

Jutta Koether/Philadelphia ***Trinity: Past***

1637 Rodman Street, Philadelphia, PA

Bortolami is pleased to announce the opening of *Jutta Koether/Philadelphia*, the fourth project of the gallery's Artist/City programming initiative. The exhibition will take place in a trinity house, miniscule three-story homes that once housed the working class of the city's more affluent areas and an architectural typology specific to the city of Philadelphia. Using the idea of the trinity as its organizing principle, the exhibition will take place in three parts: *Past*, *Present*, and *Future*, unfolding over the next year. The subsequent phases, *Present* and *Future*, opening later this year, will endeavor to capitalize on the artist's relationship to the incredible artistic legacies present in Philadelphia including Duchamp, Cezanne, and Soutine, among many other important painters represented in local institutions.

Koether has divided her time between Germany and New York since the early 1990s, and *Trinity: Past*, focuses on works she made in New York or have found their way into private collections here in the United States. The exhibition seeks to compose or open up the history of her artistic output in this country. In the artist's words, this exhibition is about, "searching, retrieving, finding ideas, histories." Less of an artist's project, and more an "external research site", *Trinity: Past* has collected works—both from private collections and from the artist's own archive—that while emitted from the same source may never have had the opportunity to engage with one another within the context of an exhibition.

On the first floor, anchoring this exhibition is a painting entitled, *Roots in the Rhineland* (1995), originally shown at Pat Hearn Gallery in Koether's 1995 exhibition, *Frontage*. Like many other examples of her work, *Roots in the Rhineland* evinces her identity as a German artist who moved frequently between her homeland and the U.S., and more specifically the distinct Cologne and New York City art scenes. Rendered in a fluorescent palette, the painting features a "portrait of the Rhine, Watteauian colors, enhances Jochen Distelmeyer—german singer of the band Blumfeld," according to Koether's handwritten notes from the time. Inscribed with the phrase "american dream", the painting relates to her career-long search for transatlantic shared histories of underground cultures that perform various types of transgression. This painting entered a private collection in Connecticut after its original exhibition in 1995, and this is the first time it has been shown since.

Leibhaftige Malerei (red version) (2007), on the second floor, was originally shown in Berlin at Susanne Vielmetter gallery, and has been in a private New York collection since its purchase. Unlike *Roots in the Rhineland*, this painting represents another strain of Koether's practice drawing upon art historical references and reproduces Sandro Botticelli's *The Story of Nastagio Degli Onesti: The Disembowelment of the Woman Pursued* (1483-87). Koether was drawn to this painting for its use of layered imagery used to communicate a narrative. *Leibhaftige Malerei*—which translates to *Painting Incarnate*—is a nesting-doll of authorship. Botticelli made *Nastagio Degli Onesti* based on Giovanni Boccaccio's *The Decameron*, a collection of novellas written in the 14th century. The characters in Botticelli's painting appear in both foreground and background simultaneously, telling the entire story in a single frame and thus creating a temporal collapse. Koether reimagines the Botticelli in her signature red monochrome palette, mediating Boccaccio's original story through the

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Renaissance master's illustration of it, adding yet another authorial voice to a narrative that originated 700 years ago.

Two drawings that served as studies for paintings are installed in the small spiral stairwell of the Trinity house. One of the drawings was a sketch made for a painting entitled *Hot Rod (after Poussin)* (2009) which was shown on a floating wall in Reena Spaulings gallery by itself in the 2009 exhibition *Lux Interior*. The painting is a too-scale reproduction of Poussin's *Landscape with Pyramus and Thisbe* (1651), an illustration of Ovid's tale. In the drawing, one can make out the complex landscape rendered in orange and red. The second drawing is a study for Koether's *Mad Garland* series of painting, which was shown at Campoli Presti in 2011.

A group of three paintings resides on the third floor, including *Art Basel 17 Untitled 1 (Maximum Inspiration)* a painting Koether made for this past edition of Art Basel as well as two smaller paintings that echo the Cezanne-esque apples in the larger painting. In Koether's own words, she describes *Maximum Inspiration* as, "a kind of 'genre scenes of the soul'". The painting features several of the motifs that have populated her paintings for years; the cane, apples, a grid, a figure that appears in other previous paintings, text (here, taken from the tagline of a brand of guitar pedal), and a non-hierarchical approach to materials. In this work, Koether uses several different types of paint and materials to construct the surface, demonstrating equal adeptness with oil paint as with metallic craft paint.

Jutta Koether (b. 1958, Cologne) is an artist and musician based between New York and Berlin. Koether is Professor of Drawing and Painting at the Hochschule für bildende Künste Hamburg. She has shown at institutions such as the New Museum, the Whitney Museum, The Kitchen, and the Sculpture Center in the United States and The Arnolfini, Bristol, United Kingdom; Dundee Contemporary Arts, Dundee, United Kingdom; Moderna Museet, Stockholm, Sweden; Kunsthalle Bern, Bern, Switzerland; Kölnischer Kunstverein, Cologne, Germany in Europe. Her work is included in several institutional collections including the The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY; Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; Kunsthalle Bern, Bern, Switzerland; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA; Nationalgalerie Berlin, Berlin, Germany; Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris, France; Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL Koether's work is currently featured in *Jump Into The Future – Art From the 90's and 2000's* at Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam. Her work will also be heavily featured in the upcoming exhibition *The Conditions of Being Art: Pat Hearn Gallery and American Fine Arts, Co. (1983 - 2004)* at the Hessel Museum, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY in June 2018. Koether will have a solo exhibition at the Museum Brandhorst, Munich opening in May 2018.

Artist/City is a roving programming initiative by Bortolami that presents yearlong exhibitions in different cities across the country. Previous projects include *Daniel Buren/Miami*, *Eric Wesley/St. Louis*, *Tom Burr/New Haven* (alternatively titled *BODY / BUILDING*). Upcoming projects include *Ann Veronica Janssens/Baltimore*, and *Barbara Kasten/Chicago*.

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For more information, please contact Emma Fernberger, emma@bortolamigallery.com or 212-727-2050. The exhibition is open Saturdays from noon-6pm.