washes up there, leaking from Moses's sand and rubbish landfill to connect a small landmass, named Barren Island, to the rest of Brooklyn. Henke collected some of the old glass jars and bottles that had washed up on the shore of Dead Horse Bay and built houses out of cardboard for those, too. As the clinking of antique glass jars can be heard on the seashore, the dead return as bodies, hooves, breasts and effluvia.

More recently, the artist's reconstitution of objects as bodies within her own narrative universe can be thought of in relation to the work of Giorgio de Chirico, echoing his approach to living in the world 'as in an immense museum of strange things'. De Chirico often painted human bodies as though they were assembled from architectural elements, wearing parts of the city like garments: in *The Painter's Family* (1926), for example, a neoclassical arch supports the heart while skyscrapers burst forth from the solar plexus. Henke drives such formal concerns through an attentiveness to late modern sculpture, which she playfully appropriates. Like De Chirico, Henke has created abstracted portraits of her family and others using sculptural objects and architectural elements. In 'Yes, I'm Pregnant' – an exhibition and comic-book publication, shown at Skulpturenmuseum Glaskasten Marl in 2014 – Henke shot a teen 'photo love story' using outdoor sculptures by artists including Hans Arp, Paul Derkes and Marino Marini. The plot featured a young girl (a sculpture of a woman by Marini) who falls in love with Paul (a bronze horse by Derkes) and becomes pregnant. Removed from their pedestals, these sculptures by noted male artists are dragged into the sphere of teenage romance. The comic strip was accompanied by a selection of smaller sculptures from the museum's collection, including works by Ewald Mataré and Eduardo Paolozzi, chosen to represent members of the artist's family. These were installed according to the psycho-spatial principles of German psychotherapist Bert Hellinger's family constellations

ALL IMAGES THIS SPREAD
'An Idea of Late
German Sculpture; To the
People of New York', 2018,
exhibition views, Kunsthalle
Zürich. Courtesy: the artist,
Bortolami, New York, Galerie
Emanuel Layr, Vienna/Rome,
and Kunsthalle Zürich;
photograph: Gunnar Meier





*“Henke’s work asks:
why do we have
to live in a world that looks
and feels like this one?”*

therapeutic method. In both these works, Henke asserts her authority to act as a casting agent. The term ‘casting’ has its origins in sculpture, referring to the creation of a form using a mould. Henke’s work in casting and recasting is to reform through character.

For the artist’s current solo show at Kunsthalle Zürich, purple silicone copies of the family sculptures originally exhibited at the Sprengel Museum Hannover (*The Coming*, 2017) were left out in the sunlight to bleach. In Zürich, these faded icons occupy indoor shelves designed to suggest architectural bodies in the style of De Chirico. The biggest work on display is a kinetic sculpture that, replicating the movements of heavy construction machinery, sets in motion a number of large fibreglass sculptures. These are amalgams of Henke’s own sculptural forms as well as those of architects, urban designers and artists including Moses, Robert Morris and Aldo Rossi. A horse’s hoof, a sleeping elephant and an ‘endless knee’ – echoing the shape of a woman’s crossed legs – are covered in the kind of rubber granulates used to surface tennis courts. Henke, considering the Kunsthalle as a total machine, has installed a mechanized pulley system in the walls of the exhibition space, which drags chainmail over the sculptures. Abrasive and damaging, the movement causes some of the works to be pulled across the floor, while a second shelf of doubles, or ‘extras’, awaits its turn. Reappropriating the title of Blinky Palermo’s 1976 series, ‘To the People of New York City’, Henke’s exhibition, ‘An Idea of Late German Sculpture: To the People of New York’, adroitly unites the artist’s reconstitution of the European sculpture garden with her interest in the psycho-surreal damage wrought on individuals in her adopted city, where the armour of character acts as an everyday costume. As if transporting the shapes of the city’s subconscious from subterranean to the everyday, the show aims to desubliminate fantasies, cruelties and delirium, and observe them at ground level. ●



ABOVE
City Lights
(*Dead Horse Bay*), 2016,
bronze and painted
wood, 105 × 125 × 65 cm.
Courtesy: the artist
and Bortolami,
New York; photograph:
© Stefan Stark

LEFT
'Heartbreak Highway',
2016, installation view,
Real Fine Arts,
New York. Courtesy:
the artist
and Bortolami,
New York; photograph:
Joerg Lohse

LAURA MCLEAN-FERRIS is a writer and curator at Swiss Institute, New York, USA.

LENA HENKE is an artist based in New York, USA. Her solo exhibition at Kunsthalle Zürich, Switzerland, is on view until 13 May, and her work will be on display as part of KölnSkulptur 9, Cologne, Germany, until June 2019. Last year, she had a solo show at Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt, Germany, and her work was also included in 'Produktion: Made in Germany Drei' at Kunstverein Hannover, Germany, and the Biennale de Montréal, Canada.

Lena Henke, "Don't Shout At Me, Warrior!"

Topical Cream, July 2017

Tenzing Barshee

07.21.2017

LENA HENKE, "DON'T SHOUT AT ME, WARRIOR!" AT SCHIRN KUNSTHALLE

Words By Tenzing Barshee



Installation View Lena Henke, *Schrei mich nicht an, Krieger!* 2017, Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt.

For her work *Don't shout at me, Warrior!* at the Schirn, Lena Henke added elements of divergent severity to the museum's architecture. They are not so much site-specific as site-implicit. By this I mean, they aren't simply reacting to the body which they are colonizing. They rather act upon the building and its meaning to such a degree that the additions make use of the host structure and channel alternative meaning through it. This lets the viewer encounter a freshly built body and reflect on its possibilities. While some elements are heavy like the word "sculpture" itself, other ones are fugitive, literally passing through the building. And like that, the artist both claims the institution's territory and challenges the institutional authority of sculpture. Her stage and place of action are one and the same: the rotunda, a public space to pass through the museum without having to enter it. Through its implications, the work makes a halt to the stream of passerbys and

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interrupts their passage. The rotunda's facade is colored — in homage to architect Luis Barragán — in signals of pink, blue, and yellow and on the opposing entrances, she placed two oval-shaped aluminium boxes, obstructing the public's passage. In a gesture a bit like shrugging one's shoulders, the aluminum echoes the objectness of Donald Judd's art and by blocking everyone's path, the boxes caricature Minimalism's emphasis on the relationship between the object and its viewer. This would seem, weirdly enough, like a nostalgic move, but at the same time, the artist refuses Minimalism's geometry and adherence to abstraction.



Seen from above, the aluminum objects reveal to be elegantly drawn eyes, pointing their stare past the museum, skyward. As with Minimal

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art, it isn't clear whether one's looking at the eye or whether it is the eye, which is glancing back. By not only representing a human perspective but suggesting a viewpoint of the object itself, Lena Henke harks back to a variety of ideas (including Eva Hesse) and considers the work's material make up and its animistic potential. Minimalism's celebration of industrial processes today stands as a burden of a previous generation. By calling out this romanticism and exposing it as a farce, the artist's flashback turns this dated position into a superficial relic, which opposes the most pressing issues of the post-industrial age (ecology, labor conditions of the masses, etc.). The artist decidedly wants us to stop and take a look, precisely feeling out a multiplicity of contingencies. By applying Ad Reinhardt's thought that "the eye is a menace to clear sight" and inverting his claim that "art begins with the getting rid of nature," she reminds us of sculpture's historic potentiality and makes us doubt its massive assertiveness. For Henke, it is exactly the nature of things, who owns them, who is granted to access them, and where they belong, which constitutes her work. In a repeated back and forth, recalling the forces of gravity, materials are juxtaposed and played against one another, only to settle in a somewhat crooked equilibrium. The content relates to public space through its architecture and includes the artist's personal experience and circumstance. The artist balances experience, knowledge, and wit, considering her topics in all seriousness, sometimes in awe, while she circumvents their standing, by obscuring or misusing their form. In the process, she disperses meaning and discharges the status of her references.



To what end? That remains to be seen. The aforementioned double-mode of appreciation and disregard heavily recurs in Henke's practice. While she commemorates her motifs and subjects, she faces them tongue-in-cheek, pulls the leg of the concept of sanctity and how things hold their place in history. In the stories above each eye, piles of sand sit around like playing or breeding grounds, the windows in front of them are removed and replaced with rolling grilles. Drawing a connection line between the fancy shop windows in the neighborhood – which use the

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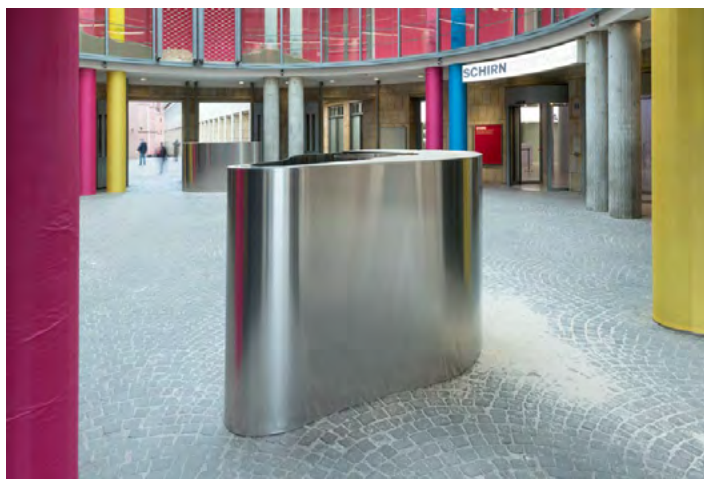
Lena Henke, “Don’t Shout At Me, Warrior!”

Topical Cream, July 2017

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same grilles not only to protect their goods but also to parade the locked up value of things — and the museum and its holdings.

By this, the artist highlights the affinity between cultural heritage and the market, how ultimately cultural value always becomes commodifiable. Every now and then, scoops of sand rain down into one of the gazing aluminum eyes, which stand right below, either kicked down by a visitor or child’s play. The little beaches of sand extend the metaphorical scope of the eyes by figuratively blinding them or switching on their dreams. The sculptures become unhinged as supposedly autonomous objects of art and are returned to bare functionality. They are forced to function as collecting containers, a refuge for detritus. The process hides and conserves the messy sand, a material used in bronze casting, within its opaque shell, which also covers up any request for an oh so abstract insinuation of a measurement of time. Doing away with the heritage of our modern, patriarchal, capitalist art history, Lena Henke must be aware that she is concurrently raising her own status, and how she eventually must be confronted with the — teasingly attractive — exigence to circumvent, disperse, and dismantle her own achievement. Does the sand remain on the ground once it is spilled? I guess, it is more interesting to make a statement than to prove one’s point. Why should it be the artist’s job to conclude the cycle, she has set in motion. Because, after all, *Don’t shout at me, warrior!* isn’t a battle cry but rather an invitation to shut up and have a look.



All images are courtesy of Schirn Kunsthalle.

Tenzing Barshee is an independent curator and writer. Recently he organized the exhibitions “Namedropping” at Jan Kaps in Cologne, “Solo Cose Belle” at Galleria Acappella in Naples, and “Der Verdienst. 2014-2017” at Oracle in Berlin. His serial novel “Pine” is published in *Starship* magazine.

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CRITICS' PICKS

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- "Making Space: Women Artists and Postwar Abstraction"
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Lena Henke

SCHIRN KUNSTHALLE FRANKFURT

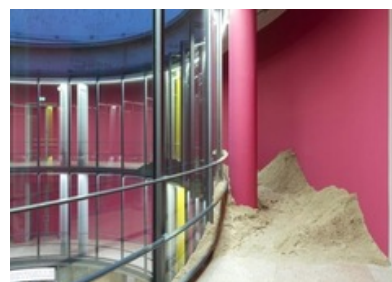
Römerberg

April 28–July 30

Lena Henke has made a walk-in artwork out of the rotunda, a space neither interior nor exterior, illuminated by the light from an approximately sixty-five-foot-tall glass dome. A sculptor by heart, Henke works with the architecture to make the crowds passing through—often to reach the cathedral from old town—aware of the typically overlooked space, interrupting their flow and diverting their attention.

