

A close-up portrait of a young man with short, light-colored hair and a nose ring, holding a cigarette. He is wearing a light-colored turtleneck sweater. The background is slightly blurred, showing a green tufted sofa and a metallic, reflective surface.

ROSEMARIE
TROCKEL

MUSEUM ^{MMK}

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ROSEMARIE
TROCKEL

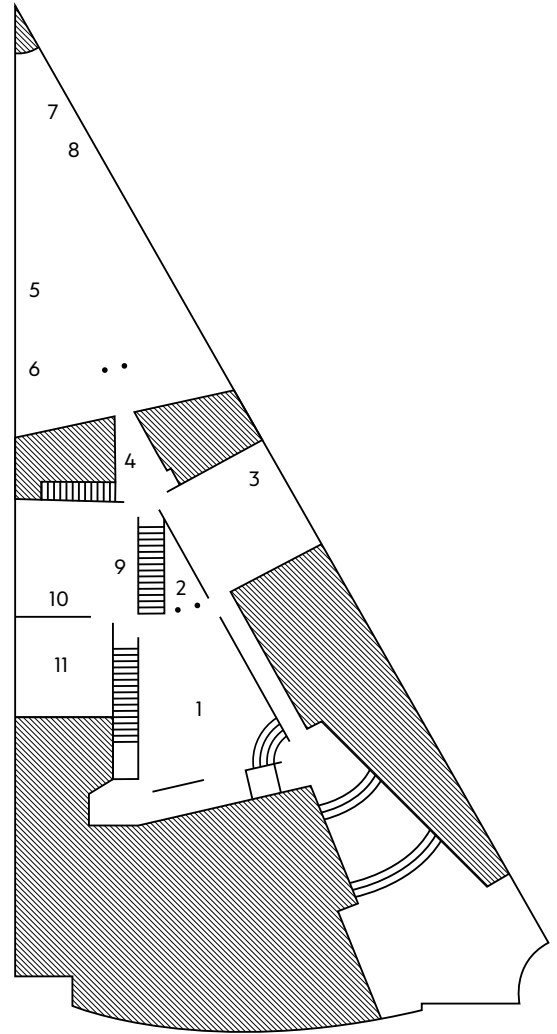
10.12.22 – 18.06.23

As rigid as they are different, the white men look out at us. They are the *Clock Owners*. They are the time regime, dictating the pace of each day. *Notre-Dame*, a 2.9 meter-long hairpin, leans quietly against the wall. Adroit and elegant, it tames the wild, the impetuous, and the provocative: it is both an instrument of liberation and a weapon. Reducing it to mere aeration, four extraction fans fill a window cavity. Without providing either insight or outlook, the very idea of the window is distorted; instead of an opening, it becomes an exclusion barrier.

The brutality and absurdity of normative regimes emerge openly in the work of Rosemarie Trockel. Definitions, restrictions, paternalism, and violence due to gender become visible and transparent. Her advance is a risky, courageous, combative, and humorous one. In all media—drawing and painting, photography, sculpture, installation, and film—Trockel’s sociological gaze is as much directed at social regimes and political structures as it is at nature. Her observations and studies of processional caterpillars, starlings, chickens, or lice, while scientifically sound and precise, always include her own critical gaze as a vital component. She appropriates the ambivalences in her work, capturing them decidedly.

The comprehensive exhibition displays works from all periods of Rosemarie Trockel’s oeuvre, from the 1970s to the new works created especially for the museum.

