

Anita Witek

Artist and Muse

10 May – 24 June 2018



Anita Witek, *Artist and Muse #03*, 2018, hand-printed analogue C-Type print, 169 x 200 cm

l'étrangère is pleased to present *Artist and Muse*, a solo exhibition by Austrian artist Anita Witek. Showcasing her photographic series based on two paintings by Egon Schiele – a self-portrait and a portrait of his model and muse, Wally Neuzil – this presentation was first shown at the Leopold Museum in Vienna earlier this year, where its collection of modern Austrian art is home to the world's largest collection of works by Egon Schiele. For the exhibition at l'étrangère, Witek has created a site-specific installation that includes a new set of photographs.

Inspired by the tumultuous relationship between Schiele and his model and lover Wally Neuzil, *Artist and Muse* draws on historical documents and pre-existing visual forms. Witek uses as her source material the posters produced by the Leopold Museum for a display of two Egon Schiele paintings in its collection: *Self-Portrait with Chinese Lantern Plant* (1912) and *Portrait of Wally Neuzil* (1912). As is her practice, Witek cut out the main figures from the posters, using the remnants of the background to create new abstract images and forms. Schiele's expressionistic brushwork, once flattened in the poster reproductions, has now been repurposed as sculptural elements. By enlarging and printing the poster off-cuts onto billboard paper, Witek is able to generate both spatial and tangible installations that push up against the architectural limits of the exhibition space.

The background fragments have also been loosely layered to form abstract configurations, which the artist has 'fixed' using the photographic lens. In this way, Witek brings the background to the foreground, paradoxically augmenting the three-dimensional volume of the constructions. In both the photographs and the installation, the artist has taken drawings by Schiele as her model in the assemblage of the fragments, finding inspiration in their compositions and Neuzil's poses. Witek further researched descriptions of Schiele and Neuzil's relationship found in exhibition catalogues at the Leopold Museum and her structures bear out the resonance of this corporeality – both visual and verbal. Her use of analogue photography further emphasises the lush materiality of the surfaces.

Artist and Muse is an extension of Witek's previous work using photomontage. Her practice is founded on the tensions produced between representation and reality, physical objects and their depiction, and between the original and the reproduction. Her extensive archive of printed matter, consisting of contemporary and historical magazines, newspapers, found books and posters, provide the material for her working process. By dissecting, detaching and cutting into these materials Witek not only interferes with the tension of their surfaces, but also questions and destabilises their initial content.

Examining the space between the psychological interpretations of art history and the image flows in visual culture, Witek's work is a radical re-staging of the interaction between image, object and viewer.

Anita Witek (b.1970, Austria) lives and works in Vienna. Witek holds a MA Photography (2000) from the Royal College of Art, London, UK, and a MA Painting (1997) from the University of Applied Arts, Vienna, Austria. Recent solo exhibitions include: *Anita Witek: Clip*, Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus, Ohio, USA (2018); *About Life*, Kunsthau Wien, Vienna, Austria (2016); *How to work-live better*, l'étrangère, London, UK (2015); and *Es ist wie es scheint*, steirischer herbst, Kunsthalle Graz, Graz, Austria (2015). Notable group exhibitions include: *Spuren der Zeit (Traces of Time)*, Leopold Museum, Vienna, Austria (2018); *Fragen zur Geste*, Württembergischer Kunstverein, Stuttgart, Germany (2014); *Reassembling Past Futures*, Austrian Cultural Forum, London, UK (2014); *Utopia, Dystopia: Constructed with Photography*, Museum of Fine Arts, MFA, Houston, Texas, USA (2012); *Another Tomorrow: Young Video Art from the Collection Neue Galerie Graz*, Slought Foundation, Philadelphia, USA (2008); *Simultan*, Museum der Moderne, Salzburg, Austria (2005); *Double Check: The Redefinition of Space in Photography*, Camera Austria, Kunsthau Graz, Austria (2005).

In 2016, Witek was awarded the Austrian Art Prize for Photography. Her work is held in public and private collections around the world, including Albertina, Vienna, Austria; Museum der Moderne Salzburg; TBA21 Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary, Vienna, Austria; MUSA – Sammlung der Stadt Vienna, Austria; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Texas; Charles Betlach Collection, La Jolla; and Margulies Collection, Florida.