

Jo Baer – Lynda Benglis – Jutta Koether

Trio exhibition 2009

20/6 – 4/10/2009

Jo Baer

From 20 June to 4 October 2009 there is a Trio exhibition of the work of Jo Baer, Lynda Benglis, Jutta Koether in the Oudbouw (Old Building) of the Van Abbemuseum. This is the fourth time that the Van Abbemuseum organises a Trio exhibition, this time with solo presentations of three generations of artists: Jo Baer (1929), Lynda Benglis (1941), and Jutta Koether (1958). They are connected by their choice for 'painting'. Not pure painting, the non-narrative painting which does not refer to anything outside itself, but an evaluation of the phenomenon of painting in terms of art criticism. In the ten halls of the monumental Oudbouw, Baer, Benglis and Koether tackle certain aspects of the history and current practice of painting from different perspectives. The exhibition makes clear that the medium of painting is not the only medium for them to challenge the tradition of painting. From the mid sixties to now these artists work, each in their own way, with a range of mediums like video, sculpture, installation and text. This Trio exhibition highlights their individual works, while at the same time the visitor can explore the potential links between the artists' positions.

Jo Baer's oeuvre spans a journey and critical dialogue from abstract expressionism to minimalism to her current style rooted in metaphorical imagery - what she terms radical figuration.

A journey through painting

"All of the so-called abstract artists always have a tissue of meaning. I always did certainly. . . . I meant layers. I meant boundaries. I meant very specific things always"

Jo Baer, 1987

Jo Baer (Seattle 1929) is a painter and lives and works in Amsterdam. This exhibition at the Van Abbemuseum traces the journey through Jo Baer's stylistic and ideological developments throughout her painting practice.

Her début in the fifties was with abstract-expressionist work. Between 1960 and 1975, Baer made paintings which referred to Minimal Art. In these she aimed for a perfect balance between space and representation. She created series of rectangular or square paintings, often triptychs with a central white or grey plane and narrow black or coloured stripes on the edges. At the height of her fame Baer also turned away from abstract art and started to examine figurative representation as a possible way to connect social reality and illusion in painting.



Jo Baer, *Untitled (Black Star)*, 1960-1961. Collection Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo

In this exhibition at the Van Abbemuseum the ways Baer's art travels through movements, divisions and arguments in the art of the past century are clearly visible. Put simply at one point she changed her mind and was bold enough to change the directions of a successful career in consequence. She has always written and published polemical statements for example her now famous article in *Art In America* called *"I am no longer an Abstract Artist"*. Here she forecast the purely formal and self-referential dead end into which modernist painting was to direct itself. Baer condemned the growing preoccupation with the purely formal properties of painting over broader intellectual concerns of the artists and their need to communicate in the world. As she herself explained *"to enhance discourse is to paint and draw in fragment, which is an open adventure: it is having painting talk (as opposed to having painting talk about parts of others' paintings)"*

This solo exhibition spans a period of fifty years and places well known abstract works from Baer's oeuvre such as *Untitled (Black Star)* (1960-1961) or *Vertical Flanking Diptych (Yellow Ochre)* (1966 -1974) alongside work

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based on what she calls radical figuration. It spans the period from the 1970's right up to her most recent completed *Memorial to the Art World Body (Nevermore)* (2009). This is the first showing of this most recent painting, which incorporates elements of what she calls an alternative self-portrait. In this new painting she incorporates images of herself by other artists (including John Wesley and Bruce Robbins), which she suggests in the act of repainting them she may be "stealing back".



Jo Baer, *Memorial for an Art-World Body (Nevermore)*, 2009. Courtesy the artist.

Curator

The exhibition of Jo Baer, part of the Trio exhibition *Jo Baer, Lynda Benglis, Jutta Koether* is curated by Annie Fletcher.



Jo Baer, *Altar of the Egos (Through a Glass Darkly)*, 2004. Collection Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo

Blend special Jo Baer - Lynda Benglis - Jutta Koether

In co-operation with Blend magazine a special publication is realised, in which the idea of a traditional exhibition catalogue is raised to a higher level. In stead of an abstract of the exhibited works, this publication is compiled of specially made interviews, photo shoots and artworks, inspired by the oeuvre of the three artists. The special publication is for sale at the opening and during the exhibition. It is also available in stores. Selling price €5,95

Van Abbemuseum

Van Abbemuseum
Bilderdijklaan 10
Eindhoven

Opening hours

Tuesday - Sunday 11.00 - 17.00
Thursday 11.00 - 21.00

Admission

adults € 8,50
groups -15, visitors 65+ € 6
students / CJP card holders € 4
Thursday night 17.00 - 21.00 free admission

For more details visit
www.vanabbemuseum.nl

Note for Editors

More information and images can be downloaded directly at:
www.vanabbemuseum.nl/press

Or contact:
Ilse Cornelis
Marketing & Communications
tel: +31 (0)40 238 1019
mobile: + 31 (0)6 1299 5794
i.cornelis@vanabbemuseum.nl

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