

COLLECTION ON DISPLAY: *RULES*

Carl Andre, Angela Bulloch, Douglas
Gordon, Susan Hiller, Eva Kot'átková,
Matt Mullican, Cady Noland, Luis
Pazos, Elodie Pong, Markus
Schinwald, Niele Toroni, Uri Tzaig,
Carey Young

20.05.–13.08.2017

The exhibition format *Collection on Display* presents works from the collection of the Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst as a three-part themed series with the title *Communities, Rules and Rituals*. The second exhibition, *Rules*, brings together works that look at rules in the charged environment of normative practice and individual creative freedom.

Curator:
Nadia Schneider Willen
(collection curator, Migros
Museum für Gegenwarts-
kunst)

In reference to the previous exhibition *Communities*, this exhibition thematises the largely invisible sets of rules on which every community is based. In distinct ways, the works from the collection that are exhibited here, make these rules visible, use them productively or undermine them. The starting point is the question of the extent to which rules can be seen as externally set, and the extent to which each individual can contribute to the shaping these rules. If a «rule» is defined as a directive that has arisen from regular observations, the potential for active contribution becomes clear. Empirical social research even proceeds on the assumption that values, norms and institutions only exist insofar and as long as there are people who acknowledge them and live according to them. However, often rules and perceived norms are so ritualised and deeply internalised that compliance or disobedience is no longer a rational decision. The works gathered here question rules with regard to a possible individual room to manoeuvre and creative leeway.

For **Eva Kot'átková** (b. 1982), issues revolving around the construction of societal norms, modes of behaviour and control mechanisms are central to her work as an artist. In her 2014 installation the artist poetically presents a *Collection of Suppressed Voices*, which are represented by various ceramics. Hereby Kot'átková establishes a thematic link to the discourse on biopolitics, as informed, for instance, by Michel Foucault or Giorgio Agamben. Foucault introduced this concept in his book *The Will to Knowledge* (1976), in which he described the tendency of the modern state to control the human body more and more, and to bring in a wide variety of disciplinary techniques for this purpose. Kot'átková's work can be read as a response to this, which on the basis of «bodies and objects, gives rise to something new and deals with identities in new ways».

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Much of the work of **Luis Pazos** (b. 1940) consists of performances and photographic documentation thereof. Pazos works with the human body, in order to study the political ideologies that are inscribed in it. Among the things that he thus reflects on, is the history of his home country Argentina, which from the late 1960s onwards, was characterised by instability and subsequent dictatorship. In this way, the artist demonstrates political ideologies' power to form bodies. He is firmly convinced that art has a duty to adopt a position in relation to the reality of the country in which it

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is produced, and to question every manifestation of authority and violence, while fiercely advocating freedom. *La cultura de la felicidad* (1971/2012) is a series of staged photographs that show people in everyday situations, wearing a paper mask with a laughing face. On the inside of each mask, there are firstly ten rules of conduct to read, satirising the oppression of military dictatorship, and secondly a warning about the consequences of not wearing the mask.

The work of **Markus Schinwald** (b. 1973) is based on analysis of the psychological components of space and body, and how they interact. The piece *Bob* (2007) is part of a series of marionettes that persist with an unchanging neurotic sequence of movements. Via mechanical motion, this wooden figure in a suit continually changes its face, opening and closing its eyes. On the one hand, the evident external control of this artificial yet familiar-looking body refers to puppets' inherent element of eeriness and thus to the discourse of Sigmund Freud, which Schinwald repeatedly cites and reflects on. On the other hand, the prosthetic nature of the figures, a characteristic of Schinwald's oeuvre, questions the social control and norming that human nature is subjected to, which Freud also thematised. The uniformity and de-individualisation embodied by *Bob* provokes contemplation on the significance of the subjective and emotional. The construction of societal norms and modes of behaviour is thus contrasted with the self-determination of the individual.

Carey Young (b. 1970) uses a multitude of media to research the relationships between body, language, rhetoric, and systems of power. Among other things, this artist examines the law as a conceptual and abstract space, in which power, rights and authority are implemented in various performance-based and linguistic forms. *We the People (after Pierre Cavellat)* (2013) is a large-format photograph, in which a judge's robe and wig are hung on a washing line in a garden. This image, which refers to a French judge and amateur artist who secretly produced artworks while presiding over trials, is a reworking of a snapshot that Cavellat took at the start of his retirement. Young addresses the law with regard to its performance and juxtaposes the official role of the judge with the vulnerable private sphere. The robe and wig are the regalia necessary for the function of the judge as a normative absolute authority, yet they contrast with the subjectivity of whoever embodies this role.

