

photographing for years, like the monuments he has redesigned with his architectural drawings, like the buried history he literally dug up on the Cuito Cuanavale battlefield—are also palimpsests of memories and dreams, inspired by two elements that know no borders: the precariousness of existence and the force of imagination.

—Miriam Rosen

VIENNA

VALIE EXPORT
GALERIE CHARIM

The pack of Smart Export cigarettes, an Austrian brand, looks a bit worse for the wear—but it is an icon. Accordingly, it is displayed in the foyer in the celebratory manner reserved for relics. The initiated will experience a mild thrill: This is the one, the legendary pack that Valie Export immortalized in the photograph that marked the feminist big bang in the patriarchal-clerical old Vienna of 1967 and which has since made it into practically every publication on the artist.

“Export—always and everywhere,” she once remarked, “that is to say, exporting myself.” And it was meant as a reference to the social structures and repression at the beginning of the '70s, the “Export” of women of all artistic and creative sorts. And so Waltraud Höllinger, a graduate of the Kunstgewerbeschule in Linz, took the packet of smokes, courtesy of the Austria Tabakwerke, on her path to becoming the poster child of rebellion. She replaced “Smart” with Valie, kept “Export” as well as the motto “*semper et ubique*,” and pasted a photo portrait of herself on the globe. The logo Valie Export was born.

In film, video, photography, and performance, Export treats the (female) body as a bearer of signs and information, revealing it as a surface of projection. The artist's works have always tended to be a kind of media criticism as well; she characterizes them as “medial anagrams,” and in a 1990 text of that name she writes of “notebooks in which the ‘pages,’ sketches and images, can be put into different orders and make possible new meaning and a new context. The medium is not the only message, or to put it another way, the medium is just *one* of the messages.” By layering a motif, the factitiousness and mutability of images becomes clear. Export makes visible how image and reality permeate and influence each other.

Polyphony and the combination of different modes of expression are constant in



Valie Export, *Köpfe—Aphärese (Heads—Aphaeresis)*, 2002, bronze, aluminum, and blue wax; 60 heads, each 10% x 5% x 9%". Installation view.

Export's complex work. Not surprisingly, this exhibition, “Pol'yp*to”ton,” was a fusion of different media. Here one found sculpture—*Köpfe—Aphärese (Heads—Aphaeresis)*, 2002, a serial arrangement of sixty heads in bronze, aluminum, and blue wax with cut out faces; film—*Tote Menschen schreien nicht (Dead people don't scream)*, 2002, a splatter-filled catalogue of mutilated murder victims; and video—*Die Macht der Sprache (The power of language)*, 2002, featuring panoramic views of a (male) glottis, the vaginal appearance of which serves to graft the image of the origin of speech onto the “*origine du monde*” birth metaphor beloved of Messieurs Courbet, Lacan, and Duchamp. Finally, *Icones Muscularum Capitis*, 2002, a computer-enhanced anatomical graphic from the eighteenth century, evinces Export's concern with the technological manipulation of reality. Her agenda includes questioning the systems of representation through which societal realities and symbolic orders are constructed, questioning power and the forms in which it is exercised. What is impressive is the energy and endurance with which Export, the lady with the garter tattoo, treats her themes always in new ways.

—Brigitte Huck

Translated from German by Sara Ogger.

