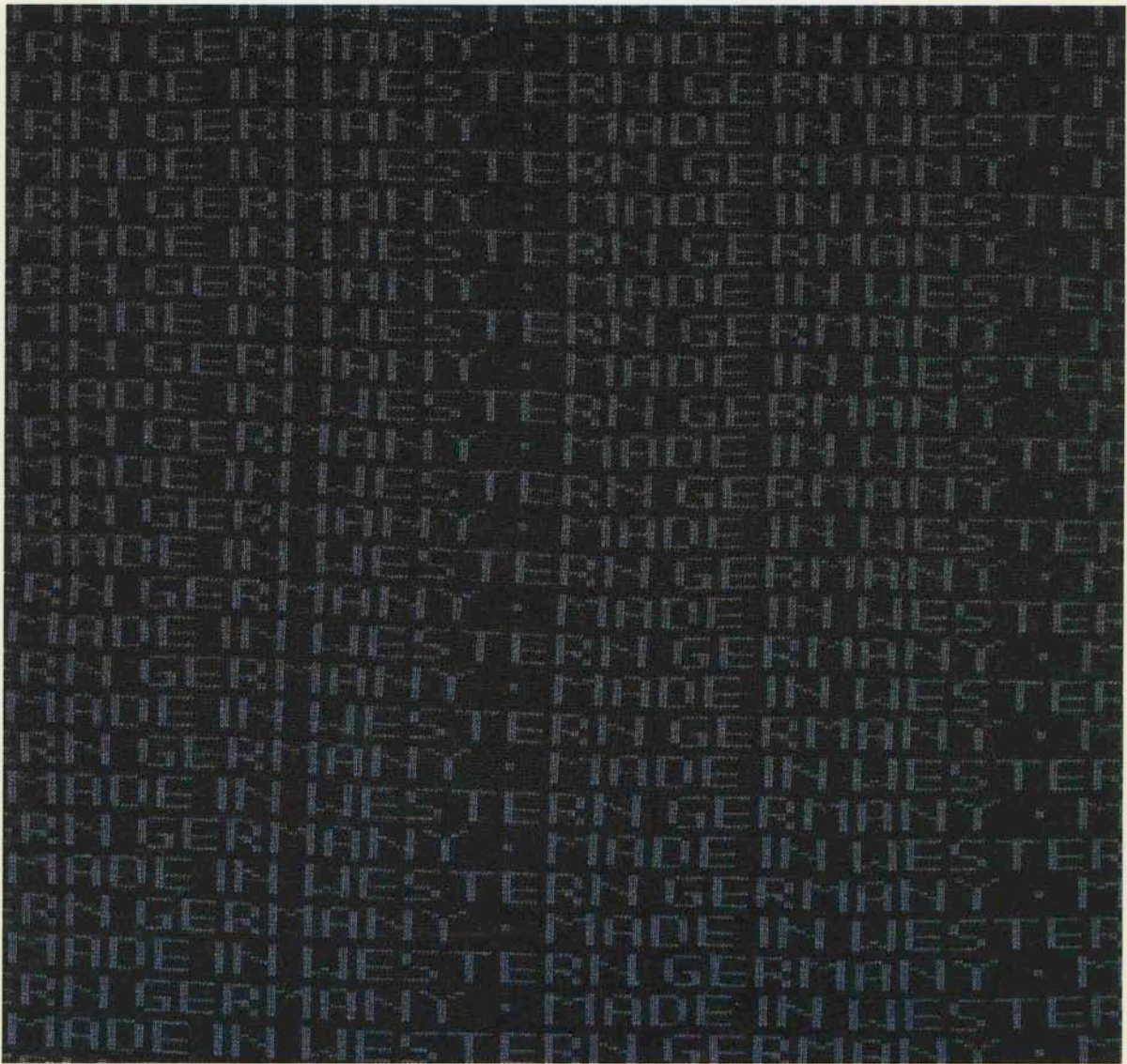


GLADSTONE GALLERY

Ottmann, Kalus. "Rosemarie Trockel." Flash Art. No. 134. May, 1987.

Flash Art

THE LEADING EUROPEAN ART MAGAZINE • N° 134 MAY 1987 • US\$6.00



ROSEMARIE TROCKEL, UNTITLED (DETAIL), 1987.
WOOL, 240 x 540 CMS. COURTESY MONIKA SPRÜTH, COLOGNE.

