

ARTFORUM

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INTERNATIONAL

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colorful screens made of venetian blinds, crochet work, and macramé, the latter two elements integrating small bells, whose jingle, jester-like, interrupts conversation. On caster wheels, the whole kaleidoscopically unfolds from an eight-point-star base and can be moved around the space if you go inside it. Once within, you are locked up, on display, and slowed by the works' bulkiness. But being inside them also gives you the feeling of peering out from a childhood fort, and offers wondrous perspectives onto Van Doesburg's ceiling and walls.

In the cinema-dance hall with Van Doesburg's bold Elementarist relief on the ceiling and walls, Yang pulled twelve tables into the middle of the room, squarely staggering them to display *Sonicwears*, 2013: ponchos, handcuffs, and anklets made of brass- and nickel-plated bells, to be donned by viewers. They have the allure of luxurious jewelry, yet their basic forms are essentially those of shackles. Their considerable weight lends a heightened consciousness of your movement through the space and the jangle that results.

Incarnation of Wind and Condensation, 2013, was in the foyer-bar designed by Taeuber-Arp, orthogonally composed from floor to ceiling in red, gray, and white. At the center of the room, Yang set up an unassuming counter containing a bar freezer of small bottles of mineral water. An oscillating fan stands atop the counter, flanked by two metal trays embedded in the counter's surface, each a resting place for a bottle from the freezer. With just the condensation accumulated on two small bottles of frozen water, Yang makes visible the humidity and temperature in the room, the evaporation and condensation creating a gentle air-conditioning. A transitional area between Van Doesburg's two rooms, Taeuber-Arp's low-ceilinged space had less immediate impact. But as Yang's cool air encouraged you to linger here on a hot summer day, you couldn't help but take in the strength of Taeuber-Arp's design and how effectively it visually and intellectually reframed Van Doesburg's horizontal and vertical motif, visible through the door at one end, and his diagonal motif at the other.

—Jian-Xing Too

BERLIN

Martha Jungwirth

GALERIE CINZIA FRIEDLAENDER

Although Martha Jungwirth received considerable notice early in her artistic career, cofounding the Viennese collective *Wirklichkeiten* (Realities) in 1968, teaching at the Hochschule für angewandte Kunst, Vienna, from 1967 to '77, and participating in Documenta 6 in 1977, the seventy-three-year-old painter is a lesser-known figure in the contemporary-art landscape. Over the past thirty years, Jungwirth has shown infrequently, and rarely outside her native Austria. Recently this has started to change. Nevertheless, her practice of refined gestural painting no doubt comes as a discovery for many viewers. This small, stunning exhibition of Jungwirth's paintings—her first solo show in Germany in many years—provided a rare and revelatory introduction to her work.

The show comprised fourteen paintings, all from the mid- to late 1980s, except for one from 1992. Most of the roughly forty-by-thirty-inch works were executed in oil on cardboard mounted to stretched canvases, and exemplify Jungwirth's enduring exploration of the nuts and bolts of painting. The lively, playful *Untitled*, 1987, epitomizes this formal pursuit. Loose, hasty brushwork animates this vertical piece, and much of the smooth, buff-colored cardboard remains untouched, providing a neutral ground for painterly incident. Jagged blue strokes predominate, jostling with two broad lines painted in orange, blue's complement. A juicy area of pinkish opaque paint is crowned with a

tangle of drily applied Prussian blue in a delicate chromatic balance at the picture's top. Mark-making is as carefully considered as color in this work. With curling loops, slashing gouges, pooled drips, and brushstrokes that turn with the flick of a wrist, the painting brashly foregrounds the phenomenology of its making. And size counts. As much as anything else, the work records the physical range of marks a hand can produce before a surface encompassing one's field of vision at arm's length. Each painting here told a slightly different story of these conditions.

Lest this all seem a little too old-school, Jungwirth's show as a whole demonstrated that such formal investments do not necessarily signify an ahistorical rehabilitation of classic gestural abstraction. On the contrary, although seriously engaged with, and perhaps even inspired by, the core issues animating much mid-century abstract painting, Jungwirth manages—through a light touch, and even a whiff of punkish disregard—to avoid the rhetorical claims typically hung on such work. (The *Wirklichkeiten* collective was founded partially as a critical response to art informel.) Jungwirth's work has an improvisational quality and a casualness that steer it clear of any existential storms. There is even a bit of cheeky humor in her often blunt brushwork and distressed surfaces: The dirty fingerprints and ring stains that typically besmirch her paintings seem to critique the auratic presence of the artist more than claim its ritualistic magic. As a result, this group of roughly twenty-five-year-old paintings occupies an important historical and strategic middle ground between the gestural abstraction of the 1950s and the ironic, pastiched, or provisional practices that characterize so much recent abstract painting.

Ultimately, one of the charms of this show was its restraint. Indeed, by titling the exhibition "*Pädagogisch wertlos*" (Devoid of Pedagogical Value), Jungwirth, the erstwhile art teacher, dissuaded her viewer from reading too much into it. The show primarily provided visual pleasure, though surely it had pedagogical value too. The play between intention and outcome might be one of its lasting object lessons. What Jungwirth's engagement with painterly problems means at this precise moment, or how she fits into a historical narrative, is a problem for posterity. The show accomplished a presentation of work that succeeds on its own terms, which, unlike the timely reception of one's own career, is all any artist can control.

—Jordan Kantor



Martha Jungwirth, *Untitled*, 1987, oil on cardboard mounted on canvas, 42 1/2 x 28".

"Abstrakt"

GALERIE MICHAEL HAAS/CONTEMPORARY FINE ARTS

Abstract painting, Bridget Riley wrote in 1983, "is still relatively in its infancy. If Mondrian was the Giotto of Abstract Painting, the High Renaissance is still to come." Riley was one of the participants in the group show "*Abstrakt*," on display in two Berlin galleries and curated by Michael Haas, Nicole Hackert, and Bruno Brunnet. The exhibition