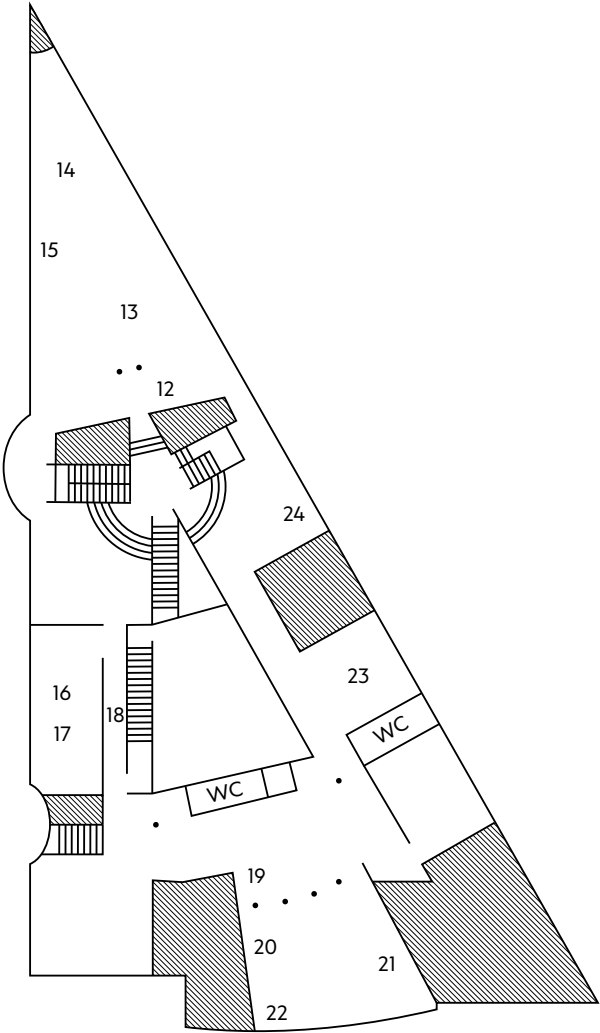
Level 1



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|---|----------------------------|
| 1. Prisoner of Yourself | 3. Book Drafts |
| 2. Ohne Titel ("Es gibt kein unglücklicheres Wesen unter der Sonne als einen Fetischisten der sich nach einem Frauenschuh sehnt und mit einem ganzen Weib vorlieb nehmen muss" K.K.:F.) | 4. Ann de nuit |
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| | 9. Justine/Juliette |
| | 10. Aus: Briefe an Gott |
| | 11. Continental Divide |

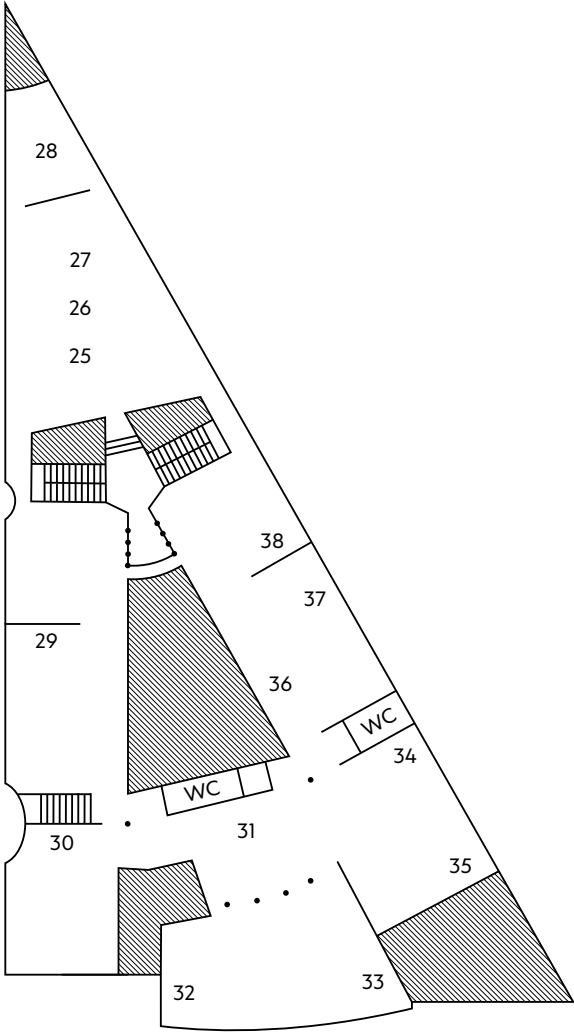
The QR code below the labels in the exhibition space provides a link to audio descriptions for people with visual impairment.