Two oval-shaped glossy aluminum boxes, in the tradition of Donald Judd's specific objects, stand in the pathways, blocking the two opposing entrances. From the mezzanine one story above, grains of dry sand trickle through the rolling grilles that have replaced four floor-to-ceiling windows and down to lower floors, landing on the sculptures or on the heads of passersby. Looking up, visitors find men walking on piles of the sand, constantly pushing heaps through the grids' holes. Like Carl Andre's *Grave*, 1967, for which he poured a bag of sand down a stairwell, Henke's work speaks about gravity, evanescence, and the devolution of sculpture. A material fundamental to bronze casting, sand, as it functions in Henke's work, shape-shifts while forming the artwork. Seen from the mezzanines above, the two aluminum boxes on the ground floor become stand-ins for eyes and the architecture's columns form a skeleton, and it becomes apparent that Henke has transformed the rotunda into a giant sculpture of a head.

In homage to architect Luis Barragán, magnificent pink, blue, and yellow hues mark the rotunda's walls and columns. Throughout the day, these delicate tones take on beautiful shades in a compelling public intervention that engages light, form, and color.



View of "Lena Henke," 2017.

— Vivien Trommer

LENA HENKE NEW FANTASIES OF MODERNISM

BY ARIA DEAN

In the introduction of Rem Koolhaas' *Delirious New York: A Retroactive Manifesto* for Manhattan, the architectural theorist claims that New York City has been developed under an unspoken program "so ambitious that to be realized it could never be openly stated." The city, from the moment of its birth in colonial encounter, is driven by efforts to engulf man in his own fantasy, "to exist in a world totally fabricated by man."

Lena Henke's work is, in architectural terms, an intervention into this fantasy. However, we would be remiss to examine Henke's work solely as such—an intervention. Intervention lends itself to the programmatic, perhaps saying "not this, but this instead." Rather the mode of Henke's sculptures and installations might be more aptly identified as a series of meditations, where architecture and urban forms—and the ideologies that shape them—become raw material. If fantasy is, at its base, about desire, Henke's work introduces new desires and reroutes existing ones. She distorts modernism's fantasies of itself, carving into it space for the surreal, the feminine, and the personal, and corrupting its programs.

In a gross oversimplification, we might say that the modernist project, as it is enacted at the level of architecture and urban design, aimed to organize human life according to a pre-designated program. In Manhattan, Henke's current home, this program is the grid, designed by the Commissioners Plan of

1811. The grid—or 'gridiron'—shapes the island's block system, which in turn provides a theoretically rigid infrastructure for controlled growth and development. Koolhaas writes, however, that "the grid's two dimensional discipline also creates undreamt-of freedom for three dimensional anarchy." We could also say that Lena Henke's work strives for the kind of three-dimensional anarchy that Koolhaas writes of. Her sculptures are extrusions built over and amidst the logics of the rational grid and the very concept of the *program*.

Henke follows in the footsteps of the Situationists, favoring a mapping of the city from the perspective of its inhabitant—a particularly intimate psychogeography. It is intimate in the sense that we find her layering her own experiences over the built environment, twisting Koolhaas' words and reinscribing the fantasies of the men who built New York City with her own. In works like *City Lights (Dead Horse Bay)*, she takes interest in the historical oddities of her adopted city and superimposes her personal vision onto the 'objective' mapping of it from above, resulting in visually distorted perspectives and power relations. *City Lights (Dead Horse Bay)* presents a bronze cast of an aerial map of a surreal cityscape, identifiably somewhere in New York City based on the hallmark watertower and the invocation of Dead Horse Bay, a small body of water in Brooklyn creepily named for its housing a number of horse-rendering plants in the 19th and early 20th centuries.



Lena Henke: New Fantasies of Modernism
Cura Magazine, June 2017
Aria Dean



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Today, the bay is known for the trash that washes up on it daily from nearby leaking landfills. Henke's treatment converts this quirky New York City landmark into a gothic landscape inflected by her German roots.

Likewise, in her ongoing *Female Fatigue* series, Henke explores a kind of intimacy with space unique to dense urban centers traversed on foot. In the series, Henke's abstracted feminine nudes molded out of sand are nestled in metal sculptures that directly recall the sleek facades of Manhattan's skyscrapers—similar to those that appear in her *Relief* works (2014), larger feminine forms protruding from sandbags. The titles of the works in the *Female Fatigue* series refer vaguely to different locations around the city: *Our AT&T*, *Their New Museum*, *My Crane Collapses*. Each sculpture abstractly chases after the formal structure of each space. There is a delightful disjunction in these works, organicism and unnaturally hard edges cozied up to one another. The women appear to melt—"fatigued"—into the urban block, perhaps speaking to the psychic tax of city life. At the same time, the titles give a sense of ownership over space not unlike the way many might designate *my bodega*, *my train stop*.

The *Female Fatigue* series also finds Henke once again appropriating and detouring the words of the men who loom large in the history of modernist architecture and urbanism. From one angle, the sculptures read as an inside joke about Brazilian architect Oscar Niemeyer's "form follows feminine," his fetishization of the "sensual curve." Niemeyer famously rejected, "straight angles [and] the straight line, hard and inflexible, created by man," in favor of the curves found in nature and "the body of a beloved woman." Henke cleverly appears to follow in Niemeyer's approach, pairing disintegrating damsels in distress with hollow, steel phalluses. The joke is on the old architect though; a fetish is a fetish, and a building is still a

shell. Henke seems to question which is preferable: an empty steel cocoon built to last or a voluptuous, full figure destined for decay?

While Henke's anti-rationalism could certainly be posed as an overtly feminist, and perhaps anti-colonial series of interventions, inserting feminine forms and narrative methods into traditionally masculine constructions, the work still appears not to be *about* these things, but *of* them. Henke, while attracted to these concrete explorations, ultimately sees them as raw resources to be mined. She takes the rationalism that the city—and perhaps not solely NYC itself, but all that it stands for in its development—is founded on and uses it as material against itself. The city becomes malleable, the block turns to putty in Henke's hands.

The resulting fantasy is one that draws indiscriminately from Henke's imagination, research interests, and personal history, combining them all into a surreal, materially-driven constellation of objects. Her sculptures range in size and her processes vary—from portable ceramic totems shaped like deformed horse hooves (*TK*, shown in *Heartbreak Highway* at Real Fine Arts, New York), to large scale minimalist architectural installations (*Core Cut Care* at Oldenburger Kunstverein). It is a program with no real program, driven by whim and chance. Robert Moses, who served as the city planner for New York City and is known as the master builder of 20th century New York, once said that "to operate in an overbuilt metropolis, you have to hack your way with a meat ax." Henke takes a meat ax to Moses' own system, hacking it up and scrapping it for parts. The work of Moses and others like him is subsumed into a mutant visual language all of Henke's own. The grid melts down into a new fantasy.



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Will a Giant Boob or Chameleon Inaugurate the High Line's New Public Art Plinth?

Hyperallergic, January 2017

Claire Voon



HYPERALLERGIC

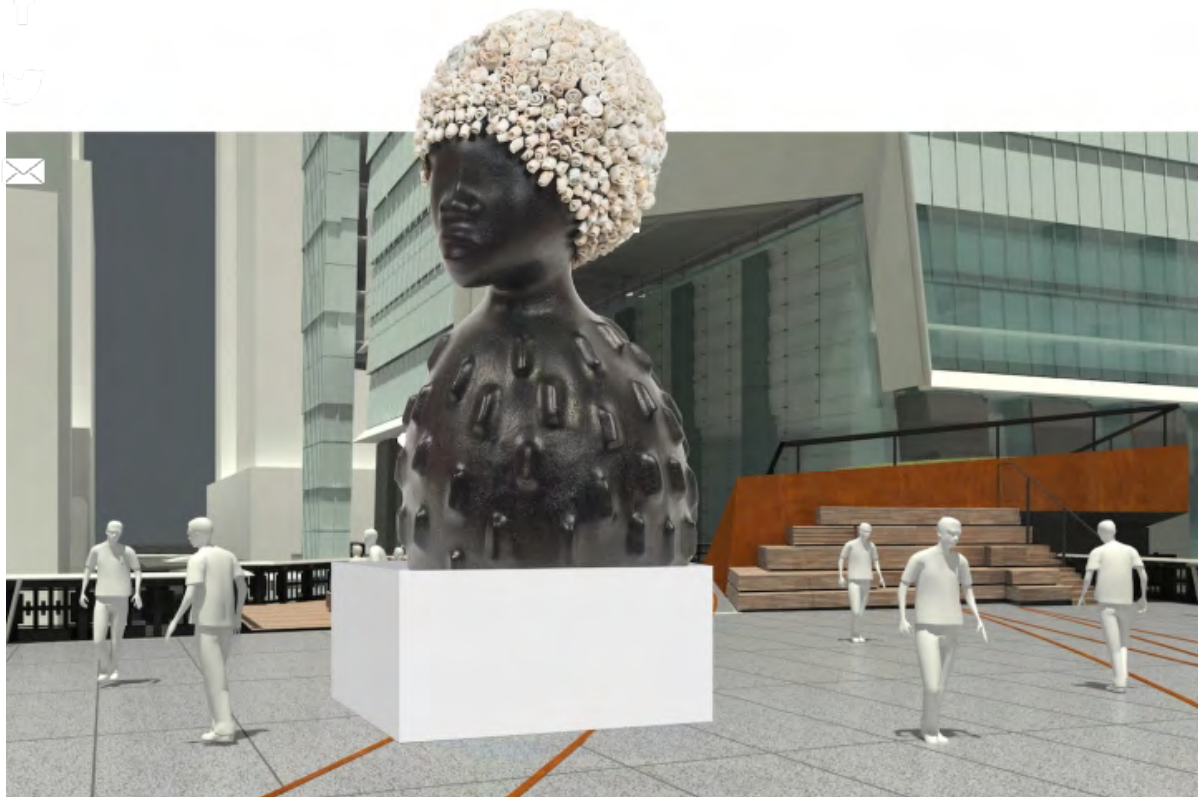
NEWS

Will a Giant Boob or Chameleon Inaugurate the High Line's New Public Art Plinth?

In spring 2018, the industrial park will inaugurate its first space dedicated specifically to art: the High Line Plinth.

