

→ Ashley Hans Scheirl

Genital Economy

Posing

05 05 2018 – 21 06 2018

Press Talk

04 05 2018, 11 a.m.

Opening

04 05 2018, 18:30 p.m.



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→ In Ashley Hans Scheirl's "life art," questioning social norms and relationships and developing one's approach to one's own identity and sexuality are at the center of her often multimedia works. The intertwining of biography and art, the question of one's own identity, crossing boundaries of gender and genre are options. Scheirl, who is, by her own account, a "trans(-media, -genre, -gender) artist," deftly changes between formats from painting, drawing, sculpture, film, video, and performance without admitting of specific classifications.

For her largest solo exhibition in an institution thus far, at the Künstlerhaus, Halle für Kunst & Medien in Graz, Ashley Hans Scheirl (b. 1956 in Salzburg, lives in Vienna) is presenting a coherent selection of existing works and a new complex of works based in part on site-specific paintings and objects produced for this exhibition. The artist, who achieved great international fame already in the late 1980s through her experimental film and video works and recently had a well-regarded presence at Documenta 14 in Kassel, had been increasingly dedicated in recent years to painting once again, which is here presented in an almost performative foray through "trans-media." In a spacious setting custom designed with the artist Jakob Lena Knebel, Scheirl leads the audience through her diverse artistic oeuvre on a kind of tour along several floors, forming a continuous narrative with powerful images and precise statements.

A red carpet leads from the foyer of the exhibition space to the main room and up the walls. Large-scale paintings based on earlier collages of digital photographs and painted work are placed as if in an installation. Sculptural elements hang from the ceiling; texts and other elements loom into the space. On the platform at the center of the exhibition space, which is at once a walk-in painting, stage, and film set, Scheirl will present for the exhibition opening a "live art performance" in which the artist appears as a "prince of painters" and speak to the audience. The performances will be recorded on video and then shown in the exhibition. For Scheirl, this work is about the "artist's personality as a role model within 'biocapitalism': vitalism, creativity, and flexibility have become the prerequisites for the neoliberal society."

A display produced by Scheirl in a side room of the exhibition will present a generous selection of older drawings by the artist, some being shown for the first time. Numerous films and videos from various phases of Scheirl's production will be shown in the apse of the Künstlerhaus. The drawings and videos repeatedly reveal cross-connections to the artist's current and performative works.

The very titles of Scheirl's works, such as *The Alchemy of Libidinal Currencies*, *Corporate Castration* or *Öl, Gold, Eier* (Oil, Gold, Balls), indicate that they are about bringing together realms that merely seem far apart: on the one hand, the world of desire and of the construction of (gender) identity and, on the other hand, the world of economic interests and global capitalism. The separation of the interior and the exterior world, the private and the public sphere, male and female, and the subject and capitalism is revealed to be an ideological construction, which lately has intensified around questions of identity. With reference to the French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard one might say that the experience and production of reality—and hence all power relationships—are colored and fueled by a libidinal passion, a "libidinal economy." This system of order/disorder circulating back to itself, which

has to be produced anew again and again, regulates both the energy of the currents of desire and the pulse of the resistance to desire as well as the energy that is obtained when desire is deferred and hence translated to another "medium" and to another temporal system. Scheirl seems to employ at best these transitive forces, intensities and affects that drive us on primarily deliberately as a motivation and to translate the dis/order built up in the course of their artistic and profoundly subjective development into "images and languages of desire," and in that sense indeed represent circulating and transmedia works. In Graz, Scheirl continues this successive expansion and translation of questions of identity, body, and art: "In the exhibition I want to overlap the circulation of my body parts with the circulation of the media employed."

Having grown up as Angela, she decided on her fortieth birthday to take testosterone and call herself Hans. As a criticism of current attributions of identity and corresponding discourses, Scheirl recently used her sixtieth birthday as an opportunity to adopt the first name Ashley. Without trying to go from A to B, Scheirl chose the (anti)identity "transgender." This "trans-"identity is anticipated by the name, voice, and the constant undermining of the clear assignment of gender through language—and its images.

Ashley Hans Scheirl (b. 1956 in Salzburg, lives in Vienna) studied restoration at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna (diploma, 1980). From 1978 to 1985, she was involved in performative experiments with music and noise such as *8 oder 9* and *Ungünstige Vorzeichen* (Unfortunate Key Signature). From 1979 to 1996, she produced around fifty Super-8 short films. In 1981–82 Scheirl lived in New York and worked for Arleen Schloss's off-Space *Wednesdays at A's*. Scheirl became famous for the two avant-garde feature films *Rote Ohren fetzen durch Asche* (Red Ears Tear through Ashes) and *Dandy Dust*. Scheirl spent sixteen years in London, where she took part in the scene of queer and transgender artists. In 2003 completion postgraduate studies (MA) in the visual arts (painting/installation) at Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design in London. After returning to Vienna in 2005, receiving of the Austrian state scholarship for the visual arts in 2006. Since the autumn of 2006 Scheirl has been professor of "contextual painting" at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna.

Scheirl's works have been shown at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Kunsthalle Düsseldorf / KIT, the Taxispalais Kunsthalle Tirol, the Kunsthau Bregenz, MUSA Museum Startgalerie Artothek in Vienna, the Shedhalle in Zurich, the Nova Galerija Zagreb, MACBA Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona, and the Museum of Modern Art Vienna as well as recently in Documenta 14 in Kassel and Athens.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a supporting program, essays on the Künstlerhaus's online publication platform (journal.km-k.at) and by a catalog produced in collaboration with the Salzburger Kunstverein with support from the Kontakt. Art Collection – Erste Group / ERSTE Foundation."

curated by Sandro Droschl



Ashley Hans Scheirl, *Fat Finger Melancholy*, 2016. Acrylic and oil on canvas.



Ashley Hans Scheirl, *Hairy Deals*, 2016. Acrylic on canvas.