Level 2



- 12. Die Gleichgültige
- 13. Studio 45: Haus für Läuse
- 14. Napoli
- 15. Shutter
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- 18. Clock Owner
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- 21. Beyond the Valley of the Dolls
- 22. Living Means to Appreciate Your Mother Nude
- 23. S.h.e.
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Level 3



- 25. Question of Time
- 26. Pattern Is a Teacher
- 27. Evening Sun
- 28. Geruchsskulptur 2
- 29. Château en Espagne
- 30. Ageism
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- 32. Grater 2
- 33. Zum schwarzen Ferkel 3
- 34. Rush Hour
- 35. White Hope
- 36. CLUSTER V – Subterranean Illumination
- 37. CLUSTER VI – Door Ajar
- 38. Prisoner of Yourself

1. *Prisoner of Yourself*, 1998
38. *Prisoner of Yourself*, 2016

Rosemarie Trockel gave works created many years apart the same title—*Prisoner of Yourself*. The 1998 work consists of a silkscreen printed directly onto the walls of a room. Its pattern, made up of essentially identical grids, is reminiscent of a loosely knitted fabric the stretchy threads of which refuse to be exactly parallel. Having received a lot of attention for her so-called knitted pictures from the mid-1980s, introducing a common “female” craft technique into the battlefield of art, Trockel refers in *Prisoner of Yourself* (1998) to the pictures that made her famous. But in the blue silkscreen patterns on the wall, in which the artist has become a prisoner of herself, there is nothing left of the real woolen yarn. Famous in her own right by this point, Trockel had become a prisoner of her work: the experience of happiness and power of the beginning becomes exhausted through concentration on her own formal language, making the artist a prisoner of her forms. There is then the risk of tedious self-quotations, of the mystification of what one is doing in practice, and, finally, of a total loss of contact with social reality. This would be one aspect of the imprisonment of artists in the self: concentration on their own formal language has destroyed contact with reality. But, in another way, Trockel also reflects on a possible escape route. For concentration on the self can also lead to a recognition of those patterns and grids that have been imposed on the artist by social and personal power structures. The recognition of these power structures can subsequently form the basis of a free relationship to oneself that can then become the point of resistance against power.

In another work titled *Prisoner of Yourself* from 2016, weightiness predominates. The glazed ceramic chain consisting of asymmetrical protrusions weighs sixteen kilograms. Moreover, strong, coarse chain links hang over it that are more reminiscent of the heavy ankle chains of prisoners than of the lightweight knitting yarns of the earlier work.

2. Ohne Titel ("Es gibt kein unglücklicheres Wesen unter der Sonne als einen Fetischisten der sich nach einem Frauenschuh sehnt und mit einem ganzen Weib vorlieb nehmen muss" K.K.:F.), 1991

Rosemarie Trockel did not give a specific title to the cast-bronze seal that is hung upside down by its hind flippers from a massive chain, but she did provide it with two more-or-less weighty additions: the seal wears a ribbon made of light-colored artificial hair around its neck, and it bears as a subtitle a famous quotation from Karl Kraus's periodical *Die Fackel*: "There is no more unfortunate creature under the sun than a fetishist who yearns for a woman's shoe and has to settle for the whole woman."

Kraus is referring to the fact that human desire can find its object of arousal in parts of an organism—like the hair or shoes—but it can never even come close to enjoying its object without the whole body. A shoe without a body, like a wig without a person, is uninteresting for the desire limited to one part. Conversely, this also means that one will not be able to "enjoy" any one part without leaving traces on the rest of the body.

And thus, the industrial form of modern desire is manifested in Trockel's seal. The practice of suspending the animal from the hind flippers only became a symbol of seal hunting when the industry began to use large ships. After being shot or beaten to death on land, the hind flippers of the heavy seals are tied together with chains, and the animals are then pulled aboard by cranes, heads dangling down.

3. Book Drafts, 1982–1997

Like the tip of the iceberg, a good book title—think *Das Kapital* or *In Search of Lost Time*—can reveal the abyss contained within the subject. Rosemarie Trockel's Book Drafts repeatedly test her penchant for allusions, shifts, and new combinations and can be interpreted as variations on this hermeneutic truth.

For instance, the title *Dolce Vita Activa* (1989) links Federico Fellini's 1960 film *La Dolce Vita* with *The Human Condition*, the major 1958 work by the Jewish philosopher Hannah Arendt, which appeared in German under the title *Vita activa oder Vom tätigen Leben* in 1960. In it, Arendt explores the same question that remains unanswered in Fellini's *Dolce Vita* of Roman high society: what holds our society together? According to Arendt, it is our ability to act; to be active. For Arendt, politics is an expression of daily agency and the power to act.