Claire Voon | January 10, 2017

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A rendering of Simone Leigh's "Cupboard VII" (2016), her proposal for the High Line Plinth (architectural rendering by James Corner Field Operations and Diller Scofidio + Renfro, courtesy the City of New York; artwork courtesy the artist)

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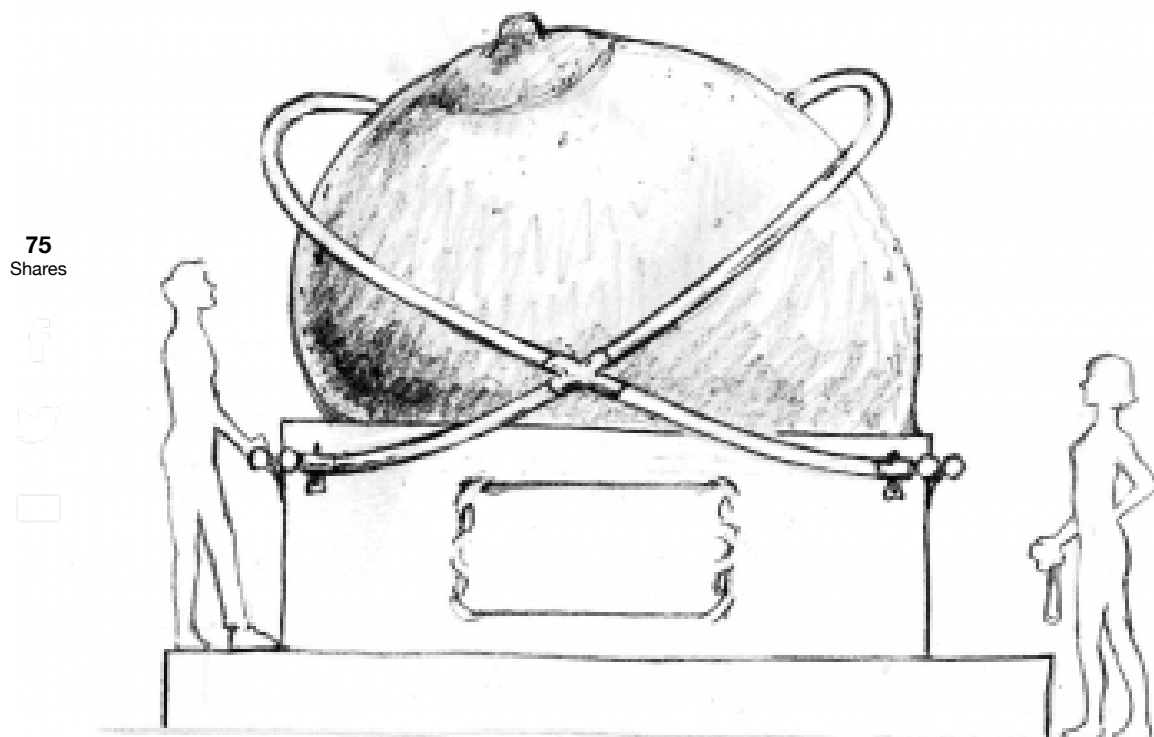
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Will a Giant Boob or Chameleon Inaugurate the High Line's New Public Art Plinth?

Hyperallergic, January 2017

Claire Voon

Come next spring, a giant chameleon, a standalone carillon, or a singular, upturned breast may grace the elevated grounds of the High Line. They're just three of 12 sculptures proposed by 12 artists and vying to inaugurate what will be the industrial park's first space dedicated specifically to art: the High Line Plinth. If that name sounds familiar, you're likely thinking of London's Fourth Plinth, the prominent pedestal in Trafalgar Square that's currently home to a [colossal thumb](#) by David Shrigley. Friends of the High Line drew inspiration directly from that 176-year-old plinth for this endeavor, which is forthcoming in the spring of 2018.



Rendering of Lena Henke's "Ascent of a Woman" (2016), her proposal for the High Line Plinth (architectural rendering by James Corner Field Operations and Diller Scofidio + Renfro, courtesy the City of New York; artwork courtesy the artist)

The nonprofit conservancy already has an impressive history of promoting culture through [High Line Art](#), which has placed a variety of exhibitions, commissions, and performances all along the park's tracks, but the new plinth will establish a spot specifically for contemporary art. It will serve the same purpose as its pal across the pond, hosting a series of works by international artists on an 18-month rotating schedule — and yes, you can expect them all to be rather grand in scale, as conspicuous as the ones that have towered over the British square.

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“The High Line Plinth will provide artists with an opportunity to work on a larger scale than ever before possible on the High Line, and to engage with the breathtaking vistas that open up around this new site,” Cecilia Alemani, High Line Art’s director and chief curator said in a statement. “As a new landmark to this space, the High Line Plinth will create a new symbol of this incredible nexus of horticulture, art, and public space in the ever-evolving metropolis that is New York City.”



Rendering of Jeremy Deller’s “Untitled” (2016), his proposal for the High Line Plinth (architectural rendering by James Corner Field Operations and Diller Scofidio + Renfro, courtesy the City of New York; artwork courtesy of the artist)

Set to stand at West 30th Street and Tenth Avenue, on what will be the park’s newest and largest open space, known as the Spur, the plinth will be seen easily from the road below. The installation of the inaugural artwork will coincide with the Spur’s opening; until then, High Line Art will be mulling over which of the 12 proposals to use to set the program in motion. The aforementioned chameleon is the imagining of British artist Jeremy Deller; the bell tower — intended to chime songs by Michael Stipe — is the vision of New Yorker [Jonathan Berger](#); and the boob — to be sculpted of soil, sand, and clay — the unabashed creation of German artist [Lena Henke](#). Other proposals include [Paola Pivi](#)’s 22-foot-tall version of the Statue of Liberty, whose face would change weekly to represent someone who either attained or is seeking freedom in the United States; [Sam Durant](#)’s drone that would rise over pedestrians and double as a weather vane; and Simone Leigh’s first monumental work in her ongoing sculptural series on the black female body, *Anatomy of Architecture*. Others on the shortlist are [Minerva Cuevas](#), [Charles Gaines](#), [Matthew Day Jackson](#), [Roman Ondak](#), [Haim Steinbach](#), and [Cosima von Bonin](#).

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High Line Art selected this dozen from over 50 proposals recommended by an international advisory committee that included curators Helen Molesworth of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles and Reem Fadda of the Guggenheim's Abu Dhabi Project, as well as artists Rashid Johnson, Adrian Villar Rojas, and Carol Bove. In the spring, two finalists will be selected, but you'll be able to judge the contenders for yourself, in person, sooner than that: the High Line will exhibit sculptural models of all of the shortlisted projects between February 9 and April 30 at a space on West 14th Street.



Rendering of Jonathan Berger's "Bell Machine" (2016), his proposal for the High Line Plinth (architectural rendering by James Corner Field Operations and Diller Scofidio + Renfro, courtesy the City of New York; artwork courtesy the artist)

SPIKE

by Laura McLean-Ferris 191

Laura McLean-Ferris is a writer and curator based in New York.

Views

NEW YORK

194

Lena Henke
"Heartbreak Highway"
Real Fine Arts
27.2. – 26.3.2016

Any trip to Real Fine Arts is marked by the proximity of the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway. The BQE is a large, roaring monster, which tore through neighborhoods at the behest of Robert Moses, the city planner whose biography *The Power Broker* by Robert A. Caro (1975) has a cultish following in New York. For her show at RFA, Lena Henke (*1982) built a structure in the gallery to block the road from view. She also created a number of gate sculptures that employ a looping braid to form flexible barriers to those who may want to use the gallery's doors. Moses was a violent form of rationalist who used hard lines and statistics to push his projects through, never adapting his roads and bridges from the straight path he deemed most rational. Positioned around Henke's exhibition were pieces that sought to channel an opposing spirit: small ceramic works made in the image of a horse's hooves, which had been fashioned to encompass plastic containers or to represent bizarre model shelters, cars, vessels, or houses. In an artistic climate in which outsourcing is rife and artworks are made to be rationally explainable, Henke's sculptures are wild, sloppy, and irrational – the *informe* which seeks to unlink categories from one another, connecting houses to soil, soil to spirits, horses to cars, and New Yorkers to the dirty messy history under the streets.

Installation view "Heartbreak Highway"



Henke: Courtesy the artist and Real Fine Arts, New York. Photo: Joerg Lubbe

Dead Horse Bay, on Lena Henke

Cura Magazine, 2015

Anna Gritz

PROJECT

**DEAD HORSE BAY
ANNA GRITZ
ON LENA HENKE**

192

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Slowly and with purpose the head of the Empire State and the Chrysler building bob up and down, fel-lating each other in a steady rhythm. Through a panoramic window their lovemaking is witnessed by a legion of anonymous, anthropomorphized Manhattan buildings deeply entrenched in the scene unfolding in front of them. The amputated arm of the Statue of Liberty makes a Cocteauish appearance in form of the table lamp on the bedside dresser, mood-lighting a scene that is harshly interrupted by the spotlight that the Rockefeller Center casts in the bed upon entering and catching the couple inflagranti.

This scene is taken from a short animation storyboarded by the artist Madelon Vriesendorp with Teri Wehn-Damisch and developed from a body of work that Vriesendorp had created in the early 1970s after she moved to Ithaca, NY with her husband Rem Koolhaas.¹ Her drawings would later become part of Koolhaas's influential text *Delirious New York* from 1978. In addition to the bizarre and surreal subject matter, it is the treatment of the city of New York as a pulsating, sweating, screaming mass of buildings, that is both stage and protagonist, that is so relevant to the work of Lena Henke. For *Dead Horse Bay* Henke

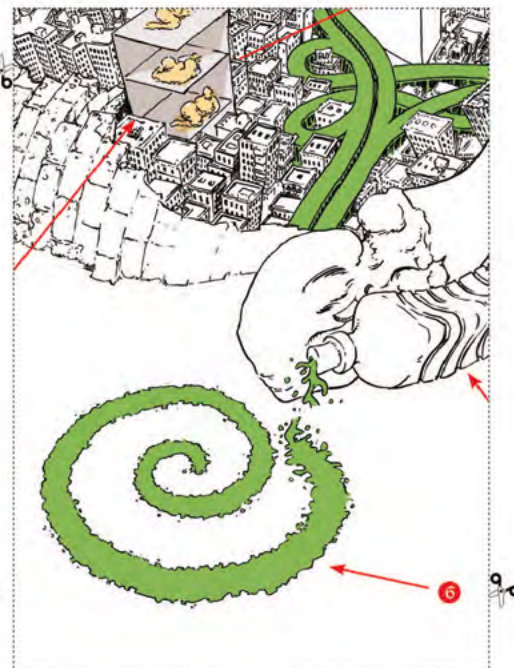
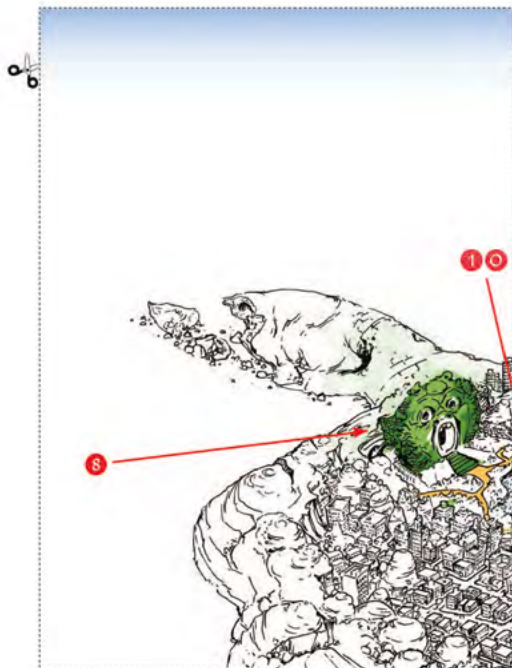
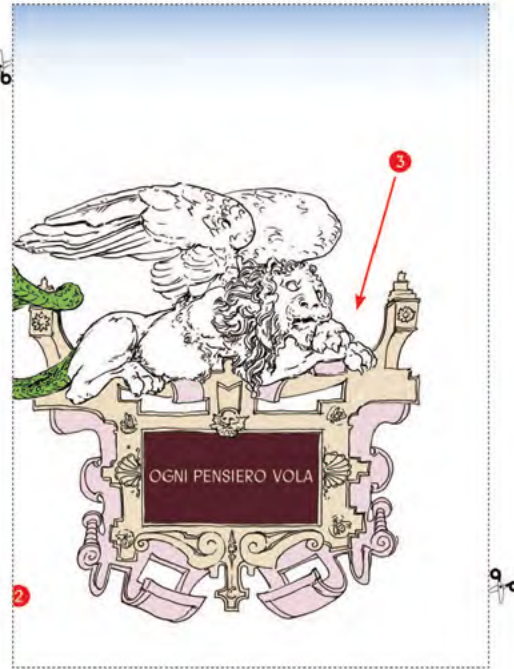
also chose the urban fabric of New York City as a matrix, clouding her intimate sensation of the city with its public façade. In both women's art work the interior and exterior becomes transposable, the city both interior setting and public domain. This strategy is epitomized in the rug in Vriesendorp's most famous drawing from this series, *Flagrant Delit*, from 1975, which shows the Manhattan city grid as a structure that runs through the inside of the apartment and is echoed in the view through the panoramic window in the geometric blocks of the urban structure. It is the aerial perspective

that reduces the chaos of the city to the easily navigable lines and channels of a map. Distance allows for the abstraction necessary to gain an overview, granting the order, which is so desirable when stuck amid the inner-city chaos below. The birds-eye view has long been a tool for map-making and is also in Henke's portrait employed to this end. It is a viewpoint that beckons authority and domination over the surveyed exterior world. Established in the Flemish portrait painting of the 15th Century by painters such as Jan van Eyck, the perspective signalled the reach of influence that the sitter had bestowed upon himself.

