

Immerse Yourself in Bethan Huws's Research Laboratory

Since the mid-1990s, the Welsh artist Bethan Huws (*1961) has explored the work of Marcel Duchamp (1887–1968), the spiritual and intellectual father of conceptual art, and, since 2007, has put together the findings of her research in works and sketches. These *Research Notes* will be shown at the Kunstmuseum Bern for the very first time in an installation filling a whole room.

Just like Duchamp, Huws delights in puns, ideogrammes and symbols. Much of Duchamp's work, his Ready-mades and installations, with titles rich with allusion, is still an arcanum for us today, enticing Huws to puzzle and decode its hidden references.

Mind Map Spread over a Room

Huws's research notes consist of drawings, writings, collages, postcards, photocopies from dictionaries and reproductions of Duchamp's works. They are being presented for the very first time in their entirety as an installation, which is conceived as a room-filling mind map. The artist conceived the installation, which virtually restages the situation of her studio in Berlin when she presented her first research results to an art historian. The research notes in the exhibition can be subdivided into two categories. The "general files" are presented on tables in the exhibition and contain insights into the general categories that Bethan Huws discerned within Marcel Duchamp's oeuvre, such as colour, geometry, numbers, painting, chess, Christianity, myths, intellect, or the poet and art critic Guillaume Apollinaire, to name just a few. Huws collected all the information related to the emergence of the subjects treated in Duchamp's work, viewing it in a specific context, in order to comprehend how it fitted into Duchamp's system on the whole. On the other hand, in the "individual works" Huws examines Duchamp's works by one by one, among them famous pieces like *Nude Descending a Staircase* (1912), the large work on glass *Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, even* (1915–23), or the installation *Etant Donnés (Given)*, 1946–66). In order to decode the multilayered references step by step, she places them in the greater context of Duchamp's oeuvre and within French culture overall.

Intellectual Siblings

One of the many ties Huws and Duchamp share is that they both believed that an artwork was the product of thinking about what makes art art. It is only through interpreting or understanding an artwork that makes it art. Hence, Huws not only seeks to interpret Duchamp's work, but strives, at the same time, to show how art produces meaning. Huws intellectually pursues the paths Duchamp himself followed and probes his work by means of his own methods and strategies. In contrast to an academic, art-historical study of her predecessor's work, Huws dares to not fill all the gaps in her research, allowing her subjective interests to shine through and provides scope to draw conclusions about her own work. Her comprehensive study of this epochal artist, together with the insights she has won in this way, provide an unconventional contribution to the art history of modernism and the present. She thus creates a profoundly sensitive and intelligent, independent artwork of her own, full of humor and highly poetic, contemplating the fundamentals of art.

An Exceptional Conceptual Artist

Bethan Huws was born in 1961 in Bangor, Wales. She studied at Middlesex Polytechnic (1981–1985) and the Royal College of Art (1986–1988) in London. She lives and works in Paris and Berlin. Especially her *Word Vitrines*, her Ready-mades and objects, and not to forget her videos, brought her international fame. Since 1999, the Kunstmuseum Bern has been expanding its collection with works by this exceptional concept artist.

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Exhibition

Duration of the exhibition: Oct. 24, 2014 – Feb. 1, 2015

Opening (jointly with the exhibition *In the Here and Now! Swiss Art of the Last 30 Years from the Kunst Heute Collection*): Thursday, October 22, 2014, 6:30 p.m. Public addresses and exhibition opening at the Kunstmuseum Bern, followed by a party with catering, a bar, and music in the PROGR Aula

Curator: Kathleen Bühler

Admission fee: CHF 14.00 / reduced CHF 10.00

Artist's Book



BETHAN HUWS: RESEARCH NOTES

ed. Dieter Association, Paris. With an essay by Hans Rudolf Reust (German / English / French).
Layout: Myriam Barchecat, Paris.
684 pages, 523 illustrations. Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, Cologne 2014.
ISBN 978-3-86335-647-7.

This publication is being sponsored by the DAAD Artists-in-Berlin Program, the Kunstmuseum Bern and Maria & Henry Wegmann-Müller, Winterthur.

Poster



F4
89.5 x 128 cm
CHF 20.00

Supporting Program

Öffentliche Führungen: Sonntag, 11h: 26. Oktober, 21. Dezember und Dienstag, 19h: 25. November, 16.* / 30. Dezember, 13. Januar. * mit der Kuratorin Kathleen Bühler und Hans Rudolf Reust, Kunstkritiker **Einführungsveranstaltung für Lehrpersonen Kunst Heute / Bethan Huws:** Dienstag, 4. November, 18h **Öffentliche Workshop-Reihe im Rahmen der Ausstellung:** jeweils 18h-20h, Kosten: Ausstellungseintritt, keine Anmeldung erforderlich: Dienstag, 18. November 2014 mit Hans Rudolf Reust und Ulrich Loock: Reading, Re-reading / Dienstag, 9. Dezember 2014 mit Annaik Lou Pitteloud und Steve Van den Bosch: Re-enactment / Dienstag, 27. Januar 2015 mit Ulrich Loock und Bettina Klein: Research. Mehr Informationen siehe www.kunstmuseumbern.ch

With the generous support of:

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