However, it is not always possible to act as blithely as Arendt's book title promises. We might be afflicted by a *Phobia* (1988) that petrifies us and makes us incapable of action. If the phobia develops into a *Theoriephobie* (Theory Phobia, 1983), even Hannah Arendt can't help us, in which case we should perhaps first undertake some self-reflection. *Toll, dass du nicht kommst* (Great That You're Not Coming, 1982) is not meant sarcastically, although the title is accompanied by a photograph of Christian Social Union (CSU) politician Franz Josef Strauß casually slouching in an armchair on the telephone. As the CDU/CSU's candidate for chancellor in 1980, he lost to Social Democratic Party (SPD) candidate Helmut Schmidt. Strauß was the first populist of the former Federal Republic of Germany to combine corruption and personal enrichment with an extremely successful political style in Bavaria.

Precisely because they don't spell out the content for us, the titles of Trockel's Book Drafts become a personal and political panopticon of her story—we can piece them together for ourselves.

4. *Ann de nuit*, 1992

In Rosemarie Trockel's *Ann de nuit* (Ann at night), chalk writing on a blackboard is wiped away by a female hand. With the film, Trockel suggests both a personal fascination with and her reflections on a particular scholar and his formalizations. In 1982, publisher Suhrkamp Wissenschaft's "white program" included the book *Love as Passion: The Codification of Intimacy* by Niklas Luhmann, a sociologist then teaching at Bielefeld University. In part on the back of this systems-theory study of love, Luhmann advanced to become the star of sociology in the 1980s. The contrast between his appearance and his subject matter made this most prosaic of all theorists appealing to artists and writers. The inhibited sociologist looked more like an administrative official than a "mad intellectual." He claimed that it had long been part of sociology's body of knowledge that feeling and acting in intimate relationships are oriented to cultural imperatives, even that both real and fantasy sexual relationships owe their limits and surges to this influence. No one had heard it expressed in that way before. Luhmann added that the medium of love itself was therefore not an emotion but a communicative code according to whose rules one could express, form, simulate, ascribe to others, and deny feelings—and thus adjust oneself to the resulting consequences if communication took place. This claim was initially perplexing.

Trockel depicts this perplexity by beginning the film with the phrase "Ann de nuit" being written with chalk on a blackboard; this "night" then opens with an image on the blackboard and the words "Sociology is the Science of Love." Above the sentence are the words "rabbit" and "hare"—two animals that are often associated with passionate sexuality. The lower part of the image contains squiggly lines that are more reminiscent of a doodle than a scientific diagram. To make the sentence in the center manifest itself as a law, a woman's hand enters the picture from the right and begins to wipe away the writing. The unpleasant sound of erasing chalk from a blackboard is augmented by a loud scratching sound produced by conspicuously long fingernails on the blackboard.

5. *Untitled*, 1985

6. *Made in Western Germany*, 1987

Rosemarie Trockel's early knitted pictures have become her trademark, a fact that lends them a certain paradox: in deliberately avoiding a personal knitting style, an individual hand, they nonetheless have come to characterize the artist's prominence, if not becoming her defining insignia.

From the very beginning, the pictures have played on the intrinsic contradictions within the "seal of quality." In *Untitled*, for example, the artist reproduces the Woolmark, otherwise used on clothing to denote high-quality. The logo is depicted in three rows of machine-knitted wool (with some trimmed off), making the quality seal an ornament of technical copyability—just as replaceable and interchangeable as any other industrially produced object. In the work *Made in Western Germany* too, the titular seal of quality appears as an endless series in black lettering on gray wool, ultimately transforming it into a mere phrase whose connection to the art market is established via the mostly convenient formats of pictures in Plexiglas frames.

But here, Trockel is not only playing with the dialectic of adaptation and resistance or rebellion, a dialectic within which all artistic positions have worked since the beginning of modernism. Her knitted pictures—not only in retrospect of her entire oeuvre—contain a remnant that cannot be integrated into the tension between adaptation and rebellion. And this non-integrable component undermines the discourses surrounding the works. All her knitted pictures, can be seen in the context of the feminist discourses of its time: knitting, a neglected activity connoted with women's work, is depersonalized by Trockel and transferred into the spaces of high art. This is also connected with the politicization of knitting that happened when a few female and male Green Party lawmakers, who first appeared in the West German Bundestag in the 1980s, knitted while following the debates in the plenary hall.