The tower, or tenanted vantage point becomes an optical device, a lens or camera as Beatriz Colomina calls it, consolidating inhabitation and the view onto the exterior world.² She recounts Le Corbusier suggesting the possibility to inhabit the camera as a means of employing a system of classification.³ One might take his point further and say that the mind can mimic a technology upon experiencing it. In a similar manner the perspective of a surveillance camera or the Google Earth zoom, once seen, can be called upon at will, allowing for a double entity – we can inhabit both the instrument glancing over a cityscape

while being an active participant in it. It is as if, once observed, we carry this perspective within us, observing ourselves from the position of an elevated outsider, an internalized panopticon of sorts, not dissimilar from Jeremy Bentham's and certainly a perspective encouraged by much recent municipal city planning. And yet aside from suggesting an internal corrective this type of split perspective also allows for an incorporated view onto our physical location. It is this incorporated view that Henke presents in this cityscape cum map. The gaze is multiplied and while we reside in her sight down on the city of her "Wahl Hei-

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mat" Manhattan, we also observe her through a window lying down on the top floor of the *Freedom Tower*, here displayed in the shape of a milk bottle that curiously resembles her own milk bottle sculptures. She is lying there playing with her sculptures as if they are dolls in a dollhouse, while surveying the ongoing of the city below through a massive window (#2). Henke is employing a similar type of scale confusion here as practiced by Vriesendorp in her drawings. While some of Henke's sculptures appear as miniatures and others materialize in the cityscape blown up to the size of buildings, her detergent

hoof dollhouses (#5) can be found copulating not unlike Vriesendorp's skyscrapers on the shore of the Hudson River, spewing green water in the shape of a spiral (jetty), a nod to another movement that was highly reliant on the aerial view. All the while specimens of her *Female Fatigue Series* (2015) – *New Museum*, *At&t Building*, *Chelsea Hotel*, and *Flat Iron Building* (all #7) – are casually spread about the lower half of the island.

There is something easy about Henke's *Female Fati-*gues, the way that the female bodies are slouching, cast from sand, on top of the sharp steel outlines of

iconic architecture, constantly threatening to collapse, not made to last but to be rebuilt when needed. They are like inflatable rubber dolls, summoned into shape and existence through a mould, once desired and easily destroyed and stored away when not. The series developed out of a show entitled *DIE*, after Tony Smith. Amongst other works Henke showed large industrial size sand bags, the ones' in which sand is delivered for construction sites. The sand was kept in the industrial bags, and moulded to resemble fragmented female bodies, an ass, a torso with head, a crotch with her legs crossed as in *Lower Part*

(*legs*) (2014). It is another self-portrait of sorts – Lena is assembling herself in fragments made of sand in the gallery. The shaped parts were then at times embellished with works from a series she calls *Chainmail* (2014), metallic chain nets cast in epoxy in FedEx boxes resembling medieval armour. The casual, almost sluggish body language of the sand sculptures can be seen in conversation with a type of feminist illustration common in '70s and '80s magazine culture with Claire Bretécher as one of the most famous protagonists. The lazy, lasziv poses appear borrowed from sources such as Bretécher's

serial publication *Frustration* (1975-80) which presents women slouched on couches, not wearing any bra, casually carrying a bag or breastfeeding a baby, habitually not poised or composed but instead perpetually irritated about the pitfalls of modern living (generally the pains of living with the other sex).⁴

This overly human, unapologetic, unpolished attitude is present in both Henke's sculpture and Vriesendorp's skyscrapers. Vriesendorp speaks of the drawings as "the result of an in-depth analysis of the possibilities provided by architecture, marking a time in which the ridged corset

of modernism had been thoroughly exhausted."⁵ The physical manner displayed by the buildings, flaunting arousal, strain and physical exhaustion opens up a perspective onto architecture that suggests an unconscious double life. Their constitution as erotic beings is correspondent to Lena's treatment of architecture and sculpture as both not only hosting each other but as being emotionally and physically affecting. Her 2014 comic book, *Yes, I Am Pregnant* was produced in reaction to the invitation to create a new work for the collection of the Sculpture Museum in Marl, Germany. Inspired by the richness in public scul-

pture in the city, a place that she experienced otherwise as desolate and without much public life, Henke decided to cast the sculptures in the public realm as the protagonists of a photo love story, a common sub genre in German teenage literature. The comic reframes and subtitles shots of the sculptures in the city, tell the story of Marina and Paul, two pubescent sculptures in love, one a work by Marino Marini and the other by Paul Derkes. Their love story is told as a drama, unfolding through an unplanned pregnancy and the resulting quarrels with family and friends and illustrated through the sculptures shot

in situ alongside a cast of auxiliary sculptures by Hans Arp, Joseph Jäckel and Hans Bucher. (As a side note it is worth mentioning that impregnation was one risk Vriesendorp's edifices did not have to fear, at least that's what one might assume from the casually cast aside 'Good Year' condom lying next to the exhausted lovers). Inspired by the works in Ignazio Danti's famous *Gallery of Maps* in the Vatican Museums, Lena Henke deploys the aerial view not simply as an attempt to map a city, but as a portrayal of her life, yet herself in the very city. Not dissimilar from Saul Steinberg's iconic vistas of the New York

City of the 1970s, the work presents a very personal vision of the skyline of the city, stretching and shrinking buildings and avenues at her leisure, going so far to transfigure the outline of Manhattan Island to match the famous anatomical drawing of the head of a horse by Théodore Géricault (#9). The skin pulled away to reveal the underlying muscle strands evocative of highways and the infrastructure of the city grid. With the baroque-eye of an Arcimboldo the city is realized as an organism made from a set of intertwined, and highly symbolic components assembled to create something new. The reference to the horse goes

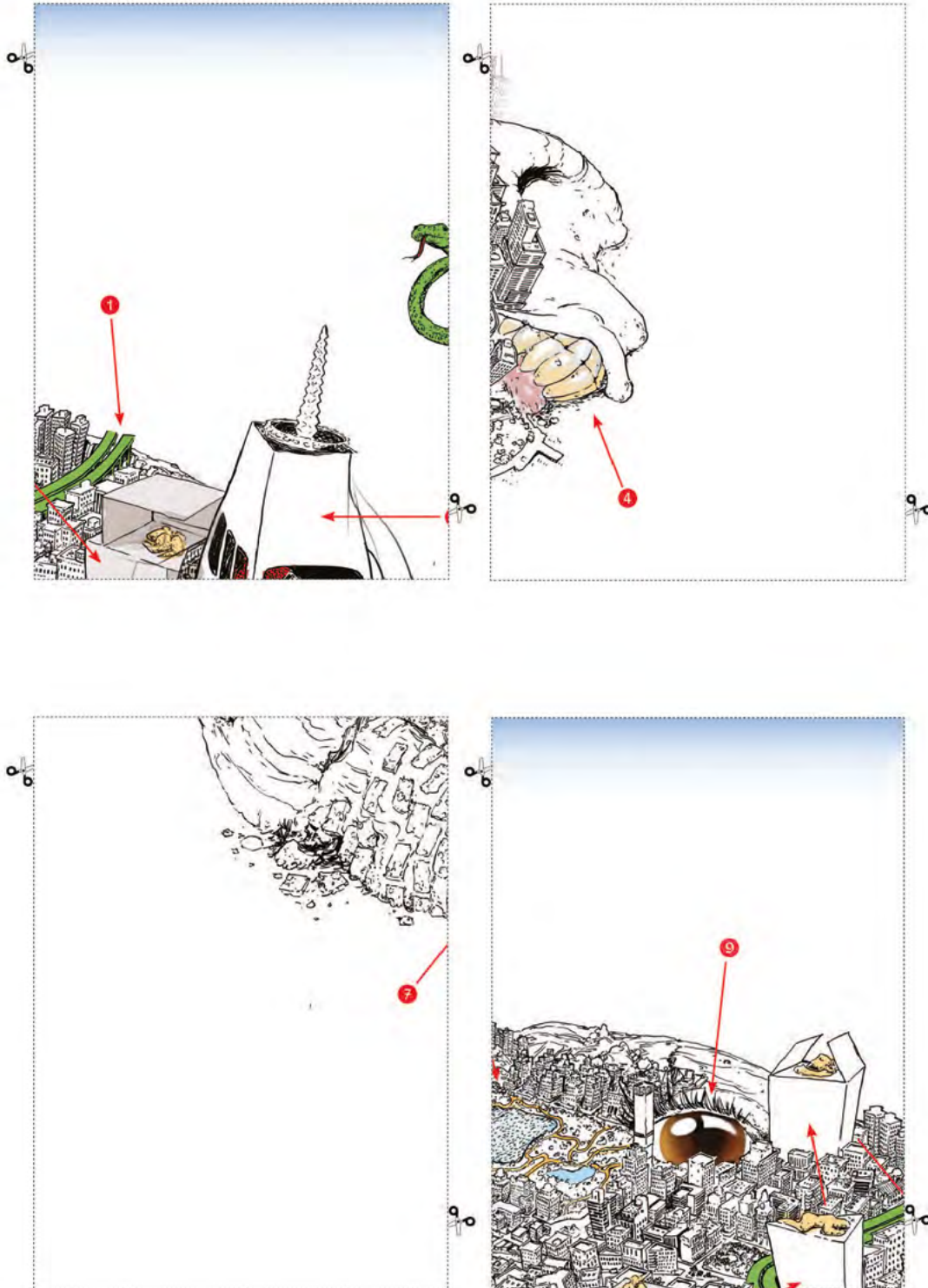
far back for Henke, recalling her upbringing next to a horse riding stable in rural Germany, blurring her pastoral origins with her new urban home. The horse motive is picked up frequently in the work, from her saddles and horse blankets in works like *Freeze Frame* (2014) to *Laundry Day* (2015), the detergent and milk bottle sculptures nestled in ceramic hoofs which are grotesquely distorted to the point that they begin to resemble vaginas, tenderly holding quarter coins between their lips – laundry money, one might assume.

The saying heralded on the emblem floating above the

island (#3) is taken from Dante Alighieri's inscription onto the opening of a cave that bears the features of a monster with a wide-open mouth as its entrance in the *Sacro Bosco* Park in Bomarzo, in central Italy. The saying states, "Ogni pensiero vola", meaning "Every thought flies away," advocating a letting go of reason upon entering the park with its cast of grotesque monstrosities. The gardens, which were built in the 16th century according to the vision of Pier Francesco Orsini, lay forgotten and overgrown for centuries until they were rediscovered and treasured by amongst others Jean Cocteau and Salvador Dalí.