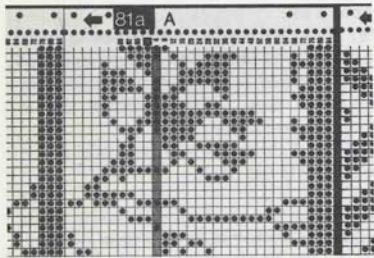
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ROSEMARIE TROCKEL

SHE NEVER FALLS INTO THE MODERNIST TRAP, THE MERE FASCINATION WITH THE REPRESENTABLE FACADE. INSTEAD SHE UNDERTAKES A DECONSTRUCTIVE DIALOGUE WITH MODERN ART, A DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE REPRESENTED AND THE NONREPRESENTABLE.

KLAUS OTTMANN



COMPUTER MODEL FOR KNITTING.
COURTESY MONIKA SPRÜTH, COLOGNE.

On the old problem: "What is German?"—*Recapitulate in your mind the real achievements of philosophical thinking that one owes to Germans. Is there any legitimate sense in which one might give the credit for these achievements to the whole race? May we say that they are at the same time the products of "the German soul", or at least symptoms of that . . . ? Or should the opposite be the truth? Might they be just as individual, just as much exceptions from the spirit of the race as was, for example, Goethe's paganism with a good conscience? . . . In short, were the German philosophers really philosophical Germans? . . . Yes, without any doubt . . . We Germans are Hegelians even if there never had been any Hegel, insofar as we (unlike all Latins) instinctively attribute a deeper meaning and greater value to becoming and development than to what "is"; we hardly believe in the justification of the concept of "being"—and also insofar as we are not inclined to concede that our human logic is logic as such or the only kind of logic (we would rather persuade ourselves that it is merely a special case and perhaps one of the oddest and most stupid cases) (Friedrich Nietzsche, The Gay Science).*

Who in his heart doubts either that the facts of feminine clothing are there all the time or that the feminine fiction, stranger than the facts, is there also at the same time, only a little to the rere? Or that one contemplated simultaneously? Or that each may be taken up in turn and considered apart from the other? (James Joyce, Finnegans Wake).

The art of Rosemarie Trockel is vigorous, subversive, postmodern, sensitive, German, disquieting, feminine, autonomous, surprising, masculine, poetic, obtru-

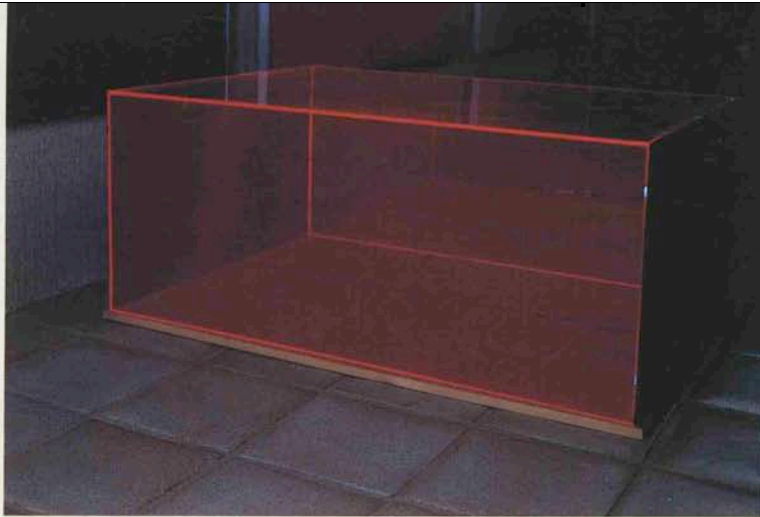


UNTITLED, 1987.
INSTALLATION AT GALERIE TANIT, MUNICHEN. PHOTO PHILIPP SCHÖNBORN.

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Ottmann, Kalus. "Rosemarie Trockel." Flash Art. No. 134. May, 1987.



UNTITLED, 1965.
PLEXIGLASS AND STAINLESS STEEL. 20" x 48" x 34".

anything but dead.

PT: *Is the idea that art is evolving and going someplace a perversion of some Judeo-Christian and Marxist notion of history?*

DJ: I think that art has to change, which is not necessarily progress. Change is the bigger word.

PT: *Yes, well it's changed again.*

DJ: I'm very much against against those grand schemes of history—Christianity or Marxism or any grand scheme because I don't see much sign of it. But things one way or another do change, and I think that art has to be new, just as people are new. Going backwards is not change.

