ISA MELSHEIMER



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BIOGRAPHY

Isa Melsheimer was born in Neuss, Germany, in 1968, and lives and works in Berlin.

Isa Melsheimer's practice spans painting, embroidery, sculpture, installations and botanical works, reflecting her documentary research and formal investigations. Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe, Superstudio… the artist's reflections are based on architectures which convey ideals, with the great responsibility of formalising theories, depicting utopias with wood, glass and concrete, and, above all, reinstating them on a living, human scale. Drawing on the history of architecture and urban planning, the artist builds her work around the relationships between humans, animals and plants, and their architectural and environmental expressions. The artist's theoretical vision takes up architectural concepts and histories as spaces of collision and creation. Yet her approach is not only aesthetic, but also analytical, returning to the fundamentals, again and again, in order to extract their essence.

Her recent solo exhibitions include *The Outshined city* at Galerie Jocelyn Wolff, Paris-Romainville (2022); *Concrete Bodies are Finite* at the Centre International d'Art et du Paysage, Île de Vassivière (2022), *Compost* at the MAMAC, Nice (2021-22), *Der unerfreuliche Zustand der Textur* (2020) at KINDL – Centre for Contemporary Art, Berlin, *The Year of the Whale* (2018) at Fogo Island Gallery, Fogo Island, *Der tote Palast zitterte–zitterte!* (2017) at Mies van der Rohe Haus, Berlin.

« Some works may be read as an incursion of natural elements into manmade forms, or even as potentially menacing reactions to humans' destructive ways. Conversely, these evolving states of engagement between organic and inorganic, between plant and manmade, are perhaps proposals for alternative forms of interaction: not antagonistic burt rather hybrid or symbiotic. Melsheimer's works suggest a type of multispecies kindship as definied by feminist theorist Donna Haraway: a *making-with* other entities, rather than self-making, in order to build more liveable futures together. »

Alexandra Mcintosh, 2022 (excerpt)

ISA MELSHEIMER

THE OUTSHINED CITY

Solo exhibition
September 11 - October 29, 2022
Galerie Jocelyn Wolff, Paris-Romainville, France

Pursuing her exploration of the heritage of Modernism, Isa Melsheimer looks at The Radiant City, Le Corbusier's urban utopia, which she considers from a particular angle. Imbued with an ideology of progress, the utopian city emanates from Le Corbusier's conceptual research, with the idea of the necessary renewal of the old city towards a new utilitarian city, governed by principles of mathematical circulation and a concentration of functions. Far from being an exclusive and universal model, Isa Melsheimer's theoretical vision takes up the concept as a space of collision, where buildings are invaded by plants and insects, and where the geometric proposal clashes with the organic nature of living things. For the first time, the artist presents us with an exhibition that is almost exclusively made up of ceramics, in the image of her current practice.

Isa Melsheimer grounds her reflections on the human, animal, botanical or built environments in the shadows and in the margins. She develops her sculptures by taking the time of work and the time of observation, as if to align herself with the thousand-year-old plants, such as the *Welwichtschia mirabilis* from Namibia, that she seeks to represent – or reinterpret – in her ceramics *Khurub* and *Onyanga*. The artist also speaks of ties between individuals and forms of life, ties that have been broken and deconstructed, envisaged or dispossessed. *The Feston*, inspired by the garlands connecting Portuguese houses, turn into long snakes on the ground, and their ostensibly monochrome colouring hides and reveals a plurality of tones. Just as the plants slowly and discreetly invade the space of the gallery, just as the ceramics transform human architecture into organic architecture, politics creeps into the spaces between the ceramics. The mesh of tiles in the artist's suspended pieces evokes the Portuguese *azulejos* which she came across during a residence in Lisbon, leading us into the architecture of everyday life. Embroidery on fabric at the entrance to the exhibition announces the fall of a proletarian utopia. Is this a warning or a fictional introduction? Neither: this piece is about the utopia carried by the Saal project in Lisbon. As always with Isa Melsheimer, the work takes shape inside of history and architectural theory, thereby becoming a pretext for its study.

Isa Melsheimer lives and works in Berlin. Drawing on the history of architecture and urban planning, the Berlin artist builds her work around human, animal and plant relationships, and their architectural and environmental expressions. Her practice spans painting, embroidery, sculpture, installation and botanical works, reflecting her documentary research and formal investigations. The artist's recent solo exhibitions include *Concrete Bodies are Finite*, at the Centre International d'Art et du Paysage, Île de Vassivière (2022), *Compost* at the MAMAC, Nice (2021-22), *Der unerfreuliche Zustand der Textur* (2020) at KINDL – Centre for Contemporary Art, Berlin, *The Year of the Whale* (2018) at Fogo Island Gallery, Fogo Island, *Der tote Palast zitterte – zitterte!* (2017) at Mies van der Rohe Haus, Berlin. For this exhibition, the artist has produced a number of new pieces, especially ceramics, which will be displayed in the gallery space.











Exhibition views: *The Outshined City*, Galerie Jocelyn Wolff, Paris-Romainville, France, 2022. Ph:François Dhoury

ISA MELSHEIMER

LINES OF FLIGHT

Group exhibition
July 10 - Novembre 6, 2022
Centre Nationale d'Art et du Paysage - Île de Vassivière, Beaumont-du-Luc, France

Lines of Flight is a group exhibition around ideas of movement across territorial and political boundaries. Drawing together natural and anthropogenic processes, the works on view question notions of native and non-native species, climate change, and voluntary and involuntary migrations. From 19th-century scientific expeditions that facilitated imperial expansion, to the transnational movement of plants, to the passage of migrants through territories, the exhibition proposes a series of encounters between plants, animals and humans in all our varied states of restlessness.

The French and international artistic contributions in the exhibition include sculpture, film, photography and installation. Some works address asymmetrical trade relations and cultural appropriation in the movement of materials between continents. Others suggest possibilities of open-ended exchange and the birth of new affinities. In addition to physical movement is the potential of forms and ideas to evolve through time and space, or to change in meaning once transposed to new contexts. Decolonial practices, for example, are inferred, considered to be always unfinished and thus in continual motion.

Questions around invasive and native plant species are raised, the former with negative overtones of incursion and the latter in a contemporary process of evolution, as climate change engenders a transformation of what was once endemic to a region.

Some works give voice to other species and subjectivities or propose new forms of relations amongst humans and the natural world. The potential of weeds and wild growth to upset human order is celebrated in works that mirror social processes of migration and integration. Other contributions underline the capacity of plants to thrive against all odds and emerge among the ruins of a ravaged planet.

Isa Melsheimer's *Wardian Case* works (2012-) engage with a 19th-century invention that revolutionized the global movement of plants, shaping both diets and economies, and enabling the spread of European colonialism in the process.

Source: Press release (excerpt)



Exhibition view: *Lignes de Fuites*, Centre Nationale d'Art et du Paysage - Île de Vassivière, France, 2022. Ph: Aurélien Mole

ISA MELSHEIMER

CONCRETE BODIES ARE FINITE

Group exhibition
March 26 - June 26, 2022
Centre Nationale d'Art et du Paysage - Île de Vassivière, Beaumont-du-Luc, France

The work of Berlin-based artist Isa Melsheimer offers a sustained engagement with the history of architecture and the relationship between humans and the environment. Her solo exhibition at the Centre international d'art et du paysage, designed by Aldo Rossi and Xavier Fabre, explores the architectural and cultural legacies of postmodernism through newly commissioned sculptures, textile works and installations that merge the organic and inorganic across singular forms.