One of the creatures has also found its way into Henke's map, (#8) guarding the north entrance to Frederick Law Olmsted's Central Park, reminding us that as much as we would like to see our cities as places of communal decision-making, they were for the most part planned according to the visions and whimsies of individual men, Olmsted being just one of these, Robert Moses another. Henke makes nods to both men here, tracing the impact that the ideas of these two had for the city of New York. Frederick Law Olmsted through his concept of a central park (#10) that embedded handmade nature as a democratic and

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Cura Magazine, 2015
Anna Gritz



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civilizing force into the urban fabric and Robert Moses by restructuring the city's infrastructure with his curving park and expressways (#1), extensive bridges and endless rows of red brick tower blocks punctuated only by the occasional asphalt playground. It is the ability to restructure on a massive scale to build a system that will order and shape the way people navigate a place and relate to each other that draws Henke to these men. Coincidentally, it was Moses' BQE, the expressway that ruptures Brooklyn in such a severe manner, that was the site of the first manifestation of Henke's collaborative pro-

ject M/L Art Space, a spontaneous and itinerant curatorial collaboration with Marie Karlberg for which both artists assemble a group show for a one-night only appearance.

Separated from its context Henke's map floats like a massive spaceship in the air, like a model and not unlike Mike Kelley's *Educational Complex* (1995) a reconstruction of a space based on recollection alone, omitting some elements in favour of the aspects that burned themselves deep into memory over time. The table-top architectural model just like the cityscape is for both Kelley and Henke a site of

power. The artist as model master builder or mapmaker has the authority to shape space independent of municipal needs, logistics and funds. The map/model carries the potential of closeness and ownership of structures that are – because of their size and complexities – difficult to grasp in their entirety. Henke draws reference here to the models built by people who identify as objectophile – who develop strong feelings of love for, and are attracted to monuments and build structures. The affection is often based in the belief that objects have souls, feelings and are able to communicate, and the

hand made models function as stand ins, as transportable sites for the their love. These maps and models are hybrids of sorts, or as Dan Graham would say, they are ways to experience architecture and the built environment without actually building it. They are intermediates that allow Henke to experience the city as an environment that is manipulatable and that can be shaped as much as it shapes us.

1. The film entitled *Flagrant Délit* was produced for French television and premiered in 1980.

2. Beatriz Colomina (ed.), *Sexuality & Space* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1992), p. 121.

3. *Ibid.*

4. Claire Bretécher, *Les frustrés* (5 albums, 1975-1980).

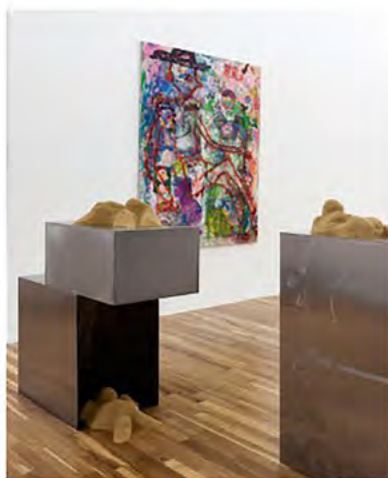
5. Madelon Vriesendorp in Klaus Leuschel, "Sex and the City? In architecture!", <http://www.architectonic.com/ntsht/sex-and-the-city-in-architecture/7000243>

With thanks to illustrator
Drew Alderfer

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View of "Lena Henke and Max Brand," 2015. From left: Lena Henke, *My Crane Collapse on 57th Street* (Female Fatigue Series), 2015; Max Brand, *Untitled*, 2014; Lena Henke, *Your Chelsea Hotel* (Female Fatigue Series), 2015.

NEW YORK

Lena Henke and Max Brand

OFF VENDOME

254 West 23rd Street #2

February 26–April 4, 2015

The exhibition starts in the stairwell, with battered sheets of painted cardboard woven through the banister and collaged with handmade sheets of rough, grody paper—welcome to the gallery, it's been waiting for you. From there you ascend through two floors of discretely installed sculptures and large paintings, interrupted by hallways and landings displaying an array of manic collaborative efforts between Lena Henke and Max Brand, who studied at Frankfurt's Städelschule together. The first floor hallway exhibits a zigzag pattern of shredded paper rectangles

adhered directly to the walls with green goo oozing out behind the edges as well as a series of Brand's watercolor, pen, and crayon drawings of cartoon figures and high octane scribbling—all untitled and from 2014—framed and hung on top of the wall collage. Discarding preciousness, this passage delights in its scrappiness while refraining from attitudinizing coolness.

Inside the first floor gallery are a series of hollow wall-mounted resin sculptures, painted sea-foam green on the outside and crisscrossed by thick rubber bands. Their curious, protruding faces are revealed to be the molds for Henke's figures made of sand that recline on metal towers on the second floor. Each work in this series resembles and is titled after iconic specimens of Manhattan architecture, such as the work *Your Flatiron* (Female Fatigue Series) or *Their New Museum* (Female Fatigue Series), both 2015. These voluptuous mounds of sand repose in stark relief with their unsympathetic environments—the sharp metal corners juxtaposed so near to the soft bodies, evoking vulnerability. Bordered by structure, the figures seem safe, but also trapped.

— Paige K. Bradley

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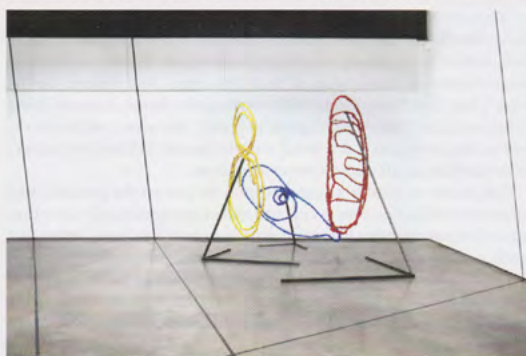
SAINT LOUIS

Lena Henke

WHITE FLAG PROJECTS

Each of the eight sculptures in “Geburt und Familie” (Birth and Family), Lena Henke’s recent show at White Flag Projects, is titled *Galocher*

View of “Lena Henke,”
2014. From left:
Galocher (poupée)
(Kissing with Tongues
[Doll]), 2014;
Galocher (oeil poche)
(Kissing with Tongues
[Black Eye]), 2014;
Galocher (fécond)
(Kissing with Tongues
[Fecundity]), 2014.



(French slang for a sloppy, openmouthed kiss). Indeed, the loose compositions of Henke’s works plant an irreverent French kiss on historic models of avant-garde production. The pieces are composed of fiber-glass rope that was dipped in boldly colored resin, laid on the studio floor in sketchy intertwining shapes, and left to dry. The resulting forms were then propped up on angular steel stands and adjusted to lean into or away from one another. The works’ two-part construction, wherein the base is an integral element of the sculpture, positions them within a long trajectory of sculptural assemblage, from the constructed sculpture of the 1940s to early Minimalism. Yet the primary colors and graphic, linear aesthetic of the loopy rope forms also call upon such diverse precedents as Surrealist automatic writing and Pop art. *Galocher (bécot)* (Kissing with Tongues [Kiss], all works 2014)—featuring a red form that seems to embrace a similar green one—pays oblique homage to Constantin Brancusi’s *Kiss*, 1907–1908, while other sculptures take up figures from popular culture: The primary-yellow *Galocher (poupée)* (Kissing with Tongues [Doll]) and *Galocher (cœur)* (Kissing with Tongues [Heart]) evoke characters from *Barbapapa*, a TV series the artist watched as a child. Although their points of reference range from art history to pop culture, the works themselves are modulations of a basic embryonic form, and are therefore united as a kind of family by this shared aesthetic.

The organizing theme of Henke’s exhibition was the artist’s notion of a sculpture becoming pregnant. As such, the arrangement of works in intimate groupings (sculptures in small clusters demarcated by black-tape lines directly faced one another so that a viewer could always see one from the front and another from the back) seemed to suggest a series of family narratives. The works’ subtitles also drove these stories: A red and blue zygote and two entwined blue and green figures were subtitled, respectively, *ovule* (egg) and *embrassade* (hug). The various configurations referenced German psychotherapist Bert Hellinger’s therapeutic method, in which a family constellation’s internal dynamics are evaluated to determine the effects of previous familial traumas. In a way, Henke’s intermingling of art-historical and personal points of reference here suggested that the artist was tracing a larger condition at stake in her work, perhaps something like a systemic trauma of art history.

Lena Henke at White Flag Projects
Artforum, Summer 2014
Karen Butler

Henke's *Yes, I'm Pregnant!*, a graphic novel in which the protagonists are works from the collection of the Skulpturenmuseum Glaskasten Marl in Germany, was also on display. It's a love story about a high-school girl (portrayed by a Marino Marini work) who becomes pregnant by a sculpture of a horse by Paul Dierkes. Lending the various depicted works the character traits of their producers, from Hans Arp to Michael Schwarze, the tongue-in-cheek novel literalizes the conceptual themes of the exhibition. In the end, one might ask what the notion of a pregnant sculpture could even mean, as Henke both thumbs her nose at the possibility of artistic progeny and declares the inescapability of historical influence. An untitled drawing, digitally printed on a large square sheet of vinyl that was affixed to the gallery's facade, features renderings of different sculptures from the collection in Marl redrawn to incorporate the faces of the artist's family and friends. Marriage, birth, family, and divorce: Are these not accurate metaphors for the conditions of artistic production, which always involves a sloppy psychosocial aspect of one sort or another?

—Karen Butler

FOKUS



Lena Henke

Abstraktion, ins unmöglich
Konkrete gewendet

Pablo Larios

In seinem Manifest *Grundsätze der Bauhausproduktion* forderte Walter Gropius 1925 in Massenproduktion hergestellte Produkte, die billiger und besser sind als handgefertigte. Heute könnte eine solche Forderung problemlos in einem IKEA-Geschäftsbericht stehen. Die Geschichte hat es nicht immer gut gemeint mit den ästhetischen Programmen des vergangenen Jahrhunderts, sie wurden Opfer von Dogmatisierung und Kommerzialisierung, verkamen zum Klischee. Um letzteres Phänomen geht es Lena Henke, wenn sie genau solche „Ismen“ – vor allem den Minimalismus – in ihren Skulpturen Gestalt annehmen lässt: als materielle Artefakte, die für soziale und historische Assoziationen lebendig bleiben, die aber von ihren Ursprüngen abgetrennt sind und im Laufe der Geschichte stumpf – manchmal aber auch befreit – wurden. Henkes Skulpturen ergeben sich aus dem, was auf dem Weg vom ursprünglichen Manifest zur Designbrochure passiert.

Das Auseinanderklaffen von Idee und Umsetzung dient der in Deutschland geborenen Künstlerin oft als Ausgangspunkt für ihre Arbeiten. Die letztes Jahr im Kunstverein Oldenburg gezeigte Installation *Core, Cut, Care* (2012) mit ihren strengen, sockelartigen Objekten und Sperrholzplatten (samt ausgeschnittener kreisrunder Segmente) wies die kühlen Kennzeichen des Minimalismus auf: starre, stumme, grabsteinartige Objekte, die im Raum verteilt stehen oder an der Wand lehnen und mit Teer, Kunstharz oder Dachpappe überzogen sind. Doch an diesen Objekten hingen kopfüber gerahmte Fotografien, meist verwickelte Schnapp-

schüsse von draußen aufgenommenen Gegenständen, die dort hart auf eine urbane Natur treffen: ein um einen Baum herum gebogenes Gerüst, ein zur Weihnachtszeit von einer rosafarbenen Böschung herabhängender, Zuckerstangen-förmiger Busch.

