

MIRA SCHOR

HERE/THEN, THERE/NOW

Opening 11. September 5-8pm; Show runs from 11. September – 31. October 2020

Fabian Lang is honoured to present the first solo show of Mira Schor's work outside the USA. Titled *Here/Then, There/Now*, the show charts for the first time the latest phase of Schor's fifty-year practice, presenting never before seen works produced between 2008 and 2020.

"Our minds are linked again" said Mira when we both suggested the same title for this exhibition. Linked by mediated language. Meeting in person is now quite a different story than it was not long ago, before this protracted moment of enforced remoteness and intangibility. Looking back on how this show came together, I was lucky to have booked a flight to see Mira in New York in March, just a few days before so much became impossible. She was the last person I hugged for two months, after that we weren't and may still not supposed to do so anymore. The title speaks like an omen, a prediction about the happened, or a premonition. (eine Voraussagung über das Geschehene). But of course this is a coincidence.

Mira Schor's project, at least from the time of her graduation from CalArts in 1973, is to address issues of gender and experience, setting out as coherently as possible what it means to inhabit a female body "with a mind." For the past decade she has utilised the motif of an avatar of self as a means by which to animate her often darkly funny meditations on mortality, power and language. In recent years, she has worked these themes into cartoon-like situations in which a schematically drawn figure reads, walks and thinks in a diagrammatic relation to nature, theory and politics. A sense of precarity pervades as this figure negotiates a raft of often difficult themes and creative pressures so great as to constantly threaten to obliterate its existence. The casual, comic figuration of this expression of creative anxiety belies the depth and extent of the journeys undertaken and crises of meaning faced.

The title of Schor's eponymous work came after she had considered what the overall body of work we have selected for this exhibition represents for her, and three words denoting placement in time came to her: *After/ Before/ During*. "These words for me indicated that the works from 2007 to the present come after my mother's death in December 2006." The two were very close; both artists. After her passing Schor began to feel that her sense of being as an artist needed reevaluating, so that when she began to work again a few months later in the summer of 2007 she had no interest in painting language, which had more or less been her exclusive focus for ten years prior. "I felt that when people asked me how I was I knew that I was supposed to say "I'm fine", but in reality there were no words." Throughout this period Schor worked on empty thought balloons, but after some time - after as she describes it, she began to return to life - a figure began to appear in the work for the first time in decades. In her work of the late 80s and early 90s body parts appeared regularly, usually punctuated in a graphic expression of language on the body, but never before had a figure as expressive avatar featured in her practice.

"At that point I felt that my work should contain any aspect of whatever I had ever done in a long history of work which has seemingly shifted appearance and focus perhaps more than some other artists - landscape, language, figure, politics, etc." The last of these themes quickly entered Schor's practice, as in the Occupy Series, but in retrospect she thinks of that period - from 2009 to 2015 - as *before*. That is to say, before what she sees as the end of American constitutional democracy. Which means now is the period *during*, "a hellscape from which we have no knowledge yet whether we will survive or escape." That Schor is a first generation American whose parents fled fascism and disaster serves only to heighten her fears about that place of refuge they made home.

The painting *Here/Then, There/Now* is a rueful act of realisation, the culmination of a period of reappraisal and reexamination. Reading e-flux journal's *What is Contemporary Art?*, lying on a favourite old salvaged chaise longue in her Provincetown garden, Schor came to the conclusion that *here* - the West, and the cosmopolitan New York art scene she had grown up in - was very much *then*. In the past. Over. It stood to reason that *there* - the rest of the planet, particularly the Global South - was *now*. To be *here* and therefore *then* is something inescapable to Schor; a sadness and yet a celebration of change beyond the old world. To be out of place is not though to render one out of time as a commentator. It has honed her sight and sharpened her critical wit. The figures that occupy these works may be fully invested in their "voice" and speech" but may have come to conflicting conclusions, born out of antagonisms and questions relating to the very core of their purpose.

Mira Schor's career, if it is not too crude to call her creative journey that, is one that offers us by way of a vulnerable honesty a set of eyes through which to see a world stripped of so much distraction and noise.

Schor has become a widely respected artist and writer over the years. She is the recipient of awards from the Guggenheim Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, the Pollock- Krasner Foundation, and she is a recipient of the 2019 Women's Caucus for Art Lifetime Achievement Award for her work as a feminist painter, art historian and critic.

Schor's work is in the permanent collections of Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, US; Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, US; Minneapolis Museum of Art, Minneapolis, MN; Portland Art Museum, Portland, US; University of Kentucky Art Museum, Lexington, US.