In a new series of large-scale ceramic works, Melsheimer draws inspiration from the plant *Welwitschia mirabilis*, which grows in the Namib desert of Namibia and Angola. Named after the first European to describe the plant in 1859, *Welwitschia* is inscribed within a legacy of 18th and 19th century European expeditions in which plant specimens were collected, taxonomized and added to botanical collections. In the case of *Welwitschia*, a double claiming thus occurred–of the plant itself and the right to name it.

Melsheimer's pieces depict *Welwitschia*-like forms that gradually merge with architectural elements. With their tentacular leaves interweaving and gradually engulfing the built forms, the plants appear to merge with the architecture, perhaps enacting their own organizational principles and right to claim. The combined sculptural gesture of Melsheimer's pieces, which gain in height as horizontal leaves intertwine with vertical walls, evokes another series of works with their own legacy of extraction and contested ownership: the Parthenon Marbles, now in the collection of the British Museum. Through this formal gesture Melsheimer makes oblique reference to the historic act of colonial acquisition and entitlement, as well as ongoing disputes over restitution.

For the artist, this historical act of appropriation finds an echo in postmodernism, where stylistic or theoretical citations from the past are decontextualized and juxtaposed in new form; a renewal of appropriation as plunder.

Melsheimer's *Metabolit* sculptures (2019-20) are glazed ceramic forms that also combine organic and architectural elements. Leaf-like shoots are barely contained by their boxy surroundings. Bulbous concretions erupt from planar facades and cubic volumes, their mottled surfaces glistening and foaming as if still in motion. The result is a series of works in mutation: uncontainable, undisciplined forms exceeding imposed constraints.

Other works in the exhibition tackle hubristic architectural and technological projects through the 20th and 21st centuries, positing that the grand narratives of modernism persist, and that ideologies and styles are rejected only to be revived anew.

While some works seem to condemn our collective actions, especially in terms of our destructive relationship to the planet, other pieces display a more playful attitude. Small-scale ceramics and a series of stepped concrete forms bring the epic gestures and overarching narratives of modernism down to earth. Utopian architectural masterplans are reduced to ornamental planters and decorative household objects.

The ensemble of works in the exhibition suggests a reckoning with the legacies of modernism, as well as a recalibration of human relationships with the environment. Plants and other non-human species are shown to have their own potential for agency.

Source: Press release (excerpt)

























Exhibition views: *Concrete Bodies are Finite*, Centre Nationale d'Art et du Paysage - Île de Vassivière, France 2022. Ph: Aurélien Mole

ISA MELSHEIMER

COMPOST

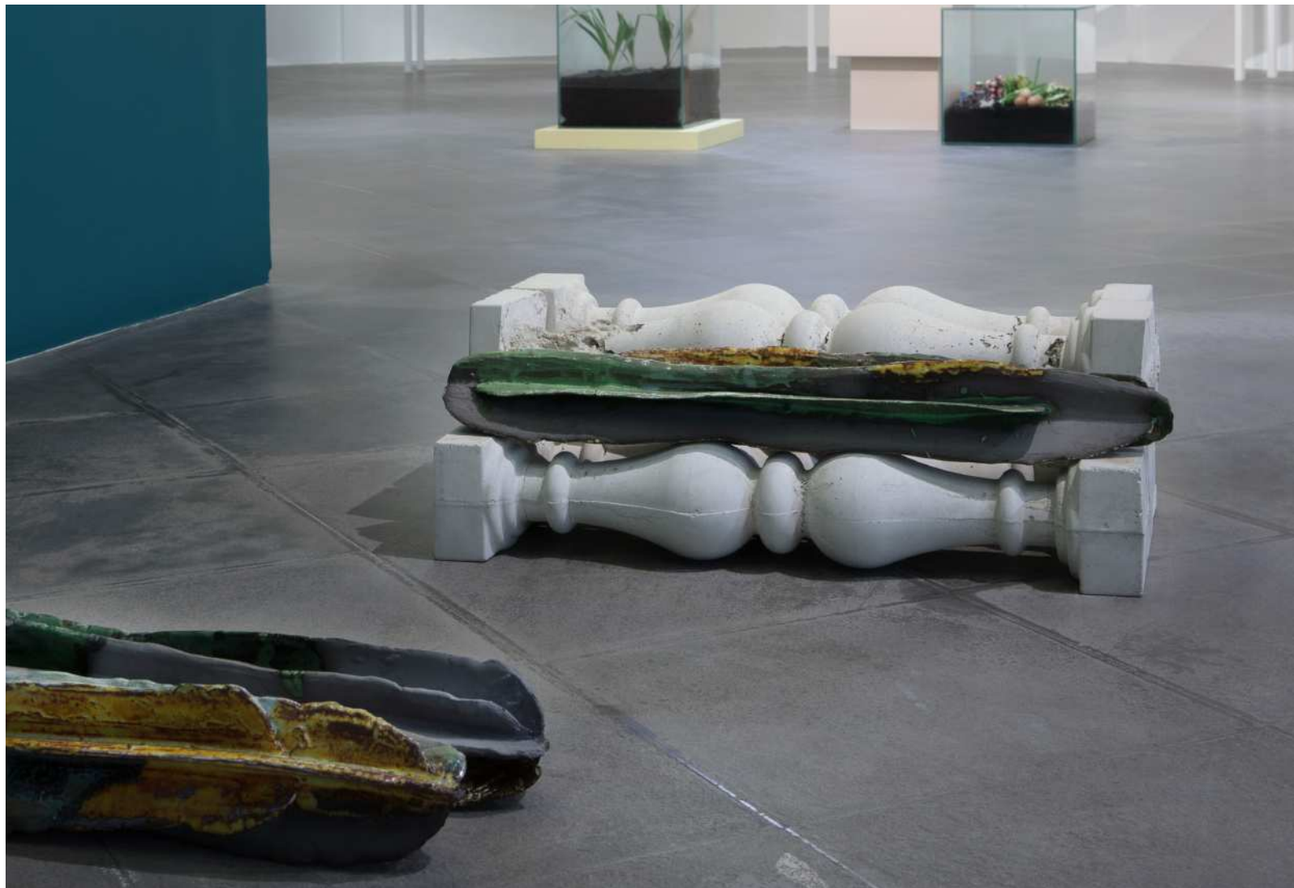
Solo exhibition
November 20, 2021 - February 27, 2022
Contemporary Gallery of MAMAC, Nice, France

From 20 November 2021 to 27 February 2022, the City of Nice invites you to discover the Isa Melsheimer exhibition, at the Contemporary Gallery of MAMAC. For nearly 30 years, artist Isa Melsheimer has questioned modern architecture as much as our natural environment through her work. She usually operates in situ. Her work straddles painting, embroidery and sculpture, and includes plants. Her work questions the complex, evolving relationship of humans with their environment. Architecture plays a central role in the work of Isa Melsheimer, more particularly the shapes and figureheads of modernism, notably Ludwig Mies van der Rohe or Le Corbusier, referred to in the exhibition through the paintings he created in 1938-39 on the walls of Villa E-1027 of Eileen Grey in Roquebrune-Cap-Martin. For her exhibition at MAMAC, the artist immersed herself in the rich history of the Côte d'Azur, a region of experimentation with modern architecture which today leaves a legacy of villas, sometimes unsuspected, nestled in the heart of the hills among the palm trees. This interwoven destiny of adventurous backers, open to the innovations of their time, and innovative architects, intersects the imagination of an eternal Riviera and its attractive landscapes. The palm tree, although introduced during the 19th century (massive plantations of tropical species date back to the 1860s), at a time when international winter tourism was developing, today appears as a native plant, and even a symbol of the Côte d'Azur.

