



Muntean/Rosenblum, "Lost in the Savage Wilderness of Civil Life," 2001. Installation view.



Christine and Irene Hohenbüchler, *Kinder-Hüttendorf* (Children's cabin village), 2001. Installation view. From "Arbeit Essen Angst."

the teenagers gave the subjects greater specificity in time and space. Muntean/Rosenblum agree only partially with the poststructuralist thesis of the end of the subject, of the subject as phenomenon of the text or the flow of symbols: The video loop presents a litany of possible identities, the photo portraits a confirmation of their incomprehensibility.

Exhibitions by Markus Muntean and Adi Rosenblum are always polyphonic structures. Large-format acrylic paintings meet tableaux vivants; graphic picture stories meet sculpturally interpreted icons of the everyday. This time the icon was a toy motor scooter that had been blown up to adult scale (*Untitled*, 2001). Meanwhile, on spacious canvases, teenage dream dancers appeared in urban wastelands or interiors, wearing globally familiar outfits but looking out at the viewer like medieval saints. Melancholic sayings and pearls of common sense are scratched in the paintings' margins—texts and images sampled from the treasure troves of fashion-magazine and advertising trivia, precise commentary on our collective state. Construction and transformation are the magic words: Reality is never allowed to be too genuine, or to come too close. Painting, which stands for individuality and subjectivity, is inserted into the anti-individualistic world of global youth culture. "Sometimes you get overly absorbed with how exact segments of time are consumed," we read in one of Muntean/Rosenblum's earlier paintings, "and you begin to feel a pleasure with life that is hopelessly tinged with longing."

—Brigitte Huck

Translated from German by Sara Ogger.

ESSEN

"ARBEIT ESSEN ANGST" KOKEREI ZOLLVEREIN

More and more, art addresses the human and economic conditions of society. Since the G8 summit in Genoa, there have been efforts to formulate a viable basis for critiquing globalization in cultural as well as economic terms. This trend remains unchanged by the events of September 11; indeed, the crisis of a world defined by economic dependencies has become all the more visible.

Up until the '90s, the building housing the Kokerei Zollverein was used to process coal. Then the factory closed, finally reopening last year as a venue for cultural activities. In addition to the newly founded Kunstverein, its extensive grounds house a stage for modern dance; concert halls and museum-style exhibition halls are also planned. For "Arbeit Essen Angst," twenty-seven artists from around the world were invited to cover the themes of work, leisure, and fear. Among the older works shown were Patricia Hearst *A Thru Z*, 1979-89, Dennis Adams's media-based study of representations of William Randolph Hearst's granddaughter; and Stephen Willats's photo-text research piece *Vier Inseln in Berlin* (Four islands in Berlin), 1980, about life in Berlin's high-rise developments. Olaf Metzler hung his installation *Im Grünen* (In the country), 1992, made of camping tents and camouflage netting—which formerly stood as a sharp commentary on the nonchalant reportage from the world's civil war zones—inside an open shaftway, as a

symbol for "leisure-park Germany."

But for the most part, "Arbeit Essen Angst" relied on artists in their twenties and thirties. Laura Horelli from Finland was last seen in the Venice Biennale, with photo collages of women in politics. Here she exhibited several videos on local residents: The viewer quickly notes that the protagonists' respective jobs—or unemployment—dominate their leisure activities too. The economy orders private life. Two Frankfurt artists, Dirk Paschke and Daniel Milohnic, translate this private sphere back into public strategies. Because the city of Essen had closed its public pools for lack of funds, Paschke and Milohnic constructed one by welding freight containers together. *Werksschwimmbad* (Works swimming pool), 1996/2001, thematizes, qua sculpture, the same rededication of industrial remnants to leisure services that the complex itself exemplifies. This shows how well constructive critique can function in a contextual framework.

Above all, the exhibition sought to develop viable viewpoints on the nature of work. For Tobias Rehberger's *Sweatshop*, 2001, each day the exhibition staff had to transpose the designs of skulls and bright, neon-colored ornaments from his wall painting into knitting patterns for sweaters. Overseeing this transposition thus became a part of the artistic procedure and referred to exploitation in other fields of work. Collaborating with local youth, Christine and Irene Hohenbüchler constructed a *Kinder-Hüttendorf* (Children's cabin village), 2001. In the course of this intervention, the group of participants grew ever larger, as the fathers—most of whom were unemployed—started helping

out with the project. Silke Wagner, too, shifted her mode of action to the concrete public realm with *Bürgersteig* (Pavement), 2001. She gave the local antifascist and antiracist organizations the use of a small bus and used photography and video to document the different situations that arose. The result is reminiscent of an independent media project beyond the pale of today's docu-soaps and their high-tech aesthetic. For Wagner, art is not a seismograph but rather the very glue of reality.