The small inaccuracies that are an intrinsic aspect of the stitches, despite them having been mechanically produced, points to the simple fact that one's line of vision or perspective alone can change the perception of an apparently uniform object. And on closer inspection, it may seem that no motif in the pictures exactly resembles another; that, in their repetition, the smallest differences become visible—both in the threads of yarn and in the motifs themselves.

Repetition can reveal the smallest, barely perceptible differences, which can be no less an engine of change than a big bang.

7. *Untitled*, 1992

8. *Unplugged*, 1994

Rosemarie Trockel's works that incorporate stoves and hot plates—such as the three hot plates of *Untitled* or the twelve hot plates of *Unplugged*—have, like her knitted pictures, often been interpreted quite conclusively. Their reference to activities with feminine connotations, such as cooking, is so obvious that it seems to need no further clarification.

When Trockel addressed hot plates in the 1990s, she was also pointing to the longevity of structures that assign women's place in life to the kitchen. Women having to settle for spending their lives in the kitchen and at the stove—to the extent that they're almost "part of the furniture"—wasn't just an often-illustrated standard of the 1950s and 1960s in postwar West Germany. And these structures' constancy is so tenacious that the dread associated with them can be evoked with the mere use of one or more hot plates.

But by reducing the "life script" assigned to women in the kitchen to hot plates, Trockel also methodically links her works to Minimalism, in which a few symbols represent something larger—not presenting an interpretation but allowing viewers to read into the meaning as they will. Therefore, Trockel's hot plates can also morph in the viewers' perception into free, abstract objects that completely lose their original ties to cooking and the kitchen.

The hot plates thus also become the basis for associations of three-dimensional objects: a graceful black disc, like a vinyl record on a turntable, that spins in the imagination and can lead to its own paradise. In addition to the clearly feminist critique of the standard "allocation" of women to kitchen work, the hot plates are therefore also related to the psychology of perception and the history of art.

The stove as a subject of art, after all, is not Trockel's innovation, having already appeared along with other everyday objects in the US in Pop Art from the early 1960s. In his 1961/62 oil painting *Kitchen Range*, for example, Roy Lichtenstein placed an open stove in the center of the picture, and Andy Warhol reproduced a kitchen pot in an advertisement in his *Cooking Pot* of 1962. Unlike Pop Art's practice, Trockel's stove works don't merely affirm everyday culture and heroize this commodity-based world; from

her own perspective, they add a critique of these everyday situations from which the men of Pop Art were so far removed.

9. *Justine/Juliette*, 1988

It lies there like a sheet of paper: a brand new, gleaming white shirt—with a small stain that is not a mistake, but has been hand-embroidered using black yarn. The shirt gets its very topical and timely contextualization not from its appearance but from its label. “Justine Juliette,” it reads, and underneath “COLLECTION DESIR.”

Justine and *Juliette* are the titles of two novels by the Marquis de Sade that in the story of their creation and publication tell their own tale of the dynamism of the only citizens’ revolution that deserves the name, namely the French Revolution. In April 1801, the Marquis was condemned to life imprisonment for writing the “disgraceful” *Justine* and the “even more terrible” *Juliette*, and dissemination of both novels was strictly forbidden. And yet, the story of the books began with success.

After de Sade had been freed by the revolutionaries in 1789, he published *Justine, or the Misfortunes of Virtue* anonymously in 1791. Six editions by 1801 testify to the success of a novel featuring the first literary personification of a strong woman born weak. While readers could experience *Justine* in a fight with and against morality, in a fight for good and evil, in the life story of her sister *Juliette*, which came out in 1801, virtue had already been defeated and one debauchery was followed by another—arranged and staged by women. That was why it all came crashing down, not just for the Marquis but for women too. The revolutionaries had started to become more unified as Napoleon seized power, and their virtuous ideal became the small bourgeois family. With the Industrial Revolution, their desires became “mechanized,” that is, transformed into their industrial form of production. The “COLLECTION DESIR” refers exactly to this process: the machine-based manufacture of desires.

