

TAMARA HENDERSON

Evergreen Minutes of the Phantom Figure

23.03. – 02.06.2013

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Opening: Friday, March 22, 2013, 7 pm

The Kunstverein Nürnberg is delighted to present **Tamara Henderson's** (b. 1982, Sackville, Canada) first solo show in Germany.

Her artistic practice encompasses film, sculpture and an intensive focus upon the medium of language. Her artworks derive from a unique methodology based on her own texts and drawings; it includes notes upon everyday objects and their sequence of movements, as well as documenting their manifestation in dreams. Henderson translates these notes into objects, scripts and installations that thus become reconstructions of the unconscious. The starting point is the artist's everyday environment: her studio, her apartment, the furniture, the bed. At these production sites she develops the layouts for her works that are captured as after-images of dreamed objects and occurrences in the moment of awakening. Similar the proposal of the surrealist author André Breton (1896 – 1966) in his writing *Introduction au discours sur le peu de réalité* (1924), Henderson realizes in her working practice objects and settings, that have been perceived in dreams without conscious memories and exterior influences.

Henderson presents two recent 16mm films – *Neon Figure* (2013) and *The Spirit of Garfield* (in Spite of NH) (2012) – in her exhibition at the Kunstverein Nürnberg. As in her earlier film works, found and handmade objects become protagonists that begin to move on their own and connect with their environment. With a selection of simple techniques and materials, Henderson animates a choreography in the films, in which things operate in a structure of movement somewhere between order and collapse. As in a Dada cabaret, objects, liquids and organic matter start to move, and yet at the same time, the actual construction of the images becomes visible: human hands clothed in gloves move the objects and the production aids, such as ropes or pulleys, are not concealed. Thus Henderson lays bare the illusion of cinematic possibilities as well as the manifestly handmade production of the props. She edits the scenes directly in the hand-held Bolex camera in a progressive sequence, lending the films a real immediacy and humorous spontaneity through the temporal limitation of the shot.

There is always a performative aspect in Henderson's work that plays with the presence and absence of an acting subject, and thus with her own personality as an author. Henderson has been working on a furniture collection as artworks since 2011, which she designs under hypnosis in a state of 'mental' absence. She asks hypnotists to hypnotise her with the specific aim of her producing a piece of furniture. Henderson uses hypnosis – which is practised today as a scientifically valid form of therapy to access the subconscious and as an aid to the generation of new systems of thought for the purposes of self-realisation – to influence her own artistic creativity. During the session, the therapist uses a specific way of speaking to evoke a memory space of individual encounters with furniture by using words alone. After hypnosis, Henderson completes a drawing, which retains the ideas of shape, size, material and colour of the

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object she has imagined under hypnosis and reconstructs the sculptures according to the sketch without regard to any ergonomic concerns. The titles of these furniture objects relate to the respective hypnotists's treatment rooms or the addresses where the sessions were held. Henderson presents three sculptures in the exhibition at the Kunstverein Nürnberg: *Prumelan 46 (Utrecht)* (2011), *Pacific Peace Chair* (Vancouver) (2013) and *Kressengarten Chair* (Nuremberg) (2013), the latter produced following a hypnosis session in the spaces at Kunstverein Nürnberg. Like the ghostly hands in the films, clothing dipped in plaster on the seats of the furnitures allude to the figure of the phantom as a kind of proxy for the absence of a conscious experience.

Although Henderson refers to the artistic techniques of the Surrealists – light sleep, trance or *écriture automatique* – she focuses in a conceptual way more upon ongoing outlines, nocturnal minutes and the current reporting of her own unconscious and thereby blurs the borders of different mental states. A key element is the translation after the hypnosis: it is the sketch itself which she produces afterwards which facilitates the transfer of the furniture's actual manufacture from unconscious remembering into reality. Henderson's approach reflects the unstable relationship between heterosuggestion and autosuggestion, and the difference between identity and an influential, external authority.

The bed as a place of dreams and sleep is an important motif in a number of her works: thus the furniture designs alternating between chairs and couches that reflect the physical condition of their creation and do not adhere to pure functionality. Henderson's furniture contains the potential of a hybrid multi-functionality, similar to the *Wink Chair* by the Japanese designer, Toshiyuki Kita from the 1980s, which has no fixed form, but responds flexibly to the needs of the user. In rejecting a functionalist approach, which only follows the requirements of consumer society, Henderson is alluding to the *Dream Bed Series* (1967) by the avant-garde design studios Archizoom and Superstudio. For the film *The Spirit of Garfield (in Spite of NH)* (2012), she built a sculpture that is reminiscent of the sepulchral bed designed by the Italian architect and designer Carlo Mollino for his home in Turin.

Based on minutes of the unconscious, Henderson's works follow an oneiric structure, whose traces and fragments never find themselves into a coherent unity but belong at the same time to an individual, enigmatic order. The objects become independent actors, guided by forces, the provenances and effects of which cannot be assigned to one person. In the sculptures and films, a tension between reciprocal physical forces unfolds, which commixes the subjective and the objective world and render the irrationalness into the main protagonist, whose exclusion from the concept of rationality since the beginning of modern era is still constitutive.

Tamara Henderson (b. 1982, Sackville, New Brunswick, Canada) lives in Vancouver and Stockholm. She studied at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, Halifax, Canada, at the Städelschule in Frankfurt a. Main as well as at the Royal Art Academy in Stockholm. Last year she has presented her 16mm film *Sloshed Ballot & Anonymous Loan* (2011) at the documenta (13) in Kassel and was represented among others in the group exhibition *Pensee Sauvage* (2007), curated by Chus Martinez at the Frankfurter Kunstverein and at the Ursula Blickle Stiftung in Kraichtal-Unteröwisheim, Germany. Only recently she presented works in the group exhibitions *Bottles Under the Influence*, together with Julia Feyrer at the Walter Philips Gallery, Banff Alberta and in *Edible Glasses* at the Western Front Gallery in Vancouver (2013). After solo exhibitions at the Gallery Mejan in Stockholm (2010) und at the A1C Gallery,

Newfoundland (2010) Tamara Henderson shows her first extensive institutional solo exhibition at the Kunstverein Nürnberg, concurrently with a solo exhibition by German artist Kirsten Pieroth.

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