The artist offers a hybridisation of this dream, fantasised Riviera and the transformation of the coastline due to the infestation of palm trees by the red weevil. The gallery is transformed into a dreamlike, metamorphic landscape in which ceramics of the larva of the insect and evocations of modernist architecture intertwine, creating the breeding ground, perhaps a fertile one, of a story to come. Numerous works, especially the ceramics, have been specially designed for the exhibition. The exhibition also benefits from loans and support from the Esther Schipper gallery in Berlin and the Jocelyn Wolff gallery in Paris. The 20th century heritage tours were organised with the support the Architecture and Planning Forum of the Town of Nice.

Source: Press release





Exhibition views: *Compost*, Contemporary Gallery of MAMAC, Nice, France, 2022. Ph: Jean-Christophe Lett

ISA MELSHEIMER

DER UNERFREULICHE ZUSTAND DER TEXTUR

Solo exhibition
March 22 - July 5, 2020
KINDL – Centre for Contemporary Art, Berlin

In her works, Isa Melsheimer (*1968 in Neuss, lives in Berlin) deals with architectural and urban spaces, including their formal language, functional history, and social significance. Her materials are heterogeneous: heavy, hard, and resistant materials such as glass, concrete, and ceramic are combined with embroidered curtains, textile masks, and even ensembles of living plants. The finely crafted and “handmade” always plays a role in her objects and installations. Since the 1990s the artist has also created gouaches that function as an architectural archive, in which she uses found photographs to illustrate the structures and functioning of built spaces.
For her exhibition at the KINDL – Centre for Contemporary Art, Isa Melsheimer engages in depth with the exhibition space M2, traces its energy flows, and places her objects like markings within the architecture.
The exhibition is curated by Kathrin Becker.

Source: Press release













Exhibition views: *Der unerfreuliche Zustand der Textur*, KINDL, Berlin, Germany, 2020. Ph:Olivier Mark

ISA MELSHEIMER

METABOLIC RIFT

Solo exhibition
Octobre 18, 2019 – February 15, 2020
Galerie Jocelyn Wolff, Paris, France

According to the Marxist definition taken up by John Bellamy Foster, the Metabolic Rift is “the irreparable rift in the interdependent process of social metabolism” (K. Marx, *Das Kapital*) or the disconnection of the metabolic interaction between humanity and the rest of nature derived from capitalist production and the growing division between the city and the countryside. Isa Melsheimer adopts this concept – recently used in the debate on the new geological era, the Anthropocene, defined by the influence of the human on the environment – to project it on at least two other cultural horizons. The first is Metabolism, an architectural movement developed in Japan after the Second World War, whose mentor is Kenzo Tange and whose pivotal moment is 1970 Osaka World Exhibition. The futurist and utopian projects of the Japanese metabolists, engaged in the process of reconstruction of Japan from the rubble of war, was to conceive structures that emulated the functioning of a living organism. Repeatable and multipliable modules like cells, floating ocean-cities, mushroom or bamboo-houses were conceived to give birth to a “ vital” architecture and to promote the exchange, the circulation, like a breath, between artifact, Man and Nature.
Futuristic imagination also irradiates the second reference horizon of Melsheimer’s show: the literature and visual culture of science fiction. I would say more precisely that this conceptual field allows the artist to stage the set where her story takes place, a set in which Karl Marx’s negative parable overlaps with and materializes the utopian/dystopic projections of Japanese metabolists. From the “metabolic rift” rain into the exhibition spaces glazed ceramic concretions: the series of *Bacteria* (small shapeless objects, bulbous masses of clotted matter, macroscopic visions of the cells of an organism infected by a virus) inaugurate and accompany the development of the metabolic process. Ceramics comes from clay, clay from the earth – earth and water (the artist herself personally creates the glaze compound) –: the biochemical reactions give rise to effects of synthesis (anabolism) and degradation (catabolism) while the gesture of production refers to an alchemical and almost witchcraft process suggested by the image imprinted on *Vorhang (Slothrop)*.

[...]

Through the “metabolic rift” the vision of the world is dark, of that colour which the bitterness, but sometimes also the irony, has. For those who love science fiction and popular culture it will be ironic to find in the title of *Vorhang (Slothrop)* the name of the protagonist, Tyrone Slothorp, of *Gravity’s Rainbow* by Thomas Pynchon, a spy-story about sex and weapons that takes place during the Second World War against a dramaturgical tragicomic background. The title of the sculpture *Neon West*, on the other hand, brings the reflection back to the work of the ‘marxist-environmentalist’ Mike Davis, *Casino Zombies: True Stories form the Neon West*. Walking through this microcosm of coloured monads, total units or minimal parts of an evolving whole, the visitor will then be able to reflect on questions that Karl Marx, the metabolists and the authors of science-fiction have posed in the past on the idea of a future that eminently questions our contemporaneity: sustainability, the survival of Humankind with the environment in its relationship with industry and culture or its disappearance in a process of collapse and dehumanization similar to the destiny of Tyrone Slothorp.

Source: Text by Marina Panelli (excerpt)









Exhibition views: *Metabolic Rift*, Galerie Jocelyn Wolff, Paris, France, 2019-2020

ISA MELSHEIMER

VIA APPIA

Duo exhibition with Polly Apfelbaum
May 2 – June 15, 2019
Galerie Nächt St. Stephen Rosemarie Schwarzwälder, Vienna, Austria

In our double exhibition Polly Apfelbaum and Isa Melsheimer are showing new ceramics as well as paper- and textile-based works that highlight the artistic focal points of both artists. After two solo exhibitions at Galerie nächst St. Stephan Rosemarie Schwarzwälder for Polly Apfelbaum and three for Isa Melsheimer, it is their first collaboration.

The exhibition owes its title to an encounter on the Appian Way in Rome in 2013 when Polly Apfelbaum was on a scholarship from the American Academy and Isa Melsheimer on a scholarship from the German Academy Villa Massimo. Both had been equally enthralled and captivated by the block paving of the famous road lined with cypress trees and the relics of tombs and graves dating from Ancient Rome.

Such was their shared interest in architecture and in ancient and modern ruins that they would subsequently meet up again many times in Rome. Isa Melsheimer explores in her work urban habitats and the circumstances under which they are shaped and altered. Arrayed alongside sculptures made of concrete, glass and ceramic are textile-based works and ensembles comprised of living plants.The sculptural works are accompanied by gouache paintings, their imagery overlaid with quotes from genres such as art, architecture, design and pop culture. Melsheimer's new ceramics are hybrid structures made up of the constructed and the organic, as if the plant kingdom had chosen to r eclaim buildings and cities. The Appian Way symbolises the transition between the urban and the rural. Melsheimer has studied theorie s of architecture and urban planning at length, most recently with Metabolism, a Japanese architectural movement of the 1960s that focused on a flexible form of urban planning, both in the air and above water. Like an organic metabolism it was designed to respond and adapt to changes in living circumstances as required. Melsheimer is also interested in the ruins of modern and contemporary architecture that have been left to decay as a result of badly planned urban development. One of her ceramic sculptures references the decaying Macaranã swimming stadium built for the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, which could stand as a sculptural entity, but also as a Roman amphitheatre. The craftsmanship aspect of working with ceramics is as crucial to Isa Melsheimer as it is to Polly Apfelbaum, coupled with the fact that the outcome of the firing process can never be predetermined down to the last detail; in other words, the works continue to undergo change even during the actual production process itself.

