

CHANTAL AKERMAN / ANNETTE MESSENGER

LES APPROCHES

04.03.2016 _____ 24.09.2016

The Espace culturel Louis Vuitton München is pleased to launch its 2016 programme with *Les Approches* presenting the artistic positions of the Belgian-born experimental filmmaker Chantal Akerman and the French visual artist Annette Messager. The exhibition is produced in the framework of the Fondation Louis Vuitton's "Hors-les-murs" curatorial initiatives that showcase previously unseen holding of its collection at the Espaces culturels Louis Vuitton in Munich, Venice, Beijing, and Tokyo, thus carrying out the Fondation's intent to realize international projects and make them accessible to a broad public. *Les Approches* examines existential and autobiographical elements that form a common thread in both artists' oeuvres, including their mutual quest to improve both representations of women and the position of female artists in the broader critical context of the visual arts since the 1970s.

The ground-floor gallery is devoted to Akerman's double-screen video projection *Femmes d'Anvers en Novembre* (Women from Antwerp in November, 2008). It is a visual homage to a woman smoking: a banal quotidian activity and a leitmotif of Akerman's forty-year artistic practice. Posing the thorny question of women's ultimate freedom over their bodies, the work is an evocative meditation on borders and boundaries, fiction and narrative, and the intersection of personal history and collective memory. Its rich, painterly atmosphere references French and American film noir, in which cinematography is sometimes prioritized over plot and narrative. The piece exemplifies Akerman's pioneering work in merging the worlds of cinema and the visual arts through video installation.

The upper gallery presents six works by Messager. *Ma collection de proverbes* (2012) showcases thirteen clichéd and demeaning statements about women, conceived as embroideries contained in entomological display cases. The work is both provocative and humorous, combining the quintessentially feminine medium of needlework with a zoological display system, thereby questioning the status of the sewn proclamations as fact or fiction. The exhibition's namesake work, *Les Approches* (1973), is an artist's book emerging from archival explorations. It contains a collection of black-and-white photographs of male attitudes, organized into categories. *Mémoire-Robots* (2015) juxtaposes the two words of its title. The black veil covering the first term suggests intimate, remembered moments, deeply interwoven in the nets of our lives. The second term is presented in colourful, plush, toylike letters, making the idea of machines without a past, with the power to replace humans, seem deceptively innocuous. These are complemented by three of Messager's signature sculptures made from marionette puppets, masks, tutus, and other fabrics and found objects, which generate an atmosphere of disquiet, macabre humour, reversed identities, and existential upheaval.

Les Approches is the first of two monographic exhibitions scheduled to take place at the Espace culturel Louis Vuitton München in 2016 to celebrate female artistic ingenuity.

About the artists

Chantal Akerman (1950–2015) was a Belgian-born experimental artist, film director, and pioneer of modern feminist film. Operating in a wide range of narrative modes and traversing the entire spectrum of cinema, her films take the form of fiction, documentary, experimental video, and literary adaptation. The daughter of Holocaust survivors and a perpetual traveller, Akerman approached the themes of memory, identity, and immigrant experience from a lived perspective. Jean-Luc Godard is widely cited as the inspiration for her life in film, and in turn Akerman has been credited with galvanizing an entire generation of avant-garde filmmakers, including Gus Van Sant, Hou Hsiao-Hsien, Todd Haynes, and Michael Haneke.

Annette Messager (b. 1943) is one of the most esteemed female artists living and working in France today. Her ongoing concerns include processes of representation linked to womanhood, identity, dreams, and human desires by means of collection, bricolage, play, texts, drawings, photographs, and embroidery. She represents pathologies of the contemporary world as filmed fairy tales or poetic fables with sombre, malignant connotations. A pioneer of feminist cultural discourse, Messager maintains an unconventional artistic practice that embraces the theatre of art and life.

About the Fondation Louis Vuitton

The Fondation Louis Vuitton is an institution dedicated exclusively to contemporary art and artists, as well as 20th century works to which their inspirations can be traced. The Fondation's own collection and the exhibitions it organizes seek to engage a broad public. The building created by architect Frank Gehry constitutes the seminal artistic statement by the Fondation and is already recognized as an emblematic example of 21st century architecture. A year after its inauguration, the Fondation Louis Vuitton has welcomed more than a million visitors from France and around the world.

From its opening in Paris, the Fondation Louis Vuitton announced that it would engage in international initiatives, both at the Fondation and in partnership with public and private institutions, including other foundations and museums. The Fondation itself has cultural spaces devoted exclusively to exhibitions of works from its collection in Munich, Venice, Beijing and Tokyo. The Fondation is responsible for the artistic direction of these *Espaces culturels Louis Vuitton*. The exhibitions they organize are open to the public free of charge, and their programs are promoted through specific cultural communication.

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Hours: Monday–Friday, noon–7 pm; Saturday, 10 am–6 pm
Free admission
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