

Press Release

Cindy Sherman

November 20, 2020–February 13, 2021
Sprüth Magers, Berlin

Sprüth Magers

Monika Sprüth and Philomene Magers are pleased to announce an exhibition of new works by Cindy Sherman, one of the most influential artists internationally who has been associated with the gallery since the 1980s. It is the first time this 2019 series will be on view outside the United States.

In her latest body of work, Sherman continues her long-standing investigation into identity as a social construction. Since the 1970s, her works have addressed topics such as identity, gender and social roles, examining stereotypical media representations of women. By adopting a multitude of disguises and personae, the artist invites the viewer to take a critical stance on subjectivity and sexuality.

In the ten large-scale photographs on view, the artist impersonates a cast of androgynous characters, all dressed in elegant, gender-neutral designer menswear. With direct eye contact and steely gazes, the figures pose in front of digitally manipulated backgrounds, composed from photographs Sherman took while traveling through Bavaria, Shanghai and England. The performative stance of each character is emphasized by their extravagant outfits, resulting in an almost stage-like, theatrical impression. *Untitled #614*, for example, depicts a man posing confidently before a tree-lined avenue. His posture and attire – silk trousers with flowers and an embroidered cape – radiates both confidence and femininity, thus challenging stereotypical contemporary perceptions of gender.

Each new work presents either an individual figure or a couple, with a consistent focus on Sherman's characters that read as male. The female characters – recognizable only from accessories or subtle changes to the artist's hair and makeup – often serve as secondary figures, providing a contrast to their partners that highlights our innate desire to assign genders to those we encounter. For the couple featured in *Untitled #609*, the artist used the same wig and makeup for each character, through to their facial hair. Gender here is thus only attributable superficially based on the figures' conventional accessories: hat, earrings and purse.

Since her earliest works, Sherman has played with masculinity and gender expression. In *Bus Riders* and *Murder Mystery*, two series from 1976, she impersonates both men and women of different age, color and social status, using elaborate disguises to hide her individuality behind stereotypical character representations. In the diptych *Doctor and Nurse* (1980–87), Sherman stages herself in a clichéd depiction of a 1950s male doctor and female nurse; and her *mise-en-scène* as clergymen and aristocrats in *History Portraits* (1988–90) comments critically on the male-dominated nature of European art history. Finally, the notion of gender is eliminated entirely in her more recent *Clown* series (2004) by means of thick layers of face paint and shapeless costumes. Sherman's new works bring these conversations squarely into the twenty-first century, when gender expression and fluidity have become mainstream subjects, casting further doubt upon the rigid constructs of twentieth-century masculinity and femininity.

The Berlin gallery concurrently presents a solo exhibition by American artist Andrea Zittel.

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Cindy Sherman (*1954, Glen Ridge, NJ) lives and works in New York. Her work is currently the subject of a large-scale exhibition at Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris, which follows a major retrospective exhibition in 2019–20 at the National Portrait Gallery, London, and Vancouver Art Gallery. Other recent solo exhibitions include: Fosun Foundation, Shanghai (2018), The Broad, Los Angeles (2016), Dallas Museum of Art (2013), and Museum of Modern Art, New York, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and Walker Art Center, Minneapolis (all 2012). Selected group exhibitions include Hayward Gallery, London (2018), National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC (2016), Tate Modern, London (2015), The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (2012) and MUMOK, Vienna (2011). Sherman participated in the 55th Venice Biennale (2013).

For further information and press inquiries, please contact Felix Lorenz-Wohnhas (felix@spruethmagers.com).

Opening hours: Tuesday–Saturday, 11am–6pm