

# GLADSTONE GALLERY

Kathy Noble, "Rosemarie Trockel," *frieze*, Summer 2012.

REVIEWS



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erwähnt werden kann. Es fällt schwer, von einer Retrospektive zu sprechen – ein Konzept, dem sich Trockel bekanntlich ohnehin verweigert. Man könnte eher sagen, die Ausstellung habe jene Aspekte ihres Schaffens in den Blick genommen, die sich unmittelbar mit der Materialität der Arbeiten auseinandersetzen, und für die die Künstlerin mit großer psychologischer und konzeptioneller Stringenz vorgeht, gepaart mit einer besonderen Pop-Sensibilität. Hätten Louise Bourgeois, Donald Judd, Hannah Höch und Andy Warhol ein gemeinsames Kind, es hieße Rosemarie Trockel. Möchte man einen roten Faden benennen, so jenes eingangs beschriebene Gefühl der Abwesenheit. Viele Arbeiten ließen mich mit der Frage zurück, was Trockel alles bewusst zur Seite gelassen hat, um ihren thematischen Kern zur Geltung zu bringen oder herauszudestillieren. Vielleicht ist die Frage weniger „Wo ist Rosemarie Trockel?“ sondern vielmehr „Wonach sucht sie eigentlich?“

Übersetzt von Michael Müller

Where is Rosemarie Trockel? On leaving her exhibition *Flagrant Delight* at Wiels, I felt an overwhelming sense of absence. Trockel's diverse oeuvre does actively resist any overarching definition; a new phase of creation is often a reaction to a previous phase and could become collage, sculpture, drawing, painting, video or text. This survey featured over 130 works from her multi-faceted career – albeit excluding video – which were selected by the artist with Wiels Director Dirk Snauwaert and which were presented over three floors. Given the show's conceptual and physical breadth, I wonder if I was somehow searching for Trockel's essence or brain in the midst of it all, in order to better understand the intense connection I feel to her work.

If one considers the subject of absence, the human body for Trockel is rarely whole. Instead, limbs, faces and heads often exist as separate objects, as slightly weird or deformed entities of their own. *Ohne Titel* (Untitled, 2005) – displayed here among

sculptural works in the first gallery space – is a clay head sporting an eye mask, topped with a short scruffy blonde wig and sitting inside a wall-mounted plastic vitrine, next to another such vitrine holding a similar wig cropped in half *Studio 45: Haus für Läuse* (House for Lice, 1994). Yet despite the surreal tone (and sense of decapitation), I had to laugh when I spotted a Lufthansa logo on the mask. Nearby, illuminated by daylight, was *Ohne Titel* (Untitled, 2006): a small, shiny, silver ceramic leg, with tinsel around the top and a lumpen, penis-like shape extending from the knee, whilst at the other end a dainty, childlike foot glinted in the light. This human leg stood on top of a canary-yellow metal table with thinner legs, one of which was formed from two overlapping legs joined in the middle, as if in a splint. In fact, nearly every work here was characterized by some form of void or missing, misshapen part(s).

It's enjoyable when Trockel gets mean. And funny. Especially mean and funny together. I got to appreciate this combination in the next area which was filled with several sculptures exuding an absurd sense of humour. *Schaumstoff-Ofen* (Foam-Oven, 1989) – a plinth of foam painted white on two sides – seemed precariously suspended in mid-air as if screaming 'Squash me, squash me!' (until I bent down and realized it stood precariously on a thin piece of Perspex acting as a skirting board). *Ohne Titel* (Untitled, 2000) comprised a copper box with nine hot plates hooked up to an electrical source and radiating a wave of heat that made me instantly shift backwards. The sense of danger and aggression engendered by both of these works were made ridiculous by the choice of materials (squashy foam and girly cooking) – perhaps as a jab at *really* tough, dangerous, macho Minimalism by the likes of Richard Serra. A series of works on paper, some mimicking magazine covers, were displayed opposite on shelves and further emphasized the gender and sexual politics inherent in so much of her work, as well as parodies of the worlds of both art and mass media. Consider *Ich bin Dan Graham* (I am Dan Graham, 1992): a fake

magazine cover with these words over a black and white photo of Trockel.

Trockel's well-known machine knits from the 1980s were missing from this exhibition, but some recent woolly works were displayed instead, such as *Danger* (2012): a 'painting' formed from thick yellow wool bound around a canvas, alongside several other works formed the same way using black wool. Nearby were a number of ceramics, including *Ohne Titel* (Untitled, 2012), which can best be described as a visceral pile of ceramic shit, with white poking out from under messy brown paint, positioned alongside similar 'piles'. Last but not least was an entire floor filled with an epic series of collages Trockel has been making over the last decade. Echoing Hannah Höch's Dadaist montages, these works are simple in means yet surreally humorous, darkly beautiful and at moments cruel. *Olympic Sausage* (2008) depicts a woman in a beige bodysuit, photographed lying face down, red hair fanned around her; *Nobody will Survive 2* (2008) shows a woman's head with a large eye pasted over the features, like a one-eyed Cyclops, albeit emerging out of a tinsel theatre curtain.

In both works, the woman is obscured or constricted; each collage is encased in a frame with a Perspex cover screwing it closed, as if the material inside were trapped.

Since the show was so extensive, only a few works can be touched upon here. It's difficult to speak of a retrospective – something Trockel is known to resist. Rather, the exhibition brought into focus certain aspects of her work that deal directly with materiality, thanks to a psychological and conceptual rigour combined with a Pop sensibility. If Louise Bourgeois, Donald Judd, Hannah Höch and Andy Warhol had created a love child, then Trockel would be that child. Yet if I were to identify a common thread, it would be that very feeling of absence I described at the start. So many works left me considering what Trockel had edited out of the conceptual 'frame' in order to magnify, or distill, the heart of her subject. While wondering 'Where is Rosemarie Trockel?', perhaps I should be asking 'What is she searching for?'

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Rosemarie Trockel  
links:  
*Studio 45: Haus für Läuse*, 1994  
Perücke  
20 cm Durchmesser  
rechts:  
*Ohne Titel*, 2005  
verschiedene Materialien  
41×31×36 cm

Rosemarie Trockel  
left:  
*Studio 45: Haus für Läuse*  
(*Studio 45: house for lice*), 1994  
Wig  
20 cm diameter  
right:  
*Ohne Titel* (Untitled), 2005  
Mixed Media  
41×41×36 cm