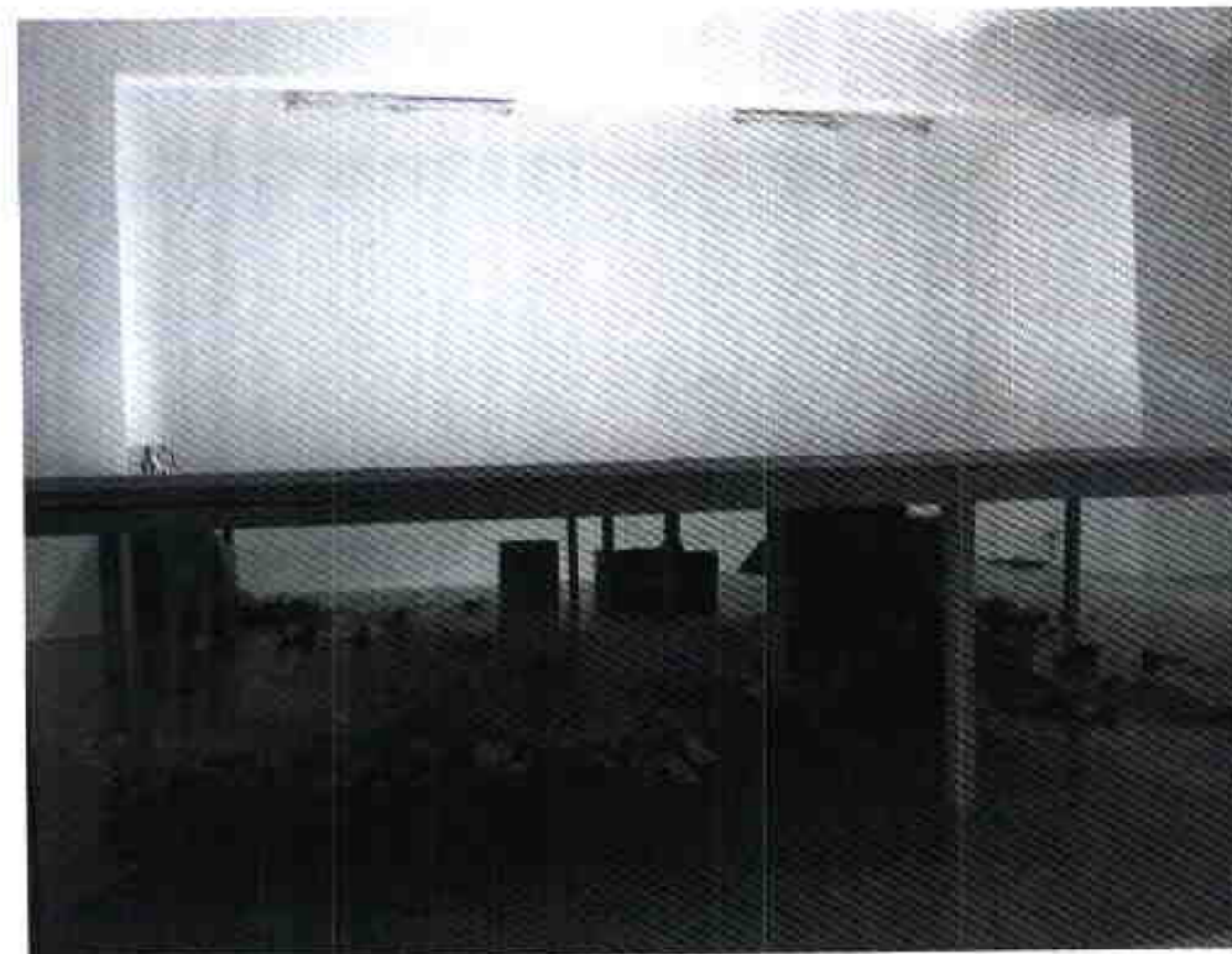
KOO JEONG-A
SECESSION

On the day before her opening at the Secession, Koo Jeong-A locked herself in the basement in order to work on its difficult series of spaces. When she came out twenty-four hours later, the

work was done: Between an emergency exit, an office, and a storage room spread a poetic dream landscape, a compellingly carefree exhibition—subtle and meditative, yet anchored in the material bluntness that characterizes sculpture. In the relation between order and disorder there emerges a pattern, and these textures of chaos are what interest Koo.

A large table—nearly twenty feet long—at the beginning of the exhibition held an orderly stack of cigarettes; beneath it lay a trashy installation of junk. The table was covered with white packing paper and spoke (like another variant of the “last painting”) the language of Minimal art. The traces of a lonely night of working on the installation had literally been swept under the table: cartons and crumpled-up plastic wrap from unpacked art supplies, and the pastel tissue paper from the evening's victuals, Italian almond cookies. Koo's references to her presence in the work were personal and intimate: In the poignant sleeping nook, the bed was simply newspapers with a T-shirt spread over them; there were little pictures on the wall. It was enchanting—at least for those who recognize the principles of organization and composition in what seems to be so haphazard. Not that this is particularly important. What concerns the artist is the fact that art is made by perception just as much as production, by the viewer as well as the artist. Koo's ephemeral installations of the poetic fragment are not about conventions of museum display; rather, they are tied more to collective and individual memories and help spark the observer's imagination.