Source: Press release (excerpt)





Exhibition views: *Via Appia*, Galerie Nächt St. Stephen Rosemarie Schwarzwälder, Vienna, Austria, 2019

ISA MELSHEIMER

PSYCHOTROPISCHE LANDSCHAFTEN

Solo exhibition
October 13, 2018 – January 13, 2019
Städtischen Galerie Delmenhorst, Delmenhorst, Germany

“The new exhibition in Haus Coburg demands a lot from the visitor. If you want to get involved with the ‘Psychotropic Landscapes’ by the artist Isa Melsheimer, you are well advised to take part in a guided tour. With her exhibition, Isa Melsheimer creates a completely different framework than her predecessor. Because while Thorsten Brinkmann ‘locked up’ the house of Coburg down to the last detail, Melsheimer lets the cosmos spread in the art space. Around 50 sculptures and installations can be seen there, some of which were recently created for the exhibition. Depending on the content and subject matter of her works, Melsheimer also changes the materials she works with. Visitors to the exhibition will find ceramics and glass objects as well as concrete and fabric works in the Coburg house.

On the first floor of the gallery, the artist is showing a ceramic work about bacteria, which she does not see negatively in any way. On the contrary: ‘Friendships are also formed with bacteria, for example through the smells they cause’, she says. With this work, the Berliner took part in a competition to design the canteen of the German Bundestag. Unfortunately without success : ‘They obviously didn’t want any bacteria there,’ she admits and laughs. In the Winter Garden of Haus Coburg, the artist creates her own botanical worlds in so-called glass ‘Wardschen cases’. Impressive: Your glass works on the upper floor of the art site. Crafted from shards, the objects suggest both beautiful and brutal landscapes.”

Source: Nicole Baumann, “Experimental cosmos in the municipal gallery”, Delmenhorst, 2018 (excerpt)











Exhibition views: *Psychotropische Landschaften*, Städtischen Galerie Delmenhorst, Delmenhorst, Germany, 2018-2019

ISA MELSHEIMER

RAIN

Solo exhibition
October 13, 2018 - January 13, 2019
Le 19, CRAC, Montbéliard, France

When Berlin artist Isa Melsheimer takes an interest in modernist architecture (and its Brutalist extensions) or postmodern design, her attention focuses as much on the building or the object itself as on the whole project that underpins it, the complex relations at play between form, function, use, and underlying ideologies. The artist frequently carries out such a critical re-appropriation through relativist effects of scale enabled by her use of scale-model formats, as well as by the rules of restraint and spacing that separate her works from one another.

In order to enact this “clarification of existing entities”, her sculptures, installations, pictures and drawings create dialogues and collisions between historical utopias and unexpected objects or images drawn from the present, and between materials that signify modernity (glass and concrete) and techniques borrowed from “minor” arts (ceramics, embroidery or gouache). These techniques give shape a abundant, narrative universe brimming with a host of details, references and quotations left by the artist on the torn or creviced surfaces at the edge of her works, as if to underline their precariousness.

The same concern for in-between-spaces and contact points is to be found in the exhibition space itself — more particularly in places usually hidden from the visitors’ view. The artist will for instance leave a door open on a storage space, or venture beyond the picture rails in search of structural elements to incorporate into her exhibition and — fully or partially — present them to the visitors.

Located in Ronchamp, twenty-five kilometers away, Notre-Dame du Haut is a chapel designed by Le Corbusier in 1955, and constitutes the main thread of Isa Melsheimer’s exhibition at Le 19, Crac. There, she has resumed a critical dialogue with the architect’s work initiated in 2010 with *Battle Line 1* (a tapestry conceived as an echo to Le Corbusier’s studies of Algerian women) and her *Dachgarten* show at Jocelyn Wolff gallery. From the chapel, she borrowed the principle of reversibility that characterizes the building’s indoor areas, and will focus on several significant details, such as the gargoyle designed for discharging rainwater into a basin or a baptistery.

Lastly, she will present her first film, *Wasser Ballet für Marl*, an aquatic ballet directed in 2017 as a tribute to the city of Marl’s abandoned modernist architecture.

Source: Press release





Exhibition views: *Rain*, Le 19, CRAC, Montbéliard, France, 2019

ISA MELSHEIMER

WOMEN HOUSE
36 WOMEN ARTISTS DECONSTRUCT DOMESTICITY

Group exhibition
March 9 – May 28, 2018
National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington D.C., USA

Featuring work by thirty-six global artists, *Women House* challenges conventional ideas about gender and the domestic space. The exhibition is inspired by the landmark project *Womanhouse*, developed in 1972 by Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro. With works that disrupted traditional ideas about the home as a feminine realm, *Womanhouse* was the first female-centered art installation to appear in the Western world. In the new exhibition, *Women House*, women artists from the 1960s to today examine the persistence of stereotypes about the house as a feminine space.

Through photography, sculpture, installation and video works organized across eight themes, *Women House* emphasizes the plurality of women's views on the home. In *Walking House* (1989), Laurie Simmons creates a playful yet disconcerting image of the female body being consumed by expectations and responsibilities. Laure Tixier's series *Plaid House* (Maquette) (2005–11) explores domestic architecture from worldwide cultures in solid-colored felt sculptures that resemble miniature residential homes, tents, towers, or high-rise buildings. Zanele Muholi's 2007 photograph of a young female couple in South Africa leaning into the warmth of their kitchen stove speaks to the possibility of domestic space as a place of both privacy and freedom.

Source: Press release



Exhibition view: *Women House,* National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington D.C., USA, 2019, Ph: Lee Stalsworth

ISA MELSHEIMER

WOMEN HOUSE
LA MAISON SELON ELLES

Group exhibition
October 20, 2017 - January 28, 2018
La Monnaie de Paris, Paris, France

Curated by Camille Morineau and Lucia Pesapane

Women House est la rencontre de deux notions : un genre – le féminin – et un espace – le domestique. L'architecture et l'espace public ont été masculins, tandis que l'espace domestique a été longtemps la prison, ou le refuge des femmes : cette évidence historique n'est pourtant pas une fatalité et l'exposition Women House nous le montre. Elle rassemble sur 1000 m² et dans une partie des cours de la Monnaie de Paris, 39 artistes femmes du XXe et XXIe siècle qui se saisissent de ce sujet complexe et mettent la femme au centre d'une histoire dont elle était absente. Après l'étape parisienne, *Women House* s'exposera au National Museum of Women in the Arts à Washington D.C à partir du 8 mars 2018.

L'enjeu de trouver un espace de travail chez soi a été théorisé en 1929 par Virginia Woolf, qui encourageait les femmes à trouver une chambre qu'elles puissent « fermer à clé sans être dérangé » dans son essai *Une chambre à soi*. C'est la date de « départ » de *Women House*, dont l'ambition se poursuit de manière thématique jusqu'à des œuvres récentes, produites par une jeune génération d'artistes femmes, en passant par les années 70, moment où les artistes femmes se rebellent contre la privation d'espace réel – d'exposition, de travail – et symbolique – de reconnaissance.

Les huit chapitres de l'exposition reflètent la complexité des points de vue possibles sur le sujet : ils ne sont pas seulement féministes (*Desperate Housewives*), mais aussi poétiques (*Une Chambre à soi*), politiques (*Mobile-Homes*) ou nostalgiques (*Maisons de Poupées*).

