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BIRGIT

JÜRGeNSSeN

lo sono.

Birgit Jürgenssen (Vienna, 1949-2003) was, together with Valie Export and Maria Lassnig, a pivotal exponent of the 70s avant-gardes in Austria. Drawing on art-historical traditions such as Surrealism, she has developed, throughout four decades, an incredibly vast body of works: a large number of drawings, sculptures, experimental objects, videos and above all photographs. The exhibition, curated by Natascha Burger and Nicole Fritz, is the first complete retrospective on the artist's work in Italy and is organised in collaboration with the Estate Birgit Jürgenssen, the Kunsthalle Tübingen and the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art.

Birgit Jürgenssen was born in Vienna on April 10th, 1949.

At the age of eight she started to draw works by Pablo Picasso in an exercise book. Her signature – BICASSO Jürgenssen – unites the name of the Spanish Maestro with her own (as a child she was called by the abbreviation “Bi”).

At fourteen, she received her first semiautomatic camera as a gift, with which she began to take photos of her handmade object. After high school, she spent much time in France, making an interest in the theatre of Artaud, Surrealism, and deepening the knowledge of psychoanalysis and anthropology. She was admitted, even though she did not have the necessary qualifications, to the Academy of Applied Arts in Vienna, where she graduated in 1971. The following year she enrolled in Franz Herbert's Master Class of graphic art to continue to practice in the production of lithographs and, in the meantime, she pursued independent studies to learn how to shoot and develop black and white photographs.

These are the years in which the feminist movement took hold in Austria. Jürgenssen, who had already exhibited in a gallery in Vienna for the exhibition MAGNA – Feminism: Art and Creativity, was invited to participate in an exhibition in 1975 in the anthropology museum dedicated to the International Women's Year. A protest, led by many known female artists, including herself, arose against the jury, which was made up only of men. The rally resolved in the choice of forty-six female artists not to exhibit at all.

In 1978, she held an important solo exhibition at the Albertina in Vienna.

From October 1980 to September 1981 she was assistant in the master class of Maria Lassnig at the University of Applied Arts when she was fired despite the heartfelt requests of the students, asking for her reinstatement.

The same year, however, began a happy collaboration between the artist and Hubert Winter, owner of the homonymous gallery, where she inaugurated the exhibition 10 Tage – 100 Fotos (10 days – 100 photos). The change of the political, social and cultural context in the 80s, more open to the artistic expression of women, created the conditions for the valorisation of Birgit Jürgenssen. She began teaching in the Arnulf Rainer's Master Class at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna, where she remained for twenty years, establishing the photography class and also teaching in the multimedia art class.

At the same time she continued her solo exhibitions (TZ-Art Gallery in New York and Oberösterreichisches Landesmuseum in Linz) and her curating activities (Austrian contribution to the 8th International Cairo Biennial in 2001).

The artist died on September 25th, 2003, in Vienna.

Her work has been exhibited in several personal exhibitions including Kunsthalle Tübingen, Tübingen; Kunstforum, Vienna; MAK, Vienna; and in collective exhibitions at Monnaie de Paris, Paris; Tate St. Ives, Saint Ives; The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Gwangju Biennale 2014, Gwangju; Center Pompidou, Paris; Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt.

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SPAZIO ZeRO

BICASSO

JÜRGeNSeN

(Drawings for Children)

Birgit Jürgenssen came into contact at a very young age with the greatest masters of art history, and the European visual and artistic culture, fostering the appropriation of the latter, a stylistic hallmark that characterised her whole artistic production.

In this room, the artworks are placed at a height accessible to the children to whom this space is ideally dedicated.

The adjoining corridor hosts a series of incisions with linguistic and literary games.

BICASSO — *Jürgenssen*, 1957

At the age of eight, she began to redesign works by Pablo Picasso in a notebook and signed them "BICASSO Jürgenssen," thus joining the syllable "Bi", her nickname, with the name of Picasso, and entering symbiosis with the great painter in a playful way.

