

GLADSTONE GALLERY

Wakefield, Neville, "Rosemarie Trockel", *Elle Décor*, Aug/Sept. 1997

BARBARA GLADSTONE GALLERY

Wakefield, Neville. "Rosemarie Trockel", *Elle Decor*,
August/September 1997, page 54-58.

515 West 24th Street
New York, New York 10011
Telephone 212 206 9300
Fax 212 206 9301

rosemarietrockel

A body of work that is both unprogrammatic and distinctly feminized

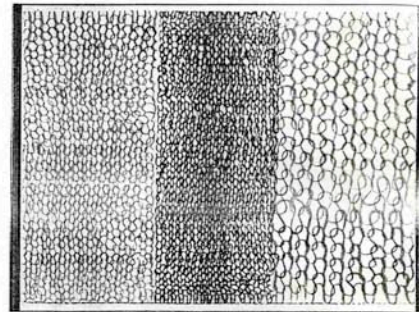
During the decade and a half in which the German artist Rosemarie Trockel has risen to prominence, her work has managed to baffle and intrigue in equal doses. Her inspiration ranges from the bizarre to the mundane, from the so-called missing-link Macao mermaid hoax to the erotic undertow of domestic appliances. Protean in ability and output, she has produced macabre

sculptural tableaux of cast fossilized skeletons in specimen-case glass vitrines alongside elegant silk scarves adorned with the innocent faces of art-world babies. Knit panels, arrangements of found objects, clothing, sculpture, and drawings, as well as photographic and video pieces, create a body of work that is both unprogrammatic and distinctly feminized. The ghosts of Beuys and Duchamp may be glimpsed behind many of these

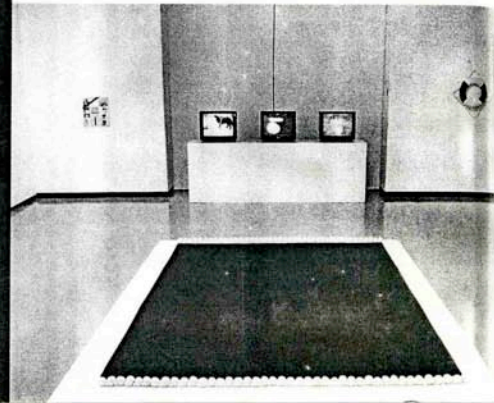
sculptural and conceptual enigmas, but the forefathers of contemporary art are rarely cited; rather, they are invoked. With the subversive irreverence and fearless intellectual ambition particular to a woman delving into a patrician past, her approach to her art refuses simple explanation.

The 44-year-old Trockel, who lives and works in Cologne, is one of the few woman artists of her generation to re-▷

TOP RIGHT: COURTESY OF BARBARA GLADSTONE GALLERY, NEW YORK



Above: *Untitled*, 1996 (acrylic on paper; 22"x30"). Below: Installation work at City Gallery, Wellington, New Zealand, 1993. See Resources.

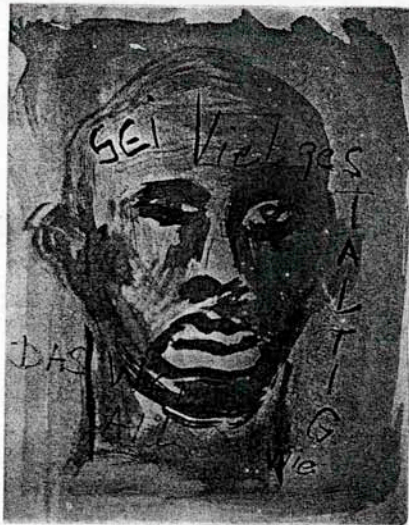
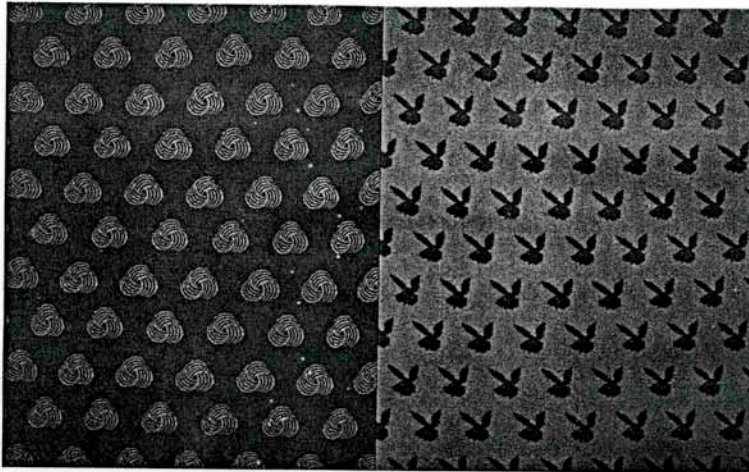


GLADSTONE GALLERY

Wakefield, Neville, "Rosemarie Trockel", Elle Décor, Aug/Sept. 1997

BARBARA GLADSTONE GALLERY

515 West 24th Street
New York, New York 10011
Telephone 212 206 9300
Fax 212 206 9301



Clockwise from top:
Untitled, 1988
(machine-knit wool;
79"x126"); *Untitled*,
1988 (ink and marker
on paper; 6"x8");
Untitled, 1984
(watercolor on paper;
10"x8").

