

mumok Museum moderner Kunst
Stiftung Ludwig Wien
Museumsplatz 1, 1070 Vienna

Exhibition dates
February 3 to May 27, 2018

Press conference
February 2, 2018, 10 am

Opening
February 2, 2018, 7 pm



Reena Spaulings, *Untitled*, 2005
Plastic bag, nylon fabric, aluminum
152 x 90 cm
Courtesy Sammlung Alexander Schröder
© Reena Spaulings

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Optik Schröder II Works from the Alexander Schröder Collection

The exhibition *Optik Schröder II* at mumok – Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Vienna presents a representative selection from the collection of Alexander Schröder. This collection includes important works by Kai Althoff, Tom Burr, Bernadette Corporation, Claire Fontaine, Gelitin, Isa Genzken, Anne Imhof, Sergej Jensen, Pierre Klossowski, Manfred Pernice, Martha Rosler, and Reena Spaulings, and is one of the most important German private collections of contemporary art. These works illustrate some of the key conceptual trends and positions in the development of Western art in the past three decades, including references to social issues, queer lifestyles, the critique of institutions and the economy, critical investigation of public spaces and architecture, poetry, and contemporary forms of critical painting. The work of prominently represented artists' collectives in particular highlights the endeavor to overcome traditional understandings of artist's roles, and to structurally undermine or transform the production of art and forms of sale and dissemination.

This comprehensive overview shows a collection built up consistently since the mid-1990s and based on close proximity to the artists and sensitivity for new developments. *Optik Schröder II* illustrates an exemplary philosophy of collecting focusing on the nature of the contemporary, on curiosity, expertise, humor, independence, and outstanding aesthetic judgement. This approach is not put off by large installations, which would normally be expected in museums but not in private collections.

Collecting as a Dialogue with Contemporary Artists

Alexander Schröder was born in 1968 in Berlin and grew up in Hamburg. He came from a family of architects and studied art in the early 1990s at the Berlin University of the Arts, where he graduated in 1996 as a master student under Prof. Katharina Sieverding. In 1994 he founded the Neu gallery together with Thilo Wermke in Auguststraße in central Berlin. Today this is one of the best-known international galleries for contemporary art. In conjunction with his work as a gallery owner, Schröder established his own collection. His intimate knowledge of the art world meant that he was able to formulate collecting as an activity that made buying artworks into a form of dialogue with the artists, an intellectual game celebrating shifting roles within the system of the art world. Today his collection comprises around 500 works, of which about 100 will be shown in Vienna. There was a first exhibition from the collection in spring 2006 at the Kunstverein Braunschweig, and now, more than ten years later, this is the second public presentation.

A key feature of the collection is its timely, intensive, and continuous interest in outstanding positions in contemporary art. Artists whose works particularly shape the collection's character include American conceptual artist Tom Burr, who works with text and photography, Scottish painter and installation artist Lucy McKenzie, Danish conceptual artist Henrik Olesen, and the Cologne artist and musician Kai Althoff. The Alexander Schröder Collection holds a significant number of 30 works by Althoff, created between 1990 and 2013—a retrospective at MoMA New York last winter was devoted to the artist. At mumok, these works will be shown together as an “exhibition within an exhibition.” Some of the works by Althoff presented in Vienna will be shown in Europe for the first time.

One of the collection's centerpieces is Althoff's theatrical installation *Stigmata aus Großmannssucht* (engl. Stigmata of Megalomania), which was first shown in 2000 in the Hamburg gallery Ascan Crone. Althoff nailed up the windows of the gallery with wooden boards painted white, and placed two life-size wooden figures in the gallery space (also using textiles, felt, cotton wool, leather, artificial hair, silicon rubber, and acrylic paint). The figures are engaged in a mysterious ceremony, perhaps some form of punishment or even torture. The scene also includes a nine-and-a-half-meter long coated slide (wood, iron nails, and acrylic paint), and a ship's bell, plastic bags, parchment, and photocopies. At the time a critic noted (referring also to Althoff's accompanying text): “The work uses containers for spices, which together with “Megalomania” might refer to Hamburg ‘sacks of pepper’—a cynical approach to art as a delicate and exotic commodity that is always situated within a permanent cycle of supply and demand. Text and installation are open to this interpretation” (Dirk von Lowtzow, *Tatort*, in *Texte zur Kunst*, no. 39, September 2000, p. 159). The thirteen drawings with the same title made in conjunction with the installation are today in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art New York.

Kai Althoff is an artist who frequently works with other artists and musicians in many different constellations, such as in the band *Workshop*. Social issues are in evidence in the works in the Schröder collection in several ways. An example is reference to the gallery owner Colin de Land (1955–2003), who was a key figure in the New York art scene in the 1980s and 1990s. His gallery American Fine Arts worked on the basis of a kind of elective affinity between artists and gallery owner. Social issues are also closely connected to architecture, a motif seen for example in the art of Isa Genzken, who once said the famous words: “Everybody needs at least one window.”