With these sketches, she was capable not to deviate from the original model, but to interpret it freely at the same time. Her "first book" was published as a facsimile in 1994, to underline that the meeting with Picasso's works, in her childhood years, played a decisive role in her artistic career.

① *Ohne Titel / Untitled*, 1969

The passion for drawing and children's books, permeated with irony, is also evident in this series of pictures from 1969. A twenty years old Birgit has explored, with a refined sense of humour, scenes of everyday life contaminated by outcomes that, although surreal, are still intertwined with social reflection. The drawings, particularly legible and inscribed in the world of illustrations, prove to be the most acute way to deal with everyday issues, creating a brilliant sense of awkwardness.

CORRIDOR

Linguistic Games, in between Literature and Everyday Life

Literary references are not lacking in the work of Birgit Jürgenssen. She said that her work "stems from an interaction between literature and everyday life," and that it is impossible for her to draw "without having a fragment of literature in the head." The artist's connection with literature and its primary medium, the book, is visible in many of her works. This connection takes various forms, including the ironic, poetic and humorous language games that emerge in the editing of the titles and the images, in the children's books that she designed, in an artist's book she created in collaboration with Lawrence Weiner and finally in an installation dedicated to Raymond Chandler. In Birgit Jürgenssen's work, the contamination between everyday life and literature, narration and representation have thus always had a significant influence.

SPAZIO ZERO

①

Ohne Titel / Untitled, 1969
Pencil, colored pencil on
handmade paper
9 pieces

②

Ohne Titel / Untitled, 1969
Collage, ink, paper on handmade
paper
10 pieces

③

Ohne Titel / Untitled, 1964
Ink, opaque white on cardboard
20 pieces

④

Ohne Titel / Untitled, 1971
Pencil, colored pencil on
handmade paper
6 pieces

⑤

Ohne Titel / Untitled, 1969
Pencil, colored pencil on
handmade paper
3 pieces

Corridor

⑥

Ohne Titel / Untitled, 1970
15 pieces
Pencil, ink on handmade paper

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L'APRÈS MIDI

L'après midi, 2001
Video, 20' loop
Estate Birgit Jürgenssen

The "new" technologies – and with them the new possibilities to realise artistic projects independently (without resorting to third parties) – have been a constant impulse for Birgit Jürgenssen. Thanks to these technologies she was able to challenge herself for almost forty years. In addition to her photographs and her drawings – being drawing the medium preferred by the artist – she produced five videos, created between 1997 and 2001. The *Après Midi* – made on the occasion of her last solo exhibition in the Hubert Winter gallery, in 2001 – shows the artist in her studio, in an afternoon, with a piece of background music that matches the camera movements. The shot, which continues to rotate framing the walls of the room, focuses each time on a different Birgit, camouflaged with wigs and with different poses and attitudes. The experimental and constant analysis of female identity, the dislocation of perspective – which allows a profound reflection on oneself as a woman and artist from an external point of view – permeate the entire work of Jürgenssen. In this video, as in the whole corpus of the artist, the central theme of the game of the boundaries of identity – a performative game teetering between masquerade and parody – is addressed with subtle irony

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ROOM 1

10 DAYS —

100 PHOTOS

10 days - 100 photos is a reconstruction of the installation presented in the homonymous exhibition set up in 1980-1981 at Hubert Winter's Gallery in Vienna. The artist's face that played such an essential role in Birgit's first photographs as a metaphor for an in-depth personal reflection has now become indecipherable through a progressive cancellation of its readability.

"A face is a place," says Birgit Jürgenssen, although in none of the photographs present in this installation the artist's countenance is in any way decipherable as a place of identification.

On the Polaroids of the *Bath* series — part of this installation — the artist wrote: "the identity of the woman disappears, only a fetish object remains, which is the focus of men's desires". Birgit Jürgenssen introduced the exhibition catalogue with this poem: "In search of my reflection / I penetrated the surface of the water. / Following a redfish, / I happily found a pilgrim's stick / So recognised as a shepherd / I went up / floating against all the currents".