Les 39 artistes de *Women House* viennent de quatre continents, de l'historique Claude Cahun jusqu'à une jeune génération : l'artiste mexicaine Pia Camil, l'iranienne Nazgol Ansarinia, la portugaise Joana Vasconcelos, l'allemande Isa Melsheimer ou les françaises Laure Tixier et Elsa Sahal... Certains noms sont connus (Louise Bourgeois, Niki de Saint Phalle, Martha Rosler, Mona Hatoum, Cindy Sherman, Rachel Whiteread) d'autres sont l'objet de redécouvertes récentes liées à une relecture de l'histoire de l'art plus paritaire (Birgit Jürgenssen, Ana Vieira, Laetitia Parente, Heidi Bucher).

Source: Press release (FR)



Exhibition view: *Women House,* La Monnaie de Paris, Paris, France, 2017-2018

ISA MELSHEIMER

MICROSCOPIE DU BANC - EXAMINING THE BENCH

Group exhibition
April 9 - June 25, 2016
Micro Onde, Vélizy-Villacoublay, France

Curated by Sophie Auger, Aline Gheysens and Maud Cosson

«b. Techniques of rest. Rest can be perfect rest or a mere suspension of activity: lying down, sitting, squatting, etc. Try squatting. You will realise the torture that a Moroccan meal, for example, eaten according to all the rituals, would cause you. The way of sitting down is fundamental. You can distinguish squatting mankind and sitting mankind. And, in the latter, people with benches and people without benches and diases; people with chairs and people without chairs. Wooden chairs supported by crouching figures are widespread, curiously enough, in all the regions at fifteen degrees of latitude North and along the Equator in both continents... These resting techniques form real characteristics of civilisations, common to a large number of them, to whole families of peoples.» Marcel Mauss, "Techniques of the Body", in Techniques, Technology and Civilisation, ed. Nathan Schlanger, trans. Ben Brewster (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2006), 88.

Examining the Bench is an exhibition in large part inspired by Marcel Mauss's writings, and in particular the invitation extended in his "Techniques of the Body" to all later researchers in the social and human sciences, urging them to devote closer attention to the habits, the attitudes of the body with which we fill our lives. Behind their seeming unimportance, which both conceals and preserves them, it is in these "miscellaneous" practices, having no instrument other than the body, that we can see the vestiges of a remote past, forged through interactions between cultures, the systems linking techniques of the body learned and handed down to intellectual activities and modes of thought, the modelling effect of society upon the individual.
The bench, and the practice of sitting on a bench, are certainly among those things to which we typically ascribe little importance, if not none at all. And yet, the very etymology of the word, which includes the Proto-Germanic bankiz ("bank of earth" or ridge) as well as the Middle English benk (place or point), seems to invite us to take stock, to reconsider our perspective on this object, on the way in which it juts out from the landscape. After all, seeing at a distance requires this elevation. Therefore, the bench is an object, hardly noticeable when it is shrewdly positioned, where we rest for a moment to remake the world, fired by a vision that encompasses everything, whether close by or much farther away. It is here, within this vacant space, not endowed with meaning due to its emptiness, that by taking a breather between two pressing matters, between two sources of anxiety, we find an environment conducive to refocusing our mind, retrospectively or prospectively, on ourselves and the world.
If benches fill empty interstices in cities, with our bodies bringing them to life and our verbal exchanges structuring the space where they are situated, cities also assuage the emptiness of our bodies and our hearts by welcoming benches. But the mere presence of a bench in a public space does not guarantee this welcome. In studying the images filmed by William Whyte for *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces* (1988), there is cause to be surprised by the ways in which these spaces function and are used. It is worth reflecting, for example, on why everyone gravitates to places where there are people and nobody is drawn to places devoid of people. Similarly, one might well ask whether recent phenomena such as the installation of metal cages over public benches in Angoulême last winter, to discourage homeless people from sleeping rough, and the opportunity to adopt a bench in New York's Central Park, in the gardens of the Château de Versailles and at the Berlin Zoo, among other sites, herald the eventual disappearance of benches as we know them.

Source: Press release (excerpt)



Exhibition view: *Microscopie du Banc - Examining the Bench*, Micro Onde, Vélizy-Villacoublay, France, 2016

ISA MELSHEIMER

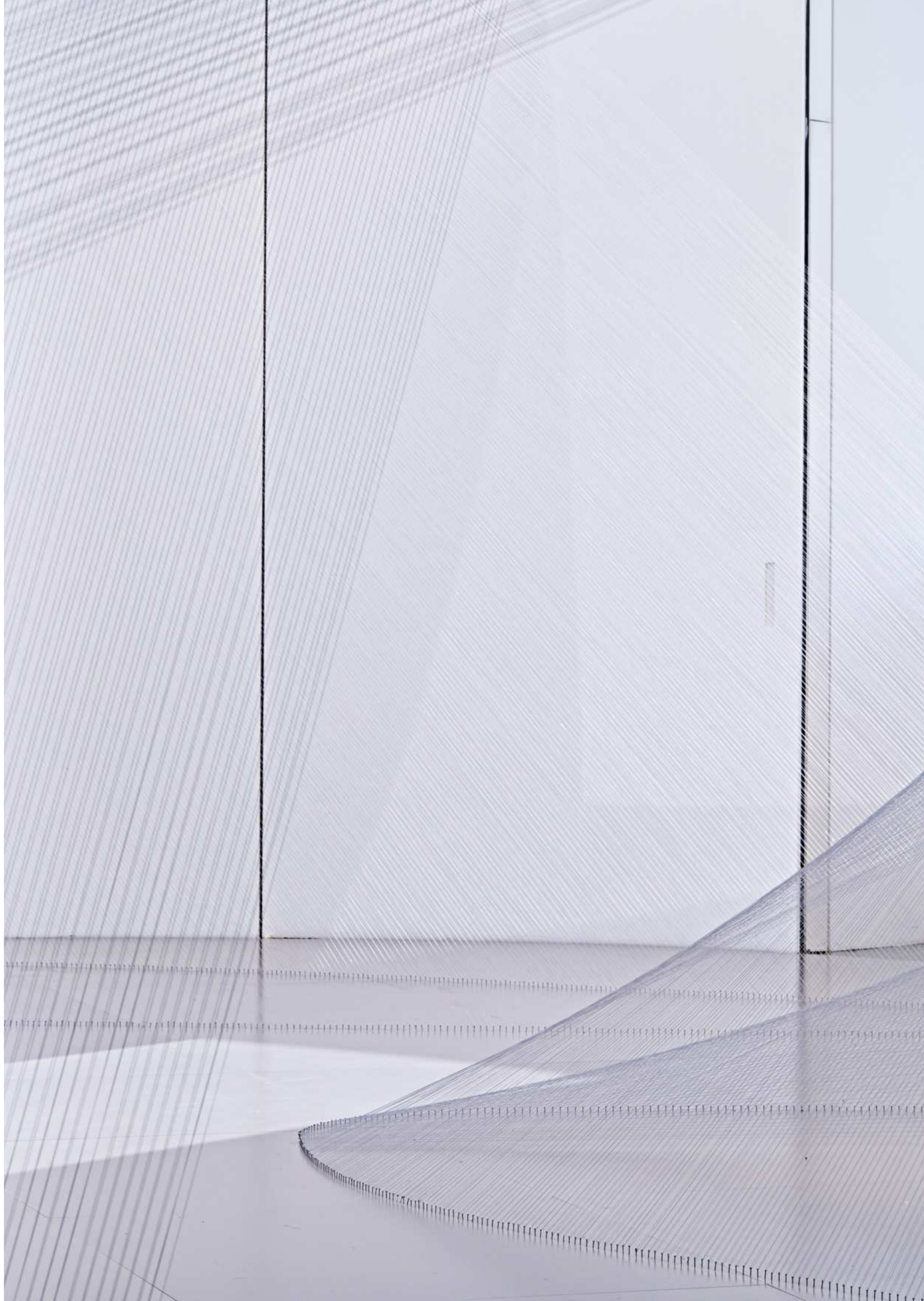
LE FIL ROUGE

February 6 - May 3, 2015
Espace Louis Vuitton, Paris, France

Group exhibition curated by Michiko Kono with Ghada Amer, Tracey Emin, Isa Melsheimer, Hans Op de Beeck, Michael Raedecker, Fred Sandback, Chiharu Shiota, Tatiana Trouvé

