

RECEPTION

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Annette Weisser The End of the World

February 27 – April 17, 2010

Opening Friday, February 26, 2010, 6–9 pm



She never had sexual power over men, not even at seventeen. So that's one less thing to worry about getting older. But still—there were men, then. Boys with bony bodies, broken, punks. Boys she made write letters to her, and poems: She did have power over words for the longest time. That this ability should fade, retreat to a place inside to shine and shimmer for nobody but herself, was not acceptable. Lately in the park where she takes her daily walks she found herself eavesdropping on women as if to stock up on language. These women: organically grown in Southern California, with every constitutional right to not know how much she despised their healthy attitudes. How she still can't help feeling flattered when they mistake her for one of them, shyly returning their friendly greetings which never extend to the Latina walking right behind her. She muses over sentences like: "She was against something—was it racism? I forgot." And for the rest of the walk she would try to come up with a context.

At the party, later, when everyone was kissing everyone, he suddenly came over and kissed her hard. Her! But immediately realized his error. His tongue in her mouth: What an exquisite feeling of misplacement. But he, being sort of an actor with an uncanny intuition for how and where to leave an emotional mark on other people, quickly came up with a different plan: He rubbed her back, stroked her hair, spoke to her in a low voice over ever-refilled caipirinha glasses about guilt, and about letting go of it, and about not being so hard on herself. It immediately hit the right spot and she started to cry all the while watching the scene from the pool table. He seemed to be happy with the result of his improvised exorcism, like: Really happy, for her.

(One Sunday morning when she was a little girl her father took her to the forest. They went deeper and deeper into the woods, and the path grew narrower until ending in a thicket. This is the end of the world, her father told her. Is it? She wondered, filled with the grandeur of his words. In her mind, she erected a flag on this very spot like the astronauts did next to their lunar module.)

Earlier that evening they were playing a game: A poem by Fernando Pessoa was to be read in Portuguese by everyone around the table regardless of individual language skills. When it was her turn, she read the first line, conscious of her harsh accent, and panicked. She couldn't go on, and handed the book to her neighbor. While he stuttered his way through the text, her pain intensified to the point where she had to get up and leave the room. Outside, it was raining. She ran away from the house, from this place where something unspeakably violent was going on. She ran away from the house.

(When she was a few years older, she became obsessed with the camps. She practiced lying, and going by different names, and suppressing the urge to sneeze in case she ever found herself standing on the *Appellplatz* for hours and hours. Or on a stage—for she was equally obsessed with becoming a rock star. Years later her boyfriend used

to make fun of her, saying she didn't have a concept of the future, couldn't plan ahead. Well, what did he know about the delicate fabric of words and meanings that constitutes the future. Someone can appear out of nowhere and call you Sara and put you in a camp.)

Outside, it was still raining. Right in the middle of the driveway, there was a frog. It didn't move at all, it must have been the king of frogs or a statue of the king of frogs. For the longest time she sat there in the rain watching the frog, motionless herself. Then she got up and walked back to the house, back to the room where everyone was still stuttering through poetry, and announced there was this unbelievably huge frog outside and please would everyone come out to see it. Please!

Annette Weisser, 2009





The Good, The Bad, The Boring and Me

The End of the World is the title of Annette Weisser's first show at RECEPTION. *Das Ende der Welt* is also the popular name for a trompe-l'oeil to be found in the gardens of Schwetzingen Palace near Mannheim, where an ideal landscape apparently lies behind an artfully painted hole in the wall. This situation is recreated in miniature by a much more abstract sculpture at the centre of Weisser's show. A kind of experimental configuration, the sculpture at once reinforces and exposes the illusionist effect.

While the enormity of an actual end to the world defies our powers of imagination, we have no trouble grasping the show effects the sculpture employs – and lays bare at the same time. It is this discrepancy between the unimaginable situation denoted by the title and the easily seen-through construction used to implement the linguistic image that makes the work so fascinating.

The civilizational power of language, with its ability both to produce and annihilate meaning, is a central theme for Annette Weisser, whose creative practice includes visual, literary and theoretical productions in equal parts.

In recent years, Annette Weisser has primarily been concerned with post-war German history, for instance with the Allies' political re-education programmes for the population of West Germany. The fact that this historical research was conducted mainly in California – a kind of outpost, so to speak – altered the artist's perspective on her native country. Distance allowed her to place a different slant on seemingly hackneyed questions about the burden of guilt inherited by

the post-war generations and the part this enduring public debate plays on the formation of personal identity. Equally, the responses of American friends and colleagues were different from those in Germany. Combining synchronous with diachronous approaches, these historical explorations intertwine individual experience with official versions of history and to some extent present the sub-text to Annette Weisser's show at RECEPTION.

The Good, The Bad and the Boring: The title belongs to women from different eras and backgrounds who occupy the centre of a series of works on paper combining collage and watercolour techniques. Appearances are made by Antigone, by Sophie Scholl along with Lena Stolze, the actress who depicted Sophie Scholl, by Danièle Huillet in her role in *Not Reconciled, or Only Violence Helps Where Violence Rules*, by Joan Baez, or cartoon heroine Lisa Simpson, without whom no contemplation of questions of morality and responsibility would be complete. Since the individual titles include only the women's forenames, a certain amount of previous knowledge comes in useful for matching the text (name) to the picture (portrait) and deciphering the rest. Another play on language, then, with names acting as a kind of trademark that evoke certain associations.

Annette Weisser, born 1968 in Villingen, has lived in Los Angeles since 2006. She teaches in the Graduate Fine Art Department of the Art Center College of Design, Pasadena.

News

RECEPTION takes part in **The Armory Show 2010, New York**, in the special section Armory Focus: Berlin. You find us at **Pier 94, booth Nr. 973**. We will show works by **Guy Allott, Luigi Ghirri, Jens Ullrich** and **Annette Weisser**. www.thearmoryshow.com

Upcoming Show at the Gallery

Friday April 30, 2010, 6–9 pm we will open a show with work by **Michael Buthe**.

Contact

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Opening Hours: Wed–Sat 11–18 and by appointment

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List of Illustrations

cover:

Frog, 2009, ceramic, glazed, 15 x 43 x 33 cm, ed. of 3 + 1 AP
left page:

Ohne Titel (untitled), 2007, branch, metal, varnish,
videotape, height: 210 cm (detail)

right page:

The Good, the Bad and the Boring (Maria), 2009
watercolour and photocopy, 38 x 50,7 cm