

25 years Barbara Gross Galerie
>ETWAS EIGENES<

Exhibition: June, 29 - September 4, 2013

Ida Applebroog, Silvia Bächli, Louise Bourgeois, Andrea Büttner, VALIE EXPORT, Katharina Grosse, Michaela Melián, Ana Mendieta, Alicia Framis, Maria Lassnig, Karin Sander, Tejal Shah, Katharina Sieverding, Kiki Smith, Nancy Spero, Jana Sterbak

The exhibition ETWAS EIGENES, celebrating the 25th anniversary of the founding of the gallery, was developed in cooperation with Kerstin Stakemeier (cx/Akademie der bildenden Künste/ Academy of Fine Arts in Munich). It presents the feminist line that has substantially characterized the gallery's work since its founding in 1988, and features a spectrum of works by women artists who have exhibited at the gallery over the years.

In 1988/89, its first year of existence, the Barbara Gross Galerie only presented works by female artists. In those days it seemed like an absolute necessity to exhibit women, since their work was, by and large, missing from galleries, museums, and the art market. From the 1970s onward it was usually only seen in isolated cases, and the existence of women artists was still not taken for granted. In this context, it was difficult to mediate the works of artists such as Louise Bourgeois, Maria Lassnig, Nancy Spero, VALIE EXPORT, and Kiki Smith, as they were gender-specific, and the artist made use of their own bodies in their work. Museums were the first to start buying the works of women artists, while collectors gradually caught on.

Over the past 25 years it has become more usual to exhibit the works of female artists. With the advent of a younger generation of women artists and the simultaneous rediscovery of older ones, a historical context has formed, bit by bit, which has in turn slowly created more of a demand for their work on the art market, while their presence in exhibitions has grown. The battle for equal rights is gradually starting to include economic equality and equal acknowledgement of women's artistic achievements.

ETWAS EIGENES shows how the gallery's artists saw and see the world. These artists do not attempt to place themselves outside of their gender; instead, they try to work through the differences between their works and those of their male colleagues, demonstrating that enrichment lies within these differences. The works on display incorporate a broad spectrum of cultural, historical, socio-political, and social themes and questions about the gender role of female artists in contemporary art. ETWAS EIGENES will present alternatives to male-dominated painting, as well as sculptures, drawings, and installations from the past 25 years; the works will be organized in relation to each other in terms of their relevance to the times.

Barbara Gross

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**“Actually, there are not two genders; there is only one – the feminine. The ‘masculine’ is not a gender. Because the masculine is not the masculine, but the universal.”
(Monique Wittig, 1983)**

This quotation, from Monique Wittig, is just five years older than the Barbara Gross Galerie. It dates from the 1980s, an era in which we now find it easy to retrospectively discern feminist positions, a whole series of female artists, who have become crucial to the art history of the 1980s – many of them represented by Barbara Gross at the time. Nevertheless, the work of finding a place for them in art history, their classification in the historical canon, which Wittig’s words still describe very accurately, cannot to be taken for granted to this day. Exhibitions featuring only the work of women artists are still noticeable, often derided exceptions, while shows featuring only the work of male artists are usually not gendered.

In the 1990s Judith Butler’s work popularized the critique of distinctions between sex and gender, between biologically and socially constructed gender, which fundamentally broadened the feminist debates – a dialectic about difference that was no longer binary, a simple pairing of opposites, but a continuously expanding framework of various ways to act. Yet for the most part, social and artistic norms remained as they were when Wittig made her observation. Things stayed the same; there is only one gender.

Even today, therefore, it makes sense to carve out the details of this single gender – to elevate it to a standard from time to time, in order to be able to proceed from there. This is what occurs in ETWAS EIGENES. Barbara Gross presents female artists from her gallery, from both the past and present programs. They remain the standard by which she has carried on her work over the past 25 years. The exhibition features a brief concentration on the early days and their resonance in the present time. None of these works have tried to conform to a norm produced out of a genderless past history. The gender that is examined here has both a historical and a contemporary life.

In the opening weekend discussion Barbara Gross and I will converse very specifically with the artists Michaela Melián and Susanne M. Winterling about these past and present histories, about where things are opening up for female artists, and where they are still excluded to this day. This discussion will later be expanded upon in a small publication.

If it is true that there is still only one gender, then there is nothing else to do except raise it to a standard.

Kerstin Stakemeier