Henke ist keine Puristin, sie setzt Motive, die ganz bewusst „naturhaft“ sind, neben von Menschen Geschaffenes. Ihre Skulpturen scheinen fröhlich-virtuos mit kunsthistorischen Lehrbuchkategorien zu spielen und sie zu unterlaufen, was vielleicht am deutlichsten in ihrer 2012er Ausstellung bei Real Fine Arts in Brooklyn zu sehen war. In der Schau mit dem Titel *She said something Like Don't Let Me Walk the Stairs Again I Said But You Live There* zeigte sie acht milchig durchscheinende Plastikuben, die mit verschwommenen, urtümlichen anmutenden Figuren bedruckt und wie Trennwände zwischen Urinalen an die Wand montiert waren. Die Figuren – sie schienen einen Reigen zu tanzen wie auf einer griechischen Vase – hatte Henke aus Fotografien von Skulpturen des norwegischen Künstlers Gustav Vigeland (1869–1943) übernommen. Die gedungenen Formen der naiv kraftstrotzenden Figuren Vigelands – hier grün und patiniert – wurden ausbalanciert durch die gallertartige Klarheit der Plastikbehälter, die auch verdächtig an die durchsichtigen Plastikhüllen von Zigarettenschachteln erinnern (ein weiteres Indiz: Auf der Einladungskarte war eine Streichholzschachtel abgebildet). Man könnte hier von einer verdinglichten Zeitleiste sprechen – Kunstgeschichte, wie sie sich an ihrem materiellen Gehäuse bricht. Doch mit einer solchen Aussage ließe man das erfrischende

Abstraction turned impossibly concrete

'Mass-produced products that are cheaper and better than those manufactured by hand' declared Walter Gropius in his 1925 manifesto *Grundsätze der Bauhausproduktion* (*Principles of Bauhaus Production*, 1926). Today, that phrase would not be out of place in an IKEA business report. History has not always been kind to the aesthetic programmes of the last century, falling victim as they did to dogma or commodification or cliché. It's in the latter spirit that those very 'isms' – Minimalism in particular – find form in Lena Henke's sculptures: as material artifacts alive to social and historical associations, mostly dead to their origins, tarnished (or liberated) by the fact of their passing through actual history. Her sculptures are the product of what occurs between the original manifesto and the design brochure.

Disjunctions between idea and realization are often points of departure for the German-born artist's works. Her austere plinth-like objects and plywood panels – with circular segments removed – in *Core, Cut, Care* (2012), shown at Kunstverein Oldenburg last year, evinced stiff Minimalist trademarks: rigid, silent tombstone-like objects, placed throughout a room or leaning against a wall and covered in tar, epoxy, or roofing felt. But hung on these were framed, upside-down photographs, mostly jittery one-offs, of man-made objects in outdoor settings colliding with urbanized nature: scaffolding bent around a tree, a candy-cane shaped bush hanging off a pink embankment at Christmas time.

Henke is no purist, juxtaposing iconography that is self-consciously 'natural' and 'man-made'. Her sculptures seem to gleefully riff on and undermine textbook art historical categories, a fact perhaps most clear in her show *She Said Something Like Don't Let Me Walk the Stairs Again I Said But You Live There*, featuring a row of eight translucent plastic rectangular prisms, printed with hazy, primeval-looking figures and mounted at urinal-divider height along the wall of Brooklyn's Real Fine Arts in 2012. The figures – seemingly dancing in a circle as if on a classical Greek urn – were actually sourced by Henke from photographs of sculptures by the Norwegian artist Gustav Vigeland (1869–1943). The chunky, innocent brawn of Vigeland's forms – here, green and tarnished – was counterbalanced by the gelatinous clarity of the plastic encasements that – folds exposed – looked conspicuously like the clear plastic on cigarette cartons (further proof: a matchbook graced the exhibition invite). One might call this a reified timeline – art history refracted by its material housing. But to express this would be to ignore the refreshing interplay between fluid, faceless forms pitted against the near-transparent, cut-and-dry formats of everyday, serialized experience (boxes, cigarettes, urinals).

It's no wonder that Henke lives between New York and Frankfurt (where she studied under Michael Krebber at the Städelschule), given that both cities, though at different

1
Core, Cut, Care
2012
Installation view
Oldenburg
Kunstverein

2
*From One Artist
To Another*
(detail)
2012
Installation view
Nassauischer
Kunstverein,
Wiesbaden
2013

3
Hang Harder
Installation view
Neuer Aachener
Kunstverein
2012

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Wechselspiel außer Acht, das hier zwischen fließenden, gesichtslosen Formen auf der einen und eindeutigen Formaten serialisierter Alltagserfahrung (Schachteln, Zigaretten, Urinale) andererseits stattfindet.

Es verwundert nicht, dass Henke zwischen New York und Frankfurt (wo sie bei Michael Krebber an der Städelschule studiert hat) pendelt: Beide Städte stehen – wenn auch in unterschiedlichem Maßstab – für harte Kontraste zwischen brutalstmöglichem Alltag und betuchter Pose. Schaut man Henkes Arbeiten an, ist das, wie an einer Bushaltestelle ein Plakat des MoMA zu entdecken: ursprünglich plastisch und ernst, jetzt mit Haustürschlüsseln zerkratzt und entstellt. So liegt die unmittelbare Wirkung von Henkes Werken denn auch in der Wucht ihrer Gegensätze: Szenen verstellter Durchgänge oder abgedeckte Beschreibungen, wie die leeren, kargen Platten von *Core, Cut, Care*. Diese widerstrebenden Impulse (Schwere und Leichtigkeit, Farbe und weiße Tünche, Abstraktion und Gegenständlichkeit) arbeiten oft in ein und derselben Arbeit gegeneinander. Man denke an die sattelartigen Gebilde von *Schlangen im Stahl*, die 2011 in der Frankfurter Galerie Parisa Kind zu sehen waren. Abstrakte, hingegossene Fiberglas-Formen, die ein wenig aussehen wie Plastikbeutel oder Abdeckplanen, wie Pferdesättel in der Bewegung fixiert, auf unglaubliche Weise auf Alltagsgegenständen balancierend, etwa auf Deodorant-Flaschen oder Tabakdosen.

In Henkes erster, *Hang Harder* betitelten institutionellen Einzelausstellung im Neuen Aachener Kunstverein (2012) standen mit Teer und Kunstharz bestrichene Holztäfelchen auf simplen stählernen Klappstühlen, die gegen die Wand gedreht waren. Teer wird in industriellen Zusammenhängen dazu eingesetzt, eine Oberfläche zu festigen und abzudecken – um sie gewissermaßen zu neutralisieren. Doch Teer war auch (wie Henke in einem jüngst in *Mousse* publizierten Gespräch mit Judith Hopf meint) ein indirekter Weg, die Arbeiten von Richard Serra zu kanalisieren. Betrachtet man die Parallelen zwischen absolutem Schwarz und dem unheimlichen Schimmern des Teers sind die Bezüge auf den fast schon despotischen Minimalismus dieser Überfigur tatsächlich kaum zu verkennen. Doch Henkes Tafeln stehen komischerweise auf Stühlen, die man eigentlich gerade deshalb verwendet, weil sie so leicht wegzuräumen sind.

In Henkes Arbeiten geht es oft um das Verwischen des Unterschiedes zwischen wörtlichem und übertragenem Sinn eines Satzes, darum, ein Prinzip bis an die Grenzen seines Gegenteils zu bringen: Abstraktion wird ins unmöglich Konkrete gewendet, Minimalismus auf die maximalistische Spitze getrieben. Es braucht natürlich ein gehöriges Maß an Zynismus, um das so zu sehen – ein Zynismus, der Henkes starren, verhärteten Objekten nicht fremd ist. Es ist das Dilemma, das Logiker und Verrückte gemein haben: Gerade die am besten durchgearbeiteten Argumentationen enden, wenn man ihnen allzu streng folgt – und das ist auch bei Kunstströmungen so – gerne im Selbstwiderspruch.

Übersetzt von Michael Müller

scales, contain radical extremes of everyday grit and moneyed posturing. Looking at her works is like looking at a MoMA poster on a bus shelter: vivid and once-earnest, but by now key-scratched and defaced. Likewise, the works' most immediate effect is their heavy antagonistic force: scenes of blocked passageways or covered-up signage, like the blank, sparse planes from *Core, Cut, Care*. These opposing impulses (heaviness and levity, colour and whitewash, abstraction and reference) are often pitted against each other in the same piece: take the saddle-like blobs in *Schlangen im Stahl* (Snakes in the Stable), shown at 2011 at Galerie Parisa Kind in Frankfurt. Abstract, moulded fiberglass forms, looking somewhat like plastic bags or tarpaulin, recalling horse saddles frozen in motion, though improbably balancing on consumer goods like men's deodorant and tobacco tins.

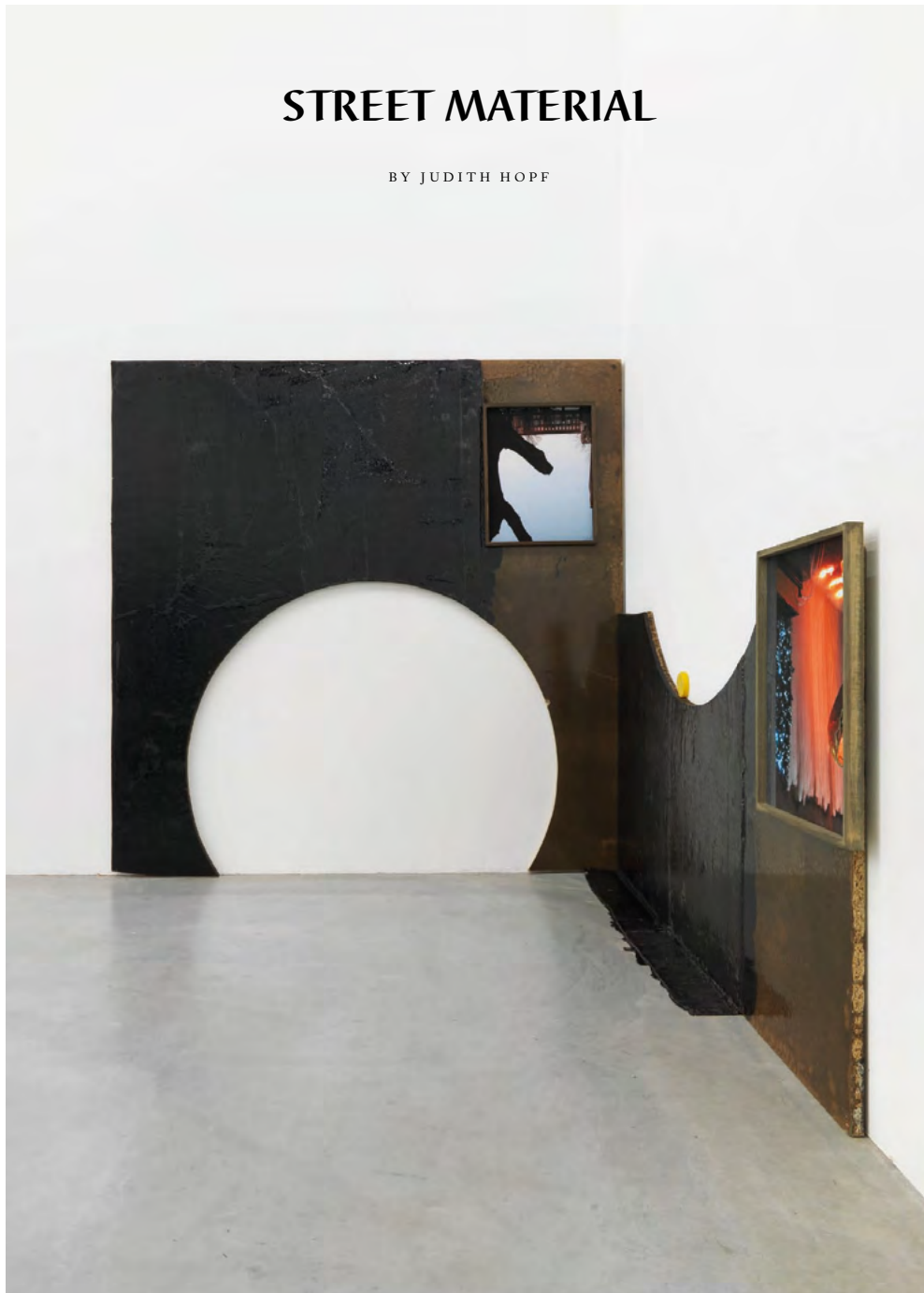
In Henke's first institutional solo show, *Hang Harder*, at the Neuer Aachener Kunstverein in 2012, a series of wooden panels, layered over with tar and epoxy resin, rested atop basic folding steel chairs which

were turned against the wall. Tar is used in industrial settings both to solidify and to cover up a surface – to naturalize it and neutralize it, in a way. But, as Henke mentions in a conversation with Judith Hopf, recently published in *Mousse*, tar was an indirect way of channeling Richard Serra. Indeed, it's hard, when looking at these works, given the duplicity between absolute black and tar's uneasy sheen, to see past the reference to the intractable figure's almost tyrannical brand of Minimalism – channelled in Henke's pieces comically placed atop chairs used for their ease of removal.

