

Female Voices

Ghada Amer, Monica Bonvicini, Claudia Comte,
Katharina Grosse, Shara Hughes, Melli Ink,
Christine Rebet, Jorinde Voigt, and more.

June 10 – September 23, 2022

Opening hours: Friday, 11 am – 6 pm
and by prior arrangement.

Grieder Contemporary is pleased to present "Female Voices" an exhibition comprised exclusively of female contemporary artists. This exhibition showcases the works of a group of leading contemporary women artists with very distinct approaches to art, who experiment with all types of artistic techniques and subject matter.

Women artists are still widely underrepresented in all aspects of the art world. This is a fact that will probably not come as a surprise to anyone visiting this exhibition. Be it gallery representation, museum shows, grants, press coverage or auction prices, female artists are far from having achieved equality in the art world, even if the existence of a few female artist superstars sometimes makes us want to believe that.

Time and again, research has shown that this gap is still far from being closed. According to a survey made in 2019 by the news portal Swissinfo, during the period 2008-2018, in solo exhibitions in Swiss museums, only 26% of artists were women, and only 10% of the museums surveyed had more individual shows with female artists than men.

Nonetheless, even with this information in the background, the question as to whether women-only exhibitions are still needed is an important and relevant one to discuss. Do these shows give women a visibility that will lead to their fuller integration within a broader discourse? Or, rather, do they position women as outsiders, separate, and forever unequal?

Opinions among curators and art scholars seem to be divided. Some argue that these exhibitions "challenge the masculine assumptions of the sacred canon of history by reclaiming women artists and inserting them back into a narrative from which they have been dismissed because they are female". Others say that these exhibitions "unwittingly contribute to the marginalization of female artists by reducing the artwork's value to its creator's gender and separating it from broader histories".

The exhibition "Female Voices" at Grieder Contemporary seeks, precisely, to address this debate, by gathering the work of a group of artists that are either represented by the gallery, or with whom the gallery has worked in previous exhibitions. While some of the works reference feminist topics such as the female gaze or gender questions, many others are focused solely on formal questions such as abstraction or constructivism, thus making it evident, that the female voice and the work of female artists comes in all shapes and forms. Contrary to what binary gender roles have tried to make us believe, women's art is simply every kind of art.

Parallel to this reflection, the current exhibition also tries to highlight one of the biggest shortcomings of the art world when it comes to female artists: their inclusion in permanent collections. As the Guerrilla Girls showed in their 2017 Whitechapel exhibition *Is it Even Worse In Europe?* women's artwork acquired in European museums didn't increase over time despite most institutions marketing their efforts to expand the canon. Institutions' actual commitment to inclusivity should be done through acquisitions since permanent collections are the ones shaping public opinion and framing how history gets recorded for posterity.

For Grieder Contemporary, opening this exhibition during the Zürich Art Weekend and right before the art world crowds move to Basel for the upcoming art fairs, was an opportunity to reflect about the role of collecting in achieving more equality for women in the arts.

About the Artists

Ghada Amer (*1963, Egypt) Through her paintings, sculptures and public garden projects, Amer takes traditional notions of cultural identity, abstraction, and religious fundamentalism and turns them on their heads. She believes that „all women should like their bodies and use them as tools of seduction“ and in her well-known erotic embroideries, Amur rejects oppressive laws set in place to govern women’s attitudes toward their bodies. By depicting explicit sexual acts with the delicacy of needle and thread, their significance assumes a tenderness that simple objectification ignores.

Monica Bonvicini (*1965, Italy) Central to her work is to reveal hegemonic relationships, control mechanisms and forms of paternalism in architecture, design and behavior. With her provocative large-scale installations, Monica Bonvicini explores the links between sexuality and architecture, both challenging the male-dominated field and exposing the gendered quality of constructed spaces. Bonvicini’s *Breach of Decor* comments on the intimacy and its spatial boundaries between the public and the private, meanwhile her installation *Not For You* clearly references power structures, both gender related and not.

Claudia Comte (*1983, Switzerland) Her work is defined by an interest on the memory of materials and by a careful observation of how the hand relates to different technologies. Her body of work is best known for her site-specific installations but her artistic output also incorporates a diverse range of mediums from sculpture to painting. Comte’s minimalist approach to art making is equal parts methodical and dynamic; works are infused with a distinct sense of playfulness.

Katharina Grosse (*1961, Germany) Grosse is best known for her large-scale in situ installations in which she sprays paint directly onto the surfaces of architecture, interiors, and landscapes. She has also painted canvases while they hang on the wall, draped canvases from exhibition space ceilings, and created colorful forms that emerge from the floor, blurring the boundaries between painting and sculpture. For her „a painting is simply a screen between the producer and the spectator where both can look at the thought processes residing on the screen from different angles and points in time.“

Shara Hughes (*1981, USA) She describes her paintings and drawings as psychological or invented landscapes. Usually they are lush, vibrantly chromatic images of hills, rivers, trees and shorelines. As she has explained, her works are created „purely from the inside“ but are nonetheless informed by a deep knowledge of art history and the work of her contemporary peers. Rather than depicting realistic landscapes, Hughes invites the viewer into a fantastical world offered as a portal for psychological discovery and reflection.

Melli Ink (*1972, Austria) Melli Ink draws inspiration from art history, literature, film and music to create her artworks, which include drawing, sculpture, film and performance. She is fond of incorporating traditional techniques and repurposing them for contemporary art, thus she often works with glassblowers and other artisans to produce her work. Her intricate glass installation „Armed Peace“ was inspired by Wilhelm Busch’s poem by the same title. Although it dates back to 2007, the piece is an allegory of war, very relevant to our current geopolitical situation. Her ceramic works in this exhibition are inspired by Greek ancient ceramics.

Christine Rebet (*1971 in Lyon, France) work is based in drawing and develops into forms ranging from animation to the environment, installations and performance art. At the heart of her work is the elaboration of historical traumas in the context of a personal reinterpretation and a consequent reanimation. The drawings in the exhibition are from the animation film "Breathe In Breathe Out" inspired by Christine Rebet's journey in the north of Thailand, where we follow the spiritual path of a monk in the mountains and the animation. *Otolithe* (2021) takes its inspiration from *fijiri*, the traditional songs of pearl divers in the Persian Gulf.

Jorinde Vogt (*1977, Germany) Voigt creates large-scale drawings, incorporating text and collaged elements to create sweeping and energetic compositions. Her method is an attempt to make objective sense of the world, to translate sound, movement, time, form, perception, and science into a single representational scheme. The modernist avant-garde and the development of Conceptual art represent implicit reference systems for the artist, whose work has been described as „conceptual drawing“. „My work is like music,“ she says, „you can enjoy it without being able to read the score.“