"There is a tremendous **confidence** to her art, which has to do with leaving questions open"

ceive international recognition. Among her earliest and best-known works are the knit paintings, large tapestries laden with gridlocked logos such as Playboy bunnies, swastikas, Woolmark insignias, and the like woven into gentle parodies of geometric paintings. The grids may slump under the weight of material and the hard lines soften to the rhythm of knit one, pearl two, but the thinking behind them is anything but woolly. Made as one-offs with computerized knitting machines designed for mass production, they reinvented the traditions of feminine labor as faux craft. A counterpoint to the prevailing current of macho neo-Expressionist paintings, they emerged, art dealer Barbara Gladstone says, "as a kind of response to her attempts to participate in serious discussions with her fellow artists in Cologne who were predominantly male and who basically told her to 'go knit!'"

But just as people were getting used to them, Trockel stopped producing them. Sensing a formula, she literally saw red. A piece made in 1992 but dating back to the time of the first knit painting consisted of a Cyclopean eye staring out of a ball of red wool. It might have been a self-portrait of the artist, entangled in a web of her own making. Where others find perversity in Trockel's refusal to settle into a signature style, change for her is a matter of creative survival. "She seems to go out of her way not to give people what they expect," says Gladstone, who is mounting a show of Trockel's new work at her Manhattan gallery from September 6 to October 4. "Her tendency is to lean toward situations that lack resolution, but there is also a tremendous confidence to her art, which has to do with not revealing itself immediately and leaving questions open."

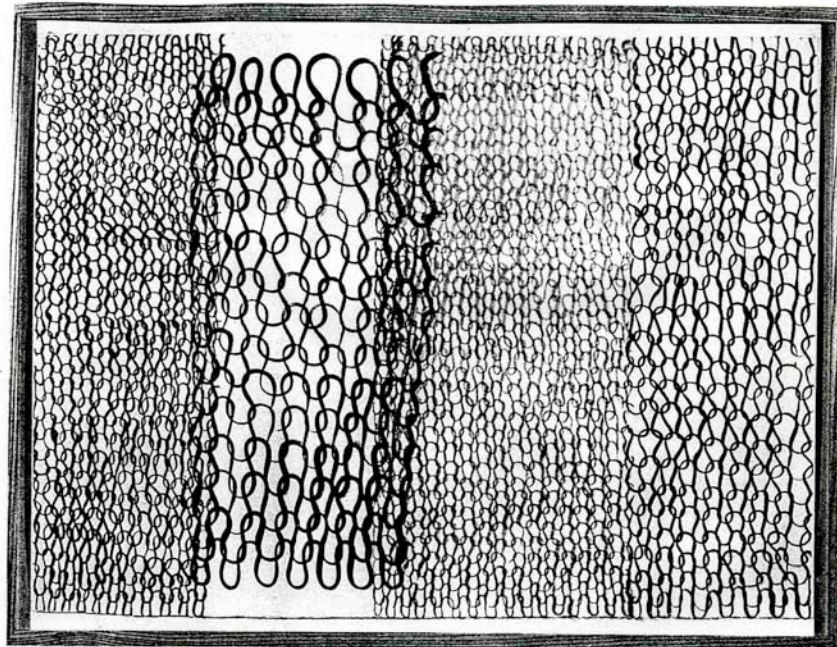
A recent video entitled *Continental Divide* provides an absurdist and wickedly funny commentary on the pigeonholing that accompanies the kind of success that Trockel has been witness to. Constructed along the lines of a Japanese game show, it depicts the artist undergoing interrogation. The questions, delivered amid a hail of verbal abuse and punctuated by periodic blows to the head, are intended to extract from the hapless Trockel the name of the best artist. ▷

GLADSTONE GALLERY

Wakefield, Neville, "Rosemarie Trockel", Elle Décor, Aug/Sept. 1997

BARBARA GLADSTONE GALLERY

515 West 24th Street
New York, New York 10011
Telephone 212 206 9300
Fax 212 206 9301



Untitled,
1996
(acrylic on
paper;
24"x30").

"Irony appears when I have to get malicious"

"Sylvie Fleury?" the interrogator roars. "You make my blood boil."

"Johns? You damn fool. You are playing with fire."

"Koons? You are risking your life, darling." And so on in a scalding torrent.

The hatchet job on her fellow artists and, by implication, herself, proceeds until the interrogator (played by Trockel) ultimately gives up in disgust and the video dissolves to the final strains of Ravel's *Boléro*.

Trockel's satiric anger was directed at the annual publication of a "trendbarometer" in the German magazine *Focus*; a supposed ranking of the world's best artists, it is based on a points system as spurious as the one that Bo Derek earned her perfect ten on—to the same musical accompaniment. Railing against

such self-serving industry hype is Trockel's way of expressing self-deprecation. "Irony appears when I have to get malicious," she says. "It's a vice that keeps me from ending up a cynic."

That vice has been a long-standing feature of much of her work. A vitrine from the '80s held a concertina-like photographic strip showing head shots of medieval statuary. Next to it was an upright silver cast of a finger—part religious relic, part lewd gesture. The photographed sculptures were the Seven Foolish Virgins, the finger a cast of the artist's own. Pointing to the heavens, it made for a typically ambiguous gesture. Both admonishing and siding with the virgins, Trockel gave the finger to the pantheon of wise old men—the elders of contemporary art.

Alongside Trockel's irony and wit is her abiding interest in nature and anthropology. Animals, from drunken dachshunds in party hats to "house pet" spiders, have all figured in her symbolic universe at one time or another. For the show at Gladstone this fall we are promised a forest of video monitors showing abstract and narrative fragments culled from nature and the world around her. Exactly how the piece will take shape, we can't know for sure: Trockel went into seclusion while preparing for this summer's Documenta show in Kassel, Germany, and would not elaborate on the new work. Perhaps she was toying with the refusal to communicate, but maybe it's just that in commentary as well as in art, the best questions are those left unanswered. ★