Henke's works are often about confusing the literal and figurative senses of a phrase, taking a principle to its contradictory limit point: abstraction turned impossibly concrete, and Minimalism pushed to its maximal extreme. Of course, it takes a deliberate cynicism to see this – a cynicism not foreign to Henke's deliberately stiff, hardened objects. It's the quandary shared by logicians and the insane that the most mapped-out arguments, like artistic movements, when taken rigidly, often collapse into contradiction.



MOUSSE 38 ~ *Lena Henke*



"Core, Cut, Care," exhibition view, OKV, Oldenburger Kunstverein, Oldenburg, 2012. Courtesy: the artist and Galerie Parisa Kind, Frankfurt. Photo: Roman März

MOUSSE 38 ~ Lena Henke

In her recent *FIRST FACES* Lena Henke has made extensive use of a single material: tar, a substance that reminds us of the material of the street, as well as illustrious associations like Richard Serra. Nevertheless, Henke's work has a sort of latency that makes it shift between the monumental and the decorative: a majestic wall of tarred, reflecting panels can transform into a fashion show catwalk, a place for "first faces". Judith Hopf converses with Henke, whose works come from time spent in "third places", between public and private, and from interaction with others, creating steps of personal and artistic growth.

judith hopf: In filmmaking or professional fashion and advertising photography, a "wet-down" refers to the procedure of watering streets in order to a) produce a rainy atmosphere and especially to b) capture the visual effect of the reflected light. When looking at the catalogue *FIRST FACES* of your exhibition at Kunstverein Aachen and Kunstverein Oldenburg, I thought the black floor pieces and the wall pieces with their intermittently reflecting tar surfaces, as well as the diagrammed silhouette of a woman on the cover of the catalogue who seems to be mirrored in a rain puddle on the ground, were reminiscent of a rainy day atmosphere. Could your floor and wallboards that are treated with tar also be read, not least due to their large format, as a version of Abstract Modernism's vocabulary? Is it, metaphorically speaking, raining on the inside, in the manner of Richard Serra's weather-resistant steel on the outside? Or said differently, can you tell me about your understanding of material and its implied potentiality in relation to possible narrations and reflections?

lena henke: The decision to use tar for these exhibitions developed from wanting to concentrate on working with a single material I had already used when I was studying in Frankfurt. I had been in New York for three months at that point and did not really want to return to Frankfurt to prepare the exhibitions. This is how the idea came about to stretch the planning and making of an exhibition over the course of two openings. The first exhibition showed the material I would usually prepare in the studio and the second exhibition the resulting sculptures. I convinced both Kunstvereine to work together, which was not easy because each institution was initially worried they would get the weaker of the two exhibitions [laughs].

I had already showed a sculpture made with tar a couple of years earlier. It was called *Tokio Hotel und Deine Mutter* [Tokio Hotel And Your Mother] and consisted of five differently sized plinths and pedestals covered with bitumen and tar. The exhibition took place during the summer, so the tar became soft in the



"From One Artist to Another," exhibition view, NAK, Nassauischer Kunstverein, Wiesbaden, 2013. Courtesy: the artist and Galerie Parisa Kind, Frankfurt. Photo: Jessica Schäfer



"From One Artist to Another," exhibition view, NAK, Nassauischer Kunstverein, Wiesbaden, 2013. Courtesy: the artist and Galerie Parisa Kind, Frankfurt. Photo: Jessica Schäfer

heat and oozed onto the herringbone parquet flooring of the exhibition hall... kind of like Serra's thick tar drawings. At the time I was thinking of the material as emulating the "gothic color" of the band Tokio Hotel. Tar is of course also used to make surfaces stable and waterproof. I like seeing such rawness of a material in a public space.

jh: The double exhibition at both Kunstvereine, Aachen and Oldenburg, was developed in New York?

lh: I planned the first show, *HANG HARDER* in Aachen, from New York. When I arrived in New York, I did not have my own studio and was out and about on the streets a lot. One time I heard one teenager say to another: "why don't we hang harder?" That is how the title and the idea to take street material into the exhibition space came about. I also spent a lot of time in places that would sociologically be called "third places". Every day I would hang out at the huge new Starbucks on Centre Street in Manhattan, to observe and draw people hanging in their chairs. This semi-private way of working in a public place interests me, as it only works in very specific circumstances. People who have nothing to do with each other have to sit closely together while at the same time feeling free enough to have private conversations or talk on Skype. Starbucks, for instance, uses long benches with high backrests to create such an environment.

In Aachen, the tar board materials were hanging out on chairs, leaning against the walls, and closing off the windows of the space forming one long wall. This is where I could rather see the connection to Serra, via Tom Burr who perhaps, in his great work *Deep Purple* at Kunstverein Braunschweig, was referring to Richard Serra's *Tilted Arc*. This grand purple exterior wall, which he copies from Serra and deconstructs by reducing it in size and supporting it from the back, can suddenly appear decorative despite its monumentality. For the show in Oldenburg, the entire material from Aachen was developed into sculptures resembling built-in furniture. Drawings made in the New York Starbucks are worked into the tar surfaces. There is a kind of deceptive appearance. Perhaps my large wall in Aachen also evokes a catwalk or window display...

jh: Possibly, then, the woman on the cover also refers to the aesthetics developed in post-war fashion photography?

lh: The woman you see on the cover of *FIRST FACES* is Jean Shrimpton, who was photographed by David Bailey for his first "Young Idea Goes West" photo series for British Vogue in 1962. They were a couple at the time, and after this first photo series in New York he became known as a photographer and she as one of the first supermodels. The catalogue title, *FIRST FACES*, also refers to New York. After the first show had opened in Aachen, I wanted to go back to New York but my visa was rejected. Inadvertently, I had to spend the summer in Frankfurt in my studio. There was no bathroom so I had to go to the gym around the corner to shower. The monitors at the gym were regularly showing a fashion channel and I learned that the first model that enters the catwalk is called the "first face". There are other fashion attributes the catalogue plays with, such as using the format of the 1970s Vogue, the Margiela page numbers, or the titles of the sculptures in Oldenburg, which are all names of different styles of jeans.

MOUSSE 38 ~ *Lena Henke*



"Schlangen im Stall," exhibition view, Galerie Parisa Kind, Frankfurt, 2011. Courtesy: the artist and Galerie Parisa Kind, Frankfurt. Photo: Jessica Schäfer

Top - *untitled_ (grid 1_ grid 2_ grid 3_ grid 4)*, 2013, installation view, NAK, Nassauischer Kunstverein, Wiesbaden, 2012. Courtesy: the artist, Galerie Parisa Kind, Frankfurt, and Real Fine Arts, New York. Photo: Jessica Schäfer

MOUSSE 38 ~ *Lena Henke*



untitled (run 1, run 2, run 3), 2013.
installion view, NAK, Nassauischer Kunstverein, Wiesbaden.
Courtesy: the artist, Galerie Parisa Kind, Frankfurt, and Real
Fine Arts, New York. Photo: Jessica Schäfer

untitled (interior, vigeland museum), detail, 2012.
Courtesy: the artist, Galerie Parisa Kind, Frankfurt,
and Real Fine Arts, New York. Photo: Jessica Schäfer

MOUSSE 38 ~ *Lena Henke*



"HANG HARDER," NAK. Neuer Aachener Kunstverein, Aachen. 2012.
Courtesy: the artist and Galerie Parisa Kind, Frankfurt. Photos: Simon Vogel

MOUSSE 38 ~ *Lena Henke*



"WIR über UNS," installation view, Neue Alte Brücke, Frankfurt, 2010.
 Courtesy: the artist

jh: When you mention Jean Shrimpton in relation to your sculptural works, I am drawn to this Harper's Bazaar issue with her on the cover. For me this image funnily connects to your large wall piece with the hole to look through, as well as to your lines of text, *Black Holes* or *A Junkie Wearing A Helmet*, both sentence splitters that were interspersed in the opening speech at Kunstverein Oldenburg by means of a speech performance spoken by Felix Riemann and Max Brand.

If I understand correctly, Max, Felix and you are hanging out in your quasi Starbucks seating island sculptures uttering fragmented quotations and snatched associations of relations between people and their relations to things in general, as well as to their subject concepts and career strategies. At least some of these sentences appear like poetry in the catalogue. Did you draw up, come upon, link these texts together? It sounds like a sort of slip box to me. Or are your sculptures imaginarily speaking this way, partly amplified by the echo effect in the space, partly offline? How did this come about in your speech?

lh: I tried to wrap myself elastically around the requirements of an institution. Instead of customarily inviting an art historian to introduce the exhibition in Oldenburg, I involved friends. Our shared slip box consisted of questions and not always fitting answers, selected from my favorite interviews with other artists, women's and men's magazines, as well as personal questions and answers from myself. As a result, Felix wrote a speech that we printed as an extended version in blocks of text as an introduction to the catalogue. Involving friends is something I had already tried in Aachen, where it is customary for someone from the board to hold the opening speech. We agreed on a kind of carpenter's speech, like at a German topping-out ceremony that is held as soon as the shell construction of a building is completed. Of course, counteracting is always an attempt to gain a consciousness of your own limits. In Oldenburg it had the nice effect of being able to organize free travel and accommodation for many of my friends. Later there was a concert by Benjamin Saurer and his band Angel's Voice. All these things become small but important bases, perhaps because I like collaborating with people, which does not usually work so well in sculpting...

jh: All the more important it is to keep thinking of new variations of how given conventions can be circumvented, in order to introduce new standards and to keep reworking the changeability of the aesthetic, institution and audience. I was able to experience a performative reading by Tom Burr at mumok (Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien) where he lectured to the audience, who were dutifully stuck on their folding chairs, about sitting itself and the prominent function of the poster—or—it was great and moved some thoughts without one actually moving physically. You too addressed social conventions in connection to art and society brilliantly in the sculptures with bar tables whose titles were names of presidents' wives.

lh: The party tables were a pleasant gadget for me, a nice object for outdoor and indoor decoration. I tried to use the first ladies of several countries as the starting point for a series of sculptures. Repeating similar formal themes, such as tables and plinths, these works were motivated by an interest in girl power, high-class party culture and style. The first lady is usually considered to be someone holding up the nation's values and setting the tone for first-class hosting and high society style, just like the table holds the plinth or the other way around, or whatever. Doubling up the use of event tables with plinths, placing them on top of each other, offers one suggestion: the functions of both being precarious and unstable.