Koo, a Korean who has lived in France for the last ten years, spent the summer of



Koo Jeong-A, “3355,” 2002.
Installation view.

2002 as artist in residence in the Augarten studio of the Österreichische Galerie Belvedere in Vienna. During her tenure there she created the series of beautiful, spare drawings that filled one room of the Secession, and she celebrated her fascination with imperfection with a skewed hanging. Many of the works portray her dog, a funny little boxer. He also made a three-dimensional appearance, sculpted in blue soap. Hidden in his paper house, he sits in a corner at a café table. Only a mirror placed on the floor revealed his presence. Koo's puppy guarded a refrigeration room, out of which condensation dripped through a hose into a pail. One discovered it by chance only if curious enough to go past an insignificant-looking wall.

With this work, *Kimbo*, 2002, Koo pays homage to Cedric Price, the visionary architect who won the 2003 Kiesler Prize and who holds that a building should adapt to the living habits of its inhabitants, thwart the physical boundaries of architectural space, and work with temperature. He conceives of architecture not through objects but as an intervention that is time-based, adaptable, and relational. The artist and the architect agree that change in the course of time is a significant component of culture and that it is created through production and consumption, not through classification and storage. One should therefore think about happiness and well-being when experiencing an exhibition and take one's time in coming to an understanding of it, for time is the key dimension of visual activities. In the catalogue text Price wrote for his admirer, he speaks of dreams that reach into the future. “And then,” he writes, “she draws a joker—and yet another dimension of



Chantal Michel, *The Clinic*, 2002, color photograph, 19 1/4 x 29 1/2"



Markus Sixay, *I am prepared for you*, 2003, confetti, dimensions variable.

wonder is played out by this artist . . . a masterful vision in which you can lose yourself—again and again.”

—BH

Translated from German by Sara Ogger.

ZÜRICH/BERN

CHANTAL MICHEL

KABINETT ZÜRICH /
KABINETT BERN

Having abandoned her early plaster objects as being too “cool and technical,” Chantal Michel has for the last few years made her own body the sculptural subject of her photographs, videos, and performances. Perched astride an eighteenth-century chest in a sumptuous room or limbs flailing inside a piece of industrial machinery, Michel both transforms her bizarre surroundings with her presence and, like a casually placed vase or forgotten handbag, becomes one with them. Always wearing gorgeous party clothes (the artist allegedly owns two thousand dresses and three hundred wigs), Michel is both a woman yearning to be the wild little girl with the run of the dress-up box and the good girl encouraged to be attractive yet not stand out too much from her environment. She often appears to divert the erotic charge in her work by concealing her face or selecting roles that have no overt personality. As documentation of private performances, Michel’s photographs and videos capture the artist’s desire to push her body to extremes. They may not be as violent or didactic as those by some women artists of the ‘60s and ‘70s, but they are nevertheless politically

charged, giving voice to marginalized women. *The Pleasure of Woods*, 1999, shown in Zurich, is typical of Michel’s videos. In a neutral interior the artist dances vigorously in and out of a row of tall box shrubs, their clipped formality contrasting with her ungainly strides. Her full dress is bunched up to reveal black schoolgirl socks. As with her previous clamberings around furniture and acrobatics on architectural fittings (slumped over industrial pipes or hanging upside down in a tool cupboard), here again Michel expresses a child’s fantasies about being alone in a place, at liberty to test it out physically and emotionally.