Le fil rouge explore le fil comme support principal dans la pratique des artistes contemporains. Contrairement au crayon et à la peinture, le fil n'est pas lié à une finalité intrinsèque. Sa matérialité encourage des expressions et des expérimentations artistiques infinies. À la place du pinceau, le fil utilisé en art contemporain est brodé ou collé sur le support image, et combiné à la peinture. Il sert aussi à coudre des fragments de toile. En l'étirant à différentes échelles et dans des configurations variées, il permet de former des sculptures, tracer des lignes dans l'espace, reproduire des principes architecturaux ou donner l'impression de suspendre les lois de la physique. La plupart des artistes exposés ne travaillent pas exclusivement avec le fil mais s'en servent comme d'un support facile à manipuler offrant un large éventail d'applications.

Source: Press release (excerpt)









Exhibition views: *Le Fil Rouge,* Espace Louis Vuitton, Paris, France, 2015

ISA MELSHEIMER

SYNAPSEN

Solo exhibition
December 07, 2014 - February 15, 2015
Ikob, Museum für Zeitgenössische Kunst, Eupen, Belgium

Every limit is a threshold that indefinitely widens the space. Every frontier is a contact zone that opens to ‘the Other’.

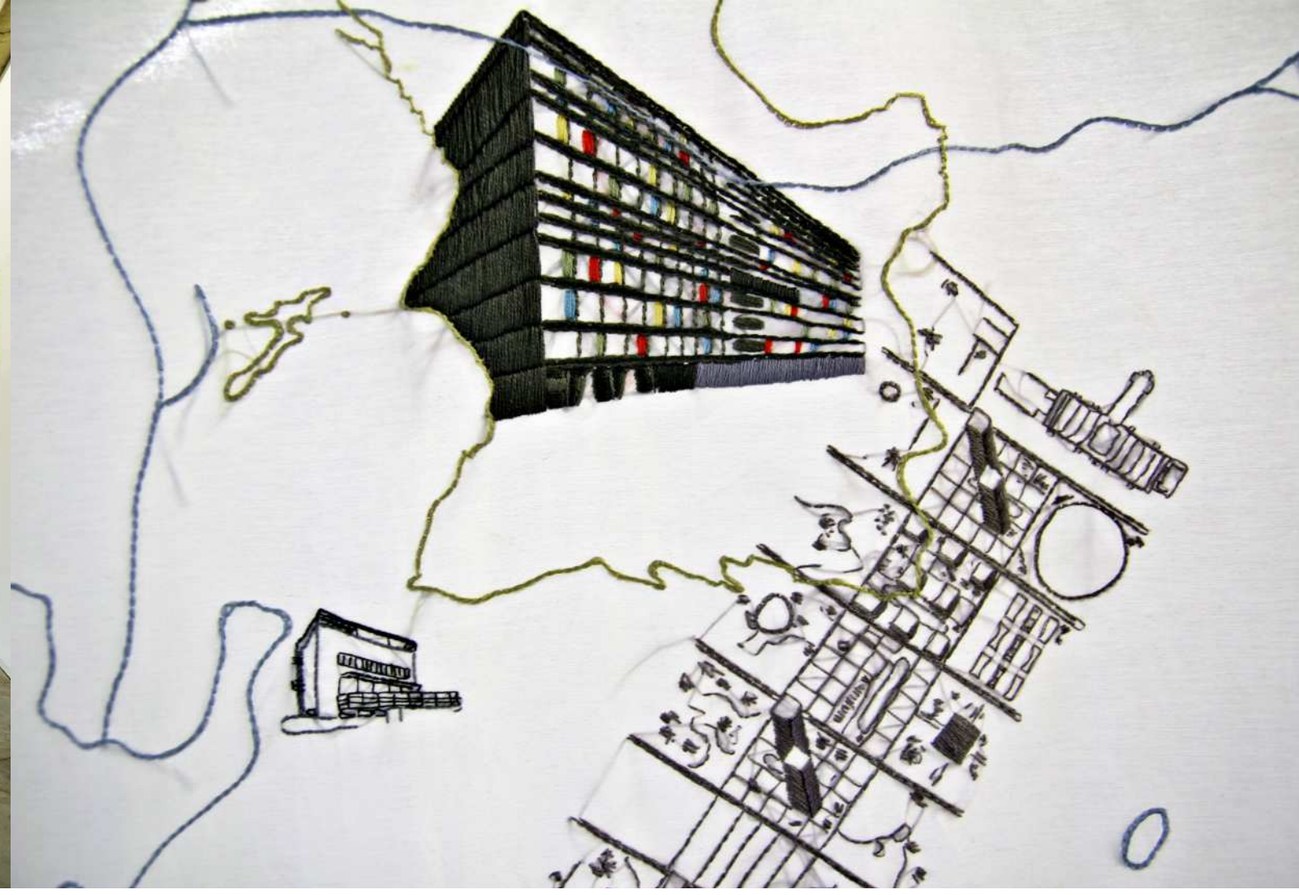
Isa Melsheimer relentlessly explores the question of the limits by creating and moving rooms. In *Synapsen* her series of curtains offer a visual reflexion on the sensitive experience of the threshold, creating within the ikob a multitude of synaptic contact zones, of open and changeable spaces that are crossed by numerous signals transmitting information on each side of their surface. Like membranes on which the picture is fixed, close and distant, spatial and installation-like, the curtains and veils of light oscillate between transparency and opacity, opening and closing spaces, unveiling what the surface has to say about the depths.