—Harald Fricke

Translated from German by Sara Ogger.

BERLIN

HEIKE BARANOWSKY KUNST-WERKE

What's wrong with this picture? The German artist Heike Baranowsky would be happy to explain the strange things going on in her videos. But the explanations—which amount to digital manipulation and changes in camera perspective—don't seem to help. Baranowsky, who lives in Berlin and Los Angeles, is a master of deception. Her mesmerizing loops challenge our perception of time and space while remaining completely realistic. The artist seems to practice a mobile form of trompe l'oeil, hoping the spectator will at once suspect the truth and believe the lie.

Take the video triptych *Der Radfahrer* (*Hase und Igel*) (The cyclist [Hare and hedgehog]), 2000. The fable is revived through a pair of identical cyclists, speeding along an indoor racetrack counterclockwise. This same sequence is projected at three different speeds: real-time in right frame, 10 percent slower in the middle frame, and 20 percent slower in the left frame. As one contemplates the entire triptych, it is not apparent that the images are being shown at different speeds; instead, it appears as if one cyclist is overtaking the other in the next frame, although the pass never actually occurs. The race is decided entirely by the human eye and its celerity in making complete narratives out of visual fragments. *Mondfahrt 2001* (Moon tour 2001) provides another optical enigma. A serious full moon bounces giddily across the wall, as if following the lyrics of a song written in the night sky. What is the source of its cadences? The camera operator, sort of: Baranowsky remained completely still while filming, but she was traveling on a ferry from Harwich to Hamburg. The moon turns

just as it takes time to become aware of the tiny movements of the aluminum plates, pieces of polystyrene sheeting, and other small pieces of wood or rubber that are strewn along the floor of the gallery. First caught from the corner of your eye, these movements soon capture your attention and then command it. Before that, though, the visitor might have stopped to look at drawings for the film *A Man and His Dog Out for Air*, 1957, or to operate the optical or sound machines: For example, *Dot Dash*, 1964, a new optical instrument after Duchamp, is a piece of wood that can spin, making the shapes painted on each of its sides—a circle and a rectangle—blur into each other; *Variations*, 1970, a rotating tabletop with various objects on it, produces a kind of mechanical “concrete music” when you make it turn. Meanwhile, you might almost have tripped over a banal and apparently inert object that was in fact being animated by small invisible motors. All kinds of things were happening on the ground or on raised platforms: the movements of the polystyrene, the rustling of the aluminum, the collisions of the units—movements simultaneously aleatory and constant. The exhibition became a truly phenomenological experience and the vocabulary of the abstract tradition found itself revived in the image of these metal crotchets, platforms, and lengths of rubber motorized and mounted on rollers, which, in the course of their displacements, established an endless number of possible configurations, a multitude of drawings in space. Form and movement thus became closely associated, not with the jolts and cruelty of some of Jean Tinguely’s machines, but in an atmosphere that was alluring and serene.

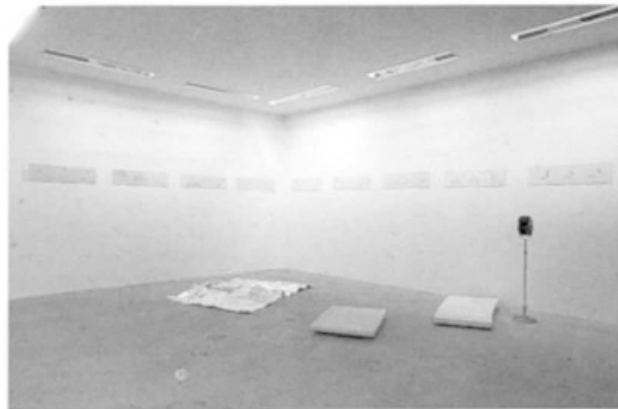
—Guitemie Maldonado

Translated from French by Jeanine Herman.