In his series of instructions, **Douglas Gordon** (b. 1966), who became famous for his experimental approach to the medium of film, tests the communicative potential of art. *Instruction. (Number 3a)* (1993) was produced for the exhibition *Migrator*, curated by Hans Ulrich Obrist at Musée d'Art Moderne in Paris. Each day, the curator or an assistant was required to make at least one telephone call according to instructions stipulated by Gordon. The sentence to be spoken, «From the moment you hear these words, until you kiss someone with blue eyes», which is conveyed to the recipient without commentary, remains enigmatic and contrasts with the clear directives. This piece is produced not only by the artist, but upon compliance with his demand, hence as a result of collaboration between artist, curator and institution. It is possible to read Gordon's work with the performance-based strategies of the 1960s and 1970s in mind, which intervened in the museum space in an attempt to reveal the system via which art operates, along with its numerous protagonists and conventions of art presentation.

In his works, **Uri Tzaig** (b. 1965) decodes social conventions and makes the underlying communication structures visible. One of his recurring themes is that of games, such as football, basketball or rugby, which he sees as behavioural systems with inherent rules that are to be broken, reassembled and changed. The video piece *Desert* (1997) shows a distorted recording of a basketball game with two balls. The two teams run from one end of the court to the other, while Hebrew and English subtitles are displayed, the content of which is seemingly impossible to link to the visual impression. The linearity of the game is interrupted and the observer, much like the players, is prompted to adapt to the new game situation and to invent new rules. Tzaig thus questions the symmetry of time and space, of rules and improvisation, and of heterogeneous cultural identities and standardized game rules.

The conceptual works of **Susan Hiller** (b. 1940) are based on tangible and intangible cultural artefacts, for example postcards or languages. She makes use of scientific aesthetics and technologies to examine phenomena of the subconscious and unconscious that defy this very same form of knowledge production. Hiller's video *Lost and Found* (2016) is an audio collage of voices speaking 23 different languages which, for reasons such as ethnic marginalisation, have either died out or are endangered. The anecdotes, songs, arguments, memories and conversations often revolve around the subject of language itself and are made accessible to the audience via subtitles. The voices create a strong affective bond between listener and speaker, beyond eras, cultures and countries, thus emphasising the subjective dimension of knowledge production. At the same time, *Lost and Found* thematises language as a structuring element for the construction of different realities, which also disappear when a language dies out.

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Artist **Elodie Pong** (b. 1966) is famous for her subtle analytical works that address human relationships, cultural codes and their influence on contemporary society. For *Secrets Collection (Lausanne, Paris)* (2001–2005/2017), Pong purchased a personal secret from each visitor to her installation *ADN/ARN*, whereby the process of bargaining, selling and telling was recorded with a video camera. The person telling the secret was able to make themselves unrecognisable as they saw fit and to set their own price for the secret. Firstly, the artist took all 300 collected secrets, from the intimate to the amusing, from the dramatic to the childish, and cut them together as a nine-hour video, *Secrets Collection (Lausanne, Paris)*. Secondly, she condensed them to make the 64-minute film *Secrets for Sale* (2003). Pong's works play with the voyeurism of the observer and the extraversion of the participants, thus questioning established norms of division between private and public.

In her works, artist **Angela Bulloch** (b. 1966) thematises systems, rules and organising principles, using them to visualise functions and dependencies within societal power structures. For her group of works entitled *Rules Series*, Bulloch has been collecting rules from different fields since the 1990s, removing them from their respective contexts and transferring them to the museum space. In this process, the artist makes the rules themselves the subject of critical observation. The rules that are brought together in this way demonstrate the balancing act between necessary societal structure and the restriction of individual expression. The work shown in this exhibition, *Birkenstock Care Tips* (1997) from the *Rules Series*, consists of instructions on how to care for Birkenstock shoes. Attached to the wall and removed from their proper context, the rules lose their meaning, but simultaneously refer to their normative nature and evoke an originally unintended ironic tone.

Matt Mullican (b. 1951) has been developing his personal model of the world since the 1970s. In this regard, he is not concerned with finding a valid or definitive model, but with the modelling process itself, and with the relationship between things and their symbolic representation. His cosmology is based on five levels that correspond to the forms of appropriation of the world. *Untitled (Paris Street Map II with signs)* (2010–2016) is part of a series of *rubbings* and consists of a city map, rubbed from a relief-like surface onto a yellow primed canvas with oilstick. This technique reflects the idea that we constantly have to deal with representations and copies. The city of Paris, with its recognisable topography and its significance as a general projection screen, serves Mullican as the archetypal social, collective construction. For him, the city is «an abstraction of the ways that we experience things». Thus, the city, or its depiction, alongside its indexical meaning, becomes an allegorical representation that the observer can pass through mentally.