③ *Ophelia*, 1979

Birgit Jürgenssen, thanks to her anthropological knowledge, often makes the literary myths current, emphasising their physical and emotional implications. *Ophelia* is an eminent example: two thighs, cut from the frame at the knee, emerge from a dark liquid evoking the Shakespearean character of Ophelia, in love with Hamlet and rejected by him, who in the tragedy is described as she distributes flowers and then dies out of sight, by drowning, with the veiled allusion to her suicide. The work, with its several layers of perception, also alludes to the poetess and artist Elizabeth Siddal, who posed for the pre-Raphaelite painter John Everett Millais in a painting of similar subject. Another meaning lies in the dark colour that veils and hides the body of the woman — Birgit Jürgenssen — inviting the viewer to dive into depth, into the reading of her works.

⑤ *Zebra 2*, 2001

Skilled in manipulating the view and the gaze, Birgit Jürgenssen elaborates her works multiple times, as we see in this work in which a photograph of the '70s, clearly of Surrealist origin, is digitally reworked by a formal point of view. The artist represents herself as a hybrid, by altering her face and bust in a metamorphosis that stages the antagonism between man and animal, with a transformation that leaves both the female figure and the animal recognisable.

⑦ *Ich bin. / I Am.*, 1995

In 1995, renouncing every figurative representation, in this work Birgit Jürgenssen writes with determination with chalk on a small blackboard the statement "I am." It is a minimalist and poetic expression that denotes a strong self-awareness but, at the same time, refers to the transience and the fleetingness of our existence. The sponge tied with a ribbon on the blackboard, in fact, alludes with inescapable clarity to how fragile life is, at the mercy of unpredictable elements and events, and could be extinguished at any moment.

ROOM 1

- ①
Jeder hat seine eigene Ansicht /
Everyone has his point of view
1975/1979
B/W photograph, hand painted
- ②
Ohne Titel / Untitled, 1976
Color photograph
Private Collection
- ③
Ophelia, 1979
Color photograph
- ④
10 Tage – 100 Photos, 1980/1981
Photograph, Polaroid
- ⑤
Zebra 2, 2001
Color photograph on aluminum
behind acrylic glass
Private Collection
- ⑥
Ohne Titel / Untitled, 1980
Collage
- ⑦
Ich bin. / I am., 1995
Blackboard, chalk, sponge
mounted on wooden plate
behind Plexiglas
- ⑧
Ohne Titel / Untitled, 1975
Mixed media (lather, labelled
feathers on stretcher frame)
- ⑨
*Ohne Titel (The Hour of the
Feather) / Untitled (The Hour of
the Feather), 1976*
Pencil, colored pencil on
handmade paper
- ⑩
Ohne Titel / Untitled, 1972
Unpublished photographic
material
- ⑪
Ohne Titel / Untitled, 1977/1978
Pencil, colored pencil on paper
- ⑫
*Mit dem Mühlstein um den Hals
in das Meer des Vergessens
stürzen /*
Plunging into the Sea of
Forgetfulness with a Millstone
around One's Neck, 1983
Pencil, colored pencil on
handmade paper, heightened
with white

Courtesy Estate Birgit
Jürgenssen, unless otherwise
indicated

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ROOM 2—3

Be TRULY

CReATIVE,

ReFUSE YOUR

ROLe

(Gender Matters)

Birgit Jürgenssen wanted to show "the prejudices and stereotypes to which women are subjected within society", a theme with which she has often confronted, and which gave rise to numerous misunderstandings in everyday life. With sharp, provocative and subversive irony, the artist played with the different concepts of identity. One of her best-known works is indeed the *Housewives' kitchen apron*, a portable kitchen oven that is worn like an apron and that refers to the services that the woman — in this case, the artist herself — as a housewife, nurse and broodmare, must provide. The home, seen as the place where women perform their functions, becomes a prison for Jürgenssen. The artist questions and deconstructs the myth of male power and desire without falling into the trap of a simplified dualism, as her reflection extends to all the gender models codified by society, both male and female.

