

# COSIMA VON BONIN: ROGER AND OUT

**ONE OF THE MOST INFLUENTIAL GERMAN ARTISTS** of her generation, Cosima von Bonin (b. 1962, lives and works in Cologne, Germany) has for over 15 years maintained a diverse practice that includes sculpture, photography, textile “paintings,” installation, performance, film, video, and music—often combined together in large-scale installations. Drawing on a broad range of sources including the work of other artists, popular and vernacular culture, fashion, and electronic music, von Bonin constructs a community of social relations using role-playing, collaboration, appropriation, and the transformation of the commonplace. Her work touches upon ideas of play and indoctrination, structure and improvisation, cultural and gender representations, and identity and self-reflection with both absurdity and humor. Playing with her own autonomy and identity as an artist, von Bonin has moved through different ranks, positions, and roles, including curator, historian, director, producer, and DJ, often working collaboratively with other artists, musicians, and fashion designers.

The artist’s first solo museum exhibition in the United States, COSIMA VON BONIN: ROGER AND OUT features a selected survey of work from 1990 to the present, including those distinguished by her continued interest in collaboration and performance, a selection of her highly regarded textile paintings, and large-scale installations and new sculptures produced on the occasion of this exhibition. This presentation surveys von Bonin’s multidisciplinary practice, which addresses the structures and power of social relations and art-historical lineages, starting with her own. In the photographic work UNTITLED (KREBBER ÜBER KREBBER) (1990), a woman stands topless, wearing partially unzipped jeans. Written on her body, from her chest to below her navel, are the last names of 18 artists—from Duchamp to Spadari—a visual roll call punctuated with flowers. The image originally appeared as an advertisement in *Flash Art* in the 1970s and was subtly altered by von Bonin, who replaced the name [Konrad] Klapheck with that of her husband [Michael] Krebber, retaining the initial “K.” Von Bonin’s subtle manipulation of this advertisement embodies contradictions that are both personal and strategic; the work stands as both a feminist critique and a powerful act of self-reflection.

Since the late 1990s, von Bonin has used textiles such as felt, dishcloths, Anatolian wool blankets, or a variety of printed fabrics—from camouflage to Laura Ashley patterns—to make the slipcover for a full-scale version of a 30-foot sailboat, an enormous bikini, costumes for performances, upholstery for enlarged mushrooms and dog toys, and what she calls her “Lappen” (rags), a body of fabric works stitched with appropriated images that function like paintings or drawings. Made without evidence of her hand, von Bonin’s textile works are a means of refashioning and re-tailoring materials that clothe, upholster, adorn, and clean.

Continually engaging with others as part of her practice, von Bonin vigorously embraces the collaborative process, as exemplified by her large-scale multimedia installation KAPITULATION/CAPITULATION (2004). Incorporating performance, sculpture, and video, this work addresses issues of conformity, indoctrination, play, and ritual within the context of obedience school, for humans as well as dogs. MOCA’s presentation—

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the first since it was produced for her acclaimed 2004 exhibition, *2 Positions at Once*, at the Kölnischer Kunstverein, Germany—consists of a constellation of rooms connected by interior tunnels and slides. Not to be entered, the work is viewed through overhead mirrors and staircases positioned so that the spectator may look in from the top at a variety of interior elements, including an actual-size sculpture of a catamaran sailboat covered in grey tweed, enlarged soft sculptures of dog toys, and chalk drawings on blackboard-like walls. The installation was used in the production of *KAPITULATION/CAPITULATION* and *HUNDESCHULE/OBEDIENCE SCHOOL* (both 2004), a video in two parts. In a scene from *HUNDESCHULE*, a group of people attempts to rotate the catamaran in its room; too large to turn intact, the sculpture is broken in order to rotate it in the space. As MOCA Associate Curator Bennett Simpson wrote in his essay in the accompanying exhibition catalogue, “*KAPITULATION* and *HUNDESCHULE* speak of maintaining: making the boat fit. Von Bonin’s boats have always seemed symbols for herself: the artist-out-of-water, met or mastered by others, cumbersome with grace.”

Many of von Bonin’s newest works created for the exhibition assume the form of obstacles, means of enclosure, or positions for observation drawn from vernacular objects such as gates, barriers, huts, furniture, or vehicles of display. Transformed through the use of new materials and scales, these new works, like all of von Bonin’s production, accompany and bear witness to the complex and reflective—and at times hilariously absurd—process of negotiating life and work.

—Ann Goldstein, MOCA senior curator

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Additional support is provided by Friedrich Petzel Gallery.

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#### THURSDAY, OCT 4, 6:30pm

MOCA GRAND AVENUE

Walkthrough of *COSIMA VON BONIN: ROGER AND OUT* with MOCA Senior Curator and exhibition curator **Ann Goldstein**.

#### THURSDAY, NOV 29, 6:30pm

MOCA GRAND AVENUE

Walkthrough of *COSIMA VON BONIN: ROGER AND OUT* with MOCA Associate Curator and catalogue essayist **Bennett Simpson**.

MOCA Art Talks Presented by Gallery C is made possible by The Times Mirror Foundation Endowment and Gallery C.

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Like dogs? Join this playful workshop, led by a dynamic group of Los Angeles teenagers, exploring the work of Cosima von Bonin. Snacks provided.

Teens of Contemporary Art is made possible by the Joseph Drown Foundation.

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