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SCENE & HERD

Again and Again

STOCKHOLM 03.21.12

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Michael Wilson on "Kraftwerk-Retrospective 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8" at MoMA
 Linda Yablonsky at the 20th anniversary of Bard's Center for Curatorial Studies
 Melissa Anderson at the Film Society of Lincoln Center Chaplin Award
 Kate Sutton at the 6th Art Dubai and Global Art Forum
 Lloyd Wise at the 5th annual March Meeting in Sharjah
 Kriston Capps at the opening of Doug Aitken's *SONG 1* at the Hirshhorn Museum



Left: Moderna Museet director Daniel Birnbaum and deputy director and chief curator Ann-Sofi Noring. Right: Artist Sturtevant and dealer Gavin Brown. (Except where noted, all photos: Nicolas Trembley)

LAST FRIDAY, cover artist Sturtevant took over the Moderna Museet with her new exhibition "*Bild över bild*" (Image over Image), her first show in Scandinavia, which travels to the Kunsthalle Zurich at the end of the year. Friends, curators, dealers, and artists came from all over the world to celebrate the interrogative pioneer who questioned art's autonomy.

During the opening, Sturtevant raised her arms and made several hip-hop hand gestures while shouting, "Wow, it's cybernetic style!" Fans (including me) responded with a round of laughter and applause before attacking the meatballs and gravlax. Daniel Birnbaum, the Moderna Museet's director, was very happy and told me that Sturtevant, in a way, had always been present here. "It's like we've been waiting for her. She's in the museum's DNA."

This is hardly an exaggeration. Two artists whose works are crucial to Sturtevant's career—Warhol and Duchamp—are also constitutive to the institution's history. (The former had his first European show here, and the museum has one of the largest collections of the latter.) Furthermore, as Fredrik Liew, the show's impeccable curator, explained, "We have a history of confronting authenticity via important replicas, like Duchamp's *Fresh Widow*, made by Ulf Linde." Sturtevant shows a series of them.

Even my taxi driver told me that he wanted to see this exhibition because of its resonance with the infamous scandal of the Brillo boxes remade by Pontus Hultén, the museum's founder. (A quite complex vision, in fact!) "Maybe those issues are in Sweden's genetic code," Birnbaum added. "From H&M to IKEA and the Pirate Bay, we're familiar with replicas, repetitions, series, copyright, etc."



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Left: Sturtevant studio manager Guillaume Benaich and Sturtevant's daughter and coproducer Loren Muzzey. Right: Moderna Museet curator Fredrik Liew.

No invitation was needed to get into this laid-back opening. The exhibition, which was organized in six rooms to be visited clockwise, opens and closes with videos, the digital medium most lately befitting this artist. If some visitors to the museum are still attached to Sturtevant's "historic" pieces, like her repetition of Warhol's giant flowers, others preferred the new pieces produced specifically for the show, such as *Pacman*, in which her name is eaten by the titular video game beastie, and *John Waters Dorothy Malone's Collar*, based on Waters's work.

During the dinner, Sturtevant thanked everyone present who had helped her when, in 1986, she returned to the art scene, and the context was ready to understand her works not as copies. Everyone was there, from her longtime dealers Thaddaeus Ropac, Anthony Reynolds, and Florence Bonnefous to museum directors Udo Kittelmann and Fabrice Hergott and curators like Caroline Bourgeois. Sturtevant specifically mentioned her daughter and producer, Loren Muzzey.

The wine flowed freely and everyone nonchalantly smoked grass on the terrace, which served to heat up the atmosphere considerably. Then, amid incessant giggling, everyone headed to the bar in the Grand Hotel to finish off the evening. Everyone except Sturtevant, that is, who went to bed; she wanted to be in top shape the next day, because she was the opening speaker at the symposium "Beyond Cynicism: Political Forums of



Opposition, Protest, and Provocation in Art." Moderated by Nina Möntrmann and held in the museum's auditorium, the event also included the philosopher Peter Osborne, Hito Steyerl, and the indispensable Diedrich Diederichsen.



Left: Musee d'Art Moderne de la Ville curator Ann Dressen and director Fabrice Hergott. Right: Dealer Anthony Reynolds.

Needless to say, a talk by Sturtevant on, for instance, "The Powerful Pull of Simulacra" is always a performance. But if you had been expecting a clear explanation of her work, you would probably have left feeling frustrated: "I never explain, but try to push the limits between articulation and visibility." When someone in the audience asked if her work was conceptual, she answered with the following anecdote: "If a girl is being pestered by a guy in a bar, she should say, 'Excuse me, you have to go to the toilet'—That's conceptual thinking!" Of course, none of the students from the Royal Institute of Art dared to ask the grande dame of art any more questions. But everyone heartily applauded the Diesel ad on the screen behind her that read, STUPIDITY IS THE NEW CHIC!

Most everyone tried not to be too chic that weekend, and we boned up on the catalogue (whose cover features an inflatable sex doll) and reread Stéphanie Moïsdon's text on Sturtevant's VERTICAL MONAD, a video installation that reads aloud the opening pages of Spinoza's Ethics in Latin. You'll be happy to hear that Sturtevant is planning to stage an opera on that text (the Spinoza, not the Moïsdon).

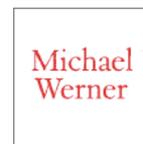
It was finally time to leave for the airport and return to Paris, where Sturtevant will stay before flying to New York in a few weeks. In May, she'll give the same talk at Gavin Brown. Next year Semiotext(e) will release a monograph on her work, the first ever in English, by Bruce Hainley. All good news, to which we say, more! "It's crazy, she is American and she's had no museum shows there for twenty-five years," artist Trisha Donnelly pointed out. Hallo . . . America? Don't be too late—she is a Golden Lion!

— Nicolas Trembley

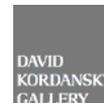
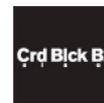


Left: Udo Kittelmann, director of Berlin's National Galleries. (Photo: Florence Bonnefous) Right: A work by Sturtevant.

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