

COLLECTION ON DISPLAY

Jean-Marc Bustamante, Liz Craft,
Sylvie Fleury, Rachel Harrison,
Kerstin Kartscher, Dawn Mellor,
David Renggli

24 May – 17 August 2014

Collection on Display presents selected works from the collection of the Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst.

The new three-part cycle of collection presentations focuses on excesses, in terms of form and motif. The first two exhibitions focus on the genres of painting and drawing in a broad sense. The exhibitions question the cultural and art-historical connotations of these media, which have been developing beyond the limitations of the tableau format for quite some time. The exhibited works explore the possibilities and status quo of painting, while also thematizing repetition, re-reading and pastiches of art history's topoi. In terms of form, they are characterized by either the excess, or the reduction, of signs and materials. In the first part, works by Jean-Marc Bustamante, Liz Craft, Sylvie Fleury, Rachel Harrison, Kerstin Kartscher, Dawn Mellor and David Renggli shall be exhibited.

"Excess" encompasses transgression, debauchery and surplus. As a formal feature of art, excess approximately equates to a superfluity of materials or images. However, "excess" can be just as present in gestures of reduction or abstraction. The term also describes modes of artistic practice, such as repetition, mania or above-average perseverance. To no small extent, despite the deconstruction of authorship, the myth of the artist working to excess is a topos of art that lives on to this day. "Excess" is a universal theme of art, a theme that is applied in terms of both motif and form in equal measure, in the sense of a postmodern work concept without boundaries. Last but not least, a collection of art, as a juxtaposition of very different styles and a representative accumulation, is always a form of excess. The first two parts of the exhibition focus on the medium of painting, which, from a certain perspective, is considered the "pinnacle of art". Forms of excess and excessive gestures have often found a platform within painting. In 20th-century modernism, painting, as a self-reflective medium, served to defend the autonomy of art. In postmodernism, on the other hand, it was frowned upon by some critics and described as a regressive medium that was primarily associated with itself and with the accompanying mystifications. An "end of painting" has not arrived, and today painterly practices are also used to address conceptual or sculptural issues; conversely, other media are of an equally pictorial or painterly nature.

The 2007 work *You, Can You Recommend Your Psychiatrist?* by David Renggli (b. 1974), which was already shown as part of the last *Collection on Display* exhibition, can still be seen in the first room. This work thematizes aspects of excess via its form of presentation and production. Here, Renggli addresses key topoi of art history and examines the potential of the flood of images. This room installation comprises 1001 very densely hung pictures. The collages, drawings and assemblages comprise painted-over newspaper pages, invitation cards or cheap prints of works from art history. The pictures are produced in a quick, spontaneous and sketchy process. It is not the individual work that is foremost, but the manic congestion of images covering the walls from top to bottom and following the principle of horror vacui. In one respect, the overloading and overtaxing

Curator:
Judith Welter,
Collection Curator, Migros
Museum für Gegenwartskunst

MIGROS MUSEUM FÜR
GEGENWARTSKUNST
LIMMATSTRASSE 270
CH-8005 ZÜRICH

T +41 44 277 20 50
F +41 44 277 62 86
INFO@MIGROSMUSEUM.CH

MIGROSMUSEUM.CH
MIGROS-CULTURE-PERCENTAGE.CH

of the observer (the individual motifs get lost in the sheer volume) refers to a classical manner of hanging art in a museum, but also in a court, whereby the walls (as originally seen in St. Petersburg's Hermitage, for instance) are so densely filled with paintings that the individual painting becomes of secondary importance, such that the observer is impressed by the accumulated volume. Here, the representative function of art as a distinctive feature in society confronts the individuality of artistic expression. Renggli's way of working, the recycling and sampling of images, also raises the topic of the continually present and uncontrollable flood of images that defines our medial and aesthetic thinking.

The opposite occurs in *Pinwheel III (Palm Tree)* (2008) by **Liz Craft** (b. 1970), who undertakes an abstraction of eclectic popular and cultural motifs via reduction. *Pinwheel III (Palm Tree)* comes across like a surreal painting that has been transferred to three-dimensionality. This sculpture is actually a white painted aluminum house, inside which there resides a palm tree that can be observed through window-like openings. The architectural structure of *Pinwheel III (Palm Tree)* is inspired by an oriental Ikea carpet with labyrinthine patterns like, for instance, the pinwheel motif referred to here, which often appears on oriental carpets. Empty classical picture frames, as windows, provide a view of the installation's interior. However, they also suggest the model of a living room, where paintings assume a decorative function. To no small extent, the kitschy absorption of the traditional carpet by a mass product represents the aesthetics of popular culture, which Craft repeatedly addresses and refers to. Engagement with forms of spiritualism, esotericism and new-age culture, is a fundamental element of her work. In Los Angeles, the artist's home city, these so-called countercultures have had a fertile breeding ground for years, and thus they also influence everyday city life.

In the painted works of **Dawn Mellor** (b. 1970), "excess" is conveyed in work method, and at the same time it is also an object of investigation. Her painting style draws from a very wide range of styles, such as surrealism, pop art and the "poor taste" of amateurish painting. With her large-format Dorothy cycle, which began in 2006 (the protagonist of this series being the character of Dorothy Gale, played by Judy Garland in the 1939 film *The Wizard of Oz*), Mellor continues her investigation of the iconology and mythology of mass media and pop culture, and how they affect societal models. Mellor deconstructs the interactive structure of the cult of celebrity, which appears to have been chosen as a substitute for religion in our society. She is particularly interested in the relationship between the star and his or her devout supporter, the fan, whereby the artist herself often adopts the role of an obsessed follower. Via her self-assigned "painting roles", Mellor destroys the moral codes implied by mass entertainment and advocates a "deliberated immorality". Here, in the face of obsessive worlds of images, the question of the observer's own standardized taste is also repeatedly raised. Mellor makes use of the multiple cultural coding of the film character Dorothy Gale: in the film, the character is a good middle-class allegory of the "white" rite of passage, but this later merges with the image of the actress Judy Garland, who made headlines with excessive drug use and became an icon for the homosexual movement. Mellor multiplies these differing notions: in her paintings, she develops the character further, incorporating the complex reception history on the one hand, and the film iconography on the other hand, while creating new narratives.