PT: *It doesn't look like what was going on before.*

DJ: It does too. It looks like what I saw all around me in art school. All these things I see in the galleries are the hack art by the GIs who didn't want to do anything in the art students' league.

PT: *You suggested in one of your recent essays that there was a complicity between the market and Neo-expressionism. Is there something intrinsically reactionary about expressionistic forms of art that assimilates it so well into the market?*

DJ: I think that because it is old fashioned the public likes it better, they're more likely to buy it. It's more easy to sell. Castelli and a lot of dealers are willing to undercut the market—to sell it a little cheaper. This is a standard mercantile activity. And it's what they're doing with the so-called neo-expressionist painting. Instead of them paying say \$60,000 or \$70,000 for say a Rosenquist painting (I think he's a good artist) they can sell Schnabel or somebody for \$40,000 or \$50,000. The public likes it, and it's probably easier for them to take. Then you can undercut Schnabel too until finally the quality is shot completely and you have to start over.

PT: *At what point will we start over?*

DJ: When the public totally disbelieves that there's anything to it. People aren't going to quit making art, so good art will crop up somewhere else. In another area or simply with another group of people.

PT: *I wonder whether we're already at a heightened stage of disbelief. In your writings there's a prejudice about Neo-expressionism and its success in the art market, and an implied superiority of previous art movements like Minimalism. But in the case of the present Neo-minimalism in painting in New York, the market can be shown to be just as involved. Obviously there's nothing intrinsically good or bad about any of these art forms.*

DJ: Actually I don't know anything about this. It's something I've heard about only very recently. I'm usually pretty wary of work that's related to mine. And I'm not for going backwards. The thing is to do something new. I would assume that the taste for this new work comes out of the same ignorance that the liking for Neo-expressionism does.

PT: *In House and Garden you wrote that "nothing existing now, despite the growth of activity in museums and the so-called public art, is sufficiently close to the interests of the best art". What is in the interests of the best art?*

DJ: First of all that it gets made. I and the people I know mostly poke along. I live off smaller pieces which is fine but I want to do larger pieces. You don't live forever, so there's a little reason to hurry. Secondly that it is placed in good situations and thirdly that it gets taken care of, and the critics and the museums are not doing that. Things have to be installed well and taken care of—not in an environment that's made by some hack architect.

PT: *In what ways is your work different now from twenty years ago?*

DJ: There's a greater variety and certain ideas are clearer. There are certainly more

larger pieces. Basically, it's the same work. One reason the new work developed was because I wanted to use more colour. In some ways these are more drastically spatial.

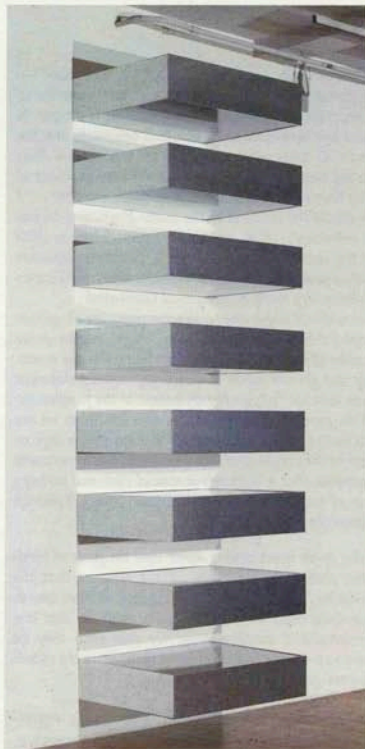
PT: *What kind of painting do you think could be interesting now?*

DJ: I wrote against painting as a whole form and naturally I was writing about it as it was at the time. I think I said it was dead, and that's quoted now and again. Maybe I was too right. I think it really is dead, and it's a shame. I believe you can take things into different contexts where you don't have the flat canvas against the wall and do something else with it. The big question is the integrity of the flat thing on the flat wall, and whether you can do something new with that without doing plain old paintings. I have some strong opinions about it all.

PT: *They give rise to what become a series of complaints in your two-part essay that was published in Art in America and Art Monthly. Now you're talking about expanding on those essays.*

DJ: Yes, I think it's a lousy world and I hope I write the book.

Paul Taylor is a regular contributor to Flash Art. He is a founder of the theoretical magazine Art & Text. He also writes for The New York Times and Manhattan Inc.



UNTITLED, 1985.
GALVANIZED IRON, CLEAR PLEXIGLASS. 9" x 40" x 31"
PHOTO GEOFFREY CLEMENTS.

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