

LAURA MARS GRP. A KREUZBERG GALLERY DANCES ALONG THE BORDERS OF POP AND PUNK, BETWEEN GLAMOUR AND AN EXPERIMENTAL APPROACH TO MODERNISM.

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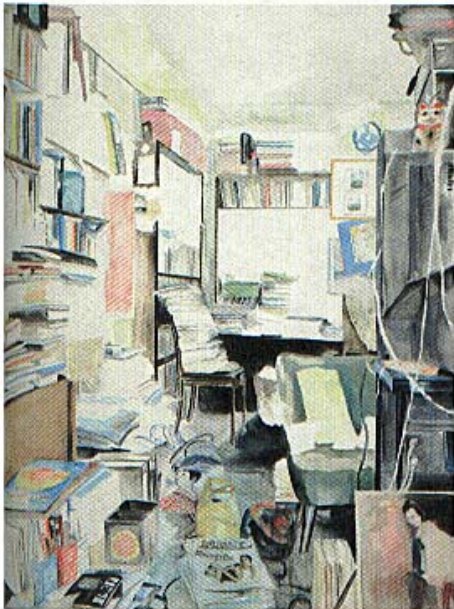
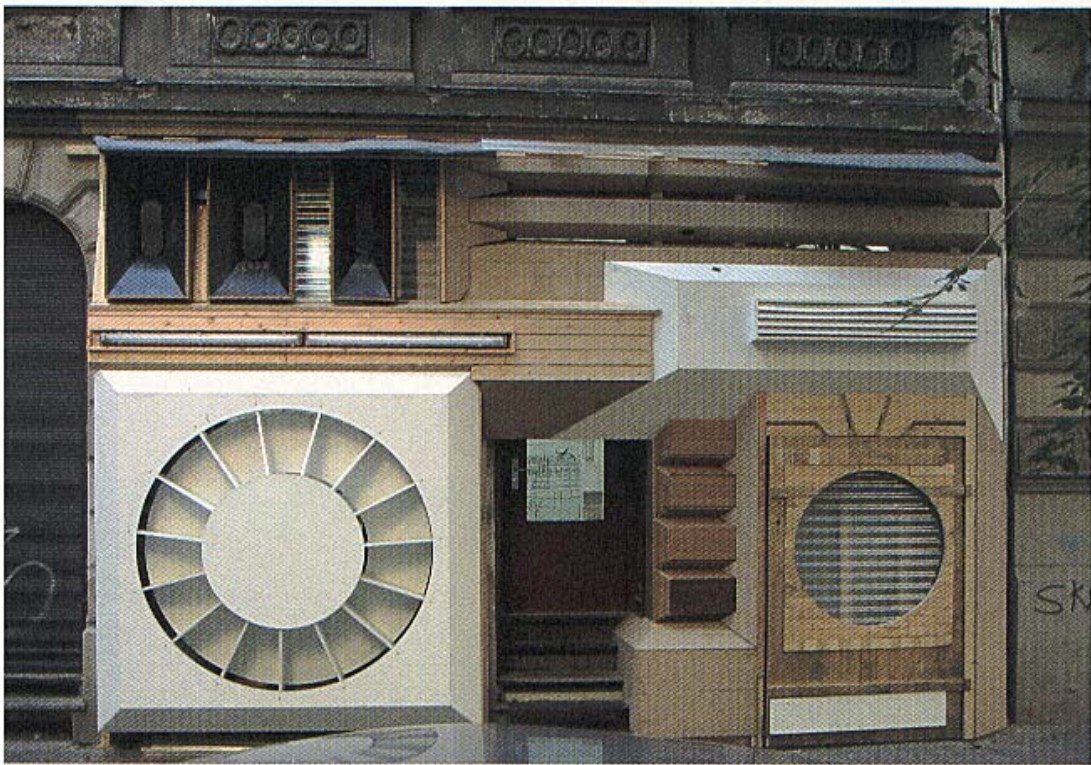
Kerstin Drechsel,
Fernsehturm, 2005
courtesy Laura Mars
Grp., Berlin

The tight community of Laura Mars Grp., a gallery in the Berlin district of Kreuzberg, has loved Kerstin Drechsel's painting for years and pilgrimages to all her exhibitions. In her newest series of paintings, which could be seen at Laura Mars this summer, Drechsel obsessively devotes herself to chaotic housekeeping. Stacks of manuscripts pile high like overgrown slums through the various rooms. Everything overflows with books, files, video cassettes and little notes. Like an altar, a television towers from the mess on the floor in one room. This is not the home of slobs, but rather, of people who live in symbiosis with the material they work with in a way that would give pause to anyone who's got half a sense of order. In her own absurd way, Drechsel is reviving the tradition of the interior decorator. But the paintings can also be seen as a postmodern return of the still life or as parables calling into question any number of manias for orderliness. Regardless, the actual event here is Drechsel's painting itself. She experiments with various angles and zooms the frame forward or backward. With a certain virtuosity, she thins the paint and astutely applies varying grades and values of transparency. She conjures quite a bit simply with a casual brushstroke, and she often breaks up a composition with patches of white, and then smudges or smears them again or intensifies the objects until they become abstract swirls of color. Such exhibitions between pop and punk, between glamor and an experimental approach to Modernism can be seen over and again at Laura Mars. Dorothy Iannone, too, once the chic lover and muse of Dieter Roth, had exhibited her work at Laura Mars before larger institutions heralded her overdue comeback.

Gundula Schmitz opened the gallery with Oliver Koerner von Gustorf in 2001 on Sorauer Strasse in Kreuzberg, where Berlin's most multicultural district is at its most Turkish. Schmitz had already had a career that was typical of the Berlin art scene. She had studied to be a print technician and, once those studies were completed, founded a record label and a publishing house for art and literature, MaasMedia. The name of the gallery is a conscious reference to the 70s-era film, *The Eyes of Laura Mars*; tagging on "Grp." at the end is meant to arouse associations with networking, a productive collective. The original idea of specializing in graphics, though, was undermined by the artists. Even so, works on paper still play an important role. This is true for Drechsel, but also for Ursula Döbereiner, who is compiling an encyclopedia of our memory of media imagery with a ballpoint pen or computer graphics.

Most recently, Philip Wiegard has attracted interested at Laura Mars. He deconstructs and saws apart movie theater seating, folding chairs, bar stools, counters and other furniture in order to bundle or put them back together again at odd angles and perspectives. His large-as-life installations are half-absurd, half illusionist projects that move expertly along the thin line between picture, sculpture and object. For a group exhibition, Wiegard, together with Christoph Ziegler, covered the exterior of the gallery with a giant relief. Using wood, particle board and found building materials, they quote the forms of ghetto blasters, tape decks, washing machines and even details from the facade of the building, so typical for Kreuzberg, and blend all these motifs into a Dadaist collage one can walk right up to.

www.lauramars.de



Philip Wiegard/
Christoph Ziegler,
"o.T.", 2005
outside installation
Kerstin Drechsel,
Variety, 2005
courtesy Laura Mars
Grp., Berlin

Kerstin Drechsel,
3 Zeichnungen -
WKBP2", 2003
courtesy Laura Mars
Grp., Berlin