Riviera & Canaille (Blue Notes & Incognito) (2004/2014) by **Sylvie Fleury** (b. 1961) combines two completely different poles of "excess": the fetishization of iconic luxury goods, and the artistic reduction of marks, as practiced by minimalist artists, for instance. Since the mid-1990s, Fleury has addressed the pretence of the world of commodities by positioning luxury items in the exhibition space as readymades. In Fleury's work, the presentation of promises from advertising and the exploration of iconic labels like Chanel or Prada are always accompanied by a critical examination of male-dominated images from art history, as have established themselves in minimalism or conceptual art. *Riviera & Canaille (Blue Notes & Incognito)* refers to this male-canonized art history with an invocation of Carl Andre, who is seen as one of the most significant representatives of minimalism. Since the mid-1960s, he has concentrated on flat sculptures comprising square plates of materials such as copper, lead, aluminum and steel. From the observer, he expects a participatory effort, in that he calls on them to perform a sensory transgression. Fleury's floor plates, arranged identically to Andre's, are "soiled": on these plates, the artist uses a sledgehammer to smash the Chanel make-up compacts from which the title stems. With a glamorous gesture, this nonchalant act refers to the reception, iconification and auratization of an art form, which suddenly appears strict and rigid with its self-imposed dogmas. The lipstick ends from the installation *Flesh, Red, Pink, Rose* (1997/2014) have a similarly playful function. In these decontextualized arrangements, abstracted luxury make-up colors, used as readymades, take on painterly or sculptural qualities.

In her large-format drawings, **Kerstin Kartscher** (b. 1966) creates her own drawn universe, reminiscent of organic fantasy architectures. This visual world also refers to phenomena of pop culture, as expressed and satirized by Liz Craft and Dawn Mellor, for instance. At the center of *Ice*

MIGROS MUSEUM FÜR
GEGENWARTSKUNST
LIMMATSTRASSE 270
CH-8005 ZÜRICH

T +41 44 277 20 50
F +41 44 277 62 86
INFO@MIGROSMUSEUM.CH

MIGROSMUSEUM.CH
MIGROS-CULTURE-PERCENTAGE.CH

Skater (2001), the eponymous ice skater stands surrounded by a surreal landscape. The text "endless", written into the background, which is reminiscent of a mountain landscape, also refers to a fantastical fairy-tale world. The artist has worked on a large paper surface with a felt-tip pen, which to no small extent is also equivalent to the manic work process of an excessive gesture.

One frequently recurring theme in the works of **Jean-Marc Bustamante** (b. 1952) is the linking of the intellectual, abstract space with the real space in nature and architecture. The artist also addresses this in the work shown here: *Feuille* (1992). This piece consists of painted iron and oscillates between abstract "incompletion" and a sensory experience of nature, implied by the title. The glossy, monochrome surface causes the "plant leaf" to appear artificial; mounted on the wall, it becomes a sculptural painting. Bustamante has long been preoccupied with such forms of disassociation, reduction and of boundary-crossing exchange between sculpture, painting and photography. For instance, at the end of the 1970s he became known for large-format color photographs of Spanish landscapes, which he described as tableaux.

Rachel Harrison (b. 1966) combines relics of pop culture with handmade painted forms, to produce sculptures and installations. An eclectic bringing-together of very different materials leads to a new "overall image". The questioning of the portrait, but also of the sculpture, and the traditionally associated plinth as a display body, forms the starting point for the 2007 installation *Trees for the Forest*. Portraits painted in oil, found by the artist at flea markets, hang on colorfully painted wooden steles. If seen from afar, the work looks like a dense forest of multi-colored, painted wooden plinths. This "sculptural forest" of a multitude of materials equates to an open experimental arrangement. Harrison's work revolves around the exploration of art-historical discourses and work categories that characterized the 20th century. As a homage, the steles refer to the sculptures by American artist Anne Truitt, who is seen as one of the few female representatives of minimalism. This form of self-reflective art-intrinsic discourse is part of a tradition that has been practiced, with various facets, since minimalism and its aesthetic deliberations, as well as later in appropriation art.



David Renggli
You, Can You Recommend Your Psychiatrist?
2007
1001 pictures; framed
Dimensions variable



Liz Craft
Pinwheel III (Palm Tree)
2008
Aluminium
420 x 332 x 332 cm

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Dawn Mellor
Bloodbath Dorothy
2008
Oil on canvas
275 x 340 cm



Sylvie Fleury
Flesh, Red, Pink, Rose
1997/2014
Resin paint, polyester, fibre glass
4 parts: each ca. 85 x 40 x 40 cm



Kerstin Kartscher
Ice Skater
2001
Hybrid and pigment marker on paper
151 x 328 cm



Sylvie Fleury
Riviera & Canaille (Blue Notes & Incognito)
2004/2014
Metal plates, make-up
0.5 x 300 x 300 cm



Jean-Marc Bustamante
Feuille
1992
Steel color varnished
173 x 142 x 1 cm



Rachel Harrison
Trees for the Forest
2007
Various materials
Dimensions variable

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