

Kunstmuseum Bern

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Press Release
Media Culture
Bern, November 11, 2008

Ego Documents – The Autobiographical in Contemporary Art 14.11.2008 – 15.2.2009

Staging one's own life

The exhibition "Ego Documents" is presenting contemporary art by artists who have made their own life the theme of their work. We will be showing autobiographical video films, photographs, prints, drawings, installations, paintings and a slide show. Salient points are the various strategies for dealing with autobiographical material ranging from self-documentation to the cultivation of the individual image. "Ego Documents" is Kathleen Bühler's first exhibition as curator of the contemporary art department.

For what reason do artists reveal private details of their lives? Is it only to satisfy the curiosity and craving for sensation of the viewer? Or might there be social or even political reasons for the divulging of intimate information. What happens when artists write diaries, take family snapshots and shoot holiday films? Is this art, or do the documents remain private memorabilia? Questions such as this are posed in the exhibition "Ego Documents".

Memories artistically processed

Approximately one hundred works from the last forty years are proof that the autobiographical in contemporary art takes on the most diverse forms. The variety of media ranges from video films, photographs, prints, drawings, installations, paintings and a slide show to a performance. The artists represented in the exhibition work with self-documentation techniques familiar in everyday life such as diaries, letters, photograph albums, holiday films or collections of memorabilia. Central to an autobiographical work of art is the artist's conscious dealing with memories and his or her intent to transform their own life experience into an artistic experience for the viewer.

From self-documentation to narcissistic self-display

"Ego Documents" is not about mere self-exposure. The artists are presenting the most varied concepts of ego, of identity and experience. They employ diverse strategies in dealing with autobiographical material. Some of the artists document their own lives, setting them in a narrative in order to make sense of the experiences. Sometimes they portray entire identity-finding processes in their works. Others undertake research into following traces of a "great" story, a civil war for instance, in their own "small" story. Thus, culture-specific moments appear in what to all intents and purposes are private testimonials. The works of other artists are occupied with their own transience and what remains of life. The exhibition also shows that an autobiographical work can be a narcissistic self-portrayal as well as serving to cultivate the artist's own image.

The exhibition "Ego Documents" was conceived by Kathleen Bühler and is the opening event of her curatorship in the department for contemporary art.

List of artists

Darren Almond, Sadie Benning, Louise Bourgeois, Annatina Graf, Mona Hatoum, Xiaoyuan Hu, On Kawara, Martin Kippenberger, Isabelle Krieg, Elke Krystufek, Laura Lancaster, Nicolas Nixon, Jan Peters, Jack Pierson, Anri Sala, Vittorio Santoro, Carolee Schneemann, Annelies Strba, Ana Strika, Pascale Wiedemann / Daniel Mettler.

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The Exhibition

Dates

November 14, 2008 – February 15, 2009

Opening

Thursday, November 13, 6.30pm

Admission

CHF 14.00/ reduced: CHF 10.00

Curator

Kathleen Bühler

Assistance

Isabel Fluri

Catalogue (German/English)



Ego Documents – The Autobiographical in Contemporary Art

Published by Kathleen Bühler, Museum of Fine Arts Bern
Kehrer Verlag, Heidelberg. Essays by Kathleen Bühler, Corina Caduff,
Matthias Frehner, Alma-Elisa Kittner, Peter Schneemann, Judith Welter
GER/ENG, approx. 200 pp. ISBN 978-3-86828-005-0. Approx. CHF 50.00 / € 30.00*

Accompanying Program

Public tours in German

Each Tuesday, 7pm: 2.12.2008*, 16.12.2008*, 6.1.2009,
13.1.2009*, 27.1.2009*, 10.2.2009

* Cinema admission included following the public tour at
7pm in the museum; introduction: Kathleen Bühler

Visite guidée publique en français

Mardi, 13.1.2009, 19h30

Public Guided Tour in English

Tuesday, January 20, 2009, 7.30pm

**Performance by Isabelle Krieg: Ich erzähle Ihnen
mein Leben!** Tuesday, November 18, 2008, 7pm

**Film screening with comment by Carolee
Schneemann (English)**

Sunday, December 12, 2008, 12 noon

**Talks with the artists Ana Strika and Isabelle Krieg
(in German)**

Ana Strika: Tuesday, December 9, 2008, 7pm

Isabelle Krieg: Tuesday, January 20, 2009, 7pm

**Art over lunch: Talks in front of the original works
(in German)**

Each Wednesday, 12.30 – 1pm

Jack Pierson 26.11.2008; Louise Bourgeois 10.12.2008;
On Kawara 7.1.2009; Elke Krystufek 21.1.2009;
Annelies Štrba und Laura Lancaster 4.2.2009

**Passion for art on Saturday afternoon: The language
of my clothes (in German)**

With the artist couple Pascale Wiedemann and Daniel
Mettler, the fashion designers Anja Bojie and Andrea
Hostettler (Viento), the curator Kathleen Bühler and the
art historian Katharina Nyffenegger.

Saturday, 14.2.2009, 2pm – 3.30pm

Registration: T +41 31 328 09 11,
vermittlung@kunstmuseumbern.ch

Films in Kino Kunstmuseum

see separate program or

www.kinokunstmuseum.ch