ROOM 2

⑤ *Ich möchte hier raus! / I Want Out of Here!*, 1976/2006

Photography is often associated, in Birgit Jürgenssen's works, with a narrative structure that could stimulate the viewer to produce mental images. In this work the artist, dressed elegantly — the collar with the ruche and the cameo are indeed a show-off — presses her hands and face against the glass, on which we read the title to the work, emphasizing the contradiction between the appearance of a state of well-being and the desperation given by the perception of imprisonment. In a letter dated March 8th, 2000, on International Women's Day, Birgit writes: "the existential issue of one's identity today is no longer "who am I?" but rather, "where am I?", emphasising how gender identity is just the result of the spatial and social specificities created by people.

⑨ *Ohne Titel / Untitled*, 1972

In a poignant reflection on the social role of photography, the artist shows herself, frontally and in profile, as in a mug shot, underlining how much these photographs are instruments of power and document of proof and identification. The apparent objectivity of the images is associated with an idea of social order since the people's identity is proved only if in the document — with all its data — is presented along with a photograph. This analysis of a well-rooted custom lends itself to the pungent irony of the representation of the *Housewives' kitchen apron* by showing, through the cliché of the mug shot, the fossilisation of patriarchal societal structures.

ROOM 2

①

Ballonschuh /
Balloon Shoe, 1976
B/W photograph
Hainz Collection, Vienna

②

Schuhroulade /
Shoe Roulade, 1977
B/W photograph
Private Collection

③

Hausfrauen-Küchenschürze /
Housewife's Kitchen Apron
1975
B/W photographs

④

Gladiatorenstrafe /
Gladiator punishment, 1980
B/W photograph

⑤

Ich möchte hier raus! /
I Want Out of here!, 1976/2006
B/W photograph
Ed. 1/18

⑥

Hausfrau / Casalinga, 1974
Pencil, colored pencil on
handmade paper

⑦

Hausfrauenarbeit /
Housewives' Work, 1973
Pencil, colored pencil on
handmade paper

⑧

Fensterputzen /
Window Cleaning, 1975
Pencil, colored pencil on
handmade paper

⑨

Ohne Titel / Untitled, 1972
Gelatin silver print

⑩

Demonstration, 1978/1979
Gouache, gauze, blotting paper,
fabric, cotton wool, thorns on
paper

⑪

Ohne Titel (Frau) /
Untitled (Woman), 1979
B/W photograph, hand painted
Private Collection

⑫

Eiserne Jungfrau /
Iron Maiden, 1976
Pencil, colored pencil on
handmade paper

⑬

Der Panzer der Augustina /
Augustina's Armor, 1974
Pencil, colored pencil on
handmade paper

⑭

Ohne Titel (The Party) /
Untitled (The Party), 1973
Pencil on handmade paper

⑮

Großes Mädchen / Big Girl, 1975
Pencil, colored pencil on
handmade paper

⑯

Gefangene Fröhlichkeit /
Caught Happiness, 1982
Found cage, wooden clips, oil on
cellophane

⑰

Kopfsandale /
Head Sandal, 1976
Plaster, leather

⑱

Interieur 1 / Interior 1
1998/2003
Lambda print

⑲

Interieur 2 / Interior 2
1998/2003
Lambda print

⑳

Interieur 3 / Interior 3
1998/2003
Lambda print

㉑

Interieur 4 / Interior 4
1998/2003
Lambda print

㉒

Interieur 5 / Interior 5
1998/2003
Lambda print

㉓

Interieur 6 / Interior 6
1998/2003
Lambda print

㉔

Interieur 7 / Interior 7
1998/2003
Lambda print

ROOM 3

①

Bevor man das erreicht, gibt es
harte Kämpfe
You Have a Tough Struggle on
Your Hands Before You Get
There, 1974
Pencil, colored pencil on
handmade paper