Another theme that connects many of the works in the collection is the colorful concept of “queerness,” referring to non-heteronormative sexualities and gay experience. “Queer,” says literary scholar and film critic Cristina Nord, is a challenge: “It is about revealing and countering socially sanctioned definitions of gender roles and norms” (Cristina Nord, *Queer Culture und künstlerische Praxis*, in Hubertus Butin

(ed.), *Begriffslexikon zur zeitgenössischen Kunst*, Cologne 2014, p. 302. Questions concerning norms and convention in everyday life are key elements in the installations of Henrik Olesen, consisting of diverse textual and image formats. These works show the history of stigmatization, criminalization, and repression of homosexuality in past and present and the need for an alternative writing of history. This too can be seen as a form of institutional critique, which is a further focus of the collection.

The concept of “institutional critique” means artistic approaches since the 1960s and 1970s that have addressed the internal power structures and the history of and ways in which art is presented in museums and galleries. The idea of the exhibition space as a neutral venue distinct from the outside world is confronted with a reality marked by political and economic implications. The works of Californian artist John Knight and New York artist Cameron Rowland show us that museums and galleries are part of this real world, revealing just how far they are shaped by historical and very contemporary contradictions. Rowland, for example, tells of historical and contemporary forms of slavery in his art, and does not sell the works that he displays in commercial galleries. Instead he rents them out at certain conditions and thus emphasizes their use value and their service potential.

The reality of the art world includes a permanent shifting of roles between various art scene protagonists, a circumstance that Christian Philipp Müller’s installation *Role-play* seems to particularly exemplify. Seven different kinds of fishermen’s hats are displayed on a shelf, each of them printed with a different word: artist, critic, observer, teacher, supporter, collector, broker. Visitors can put the hats on their own heads and symbolically assume different roles. The shape of the hats also makes it possible to wear several at the same time, and thus to increase the complexity of the game and get very close to reality.

The mumok’s collections of socially-related, minimalist and conceptual art spanning from the 1960s through to the present – exemplary of an extended art concept – are ideal setting for presenting the Alexander Schröder Collection. *Optik Schröder II* presents a subjective though representative panorama of present-day artistic work. In the selection of those art works on display the exhibition facilitates a perspective on the art of our decade while at the same time underscoring – somewhat painfully – some of the lacunae in the mumok Collection.

Curated by Karola Kraus

The exhibition is accompanied by a catalogue with an essay by John Kelsey, an interview with Alexander Schröder by Kito Nedo and texts by Thomas Ballot, Fiona McGovern, Kito Nedo, Dominikus Müller and Beate Scheder.

Participating artists:

Kai Althoff, Lutz Bacher, Cosima von Bonin, KP Brehmer, Tom Burr, Merlin Carpenter, Marc Camille Chaimowicz, Anne Collier, Bernadette Corporation, Lukas Duwenhögger, Jana Euler, Cerith Wyn Evans, Claire Fontaine, Gelitin, Isa Genzken, Ull Hohn, Karl Holmqvist, Alex Hubbard, Peter Hujar, Anne Imhof, Sergej Jensen, Martin Kippenberger, Pierre Klossowski, John Knight, Michael Krebber, Mark Leckey, Klara Lidén, Lucy McKenzie, Christian Philipp Müller, Henrik Olesen, Paulina Olowska, Dietrich Orth, Manfred Pernice, Josephine Pryde, Martha Rosler, Cameron Rowland, Andreas Slominski, Reena Spaulings, Katja Strunz, Philippe Thomas, Danh Vo, Peter Wächtler

We wish to thank the exhibition sponsors, Dorotheum and UNIQA, and our media partners Der Standard, Falter, Wien live, and Ö1.

Fact-Sheet

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Opening	February 2, 2018, 7 pm
Press conference	February 2, 2018, 10 am
Exhibition	mumok, MuseumsQuartier, Museumsplatz 1, 1070 Vienna Levels 3, 4
Curator	Karola Kraus
Exhibition production	Konstanze Horak
Catalogue	<p><i>Optik Schröder II. Works from the Schröder Collection</i> Ed. by Karola Kraus, Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien. With an essay by John Kelsey, an interview with Alexander Schröder by Kito Nedo and texts by Thomas Ballot, Fiona McGovern, Kito Nedo, Dominikus Müller and Beate Scheder. Published by Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, Köln, 248 pages, German/English. English edition: ISBN (mumok) 978-3-902947-52-9 ISBN (König) 978-3-96098-314-9 Price: € 24,-</p>
Opening hours	Monday: 2 to 7 pm, Tuesday through Sunday: 10 am to 7 pm Thursday: 10 am to 9 pm
Admission	Normal € 12,-, reduced € 9,- bzw. € 8,-
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