Source: Press release













ISA MELSHEIMER

TIMES ARE HARD, BUT POSTMODERN

Solo exhibitionJanuary 18 - March 1st, 2014
Galerie Jocelyn Wolff, Paris, France

In the installation *Times are hard, but Postmodern*, from which the exhibition takes its name, Isa Melsheimer lets her work coalesce with the spaces of the Galerie Jocelyn Wolff. In this way, the subject matter of the group of works shown in the current installative composition is mirrored by the gentle and almost playful dialogues Isa Melsheimer allows to unfold within the environments in which her exhibitions are held: few architectural eras are influenced as strongly by dialogue as postmodernism.
Primary shapes such as cones, balls, pyramids or cubes; hues of skin and sorbets; surfaces arranged in tiers, patterns that clash—the form and colour sphere of Isa Melsheimer's works evokes associations with the radical anti-design stance of the Memphis Group, known for reacting to modernism in favour of the emotional design of postmodernism.
With her wall-collage Isa Melsheimer cites the architect Charles Jencks who dates the symbolic end of modern architecture and the crossover to postmodernism at precisely 3:52 p.m. on 15 July 1972, the point in time when the Pruitt-Igoe housing project was demolished. The council estate, which had been euphorically celebrated as helping to shape the future, was completed in 1955 in St. Louis/Missouri. The chief architect, Minoru Yamasaki, followed the rational planning principles of Le Corbusier's modern residential machine. But this shining example of social housing was quickly lost to violence and vandalism, serving to this day as a symbol of the collapse of modern architecture and urbanism. Modernism is followed by an era of postmodern architecture that moves away from the totalitarian idea of a universal, rational, functional design principle, and towards a stylistically eclectic reactionary movement, opening itself up to local traditions and specific spatial factors.
Isa Melsheimer lets the hopes anchored in this urban and architectural development flourish in her works. Architectures in Rome capture her interest in particular: a city that has grown significantly historically. Contrary to Le Corbusier's city-sweeping visions for Paris – which included razing the historic centre to the ground to make room for perfectly aligned high rises, with only a handful of monuments to be spared – Rome's city planning is a reflection of what the architect Colin Rowe has referred to as a "collage city": a ceaseless process of fragmentation, collision and contamination of the disparate ideas of different generations.
In this light, Isa Melsheimer draws from the ideal urbanism of architecture groups such as UFO, Superstudio and their persiflage of the mega-structure "The Continous Monument" or Archizoom Associati and their "No-Stop City" model. But in doing so, the artist also summons up a reflection of the same glorification of technology inherent in certain postmodern designs.
On one of her textile objects – reminiscent of George Hardie's illustrations – Isa Melsheimer stages a sensuously strong yet also provocative embroidery of two Roman constructions: the Pyramid of Cestius, a tomb dating back to 12 BC, and the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana, completed in 1943 as part of Mussolini's city planning project EUR. These two structures are not located one next to the other in the city of Rome, nor can they be considered as being postmodern architectures in a historic context. And yet, they can be found in Isa Melsheimer's piece, side by side, thus underlining the collage-city idea of Rome as a metropolis that functions perfectly in its non-linear evolution.

[...]

In her tongue-in-cheek way Isa Melsheimer manages to rouse scepticism, making us wonder if postmodernism or other forms of radical individualism that start off full of hope and ideals, can in fact break from the past. If not, we must ask ourselves if they are merely epitomisations of the technologically rational, sober and functional efficiency of modernism – a particular manifestation of capitalism. Isa Melsheimer's works incite us to analyse the latitude in which resistance can unfold.

Source: Text by Anna-Catharina Gebbers (excerpt)
Translation: Jana Obermueller





Exhibition views: *Times are Hard, but Postmodern*, Galerie Jocelyn Wolff, Paris, France, 2014

ISA MELSHEIMER

VERMILION SANDS AND OTHER STORIES FROM THE NEON WEST

Solo exhibition
April 14 — July 7, 2012
Santa Monica Museum of Art, Santa Monica, USA

Santa Monica Museum of Art presents Isa,Melsheimer: *Vermilion Sands and Other Stories from the Neon West,* a never-before-seen installation that explores Hollywood's cinematic heyday and its motion picture icons, investigating notions of glamour and luxury as they relate to characters, architecture, and locations in and around Los Angeles. *Vermilion Sands and Other Stories from the Neon West*, Melsheimer's first American museum exhibition, will be on view in the Museum's Project Room 1 from April 14 through July 7, 2012. Santa Monica Museum of Art Deputy Director Lisa Melandri is curator of *Vermilion Sands and Other Stories from the Neon Wes*t, in which the artist utilizes commonplace, and largely domestic materials, to create site-specific environments, including a mixture of altered and embroidered t- shirts, live plants, paper, pearls, yarn constructions, and cast concrete sculptures. During a 2007 residency at Villa Aurora — a nonprofit organization located in Pacific Palisades dedicated to German-American cultural exchange — Melsheimer became interested in Los Angeles's landscape and architecture, as well as the fictional and historical characters that inhabit these spaces. Melsheimer's work examines the affects of architecture and location on Los Angeles's glamorized cinematic figures; as well as the démise of those figures from lifestyles of famé and Financial success. She was influenced by classic Hollywood films such as David Lynch's *Mulholland Drive* and Billy Wilder's *Sunset Boulevard*, as well as by stories such as James Graham Ballard's *Vermilion Sands* and Mike Davis's *Casino Zombies: True Stories From the Neon West*—whose respective titles Melsheimer joins to give the exhibition its name. Melsheimer is particularly drawn to examples such as the Salton Sea, a former glamorous ressort area near Palm Springs that has since degenerated into a kind of wasteland. With *Vermilion Sands and Other Stories from the Neon West*, Melsheimer wants viewers to be aware that architecture is always représentative — of ideas or Subjects that permeate society. She asks viewers to consider: Which fictional and historical subjects are admired within Los Angeles? Why do residents emigrate from Los Angeles? What aesthetics characterize Los Angeles's buildings; and what sentiments manifest in the region's architecture?

Source: Press release





Exhibition views: *Vermilion Sands and Other Stories from the Neon West*, Santa Monica Museum of Art, Santa Monica, USA, 2012

ISA MELSHEIMER

MONDES INVENTÉS, MONDES HABITÉS

Group exhibition
October 08, 2011 - January 15, 2012
Mudam Luxembourg, Musée d'Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean, Luxembourg

The technical object cannot be dissociated from human history, but the relationship between Man and Technology remains complex. As a synonym of progress, in western eyes, the technical object is at once desired and suspect, arousing by turns hope, wonder, and disillusion. The exhibition *Mondes inventés, Mondes habités* ("Invented Worlds, Inhabited Worlds") broaches the issue of technology transcended by artistic genius. It highlights the special relationship of creative people, those "technical poets" who, rather than restricting themselves to the utilitarian aspect, base their research on an understanding of existence and the beauty of machines. So through the works of some twenty artists of different generations and with different outlooks, the exhibition offers glimpses of the capacity for invention and wonder, daring and curiosity, hallmarking the human and artistic adventure.

The exhibition focuses first and foremost on the specific figure of the inventor and the imagination which fuels his research. A whole mythology has in fact developed down the centuries around the artist-cuminventor, whose guardian figure is indisputably Leonardo da Vinci, an artistic and visionary genius if ever there was, as much an architect and engineer as a painter and musician. With the emergence of modern science and motorization, the 19th century left behind a literature studded with demiurge figures, crazy scholars and other daredevils, with an absolute faith in science and its potential. It is these colourful personalities who seem to inspire the filmmaker Jan Švankmajer in his film Leonardo's Diary and his drawings of unlikely erotic machines, as hilarious as they are disquieting, when the machine appears to hold sway over people and dictate their doings and gestures.

Isa Melsheimer's remote approach is also distant when she focuses on a given context. Here, her work directly echoes the configuration of the venue. Her project is part of an already existing space, the spiralstaircase, a real piece of bravura in Mudam's architecture by Ieoh Ming Pei. She is intrigued by the imperious nature of the architectural gesture, and subtly shifts the outlines and boundaries, deeply transforming it and lending it a new poetic charge.

Artist(s): David Altmejd, Bodys Isek Kingelez, Chris Burden, Vija Celmins, Björn Dahlem, León Ferrari, Vincent Ganivet, Paul Granjon, Theo Jansen, Paul Laffoley, Isa Melsheimer, Miguel Palma, Panamarenko, Robert & Shana ParkeHarrison, Nancy Rubins, Conrad Shawcross, Roman Signer, Jan Švankmajer

Source: Press release









Exhibition views: *Mondes inventés, Mondes habités*, Mudam Luxembourg, Musée d'Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean, Luxembourg, 2012

ISA MELSHEIMER

DACHGARTEN

Solo exhibition
September 10 - November 2, 2010
Galerie Jocelyn Wolff, Paris, France

For her third solo show at Galerie Jocelyn Wolff, Isa Melsheimer is presenting a project centered on architect Le Corbusier (1887–1965) and his relationship, during the beginning of the 20th century, with a Parisian collector, Charles de Beistégui.