②

Ohne Titel / Untitled, 1972
Gouache, pencil, colored pencil
on paper

③

Gleiche Wellenlänge? /
On the Same Wavelength?, 1976
Pencil, colored pencil on
handmade paper

④

Ohne Titel / Untitled, 1978
Pencil, colored pencil on
handmade paper

⑤

Ohne Titel (The Party) /
Untitled (The Party), 1975
Pencil, colored pencil on
handmade paper

⑥

Ohne Titel / Untitled, 1978
Collage (pencil, oil on fabric,
pencil on paper, mounted on
paper)

⑦

Das Match das trag ich mit mir
selber aus / I'll Play the Match
with Myself, 1973
Pencil, colored pencil on
handmade paper

⑧

Ohne Titel / Untitled, 1979
Gouache, pencil on paper

⑨

Ohne Titel / Untitled, 1988/1989
Cyanotype
12 pieces

⑩

Ohne Titel / Untitled, 1979/1980
Pencil, colored pencil on tracing
paper

⑪

Evelyne - Operette in 3 Akten
Evelyne - Operetta in 3 acts,
1983
Mixed technique on score

⑫

Andersrum /
The Other Way Round, 1979
Pencil, colored pencil on tracing
paper

⑬

Unsere / Ours, 1979
Gouache, pencil, colored pencil
on tracing paper

Courtesy Estate Birgit
Jürgenssen, unless otherwise
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ROOM 4—5

THE SAVAGE

MIND

(Human - Animal - Nature)

In the 1970s, a series of themes emerged in Birgit Jürgenssen's works that the feminist motif often overshadowed. The two aspects – feminism and the other themes, namely the cultural boundaries between human beings, animals and nature – cannot be considered independently, as they are always intertwined, in reciprocal relations to one another.

The starting point of this poetic is Birgit's stay in France, which lasted several months in 1967 when she began her artistic studies. On this occasion, she started a critical re-examination of Surrealism, Structuralism, Psychoanalysis and Ethnology, which stimulated her to question the dialectic between nature and culture, that she later developed in the comparisons created between animal and woman, both beings equally devalued and fetishised as objects. The "wild thought" of Birgit Jürgenssen has led her to trace the relationships between man and animal on her body, making it an artistic medium. She gave life to surreal hybrid creatures, in which the animal – seen as "the other" – is anchored, grafted, inside the human being, confusing the boundaries between codified identities, in favour of a fluid relationship system. In doing so, the artist questioned the anthropocentric view of the animal and plant status that will later find an echo in the theories of Donna Haraway or in the research in the field of human sciences which, in the 1990s, took denomination of "Animal turn".

ROOM 4

① *Hörst du das Gras wachsen? / Can You Hear the Grass Grow?, 1968*

This is one of the first works in which Birgit Jürgenssen uses the collage technique – used by Picasso in 1912 to elaborate his vision of synthetic cubism, further proof of the influence exerted on Birgit by the Spanish master. There are many clues of her future works: the clippings of her collection, a small self-portrait, a crane in flight – revered in Japanese mythology as a symbol of longevity and fortune – and her hand with one of the favourite stones of the American painter Georgia O'Keefe, whose portrait returns in a cut-out in the lower edge. Art, anthropology, and personal imaginary are grouped, recomposing themselves as fragments of a whole.

⑦ *Ohne Titel (Naturgeschichte) / Untitled (Natural History), 1975*

The work comes from a series in which the theme of gender is contaminated with that of the relationship with nature. In the process of hybridisation, vegetable specimens and human bodies are integrated into the whole, well represented by this work, one of the most evocative. On the black background, in a perfect fusion, a white body stands out. In it, pulses an ivy leaf, resting on the chest and stomach. The leaf is not merely covering the groin, but it substantiates it, making the genre just one of the many elements that create the identity: the artist's gaze does not focus on a particular individual, but rather on the complexity of the system of life.

