

*Cockroach or Queen?*

Opening: 11.06.2021 from 12:00 until late  
11.06.2021 – 14.08.20

Alfredo Aceto, Joe Brainard, Keren Cytter, Germann & Lorenzi, Doug Johns, Gregory Hari, Peter Hujar, Chris Kraus, Fabio Luks, Robert Mapplethorpe, Mickry3, Genesis P-Orridge, Camillo Paravicini, Gil Pellaton, Ed Ruscha, Cindy Sherman, Andreas Waldmeier and Latefa Wiersch

With books by Lutz Bacher, Joe Brainard, Keren Cytter, James Franco, Gertrude Stein, Seth Price, Patti Smith and more

"Maybe I just wasn't good enough. Maybe I'm not as smart as the men-not intellectual enough. But maybe emotion is just as good as intellect. There ought to be a place for it. Richard Serra came to me. I think he took some of my ideas. But I'm so insecure; yet I know I can make great art. All my life I've either been the cockroach or the queen." – Eva Hesse

"From the time my working with Eva Hesse ended, I knew that my ambition was to become a sculptor in my own right - a Great sculptor!" – Doug Johns, Hesse's studio assistant (1968-70)

"It's not about any specific place it's about placelessness... The intrigue it generates doesn't come from its rarefied objects but the players." – Sean Monahan on the artworld and his fantasy of a reality TV show featuring art celebrities in "Ship of Fools," *Spike Magazine*, 2020/21

"My idea of an artist meant to do courtroom drawings or sitting on a boardwalk doing caricatures. I didn't realize that this is really something that somebody could grow up to do. Especially a woman." – Cindy Sherman in *Interview Magazine*

"I am way, way up these days over a piece I am still writing called *I Remember*. I feel very much like God writing the Bible. I mean, I feel like I am not really writing it but that it is because of me that it is being written. I also feel that it is about everybody else as much as it is about me. And that pleases me." – Joe Brainard

"I remember when I thought I was a great artist." – Joe Brainard

"I remember a dream I had recently where John Ashbery said that my Mondrian period paintings were even better than Mondrian." – Joe Brainard

"This might seem romantic, but to be seen and named is great, it feels good, but it also makes it easier to quantify you in terms of value, and I don't just mean financial value, it can be critical value, social value, value for someone else. And those can be gilded chains. The more you are known, the more you are predictable and testable and constant, and can improve in value." – Seth Price

"My plan was to never get married. I was going to be an art monster instead. Women almost never become art monsters because art monsters only concern themselves with art, never mundane things. Nabokov didn't even fold his own umbrella. Vera licked his stamps for him." – Jenny Offill

"... He coldly regards himself as a malleable object, and rejects any notions of (self) certainty in order to become someone, or even something, artificial." – *No Dandy, No Fun* press text for Kunsthalle Bern, 2020-21

"The position I'm in now, I'm responsible for a hell of a lot of things to do with the art world. What I do affects the course of art. I don't mean it in an arrogant way." – Damien Hirst

"Today, Ms. Trump has achieved her childhood goal. Being photographed. Being seen. Being noticed. The more outrageous her dress sense, the more press she gets. Like her husband, I think

the only thing that really stirs her is attention. I don't think she's malevolent. Still less a martyr. I just think she's a narcissist, a slightly clapped-out model who will still do anything to get herself that cover." – Jo Ellison, "Malevolent, martyr or moron? Unpicking Melania Trump," *Financial Times*, 2018

"He was one of the more difficult people in the world... an angry and difficult man... He could never sell himself." – On Peter Hujar from "Interview with Fran Lebowitz"; Stephen Koch, "Peter Hujar and His Secret Fame" and "Interview with Vince Aletti"

"Penny is an aging man with a somewhat ridiculous old-fashioned little hat: a transvestite or the ideal grandfather or the ideal grandmother. This causes to emerge in my mind a picture by Domenico Ghirlandaio, the portrait of the grandfather with protuberant nose and his grandchild. To the child his grandfather is beautiful because the child loves him. To the painter both were beautiful because he loved them. This love is in all the images of the photographer Peter Hujar. – Dieter Hall, introduction in *Peter Hujar*, 1981

"Much has been said about Robert, and more will be added. Young men will adopt his gait. Young girls will wear white dresses and mourn his curls. He will be condemned and adored. His excesses damned or romanticized. In the end, truth will be found in his work, the corporeal body of the artist. It will not fall away." – Patti Smith

"The whole point of being an artist is to learn about yourself. The photographs, I think, are less important than the life that one is leading." – Robert Mapplethorpe on being an artist

"Our worlds coexist and don't really need to meet. / They are offering me an opportunity for involvement. It's like accepting an inescapable presence, a hectoring insistence. / What does it mean, to become uncomfortable neighbours? Their intentions must have felt like fast trains passing in a tunnel. / ...The effect was unpleasant like artists talking over one another competing for your attention. / ... It's like being trapped in a lift with an enraged placard waving drunkard screaming political slogans in your ear!" – Excerpted text from the monologue of *VISIONARIES & VOYEURS, II* (2009), a video work by Vittorio Santoro

"Those who court celebrity must be prepared to pay the price." – Cambridge Dictionary entry for the word "notoriety"

"I'm always terrified that someone will realize what a mess there is in my mind, and they'll forever prohibit me from hiding myself, but I don't think this can happen in the art world, which is why you can say anything you like here... Perhaps that's why the art world appealed to me so much! It seemed like a good place to set my obsessions aside and, without raising any suspicions, even to turn them into a profession: that of an artist! Actually, I don't think I really like exhibitions, or rather I don't think I'm interested in the way they're put together. It seems to me like a perverse activity carried out by good people. The first time I saw Sophie Calle on television, I was just amazed because it seemed to me that she too was using the art world to disguise herself into something less problematic. In the end, perhaps this thing of being an artist just makes you feel more comfortable when you see yourself in the mirror in the morning." – Alfredo Aceto

*Cockroach or Queen?* explores ideas about mythmaking, portraiture, self-esteem, authorship, the artist persona and the noble act of paying homage. Some of the works are autobiographical in nature and provoke thoughts about publicness, intimacy and the private. Others are a more direct response to the artworld, established hierarchies, status anxiety, popular culture and celebrity culture. The title of the exhibition is taken from the title of an article in Newsweek in 1973 that was on Hesse back in the day and was meant to convey Hesse's sensation of being both inferior and superior. What happens when an artist falls into a slippery and oscillating spectrum between feeling inferior and superior? In our economy of attention, the production of persona is widespread and there is a claim that pop culture has made society ever more narcissistic. How is aura created? How is a character created? Can self-infatuation be a site of resistance? Has narcissism become a cultural norm?

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