This double bill of exhibitions included two photographic series that depart from Michel’s usual practice. Rather than staging herself in “found” interiors, in these she occupies her own art installations. In *Why the cake falls from heaven, Lili must clear an obstacle and know finally what she wants*, 2002, Michel, dressed like an oversized Heidi, fuses with the candy-palette garden she created last year on an island in the Lake of Zurich. Whether curved around a flowerbed, dancing with wild flowers crammed in her mouth, or gazing wonderingly at this brave new world, she takes a natural idyll to Disneyland extremes of artificiality. As Lewis Carroll created *Alice in Wonderland*, an outlandish fantasy based on the fundamentals of logic, so Michel’s work challenges socially constructed “female identity” by embodying it to the extreme.

The photographs in “Last Intervention,” 2002, were inspired by Michel’s participation in an exhibition at a disused women’s hospital, where she placed some of her early plaster sculptures in the clinical environment of an operating theater. In the photographs,

Michel is dressed appropriately in a white lab coat, but the predictable sweetness has been stripped away to reveal a nurse gone mad—her face tense and deranged-looking, her actions absurd. As a setting for her sculptures, the room looked like a sci-fi film set; as her co-actor in the photographs, it becomes a conspirator in her hysterical hyperreality. Peering dementedly at her crazed reflection, she breathes demonic life into the innocuous environment; and yet, curled up under the basin, sandwiched between shelves, or face pressed to the wall, the artist seeks to disappear, to merge with the room, to join the absent women who were once treated there.

—Felicity Lunn

BERLIN

MARKUS SIXAY

CHOUAKRI BRAHMS

“Girls need modems.” “I wish I was as sensitive as Marcel Proust.” “Peanut butter on a very expensive Persian carpet.” “Far too ambitious.” “Adieu avant-garde” (opening a Manzoni shit and flushing it down the toilet). “David Hasselhoff poster from the late ‘80s cut into pieces by Liam Gillick and rearranged by Sarah Morris.” “I made my first million at the age of sixteen.” “Whoomp . . . there it is.”

Welcome to the world of Markus Sixay. The Berlin-based artist has made a name for himself with simple comiclike drawings featuring such musings and many more: thoughts from the frustrated genius, lines from the procrastinating loser, nasty observations about the fabulous art world, and way too many ideas for artworks,

from the outlandish to the pathetic. While haunted by all-too-human preoccupations, Sixay’s line contours never show any human figures but rather the props and settings for endless art projects. As the hundreds of drawings he’s done demonstrate, the procrastinator can indeed be prolific, the creative genius vulnerable in his attempts to live up to his own reputation.

For this exhibition Sixay expanded his ideas from the confines of a white page to the space of the gallery. Nothing was lost in the translation. As if to highlight the shift from two to three dimensions, Sixay welcomed visitors with his weight in confetti. *I am prepared for you*, 2003, consists of about 331 pounds of the fluffy stuff spread across the entire gallery floor. In this constantly changing sculpture, the body of the artist was transformed into a colorful landscape of paper snowdrifts—kickable, throwable, even edible, if you’re feeling up to it.

Not one to forget the walls, Sixay splashed eighteen cans of Coca-Cola Light on them to create *Can’t beat the feeling*, 2003. The wall painting seemed meant to keep up the party mood of the confetti, but maybe the peanut-butter idea would have worked better here. Using confetti as a scale or deploying a soft drink as paint, Sixay seems to explore the possibilities of transubstantiation in the era of consumerism, where the organic body has become interchangeable with the products it consumes and where refreshment can become anything from a feeling to a high-modernist artwork. Sixay’s sculptures and drawings, however celebratory and cheeky, always carry a melancholic undertone reminiscent of J.J. de Grandville’s scenarios of industrialized paradise. The artist marks not only his exclusion from a world of plenty but also his instrumentalization at the hands of too many commodities.

The video *on off on off on off on off on off on off on off on off on off on off on off*, 2002, moves from the world of commodities to media spectacles by encapsulating an evening in front of the television. Sixay filmed the luminescent flash that appears on the television screen right after the set is first turned on or off. The beginning and the end of a viewing session appear in ten short sequences—the untraceable leftovers of news, talk shows, sitcoms, and made-for-TV movies. The artist pays homage to an image that appears on every television screen and yet has somehow managed to escape the media’s attention. Ultimately, the glowing on-off flashes function as bookends for television; one can only guess how many