Street Material

di Judith Hopf

Nella sua recente **FIRST FACES**, Lena Henke ha fatto largo uso di un unico materiale: il catrame, un materiale che ricorda la materialità della strada tanto quanto parentele illustri, come quella con Richard Serra. Tuttavia, il lavoro di Henke possiede una lena che lo rende ora monumentale ora decorativo: una maestosa parete di tavole incatramate e riflettenti possono trasformarsi in una passerella da sfilata, da *first faces*, appunto. Judith Hopf intesse una conversazione con Henke, i cui lavori nascono dalla frequentazione di “luoghi terzi” fra pubblico e privato tanto quanto dal confronto con gli altri, creando tasselli di crescita personale ed artistica.

Judith Hopf: Nell'ambito della produzione cinematografica o della fotografia professionale si parla di “wet-down” per indicare la procedura di bagnare le strade per al produrre un'atmosfera da giorno di pioggia e in particolare per b) cogliere l'effetto visivo della luce riflessa. Sfogliando *FIRST FACES*, il catalogo della tua mostra tenutasi presso le Kunstverein di Aachen e di Oldenburg, ho pensato che sia i lavori neri – a pavimento e a parete – dalle superfici catramate riflettenti, che la silhouette stilizzata sulla copertina del catalogo – che sembra specchiarsi in una pozzanghera a terra – fanno venire in mente proprio l'atmosfera di un giorno piovoso. È possibile che le tavole catramate appoggiate a terra o appese siano da interpretare, soprattutto per il grande formato, come una rilettura del vocabolario modernista astratto? Sta forse, metaforicamente parlando, piovendo all'interno allo stesso modo in cui piove sulla parte esterna dell'acciaio resistente agli agenti atmosferici di Richard Serra? In altre parole, vuoi dirmi come concepisci il materiale e la sua potenzialità implicita in rapporto alle possibili narrazioni e riflessioni?

Lena Henke: La decisione di usare il catrame in queste mostre è partita dal desiderio, nato quando studiavo a Francoforte, di concentrarmi sul lavoro con un unico materiale. Ero a New York da tre mesi e non avevo molta voglia di tornare a Francoforte per occuparmi delle mostre. È così che mi è venuta l'idea di articolare l'organizzazione e la realizzazione di una mostra attraverso due inaugurazioni. Nella prima mostra avrei presentato il materiale che normalmente preparo in studio e nella seconda le sculture frutto di questo lavoro. Ho convinto i due Kunstverein a collaborare, e non è stato facile perché tutti e due temevano inizialmente di ritrovarsi con la mostra meno interessante [ride]. Avevo già presentato una scultura fatta di catrame un paio d'anni prima. Si chiamava *Tokio Hotel und deine Mutter* [Tokio Hotel e tua madre] ed era composta da cinque plinti e piedistalli di diverse dimensioni, ricoperti di bitume e catrame. La mostra di cui faceva parte si è svolta in estate, quindi il caldo ha ammorbido il catrame che si è sciolto sul pavimento in parquet a spina di pesce della galleria... un po' come i disegni di catrame di Serra. All'epoca pensavo a quel materiale come ad una emulazione del “colore gotico” della band Tokio Hotel. Naturalmente il catrame serve anche a rendere le superfici resistenti e impermeabili. Mi piace vedere la sua crudezza in uno spazio pubblico.

JH: Hai preparato la doppia mostra nelle due Kunstverein di Aachen e Oldenburg a New York?

LH: La prima mostra, *HANG HARDER*, quella di Aachen, l'ho organizzata da New York. Quando sono arrivata a New York non avevo uno studio mio e quindi passavo molto tempo per strada. Una volta ho sentito un ragazzo che diceva a un altro: “why don't we hang harder?” [“perché non ce la prendiamo ancora più comoda?”]. NdT]. Il titolo della mostra viene da questa espressione così come l'idea di portare materiale di strada nello spazio espositivo. Passavo molto tempo anche in quelli che sociologicamente si definirebbero “luoghi terzi” [luoghi franchi tra il privato e il pubblico, NdT]. Ogni giorno mi appostavo per un po' nel nuovo e gigantesco Starbucks in Centre Street a Manhattan a osservare e disegnare la gente seduta ai tavoli. Questa modalità semi-privata di lavorare in uno spazio pubblico mi interessa perché funziona solo in circostanze molto specifiche. Le persone si trovano sedute vicine tra loro anche senza conoscersi e nello stesso tempo si sentono abbastanza a proprio agio da condurre conversazioni private o parlare su Skype. Per creare si-

tuazioni come questa, Starbucks, ad esempio, mette a disposizione lunghe panche con alti schienali. Ad Aachen le tavole nere erano appese alle sedie, appoggiate ai muri e poste a chiusura delle finestre dello spazio espositivo in modo da formare un'unica lunga parete. È qui, semmai, che riesco a vedere la connessione con Serra, forse passando da Tom Burr e dalla grande opera *Deep Purple* che ha presentato al Kunstverein Braunschweig e che evoca il *Tilted Arc* di Richard Serra. Malgrado la monumentalità, questa maestosa parete esterna viola, che copia il lavoro di Serra e lo decostruisce riducendolo dimensionalmente e fornendogli sostegno da dietro, può inaspettatamente apparire decorativa. Tutto il materiale presentato ad Aachen è stato trasformato in sculture simili ad elementi di architettura d'interni per la mostra di Oldenburg. I disegni realizzati allo Starbucks di New York sono stati inglobati nelle superfici catramate. Si determinano una sorta di apparenza ingannevole. Forse anche la mia grande parete di Aachen fa pensare a una passerella o a una vetrina...

JH: E quindi, forse anche la donna sulla copertina del catalogo è un riferimento all'estetica della fotografia di moda nel dopoguerra?

LH: La donna ritratta sulla copertina di *FIRST FACES* è Jean Shrimpton, fotografata da David Bailey per il suo primo servizio fotografico “Young Idea Goes West”, per *Vogue* inglese nel 1962. All'epoca i due stavano insieme e dopo questo primo servizio di foto a New York lui divenne famoso come fotografo e lei si affermò come una delle prime supermodel. Anche il titolo stesso, *FIRST FACES*, è un riferimento a New York. Dopo l'inaugurazione della prima mostra ad Aachen, volevo tornare a New York ma avevo avuto problemi con il visto, quindi mi trovavo costretta a passare l'estate a Francoforte nel mio studio privo di bagno, motivo per cui dovevo andare alla palestra all'angolo per farmi la doccia. I monitor della palestra erano regolarmente sintonizzati su un canale di moda grazie al quale ho imparato che “first face” è, durante una sfilata, la prima modella che entra in passerella. Il catalogo gioca anche con altri elementi riconducibili alla moda, ad esempio l'uso dello stesso formato adottato da Vogue negli anni Settanta, i numeri delle pagine creati da Margiela o i titoli delle sculture presentate a Oldenburg, che sono nomi di diversi modelli di jeans.

JH: Sentendoti parlare di Jean Shrimpton in rapporto alle tue sculture, mi viene in mente il numero di *Harper's Bazaar* che la ritrae in copertina. Per me quell'immagine evoca in maniera curiosa la tua grande opera da parete con il buco per guardare attraverso; così come evoca anche tue linee di testo come *Black Holes* o *A Junkie Wearing A Helmet*, frasi estrapolate che sono state inframmezzate al discorso di inaugurazione tenuto presso la Kunstverein Oldenburg in una performance verbale di Felix Riemann e Max Brand. Se ho capito bene, la performance vede voi tre (tu, Max e Felix), seduti sulle tue sculture a isola ispirate a Starbucks, recitare citazioni frammentarie e spezzoni rubati di relazioni tra persone e tra persone e cose in genere, oppure con temi personali e strategie professionali. Lette nel catalogo, alcune di queste frasi hanno un che di poetico. Come hai lavorato su questi testi: li hai composti, trovati per caso, collegati tra loro? Io trovo che formino una sorta di *slip box* [una scatola dove si depositano note e appunti, NdT]. Oppure le tue sculture parlano così in modo immaginario, in parte amplificate dall'effetto eco nello spazio, in parte offline. Come hai espresso tutto questo nel discorso?

LH: Mi sforzo di aderire in maniera elastica alle esigenze che mi pone l'istituzione museale. Invece di invitare uno storico dell'arte a presentare la mostra, come si fa spesso, ho deciso di coinvolgere qualche amico. Ho riempito la *slip box* di cui parlavi prima di domande con risposte non sempre pertinenti, tratte dalle mie interviste preferite ad artisti, da riviste femminili e maschili e domande e risposte formulate da me. Su questa base Felix ha scritto un discorso che, stampato in versione estesa sotto forma di blocchi di testo, è diventato l'introduzione al catalogo. Avevo già sperimentato il coinvolgimento di amici ad

Aachen dove la norma è che sia un membro del consiglio a tenere il discorso di inaugurazione. Abbiamo concordato di organizzare invece un discorso come quello che si tiene durante la cerimonia per il completamento dell'ossatura strutturale di un edificio. Naturalmente confrontarsi con altri è sempre semplicemente un tentativo di prendere coscienza dei propri limiti. Questa esperienza a Oldenburg ha avuto anche il vantaggio di consentirmi di offrire viaggio e soggiorno a diversi amici. Poi c'è stato un concerto di Benjamin Saurer e della sua band Angels Voice: tutti elementi che diventano tasselli piccoli ma importanti, forse perché mi piace lavorare con le persone, una cosa che non capita spesso nel mondo degli scultori...

JH: È tanto più importante continuare a pensare a modi nuovi di aggirare le convenzioni, così da poter introdurre parametri di azione inediti e continuare a riellaborare la mutabilità dell'estetica, dell'istituzione e del pubblico. Ho potuto assistere a una lettura performativa di Tom Burr al mumok (Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien) durante la quale l'artista parlava a un pubblico, ordinatamente accomodato su sedie pieghevoli, dell'azione di sedersi e della funzione fondamentale del proprio posteriore – è stato bellissimo perché ha smosso alcuni pensieri anche se, di fatto, nessuno si muoveva fisicamente. Anche tu hai brillantemente richiamato le convenzioni sociali applicate all'arte e alla società nelle sculture fatte di tavoli da ricevimento intitolate con i nomi di mogli di presidenti.

LH: Per me i tavoli da ricevimento erano gadget simpatici, piacevoli oggetti di arred esterno e interno. L'idea era quella di usare le first ladies di alcuni paesi come punto di partenza per una serie di sculture. Facendo leva sulla ripetizione di strutture formali simili, come i tavoli e i piedistalli, questi lavori evocavano l'interesse per temi come quello del *girl power*, la cultura e lo stile delle feste dell'alta società. Si tende a considerare la *first lady* come una figura che tiene alti i valori della nazione e detta il tono dei ricevimenti di classe e dello stile dell'alta società, allo stesso modo in cui il tavolo tiene in equilibrio il plinto. Duplicare la funzionalità dei tavoli da ricevimento ponendoli uno sull'altro fa scaturire una riflessione: la doppia funzione della precarietà e dell'instabilità.

MOUSSE 38 ~ *Lena Henke*



"H.H. BENNETT, LENA HENKE AND CARS," installation view, 1857, Oslo. Courtesy: the artist and Galerie Parisa Kind, Frankfurt

Top - F - A - I - L - B - I - T - C - H (In fact, the pseudo-freedom of a work under the pretext that it can be transported from here to there, anywhere, from one exhibition to another, regardless of the group show in which it is displayed, presupposes either that this group show is familiar, or that it is being deliberately ignored), installation view, Kunstraum Riehen, Basel, 2012. Courtesy: the artist and Galerie Parisa Kind, Frankfurt