ROOM 4

①

Hörst du das Gras wachsen? / Can You Hear the Grass Grow?
1968
Collage

②

"Auf der Lauer" / "Lying in Wait"
1985
Marker on structured paper

③

Ohne Titel / Untitled, 1974
Pencil, colored pencil on
handmade paper

④

Verwandtschaft mit der Möwe / Kinship with a Seagull, 1977
Pencil, colored pencil on paper

⑤

Das Tier / The Animal, 1978
Pencil, colored pencil on
handmade paper

⑥

Elsa, 1973
Pencil, colored pencil on
handmade paper

⑦

Ohne Titel / Untitled, 1979
Pencil, colored pencil on paper

⑧

Spinne / Spider, 1979
Photograph

⑨

Ohne Titel / Untitled, 1979
Pencil, colored pencil on paper

⑩

Ohne Titel / Untitled, 1977
Pencil, colored pencil on
handmade paper

⑪

Anna-tommie, 1976
Pencil, colored pencil on
handmade paper

⑫

Sich den weg pfluegen / To plow the way, 1976
Pencil, colored pencil on paper

⑬

Netter Raubvogelschuh / Nice Bird of Prey Shoe, 1972
Pencil, colored pencil on
handmade paper

⑭

Muskelschuh / Muscle Shoe 1976
Pencil, colored pencil on
handmade paper

⑮

Ohne Titel / Untitled, 1977
Pencil, colored pencil on
handmade paper, heightened
with white

⑯

Nest, 1979/2011
Lambda print
Ed. 10/10

⑰

Ohne Titel (Naturgeschichte) / Untitled (Natural History), 1975
Rayogram

⑱

Ohne Titel (Naturgeschichte) / Untitled (Natural History), 1975
Rayogram

⑲

Ohne Titel / Untitled, 1974
Pencil, colored pencil on
handmade paper

⑳

Lebenslinien-Bäumchen / Lifelines – Little Trees, 1977
Pencil, colored pencil on
handmade paper

㉑

Metamorphose I, 1974
Pencil, colored pencil on
handmade paper

㉒

Ohne Titel / Untitled, 1979/1980
B/W photograph

㉓

Relikteschuh / Relict Shoe, 1976
Bones, leather, paint, feathers,
wax

㉔

Rostschuh (Modell Mary Stuart) Rust Shoe (Mary Stuart Model), 1976
Rusted iron

㉕

Netter Raubvogelschuh / Nice Rapacious Shoe, 1974/1975
Metal, feathers, chicken claw

㉖

Schwangerer Schuh / Pregnant Shoe, 1976
Wood, leather, lace, tulle

ROOM 5

①

SPIRALE = Kleiner Finger (bei Faust), Gekrümmt. / SPIRAL = Little Finger (in Fist), bent., 1978
Pencil, colored pencil, charcoal
on handmade paper

②

Krinoline / Crinoline, 1978
Pencil, colored pencil on
handmade paper

③

Ohne Titel / Untitled, 1978
Pencil, colored pencil on paper

④

Verwandtschaft mit einem Blatt. Keimzeichnung Kinship with a Leaf: Germ Drawing, 1978
Pencil, colored pencil, collaged
leaf on handmade paper

⑤

Kreisring (Schwimmgürtel) / Annulus (Life Belt), 1978
Pencil, colored pencil on
handmade paper

⑥

Fluglinie der Sterne / Trajectory of the Stars, 1978
Pencil, colored pencil on
handmade paper

⑦

Ohne Titel / Untitled, 1983
Gouache, charcoal on paper,
heightened with white

⑧

Sklavin des Herzens / Slave of the Heart, 1983
Gouache, pencil on handmade
paper, heightened with white
7 pieces