In Paris during the 1920s, Charles de Beistégui, a fervent admirer of surrealism, asked Le Corbusier to build him an apartment, which would serve exclusively for parties. Unlike Charles de Bestégui, the architect's interest in surrealism was limited.

The result: an apartment near the Champs-Elysées having no roof, a living room directly open to the sky, and furnished only by a fireplace. The walls were limited to 1.5 meters in height to parcel the view of certain places. For example, from one perspective, the walls allow only the upper half of the Arc de Triomphe to be seen, and from another perspective, only an upper section of the Eiffel Tower was visible. The walls could be displaced using an electrical remote control, however the apartment itself had no electricity and, consequentially, was lit with candles. This apartment no longer exists today.

Through the works in this exhibition, Isa Melsheimer searches to become aware of the odd relationship that united the two men during the duration of their project. Using very different mediums such as concrete, embroidery, and gouache, the artist strives to bring to the forefront a rather surprising result, for the apartment made by Le Corbusier is actually close to a surrealistic installation.

Two concrete sculptures recreate two important points of the "roof-garden". A wax sculpture on the floor made from burning candles night after night and sculpted by the wind refer to the space's candlelit evenings.

On a "Paris" scarf bought in a souvenir shop, Isa Melsheimer embroidered the map of Paris, an allusion to Le Corbusier and his schematic and naïve vision of the city.

A step down to the lower, second exhibition space, the artist has chosen to create a more intimate atmosphere. A bird posted on a "tree" limb made from glass and perched near the wall conjures the apartment's only "occupant".

Two large, kitsch embroideries take on details of the view of the Eiffel Tower and the Arc de Triomphe and, in this way, recreate a situation scenario within the space.

Some architectural details of the apartment, such as the spiral stair, surface in a very peculiar manner in the gouaches hanging on the far wall.

Source: Press release





Exhibition views: *Dachgarten*, Galerie Jocelyn Wolff, Paris, France, 2010

ISA MELSHEIMER

LIVING ROOMS

Group exhibition
May 30 - October 3, 2010
Domaine départemental de Chamarande, Chamarande, France

As part of the cultural policy of the General Council of Essonne for contemporary art, the art center of the Departmental Domain of Chamarande presents, starting on May 30, a large collective exhibition titled *LIVING ROOMS - PIECES À VIVRE.*

This exhibition presents numerous specific works with heritage, historical, and decorative features. The exhibition joins fifteen national and international artists, representative of today's artistic scene.

Constructed in 1654, the castle, which is the principal exhibition space for the art center, possesses a history in "a thousand pieces", made from changes and rearrangements of the architectural structure as well as the room organization and living spaces. Today, the salons and rooms still contain the memory of this transformation. It is this invisible story, barely palpable but leaves room for imagination, at which we invite the artists of the exhibition *LIVING ROOMS – PIECES À VIVRE*.

Each artist metaphorically invests in the space and reinvents what a castle and home can be, and what it can become. With *LIVING ROOMS - PIECES À VIVRE*, the artists are the actors and the subjects of the idea "to live". Among the fifteen artists present, certain lingered on the idea of the architectural characteristics of the space. The Chapuisat Brothers took on the grand staircase in an invasive, yet logical takeover, while Martin Boyce and Loris Cecchini propose a modern and poetic lecture of the space, paying particular attention to the logical flow of visitors, notably in the vestibules and galleries.

The past functions of these rooms are also at the center of the work of Gitte Schäffer, Isa Melsheimer, Florence Doléac, and Vincent Beaurin, in a domestic or phantasmagoric aspect. The presence of the human imagination, like the slightly kitsch, yet timeless, décor of the castle, nourishes the works of Californians Liz Craft and Pae White, Javier Perez, Dominique Blais, and even Karim Gheloussi. Finally, by part of the fictional narrative, the space is completed with the rooms of Danish artist Ann Lislegaard, Hugues Reip, Hubert Robert, and Delphine Reist.

With the tile *LIVING ROOMS – PIECES À VIVRE*, the idea of habitat joins the idea of living space, where one stays where one rests, and a living space becomes inhabited.

Source: Press release



Exhibition view: *LIVING ROOMS*, Domaine départemental de Chamarande, Chamarande, France, 2010

ISA MELSHEIMER

ISA MELSHEIMER

Solo exhibition
January 26 - April 18, 2010
Carré d'Art - Musée d'art contemporain de Nîmes, Nïmes, France

For Isa Melsheimer, embroidery is also a technique of drawing and writing. Her exhibition is designed as a specific installation in the Norman Foster building in which she creates new embroidered hangings with book citations from the Japanese writer Kobo Abé, *The Box Man*. She relies also on the choice of older works, around 24, dated from 2002 to 2009, that equally express this idea of hidden space, where the looks we ignore and observe come from.Very interested in architecture, Melsheimer develops a reflection around living space created by modern architecture, that has been a part of the everyday home, but also in market galleries and intermediary spaces used by the homeless. Certain recent works created from images taken at the press building collapse of the City of Cologne Archives or other news items address themes of instability and loss in the closely kept together Western world. This theme also refers to the strong interest in matters of environment and collective responsibility.

Source: Press release (excerpt)





Exhibition views: *Isa Melsheimer and Michael Raedecker*, Carré d'Art - Musée d'art contemporain de Nîmes, Nîmes, France, 2010

ISA MELSHEIMER

Solo exhibition
May 19 - June 25, 2005
Galerie Jocelyn Wolff, Paris, France

Galerie Jocelyn Wolff is pleased to present the first solo exhibition of Isa Melsheimer in France.
Three works created during her residence at the Chinati Foundation in Marfa, Texas (The Donald Judd Foundation) in 2004-2005 are shown in a presentation designed by Isa Melsheimer for the gallery space, with two gouaches completed when during her return to Berlin.

Berg (pieces of glass, silicone, wood) is the exact reproduction of a Texan montage, and echoes the Chinese “stone of wisdom” meant to represent/contain any landscape, regardless of reduced size.

Unfinishedbuilding (metallic fishnet, embroidery) is inspired by an incomplete building constructed in Marfa by Donald Judd.

The relationship with architecture is equally explained in the gouaches on paper *121, 2005* and *122, 2005*, a series inaugurated over several years and conducted in parallel by sculpture and installation by Isa Melsheimer. *Cloth I* (fabric, embroidery) is the first fabric work by Isa Melsheimer presented in an autonomous manner. Ina Melsheimer’s installations integrate most often elements of embroidered fabric, mattresses or suspended pieces forming shelters or partitions, demanding a total appreciation of the volume and colors by the viewer, with a detailed reading of subjects and represented scenes.

Isa Melsheimer was born in 1968 in Neuss, Germany. She studied at the Hochschule der Kunste in Berlin (master class of Georg Baselitz). She was recently exhibited at the Musée Ludwig in Cologne, and at the Bonnefanten Museum in Maastricht (solo). Projects 2005: Städtische Galerie of Nordhorn, Germany, Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, Galerie Nächst St. Stephan in Vienna (solo). Isa Melsheimer lives and works in Berlin.

Source: Press release:





Exhibition views: Galerie Jocelyn Wolff, Paris, France, 2005

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