

The approach

Heidi Bucher

Rooms are Surroundings, are Skins

15th November – 22nd December 2013

Private view – Thursday 14th November, 6-9 pm

The Approach is pleased to present the first solo show of Heidi Bucher in the UK. The artist (b. 1926, Winterthur, CH, d. 1993 Brunnen, CH) began her oeuvre with abstract collages and illustrations after studying fashion in Zurich the 1940s. She soon developed a distinct practice fusing sculpture and performance, ranging from sculptural costumes to latex and caoutchouc casts, the latter of which are shown in this exhibition.

In the mid-1970s, Bucher began to dip domestic items into raw and processed rubber, ranging from clothing to blankets and furniture. These intimate objects are transformed into smooth pictorial surfaces, which evoke women's crafts and the home, motherhood and memory, but also sexuality and patriarchal structures. Soon, Bucher made latex and caoutchouc 'skins' of architectural features, whole rooms and facades, which represented a breakthrough in her practice. She made these rubber casts in spaces that had a strong bearing on her own biography, such as her grandparents' house, the *Ahnenhaus* (house of ancestors) or a tiled fridge room in the basement of her studio in a former butchery in Zurich, the *Borg*, an invented word evoking *Burg* (fortress) or *Geborgenheit* (intimacy, safety). The artist also worked in historically charged buildings in the geographical proximity of her hometown, including the decaying former bourgeois hotel Grande Albergo, and the psychiatric institution Bellevue.

The intensely physical process of making her these works is documented in several short films and photographs also shown in this exhibition. It involved embalming rooms and façades through hand application of the liquid rubber and pigments, often covering windows, doors and the floor. Following this laborious process, Bucher would 'skin' the rooms with the help of assistants, slowly stripping off the leathery surfaces. While the embalming may evoke caring or nursing, the 'skinning' of the rooms is an assertive, almost radical action. The works became part of performative activities when Bucher and her assistants carried the latex rooms through the streets of her hometown like a parade of floating rooms, or hung the 'skin' of a long corridor in the *Ahnenhaus* from a flagpole on its façade. These activities may evoke a cleansing ritual followed by a celebration, in which the resultant works act as trophies of a surmounted past.

Bucher's caoutchouc and latex work is reminiscent of the periodic shedding of the snake's skin or the metamorphosis of butterflies and dragonflies, symbols that Bucher frequently employed. She further emphasised the association between her works and insects through her use of iridescent mother of pearl pigment. To the artist, these works represented moments of transformation and renewal and the detachment from the conventions and constraints of the past, as opposed to trauma or loss. Bucher said about the working process, 'we cover and discover'. She applied the same casting technique to live models, which shows the relationship between her architectural 'skins' and the human body. Bucher understood of the human body as well as rooms as vessels, and achieved a sensual connection between architecture and the corporeal through her cast skins.

1st Floor, 47 Approach Road
Bethnal Green, London E2 9LY
Telephone: +44 (0)20 8983 3878
Email: info@theapproach.co.uk
www.theapproach.co.uk

Heidi Bucher (b. 1926, Winterthur, CH, d. 1993 Brunnen CH). Selected solo exhibitions include: Swiss Institute Contemporary Art, New York (2014); Alexander Gray Associates, New York, USA (2014); Centre Culturel Suisse de Paris, Paris, France (2013); Freymond-Guth Fine Arts, Zurich, CH (2013); The Approach, London, UK (2013); Galerie Giti Nourbakhsch, Berlin, DE (2011, 2007); Freymond-Guth Fine Arts, Zurich, CH (2012); Rotwand Gallery, Zurich, CH (2008); Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Zurich, CH (2004); Kunstmuseum Thurgau, CH (1993); Kunstmuseum Winterthur, CH (1983); Galerie Maeght, Zurich, CH (1981, 1979, 1977); Galerie Numaga, Auvornier, CH (1979); Esther Bear Gallery, Santa Barbara, CA, USA (1973); Los Angeles County Museum of Art, CA, USA (1972). Selected group exhibitions include: Palazzo Cavour, IT (2013); The Approach, London, UK (2013); Musée Rath, Geneva, CH (2013); Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Zurich, CH (2013); Galerie Giti Nourbakhsch, Berlin, DE (2010); Rotwand Gallery, Zurich, CH (2008); Schloss Presteneck, Neuenstadt, DE (1992); Fondation Szilassy, CH (1990); Kunstverein Ludwigsburg, DE (1989); Portal, Schloss Solitude, Stuttgart, DE (1986); Kunsthaus Zürich, CH (1980); Maison de la Culture, Rennes, FR (1979); Terre des Hommes, Montréal, Canada (1975). Bucher's works are part of public and private collections, including the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, USA; Kadist Art Foundation, Paris, France and San Francisco, USA; Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Zurich, CH; Centre Pompidou, Paris, France; Kunstmuseum Winterthur, Winterthur, CH.

For further information or images please contact Nora Heidorn at nora@theapproach.co.uk