Carl Andre (b. 1935) is regarded as one of the most important representatives of minimalism. The engagement with the spatial possibilities of sculpture is central to his oeuvre. In his work, sculpture is no longer an object that is primarily received via visual observation, but instead demands active participation, with the intention of shifting consciousness and perception to a new dimension. For instance, the reception of the work *Cubolt* (1981), which encompasses the structure and specifics of the material, requires the observer to step on copper plates that have been placed next to each other. Rules and norms of the museum, such as the contemplative stance and the prohibition of touching the exhibits, are rendered inoperative by this direct contact with the artwork.

Since the 1960s, **Niele Toroni** (b. 1937) has devoted himself to «travail/peinture». He makes imprints of a no. 50 paintbrush (50 mm wide) at 30 cm intervals on various media, such as fabric, canvas or paper, or directly on the museum wall. The term «travail/peinture» is based on the most elementary definition of painting, namely the manual application of pigment to a surface. As seen in *Empreintes de pinceau no. 50 répétées à intervalles réguliers* (1993), Toroni's uniform brush imprints are evidence of his activity as an artist on the one hand, but on the other hand, they defy any metaphorical or psychological reading. He challenges the figure of the artist and the associated concepts of genius and authorship just as much as he challenges the medium of painting itself. By consistently applying his self-conceived rule, Toroni attempts to systematically liberate painting from its own restrictions.

For her artworks, **Cady Noland** (b. 1956) frequently defamiliarises spatial elements and reduces them to form and surface. In her oeuvre, she uses and reproduces various iconographic sources, for instance from pop art or minimal art, as well as elements from everyday life or the public space. However, the political and social dimension of this public space is also constantly of central interest to Noland. With her artistic practice, she carries out a form of social archaeology and a staging of reality. Her perception of a dysfunctional American culture serves as the context of her investigations. The work *Untitled* (1999) also assimilates an element from the urban space: a plywood plank, supported by white plastic barricades, such as those used for road traffic. In the exhibition space, these barriers that serve to regulate the movements of people in the urban space become a sculpture devoid of purpose.

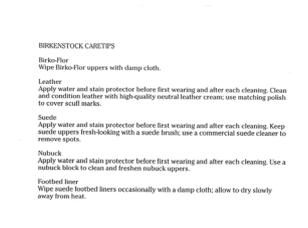
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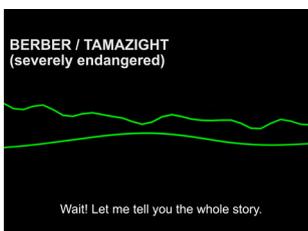
Carl Andre
Cubolt, 1981
Copper
0.5 x 300 x 550 cm



Angela Bulloch
Birkenstock Care Tips, 1997
Stenciled writing on wall
Dimensions variable



Douglas Gordon
Instruction. (Number 3a), 1993
Wall text, b/w photographs,
instruction
Dimensions variable



Susan Hiller
Lost and Found, 2016
Single-channel video projection
(color, sound)
30 min



Eva Kot'átková
Collection of Suppressed Voices
2014
Steel, fired clay, prints on
paper, cardboard, chalk,
baskets, wood
200 x 480 x 400 cm



Matt Mullican
*Untitled (Paris Street Map II
with signs)*, 2010–2016
Acrylic and oilstick on canvas
305 x 460.9 cm



Cady Noland
Untitled, 1999
Plastic, acrylic, wood
103 x 74 x 306 cm



Luis Pazos
La cultura de la felicidad
1971/2012
B/w photograph, paper mask
6 parts: 5 parts each 28 x 42 cm,
1 part 17 x 24 cm

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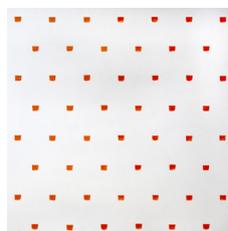
Elodie Pong
Secrets Collection (Lausanne, Paris), 2001–2005/2017
Single-channel video projection (4:3 SD Video upscaled to 16:9 HD, color, sound)
Ca. 547 min



Markus Schinwald
Bob, 2007
Various materials
Ca. 150 x 30 x 50 cm



Niele Toroni
Empreintes de pinceau no. 50 répétées à intervalles réguliers
1993
Acrylic on canvas
100 x 100 cm



Niele Toroni
Empreintes de pinceau no. 50 répétées à intervalles réguliers
1993
Acrylic on canvas
200 x 200 cm



Uri Tzaig
Desert, 1997
Single-channel video on monitor
(color, no sound)
30 min



Carey Young
We the People (after Pierre Cavellat), 2013
C-print on aluminium
190 x 124 cm

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