

**Shiny, shiny, shiny boots of Leather**  
23 April - 27 May 2017

**Nobuyoshi Araki | Ellen Cantor | David Knuckey | Renée Levi | Walter Pfeiffer**

In Velvet Underground's 1967 song „*Venus in Furs*“, Lou Reed sings of the relation between self-abandonment, love and lust. The young poet here gets relieved of the pain of his love by the kissing of his mistress', the severe's, shiny leather boots and the lashes of her whip not only cast his tears but all his earthly sufferings.

Both this sadomasochistic chant but also its delirious, obsessive sound serve as a loose foundation of an exhibition that looks at how in art the subjective experience of submission, seduction and sexuality in general are manifested as an act of liberation on one hand, and as a confrontation with political and social thematics on the other. It shows both works that sometimes refer to sexuality and the human body very directly, as well as others in which rather forms, materials and working processes suggest ambiguous associations with sexuality, fetish and physical devotion.

Since the mid- 1970s, the Japanese photographer **Nobuyoshi Araki** (\*1940) has created an oeuvre that does little distinction between fiction, documentation and fantasy. It witnesses an exceptional intimacy that is achieved on one hand by its explicit illustrations, but also much by the privacy of situations as such and the depicted human nearness. Araki's reportage-like publications and photo books celebrate sexuality and staging of it, however a primarily voyeuristic gaze of even the most intimate moments is avoided by the directness of the imagery and the inclusion of the artists own body and desire and focus on aspects of dedication and trust.

Sexuality and power as parables for social conditions, pop-culture but also subjective experience within these form the basis of the extensive oeuvre of American artist **Ellen Cantor** (1961- 2013). Since the early 1990s both in New York and London, her second home, Cantor was part of a new generation of feminist artists that questioned sexuality, desire and vulnerability with her films, drawings and objects, often using fragments of pornography that she juxtaposed with imagery from main stream cultural iconography such as Hollywood or Disney. In the drawings exhibited, Dorothy Parker's witty poetry forms an unity with subjective erotic illustrations.

Ellen Cantor's last work „*Pinochet Porn*“, shot on Super8, portrays a Chilean family and its experience of dictatorship and the abuse of power. „*Pinochet Porn*“ stages an intimate play that is both grotesque and tragic, in which sexuality and its explicit illustration stand for the control and destruction of institutionalized forms of power over the individual.

The works of Geneva-born **David Knuckey** (\*1985) primarily evolve around painting and objects, though often fathoming the boundaries of the two or alternating presentations depending on the situation. The exhibited body of works „*Crest*“ originally was conceived as wall objects and the leatherette surfaces treated with resin and paint similarly to canvases. Knuckey's decision to show them on the floor however supports their three-dimensional impression and suggest ambiguous functionalities. Besides the expansion of classifications and associations with sexuality and power an utterly haptic materiality can be found in many works, that results from experimenting and improvising with working processes that include so-called mistakes. Materials sub linearly connoted erotic but also potential aspects of use, pop-cultural icons in Knuckey's work meet with aspects of power, e.g. when weapons, or at least forms that offer such interpretation, are repeated as seemingly purely painterly gesture.

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## **fine ARTS**

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The radical painterly gesture and questions of system, seriality and repetition are fundamental aspects in the work of **Renée Levi** (\*1960) since the early 1990s. Levi's physically demanding mode of painting, e.g. her iconic infinite lines applied directly onto walls, not only emphasize on space but also the body surrounded by it. Intuition and improvisation as well as control and technique shape her uncompromising dedication to the surfaces consigned to her and discuss the basics of (her) painting. In doing so, Levi has re-interpreted her earlier work for the context of the exhibition. „Billie“'s shimmery and slick materiality is seductive and infamous and at the same time violent in size and image. Yet the site-specific installation remains exposed to its own material conditions and not only deforms over the period of the exhibition but inevitably faces destruction.

Such confrontation with her own history as an artist Levi continues in her canvases- the first oil paintings she has ever exhibited. Hurting the fresh surfaces by scratches with a palette-knife, Levi reveals layers of older works beneath. These impulsively executed movements resemble old scars that reappear on the surface and are sensitive drawings at the same time.

While other artists in the exhibition explicitly refer to the topics of desire, intimacy and power in Levis work her working processes and materials predominantly narrate of defenseless dedication, of the pursuit of clarification and certainty not by the subjective submission to a human counterpart but solely by the complete surrender to her own artistic principles.

Seduction, sexuality but also irony and humor form the work of **Walter Pfeiffer** (\*1946) since the 1970s. Hugely underestimated until the early 2000s, Pfeiffer relentlessly has looked at the ambiguity of roles that a culture and society of consumption but also gender and sexuality suggest. Possibly exactly because of having been ignored by the established art world for such a long time, Pfeiffer has created an oeuvre that today still seems timeless and addresses desire playfully without ever allowing moralization. Seduction and eros in Pfeiffer's work are staged and pictured effortlessly: great sensuality and an interest in projection and aesthetics depict faces, bodies and interpersonal actions are just like objects and their material characteristics, they are subtle reflections of a position that analyzes without judgment and commemorates their ambivalence with great pleasure.

Please contact the gallery for further information at  
+41 (0)61 501 9020 or office@freymondguth.com

### **Filmprogram:**

Wednesday 17. May 2017, 19.30h

with works a.o. by

Ellen Cantor

Liliana Cavani

VALIE EXPORT

David Lamellas

Walter Pfeiffer

Hito Steyerl

### **Performance:**

Friday, 26 May, 19.30h

Li Tavor & Nicolas Buzzi

Piece for voice, cymbals and electronics, 2017