

Gisela Weimann, Berlin 2007

Concept

SHARED TIMES **Questions and Answers**

Translation: Helen Carter

In dialog with other women active in the fields of culture, science and politics seven Berlin-based women artists, all born between 1940 and 1950, document and comment on work they have produced since the 1970s:

Christa Biederbick • Karin Fleischer • Gisela Genthner • Sarah Haffner • Heide Pawelzik • Regina Roskoden • Gisela Weimann

The main aim of this book is to feature the work of seven women artists, including biographical texts. Each artist presents typical works or groups of work from various phases in her professional life whether figurative or abstract painting and sculpture, photography and film, installations, conceptual art, sound art, interdisciplinary projects or the use of new media. This will indicate the spectrum of contemporary forms of expression over the last decade and the development of the work in question.

The point of departure for this retrospective inquiry is the time they spent as students at the 'Hochschule für Bildende Künste' in Berlin, now the Berlin University of the Arts, between 1965 and 1975. Their professors were members of the artistic circle including Hermann Bachmann, Alexander Camaro, Alexander Gonda, Hans Jaenisch, Hans Kuhn, Dietmar Lemcke, Ernst Schumacher and Hann Trier, whose influence made itself felt on the cultural scene well beyond Berlin. At that time there were not yet any women professors at the University. This point of departure and the contact they have maintained with one another since then has prompted the artists to reflect on their own development and changes in culture and society.

The title of the book, Shared Times, is intended as a double metaphor, as the time each of the artists had at her disposal was used in different ways. The main areas of life and work developed differently and the individual careers were divided up into various stages: starting a family, living abroad, employment outside the studio to ensure financial security, involvement in associations and socio-cultural projects were reflected over many years in the scope, subject and content of the creative work.

Divisions were not only present in the artists' private and professional lives: in postwar Europe upheavals and conflict in economic and social politics led to division of countries and creation of new borders. A divided Germany and the unique conditions within the divided city of Berlin were influential factors in the lives of those Berlin-based artists and intellectuals who took part in this book. The Cold War created a deadlock which brought with it an unnerving sense of insecurity. The process of confronting the repercussions of these repeated, deep-seated divisions, triggered by the fall of the Berlin Wall, is far from being complete.

On the other hand, the student movement and the new feminist movement brought people a new beginning, change and new possibilities. In aesthetic terms, especially in Berlin, this was felt in a revival of realistic tendencies and the search for communicative forms of expression with socio-cultural and socio-political elements and on the public art and culture scene for instance, in the foundation of galleries and museums showing work exclusively by women artists and by major exhibitions and symposia with themes and realms of experience specific to women. The insights gained during this time and the demands which sprang from them led to the introduction of the quota system and thus increased representation of women in all areas of society.

The book's focus revolves around the idea of "shared time" like a spiral.

- **Thoughts on time:** in a joint introduction, women active in Berlin's cultural life describe the contemporary background to the project in terms of their training, their success, results of research and initiatives.
- **7 Questions – 49 Answers:** other women, active in a variety of professions, each asked the artists one question emerging from their own personal background. The artists' answers compressed these lines of inquiry into a fabric including reflective memories and political and cultural development within Berlin.

Subjects pursued by the lines of inquiry:

Dr. Brigitte Hammer, Art historian, curator, author

The woman artist and children

Ginka Steinwachs, poet

Different experiences of time and how its limitations are overcome

Sabine Zurmühl, Journalist, film maker, mediator

Confronting fascism and feminism

Marianne Pitzen, visual artist, director of the Women's Museum in Bonn

Solidarity among women

Hannah Kruse, Goldrausch women artists' project

Ways of public presentation and self-management

Renate Grisebach, art promoter, chairwoman of a private art association

Artist galleries and private art sponsorship

Alice Ströver, Spokesperson on cultural policy for Bündnis 90/Die Grünen

Options and activities in cultural policy

- **International comparison:** a third element builds on the perspectives gained by the Berlin experience. With insight drawn from their own research work done during the same period as the project and their descriptions of their own career paths, women art historians from the US, Mexico and West and East Europe contribute a comparative reference to the situation of the women artists and writers in Berlin.

Contributing authors to the international commentary:

Professor Dr. Eli Bartra, philosopher and author specializing in the female aesthetic, teaches at the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana (Metropolitan Autonomous University) in Mexico City, Mexico

Katy Deepwell, art critic and author, publisher of n.paradoxa, teaches at the University of the Arts in London, England

Sanne Kofod Olsen, art historian, author and curator, rector of the Fynske Art Academy in Odense, Denmark

Dr. Ramona Novicov, art historian, art critic and curator, teaches at the Faculty of Fine Arts at the University of Oradea, Romania

Professor Dr. Mercedes Replinger, art historian, author and curator, teaches at the Faculty of Arts at the Complutense University in Madrid, Spain

Professor Dr. Moira Roth, art historian and author, teaches at Mills Women's College in Oakland, USA

Each of the women artists profiled in this book project "Shared Times" has reacted in her own personal way to the events and changes in society; each has still carried on working undeterred. Forty years on, it's time to take stock and analyze.

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