

Lynda, Robert, Amy, Enzo and the Others

BREMEN, GERMANY

Künstlerhaus Bremen

—by Raimar Stange



Lynda, Robert, Amy, Enzo and the Others
2015 Installation view

The video *Methodology* (2011) by Alejandro Cesarco begins with the words ‘there were once two little fish holding hands, and when they remembered that they had no hands, they let go.’ What follows is a discussion between a woman and a man over the problem of (artistic) relationships caught between intimacy and the public sphere. In the framework of *Lynda, Robert, Amy, Enzo, and the Others*, Cesarco’s work – incidentally the only ‘genuine’ artwork in an exhibition comprised mainly of documentation material – functions as a prologue to an exhibition concerned with love and gender as well as with the difficulties of artistic self-representation and art world power relationships.

The point of departure for this discussion is the ‘feud’ between Lynda Benglis and Robert Morris, which is documented here based on research done by curator Fanny Gonella. In the early 1970s, Morris and Benglis worked closely together and were lovers for a time before separating in 1974. At the beginning of that year, Morris had himself photographed bare-chested, sporting a military helmet and iron chains for a poster announcing his two solo gallery exhibitions in New York. Benglis ran a full-page ad in *Artforum* a few months later in which she appeared naked, wearing sunglasses and brandishing a double-ended dildo. While Morris’s sado-masochistic travesty was barely commented upon in the art world, Benglis’s statement, which can be understood in the context of a decidedly pleasure-oriented feminism, caused a veritable scandal: five members of the editorial board of *Artforum* wrote to the publisher offering their resignation and publicly vilified Benglis. She was accused of assuming an anti-feminist stance. That editorial board counted Rosalind Krauss as a member, who shot the photo for Morris’s poster. Yet there were also prominent declarations of solidarity for Benglis, for instance from artists such as Vito Acconci, Larry Bell and from legendary curator Germano Celant.

Together with this documentation of the Benglis affair, the exhibition presents precursors and successors of various artistic role games in the charged atmosphere of private and public life. Take, for example, Ed Ruscha’s wedding announcement from 1967 (also published in *Artforum*, where Ruscha worked as a graphic designer in his early years), in which the artist is shown lying nude in bed with two young women. Written beneath it is the caption: ‘Ed Ruscha says goodbye to college joys.’ Far more interesting than the chauvinistic joke itself is the fact that no one protested this little macho game, either. Piotr Uklanski’s *Artforum* artist pages, titled *Ginger Ass* (2003), show Alison Gingeras’s ass across a double-page spread. Gingeras is not only Uklanski’s partner, but also a curator — a ‘double determination’ that simultaneously poses a series of questions over the structures of power, both in terms of the gender question and the hierarchies between artist and curator.

Also installed in the Künstlerhaus is a documentation of the group exhibition *Who do you love?* that took place in 2014 in the Berlin gallery Mathew. The seven invited artists are friends, and for the most part Asian-Americans. The group decided to entrust two representatives selected from their midst with the show’s implementation: Amy Lien and Enzo Camacho. They built replica sections of the Berlin Wall, which

were covered in new graffiti, posing questions concerning political and artistic identity at the beginning of the 21st century. 'Serial Orientalists have assembled in the arts capitals of old Europe', read one slogan, while others asked: 'Who claims alterity?' and 'Speculate my dick' – slogans ostensibly updating (or parodying) artistic self-representation for the 21st century. If the role playing of *Lynda, Robert...* still took place in a thoroughly Western art world, the art world of ... *Amy, Enzo* is structured as a globalized, neo-liberal enterprise: commodified to the point that artist identities, including 'ethnic' classifications, are increasingly reduced to market-friendly labels: 'Comme des Orientalists', as the graffiti aptly says.

This politically-minded exhibition mainly documented these shifts, moving the focus to the development of artistic identity and self-representation over the past 50 years. In the process, the boundaries between documentation and artwork become increasingly blurred – is an ad designed by an artist really just an 'ad', or is it an 'artist's project', too? And haven't 'documents' long been part of the vocabulary of conceptual art? It's particularly thanks to such hybridity that *Lynda, Robert, Amy, Enzo and the Others* moves simultaneously within and outside the art establishment. And for this very reason it can call the establishment into question without supplying it willingly with 'original' wares.

Translated by Andrea Scrima