⑨

Demaskierung / Demasking 1974
Pencil, colored pencil on
handmade paper

⑩

Der Wettlauf / Footrace, 1975
Pencil, colored pencil on
handmade paper
S. Hannae Brand Collection

⑪

Ohne Titel / Untitled, 1980
Gouache on transparent paper

⑫

Zwei Horizonte einer Freundschaft Two Horizons of a Friendship 1978/1979
Gouache on paper

⑬

Meine Freundin / My friend 1978/1979
Gouache on paper

⑭

Rücken an Rücken sitzen / Sitting Back to Back, 1978/79
Gouache on paper

⑮

Streicheln / Caressing 1978/1979
Gouache on paper

⑯

Ohne Titel / Untitled, 1978
Pencil, colored pencil on
handmade paper

⑰

Ohne Titel (Naturgeschichte) / Untitled (Natural History), 1975
Rayogram

⑱

Ohne Titel (Naturgeschichte) / Untitled (Natural History), 1975
Rayogram

⑲

Ohne Titel (Naturgeschichte) / Untitled (Natural History), 1975
Rayogram

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ROOM 6

PHOTOGRA—
PHIC FABRICS

Birgit Jürgenssen always considered fundamental to develop her artistic expressions on multiple levels, by overlapping them, using lights and shadows, projections on the body or collages. In some of her works, for example, covering the photographs with latex or fabric, the artist creates an erotic visual and, at the same time, tactile appeal. In others, by superimposing on the surfaces of the photographs a layer of translucent gauze, Jürgenssen produces a moment of voyeurism, of illusion. In this way, the desire to move "the curtain" aside to be able to see what lays behind it permeates the observer. Birgit Jürgenssen herself states that she wants "by being seduced, to seduce others, by covering, to make things visible", playing with illusion and reality. Through her camouflages, Birgit transforms her photographs into paintings and into sculptural objects, to which she lends something alive, organic. Precisely through multiple superimposition levels, she manages to refine the perception of her work's narrative.

① *Selbstportrait mit Lampe / Self-Portrait with Lamp, 1979/1991*

These works, which constitute a sort of dictionary of experimental photography — include photographs and cyanotypes, solarised and multiple exposure images - juxtapose the hardness of the iron of the frames to the delicacy of the fabric that covers them, also giving her works a tactile perception. The language she adopts is a symbolic one, with constant references to Surrealism and, as is evident in *Self—portrait with lamp*, to Man Ray. This work presents a vertical triptych in black and white and shows, among the overturned images of a lamp, legs that fit perfectly a high-heeled shoe and that appear distorted as in a room of mirrors.

③ *Einhorn / Unicorn, 1991*

The suggestion exerted by Surrealism — by its assembling techniques and dreamlike imprint — emerges in this work where the figure of the horse, already the object of the artist's analysis, finds an echo in the unicorn costume worn by a woman. Other images are combined to give life to this sort of decomposed puzzle: a solarised flower and the sharp profile of a toothed wheel. The photographs, covered with fabric and framed by iron edges, draw their strength from the visual contrast: the rotating blades of silver, in fact, surround the woman disguised as a mythological animal, mixing eroticism with mechanisation.

④ *Ohne Titel / Untitled, 1991*

One of the stories in the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid, narrates that the sculptor Pygmalion created an ivory statue with feminine features so lifelike that the sculpture seemed real to such an extent that he fell in love with it. The goddess Aphrodite, listening to his plea, gave life to sculpture. This story has inspired many artists over the centuries, including the French academic and painter Jean-Léon Gérôme, who depicted the story in an 1890 painting — now at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. A detail from Gérôme's painting is reproduced by Jürgenssen in one of the panels coated in fabric, from her work *Untitled*, 1991. In the other panels of the composition, she used photographs instead, from her private archive, depicting luminous bodies and draperies that accentuate the movement within the composition and, from a symbolic point of view, duplicate the surface of the gauze that covers them. The fabric not only unites all the individual sections of the image in a single panel but also gives each part a beautiful, almost sculptural quality.