BASEL

HANNAH VILLIGER KUNSTHALLE BASEL

Just four years after Hannah Villiger’s death at the age of forty-six, the Kunsthalle Basel dedicated an exhibition of considerable scope to the Swiss artist, accompanied by a detailed monograph, including a catalogue raisonné of her works. Nevertheless, this presentation was not a full retrospective, eliding as it did her early sculptural works of the ‘70s, which still followed in the *arte povera* tradition. Instead, it focused on her photographic oeuvre, which treated her own body as its point



“Robert Breer,” 2001.
Installation view.



Hannah Villiger, *Skulptural*, 1984–85, color photograph mounted on aluminum, 49 x 48 x 1”.

of departure. But even before that work, which was the subject of many a solo exhibition and made Villiger widely known in Switzerland, she had developed a sculptural approach to photographing her own mundane possessions. The dynamic power of flying bocce balls, burning palm branches, or even a water sprinkler contained a potential energy that could be made visible only through photography. Only after being hospitalized in 1980 for long-term treatment of tuberculosis did Villiger begin a systematic investigation of her own body.

As the story of the genesis of an oeuvre, Villiger’s hospital stay reads very much like myth: Here, with limited means, the artist finds herself forced to invent a new language. Until her premature death, the companionship of the Polaroid camera was to determine her entire production. The pictures she took with it were enlarged to just over a meter square, then transferred to thin aluminum plates. These plates show cutouts of the body, which seem to achieve a self-evident autonomy, distanced from the person. These corporeal architectures never allow for any final ordering; even their up and down coordinates remain obscure. The flesh, as it pulses, lives, and changes day by day, is looted by the camera, itself a prosthetic extension of the eye. Segments, never seen this way before, are cut out of the continuum of flesh, creating the impression of abstract, nonreferential formations.

Villiger named all of her enlarged Polaroid works “*Skulptural*,” marking her interpretive intent with this adjectival characterization, which was also meant to undermine the referentiality of photography. After 1988, her sculptural method

became even more pronounced. She began putting large groups of the photographs together in blocks, and the resulting multiple viewpoints and related fragments melted into a new unity—a unity, though, that no longer has faith in the wholeness of the body. Villiger’s intimate research into her own body, degraded to an observed object and thus made an expression of alienation, has its correlate in the specific color range of the Polaroid. The gleaming light of the flash reveals the artist’s skin, sprinkled with flecks of pigment, and for the viewer, the larger-than-life body parts become a physical and psychological confrontation. The simultaneity of the intimate and public spheres, of organic form and minimalist sequence, defines the tension-laden field where the radical investigation of this “most obvious subject,” as Villiger once characterized her body, takes place. A year before her death, it seemed that this exploitation of her own “material” had reached a definitive end, for in her last works the outer veil of her skin was replaced with bright wrappings of gowns that, completely effacing the body, seemed to forecast her inevitable end.

—Philipp Kaiser

Translated from German by Sara Ogge.

VIENNA

MUNTEAN/ROSENBLUM GALERIE GEORG KARGL

There’s a prefab housing development just outside the gates of Vienna called the Blue Lagoon—an idyll of single-family homes

erected between a shopping mall and the Autobahn. “Experience your dream life,” promises the brochure. This artificial suburbia is the background for Muntean/Rosenblum’s parable of lost identities, “Lost in the Savage Wilderness of Civil Life.” It’s an apt title for this exhibition, in which these ethnographers of youth culture have turned their thematic home base into a nearly universal category.

Behind the gallery doors was the facade of what looked like a house from a Playmobil or Barbie set, in bright children’s colors; there were windows on either side of the door leading into the exhibition spaces. There we found the video work, from 2001, whose title is that of the show. On location at the Blue Lagoon, Muntean/Rosenblum had teenagers in jeans and sneakers pose in front of the eerily aseptic and featureless house facades, filming them head-on for one minute. Each zoom shot begins with a close-up of a face in front of an abstract color background, travels along the T-shirt, which is printed with a motif drawn by Muntean/Rosenblum, and only reveals the setting once the entire figure is in the picture. The calculated contrast between the archaic motionlessness of these human sculptures and the shrill, hyperreal backdrop in harsh daylight is increased by a no less oblique sound track. Muntean/Rosenblum set the zoom shots to aria settings of the lament of the prophet Elijah, a musical subject popular of Scarlatti & Co. achieved a sense of perspective or distance. Frozen footage became thawed through sound and emotion. A parallel series of portrait photos of