

KUNSTVEREIN IN HAMBURG

PRESS RELEASE

NICOLE WERMERS

Women Between Buildings

3/3/ - 5/6/2018



Nicole Wermers, *Abwasch*, Courtesy of Jessica Silverman

PRESS CONFERENCE

3/2/2018, 11 am

Opening, 3/2/2018, 7 pm

Speakers: Christoph Seibt, Bettina Steinbrügge

3/3/2018, 3 pm

Artist Talk with Nicole Wermers and Bettina Steinbrügge

Free guided tours are offered at the Kunstverein in Hamburg each Thursday at 5 pm.

With *Women Between Buildings*, the Kunstverein in Hamburg presents the first survey exhibition of Nicole Wermers in Germany. Wermers' predominantly sculptural practice combines an engagement with urban space and its sociopolitical, narrative and historical aspects with reflections on the formal language of modernism and her own role as an artist working in a big city. Her reference system consists of visible

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and invisible structures of public space and their manifestations. She is particularly interested in the culture of stimuli and affects inherent in architecture, materials and designed objects and how this is complicit in the virtualization and delocalization of public spaces, political subjects and collective bodies. The show features pieces from the past ten years, including *Untitled Chairs* of the exhibition *Infrastruktur* which was nominated for the Turner Prize in 2015, as well as new sculptures created especially for the Kunstverein.

The series *Vertical Awnings*—formally referring Brâncuși and also quoting Wermers' own sculpture series *Kusinen*—are sculptures made of long rolls of fabric which have been repurposed to stand upright in the gallery space. Textiles are often used to subdivide, appropriate, privatize, shade, domesticate, or even generate public space. Their suitability for this purpose has to do with their material properties (textiles are flexible, permeable and stretchable), and also with the way we perceive them as harmless and unthreatening. A textile border always appears negotiable. The lengths of fabric of the *Vertical Awnings* that can cover up to 12 square meters are presented in a rolled-up, compact state. In this context, space is an abstract potential, but also a variable that can continuously be redefined and renegotiated.

Wermers' wall works titled *Moodboards* are misappropriated, foldable, diaper-changing tables from public toilets that create practical surfaces in close quarters. The artist cast different-colored terrazzo into them. Floor, traditionally at the low end of the architectural canon of values, is raised to the level of the display. Architectural hierarchies as well as historical and contemporary features of public space are newly blended and undermine customary patterns of behavior. As with the *Moodboards*, the *Dishwashing Sculptures* are adapted ready-mades that play with degrees of function and misappropriation, but in this case transferred to the domestic environment. In precarious assemblages of pots, porcelain and kitchen devices stacked as if to dry, architectural ambition and daring statics form a contrast to female-connoted reproductive labour.

The series *Croissants & Architecture* combines photographs of croissants in various European cafés with the front and back sides of unused sandpaper sheets. Croissants are lifestyle pastries, symptoms of the first wave of gentrification in the 1980s and of a globalized taste—now replaced by avocado on toast. In combination with the sandpaper that creates negative spaces, the changing dynamics between two- and three-dimensional space, discomfort, and sensual pleasure, but also between male- and female-connoted forms, are examined.

The earliest work on display, the video *Palisades* (1998) produced during Wermers' time in Hamburg, marks the start and simultaneously frames the content of the show. The artist appropriates semi-public spaces with the camera held upside down, giving the impression of walking on the ceiling. Hotels, corporate lobbies and the CCH Hamburg become enigmatic, interchangeable, endless architectures, whose func-

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tionless details appear as abstract sculptures or ornaments. Wermers' flâneuse produces space quite literally in the sense of Michel de Certeau, who in *The Practice of Everyday Life* speaks of "walking as making space".

Wermers' engagement with our thoroughly designed life-worlds, whose visual, haptic and audible features almost always result from strategic considerations, can be read as a 'counter-aestheticization', as a sensually interpreting involvement in the objects of contemplation that the artist appropriates and produces. Wermers' pieces are less intent on asserting the (minimalistic) claim to the discreet status of a work, than on structurally taking part in the materials and surfaces in which public and private, urban and commodity-cultural, architectural and medial, institutional and social spaces and environments overlap.

A comprehensive publication on the exhibition with texts by Sabeth Buchmann, Kerstin Stakemeier and David Bussel will be published in cooperation with Compagnia and Motto Books.

Nicole Wermers (*1971 in Emsdetten, lives and works in London) studied at the HFBK Hamburg under Sigmar Polke and Claus Böhmler and at Central Saint Martins College in London. In addition to numerous other awards she was nominated in 2015 for the Turner Prize.

The exhibition is made possible by the kind support of the Ministry of Culture and Media of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg.



For further information please contact:

KUNSTVEREIN IN HAMBURG

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Press material and images of the show can be downloaded from our website:

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KUNSTVEREIN IN HAMBURG

Klosterwall 23
20095 Hamburg
www.kunstverein.de

Opening hours: Tuesday – Sunday 12 – 6 pm

Public guided tours: Each Thursday at 5 pm

Admission: 5 euros, reduced 3 euros