ROOM 6

①

Selbstportrait mit Lampe /
Self-portrait with lamp 1979/1991
B/W photographs, fabric

②

Houdini, 1990
B/W photographs, fabric

③

Einhorn / Unicorn, 1991
B/W photographs, color
photographs, fabric

④

Ohne Titel / Untitled, 1991
B/W photographs, color
photographs, fabric

⑤

Wings are made for desire, 1989
B/W photographs, fabric

⑥

Fragmente einer Rose (Nijinski) /
Fragments of a Rose (Nijinsky)
1989
Color photographs, fabric

⑦

Supermarkt / Supermarket
1987
Diptych, B/W photographs, fabric

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ROOM 7—8

eXPReSSIVe

BODY

(The 80s and 90s)

In 1980, Birgit Jürgenssen worked for a year as an assistant to Maria Lassnig at the University of Applied Arts in Vienna. Since March 1982, she had served as a teacher in the master class of Arnulf Rainer at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna. She remained there for twenty years, and while there she founded the photography courses. During these years, she began to make significant works on paper, characterised by expressive gestures, using both pictorial and graphics techniques. In these works, she traces shadowy silhouettes, and conceals the objects with an enigmatic iconography; the presence of the body remains as an essential point of reference that, in series like *Kopfalarm*, dissolves into the expressiveness of painting.

The Polaroid

The invention of the instant camera generated not only a technical revolution but also a formal and iconographic one. The use of the camera spread very quickly, especially in the United States, where artists such as Warhol enthusiastically promoted its use. Although in Austria, until the '80s, Polaroid did not enjoy great popularity, Birgit Jürgenssen immediately grasped the potential of the instant camera and used it both to experiment with new stylistic elements, and to subvert the canons of "good photography." By intervening with great freedom on the layers of the emulsion at the time of development, Jürgenssen dissolved the image, thus showing its intrinsic vulnerability. The use of Polaroid allowed the artist to deal with intimate matters, such as physical and psychological wounds, without exposing her body to the gaze of those who, in the photographic laboratories, developed the films.

ROOM 8

② *Ohne Titel (Körperprojektion)* / Untitled (Body Projection), 1988/2009

In our symbolic and visual tradition the lower abdomen of the woman is a symbol of life, and the navel indicates both life and death, the cut that marks both the birth from the mother's body and mortality. In this projection, the navel, surrounded by a circle of light, with the inscription "END", highlights its ambiguity, between opening and closing, visible and invisible. The technique used, which makes the materiality of the body dialogue with the immateriality of the writings, transforms the surface of the body into a projection screen that welcomes the artist's thoughts on the conventionality of culture.

ROOM 7

①

Mama / Mum, 1984

Mixed media on paper (oil,
pastel, colored pencil)
2 pieces

②

Ohne Titel / Untitled, 1985

Mixed media on paper

③

Ohne Titel / Untitled, 1985

Mixed media on paper (acrylic,
gypsum, spray paint)

④

*The tediousness of the
connoisseurs*, 1985

Mixed media on linen

⑤

Three sources of nocturnal light:

Angel, Moon, Torch, 1987

Triptych, mixed media on linen
(acrylic and gypsum paint on
linen)

⑥

Ohne Titel / Untitled, 1989/1990

Mixed technique on handmade
paper (gouache, charcoal, pastel)

⑦

Ohne Titel / Untitled, 1984

Mixed media on paper

ROOM 8

①

Mama / Mum, 1984

Mixed media on paper (oil,
pastel, colored pencil)
5 pieces

②

Ohne Titel (Körperprojektion) /

Untitled (Body Projection)

1988/2009

Color photograph

5 pieces

③

Ohne Titel (Aus der Serie

»Kopfalarm«)

Untitled (from the series »Head

Alert«), 1985

Mixed media on photocopy

12 pieces

④

Ohne Titel / Untitled, 1979

Polaroid

6 pieces

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