

GLADSTONE GALLERY

Quinn Latimer, "Rosemarie Trockel," ArtForum, June 2010

Zurich

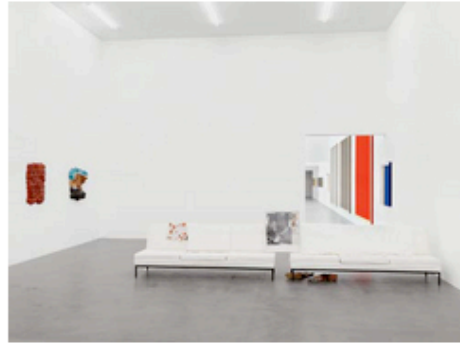
Rosemarie Trockel

KUNSTHALLE ZÜRICH

Limmatstrasse 270

May 8–August 15

One could be forgiven for viewing Rosemarie Trockel's most recent and most astonishing survey, "Deliquescence of the Mother," as a dream (or nightmare) of domesticity and its oft-gendered (dis)appointments. There are sofas, "hot plate" works, "knitted paintings," and ceramic objects that project off the wall like exploded dishware, yet each piece—no matter how familial or housebound its reference or material—seems distilled through the wary brilliance of the mind. In one of the huge glass vitrines filled with sculptural works that punctuate the show, a black bust reveals a sleeping face adorned by a corona of yellow wool tendrils. The yarn shoots out like sun striations, prompting the feeling that this dream of a show is a common one: We are all, to some degree, involved.



View of "Deliquescence of the Mother," 2010.

Comprising nearly one hundred works from the 1980s on, the exhibition opens with a lone 1992 video of a female torso turning round and round, her woolen sweater unraveling with each rotation. The work's feminism is a given, but also implicit is the idea of the "mind unraveling"—for in Trockel's work, the body and the mind are never far apart. See, for example, her white ceramic sofas. Modernist and monochromatic, each couch glitters like wedding china and is as sexless and lucid as a Robert Ryman painting. The sofas (one is titled *Watching and Sleeping and Composing*, 2007) double down on the artist's purchase on the unconscious and its fruitfulness for the more conscious labors of artmaking.

Rooms devoted to distinct bodies of work, emphasizing their serial nature, follow. Trockel's huge, magisterial "knitted pictures" are a revelation: The warp and weft of the wool assume the form of a minute, monochromatic grid, while simultaneously inhabiting the body of a Color Field painting. The works both court and subvert these self-serious, art-historical motifs (and the macho politik that went with them); that all could fall away with the pull of a string does not lessen the power of each "painting" but rather underlines it with a potent, witty weirdness. A recent series of collages are equally persuasive and formally expert—moody figures alternate with bits of foil, newsprint, and paint—and the evocative titles teem with male and female pronouns, a mixture of Brechtian pronouncement, pop-song lingo, and menace. That the show ends with a 2010 series titled "Dark Threat" is perhaps instructive. Lengths of black wool strung across white canvases conjure window blinds in a film noir: After all, what Trockel's oeuvre lets in is blinding light, but—like any good noir (or Dickinson poem)—at ever so much a slant.

An exhibition of Rosemarie Trockel's drawings is also currently on view at Kunstmuseum Basel, Saint Alban-Graben 16, until September 5.

— Quinn Latimer