

# Ulrike Müller

## *BESIDE MYSELF*

Sylvia Kouvali, *Piraeus*  
19 February – 17 May 2025

The gallery is honoured to be presenting Ulrike Müller's second exhibition with us, throughout both locations, opening first in Piraeus followed shortly after by London.

*Beside Myself* also marks the production of an artist's book that charts Müller's drawing practise in depth, a process integral to the enamel paintings she initiated in 2010. Two hundred and forty "templates," drawings\* in chronological order from the latest to the first, all numbered and organised accordingly. A lexicon as undressing as the revelation of this material.

Her forms as shadows, entities and characters; voluminous, even if slim and seemingly empty, resembling archaic lines discovered on ancient pots, children's fairytales or other familiar places in which modernism resides.

All works are split in two parts and shout out quietly on the possibility of a duality, that of a union, a growth whether in physical or emotional connection and then that of boundaries, borders and separations. The dichotomy on the steel plate where the painting happens is something so subtle and at times invisible, but when one becomes familiar with Ulrike's linguistic framework, it is impossible to un-see. Left and right, positive and negative, full and hollow, warm and cool, strong colour and pale; sometimes the dichotomy is present and sometimes it is seemingly gone.

The power of this very distinct language Ulrike has created over the years, lies also in her ability to unite opposites and make them one. The duality mentioned above, embedded in the enamel paintings, disappears with a twist of a line or the appearance of a band or a coloured surface bleeding onto the 'other side' of the surface. And this is why Müller's work is as much about the politics of bodies that define and give shape to its forms as it is about its colours.

Bodies next to one another, in whatever position and occasion, social, public or private, standing up or lying down manifest as curves or straight lines, always vertically set, squares or circles or semicircles, blurbs or fields. They are friends or lovers, forces in proximity, in friction and engagement.

Colours come later and with extreme mastering of the enamel technique (a transformation in its own right), and like a child filling the white void in a colouring book she creates the work we have grown to know.

And Ulrike has made it one, while creating infinite possibilities, scenarios one could call them, poses also, of her forms to fit within her plates. And this infinity lies in both acts, in drawing and in painting. The book of templates is a manifestation of this process and its infiniteness, and it ends with the works presented in Piraeus.

Ulrike's exhibitions have always felt like gatherings; not only because of the titles she gives her works and her exhibitions, which always signify a plurality of togetherness, but also because the works resemble windows of bodies in situations.

And their masses do not always refer to human forms, as she fills her plates equally with shapes that suggest flora as well as the animal world.

In Piraeus, works from two different groups come together, *Signs and Shields* from 2024 and *Hinges* from 2022.

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While in London hang two big woollen rugs and one enamel painting from the same *Signs and Shields* series. The textile works are always made with and by Jerónimo and Josefina Hernández Ruiz in Oaxaca of Mexico.

In *Rug (orientación)*, a division happens in the space of the work though this time in horizontality. The same form of a cat or a dog or a fox appears like in a playing card, a figure that can be seen either side, colours apart. Pinks and greens, corals and reds merging with earth tones of browns and off whites, a stone grey and a mouse grey signifying a domestic woven palette in juxtaposition.

And in *Rug (partes móviles)*, as if in a children's book, the same creatures in hide and seek, sleeping and, like in a cartoon strip on the next window, ready for action.

Müller's fascination with the production and manufacturing of things through tales, images, patterns and materials produced in good quality by small 20th Century facilities (usually by a creator or a group of people working backstage and mostly anonymously), keeps giving and building a world on top of a world that is slowly disappearing.

What she is really interested in is how this world of materials was once accessed through shops and markets, non monopolised and free, full of endless possibilities and of surprises. It is this exact surprise that she masters so well when unexpectedly a line resembles a mountain or a waist, and in a floral tone a pale line cuts through and creates those rifts and voids that remind us of her as the artist and the hostess of her colourful gatherings.

This process, interestingly, is endless.

\*A group of these drawings will manifest in various outdoor locations in Piraeus and Athens, signifiers of the show for the audience that knows, abstract drawings for the cities' public.

## Bio

Ulrike Müller (b. 1971, Austria) lives and works in New York and Vienna.

Her solo and two-person exhibitions include: *Beside Myself*, Sylvia Kouvali, Piraeus (2025); *Monument To My Paper Body*, Ludwig Forum Aachen, Aachen (2023); *The Conference of the Animals*, Queens Museum, New York (2020); *Or Both (Curated By Mia Locks)*, The Galleries at Moore, Philadelphia (2019); *The Walls Do Not Fall*, Rodeo, London (2019); *Container*, Kunstverein für die Rheinlande und Westfalen, Düsseldorf (2018); *Kitty Kraus / Ulrike Müller*, Parapet Real Humans, St. Louis (2016); *Ulrike Müller: The old expressions are with us always and there are always others*, mumok, Vienna (2015); *Ulrike Müller*, Kunstraum Lakeside, Klagenfurt (2014); *Fever 103, Franza, and Quilts*, Cairo Biennial, Cairo (2010); *Feminism Formalism*, Steinle Contemporary, Munich (2010); *Public Spaces, Private Moments*, O'Connor Art Gallery, Chicago (with Bill Guy) (2008)

Group exhibitions include: *Woven Histories: Textiles And Modern Abstraction*, National Gallery of Art, Washington (2024); *Woven Histories: Textiles And Modern Abstraction*, LACMA, Los Angeles (2023); *Dream About Rooms*, Kinder Kunst Labor, St. Pölten (2023); *Craft*, Galerie Francesca Pia, Zürich (2023); *Changes*, mumok, Vienna (2022); *The Animal Within*, mumok, Vienna (2022); *Evidence*, Mercer Union, Toronto (2022); *Open*, Heidi Horten Collection, Vienna (2022); *Remix: Selections From The Collection Of Contemporary Art*, Kunsthalle Bremen, Bremen (2022); *\*standstill*, RODEO London (2022); *The Printer's Proof: Artist And Printer Collaborations*, Albuquerque Museum, Albuquerque (2022); *ανάβασις\**, RODEO Piraeus (2022); *Women In Print: Recent Acquisitions*, The Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland (2022); *Stories Of Abstraction. Greenberg's Nightmare*, Fondation d'entreprise Pernod-Ricard, Paris (2021); *Avant-Garde And The Contemporary*, The Belvedere Collection From Lassnig To Knebl, Belvedere 21, Vienna (2021); *Enjoy. The Mumok Collection In Change*, mumok, Vienna (2021); *Closer to Life: Drawings and Works on Paper in the Marieluise Hessel Collection*, CCS Bard Galleries, Annandale-on-Hudson, New York (2021); *Gestures Of Affection: In Memory Of Louise Fishman*, Thomas Erben Gallery, New York (2021); *When Art Meets Society/When Society Meets Art*, aqb Project Space, Budapest (2021); *Disrupting The Canon*, The Arts Club London, London (2021); *In Three*, Callicoon Fine Arts, New York (2021); *Threads*, Foxy Production, New York (2021); *Katarzyna Kobro, Shaping Space*, MoMA, New York (2021); *Prize Of The Böttcherstrasse*, Kunsthalle Bremen, Bremen (2020); *1. Color 2. Hole And 3. Joke – Selected Works On Paper*, Galerie Meyer Kainer, Vienna (2020); *May You Live In Interesting Times*, 58th Venice Biennale, Venice (2019); *The Carnegie International*, Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburg (2018); *Yesterday, Today, Today*, Kunstraum Buchberg, Buchberg (2018); *WE*, Rodeo, London (2018); *Trigger: Gender as a Tool and a Weapon*, New Museum, New York (2017); *The Whitney Biennial*, The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2017); *Painting 2.0: Expression in the Information Age*, mumok, Vienna (2016); *Painting 2.0: Expression in the Information Age*, Museum Brandhorst, Munich (2015); *The Little Things Could be Dearer*, MoMA PSI, New York (2014); *Rites of Spring*, Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, Houston (2014); *Looking Back: The Eighth White Columns Annual Selected by Pati Herling*, White Columns, New York (2014); *Descartes' Daughters*, Swiss Institute, New York (2013); *Dance/Draw*, ICA Boston, Boston (2011).

### Public Collections

The Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, OH

The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY

Kunsthalle Bremen, Bremen, Germany

mumok - Museum Moderner Kunst, Stiftung Ludwig Wien, Austria

Oesterreichische Nationalbank, Vienna, Austria

Hessel Museum of Art, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY

J.P. Morgan Chase, New York, NY

Phileas – Fund for Contemporary Art, Vienna, Austria

Lumber Room, Portland, Oregon

Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, PA

Museum of Applied Arts (MAK), Vienna, Austria

Tiroler Landesmuseen, Innsbruck, Austria

JoAnna Gonzalez Hickey Collection, New York, NY