10. *Aus: Briefe an Gott*, 1994

In *Aus: Briefe an Gott* (From: Letters to God) the lens opens like a curtain as writer Arthur Miller and actress Marilyn Monroe step in front of the cameras. In 1956, Monroe and Miller had arrived at Miller's farm in rural Roxbury, Connecticut, for a press conference about their upcoming wedding. The event, which was attended by several photographers and journalists, was preceded by a serious car accident. The press photographer Mara Scherbatoff was killed when her driver followed the couple at high speed and lost control of the car on a bend.

Visibly affected and shocked in the original recordings, Miller and Monroe report on the tragic accident before answering journalists' questions. While Monroe is asked about the future of her career after—and despite—the wedding, the focus with Miller is on the accusations of the House Un-American Activities Committee that he was facing at the time. Both the questions directed at the couple and their behavior illustrate role clichés: beauty and intellect, youth and age, femininity and masculinity are constructed as formal opposites. Monroe is the naïve, sensuous beauty at the side of the self-stylized intellectual. Although she repeatedly attempted to defend herself against such an objectifying gaze and addressed it openly, this role also guided her external presentation. She gazes adoringly at Miller in the recordings, wraps her arms around him. Rosemarie Trockel superimposes lines from one of Monroe's songs on these shots of the couple as they bathe in the lights of camera flashes.

In the song "Lazy," performed by the actress in the role of a showgirl for the film *There's No Business Like Show Business* (1954), Monroe refuses invitations by telephone from various suitors. She doesn't feel well, is passive; she just wants to laze at home. Trockel employs two lines from the song, and we hear Monroe say, "Physically I'm in pretty good shape, but mentally I'm comatose. [...] Physically I'm in pretty good shape, it's my attitude that's passive." Combined with the shots of the couple, a stifling image emerges in which Monroe herself reinforces the clichés imposed on her. The focus is solely on her looks, while her intellect is in doubt or denied altogether.

11. *Continental Divide*, 1994

In her film *Continental Divide*, Rosemarie Trockel takes herself captive and cruelly interrogates this intimidated double, posing unrelenting questions about her status as an artist. Over and over again, she repeats "Who is the best artist?" The classic trappings of an interrogation—a surveillance-like overhead camera angle and a chair for the interrogated delinquent—make the situation clear. The two Trockels circle each other in various poses to the sound of Maurice Ravel's composition *Boléro*, which begins quietly in the background and becomes louder and more dominant towards the end.

Each answer to the same question is followed by reprimands and corporal punishment. The interviewee mentions all kinds of artists, from David Hockney, Luc Tuymans, and Nan Goldin to Andreas Gursky, Sylvie Fleury, Jimmie Durham, Martin Kippenberger, and Rosemarie Trockel herself. The interviewer's response to her own name—a sarcastic "You hit the jackpot"—brings to mind a stock phrase used for verbal humiliation that was all too familiar to high-school students in the 1970s: Think before you speak!

Embedded in rhetorical chastisements that transform over time, there remains the fundamental and ongoing artistic self-questioning: Am I the best artist? Where exactly do I stand in the rankings? And, if I've made it, will I stay in the running or be gone again next year? Since the advent of modernism at the latest, artists can no longer escape the commercial profit-and-loss calculations of the art market.

Trockel's answer to these questions is implied in the title. Originally referring to the watershed in North and Central America, the *Continental Divide* applies not only to land masses, states, and societies; it also affects human beings as individuals. In the words of the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, every experience of the ego is divided from the beginning, the unity of the person is therefore an illusion. This is another reason why self-doubt about one's own status as an artist is never-ending. Life and art, the private and the public person remain separated without ever being able to find each other.

12. *Die Gleichgültige*, 1994

Rosemarie Trockel's video *Die Gleichgültige* (The Indifferent) is an excerpt from Jean Painlevé's best-known work, *L'Hippocampe* (The Seahorse), a film shot in 1933 in an aquarium. Painlevé was one of the first to show seahorses mating in his thirteen-minute, 35-mm film. Voiced over with poetic words, he staged the seahorses like dancers in water. The filmmaker made over 200 films about underwater life, but these were almost always presented as scientific research. It was his combination of scientific curiosity and aesthetic presentation that turned Painlevé into an influential source of inspiration for contemporaries like Man Ray and Alexander Calder. By being directed at an audience beyond science and art, he managed time and again to encourage public debate as well. *L'Hippocampe* is one example of this, because it triggered fierce controversy about the reversal of gender roles, and to this day the seahorse is viewed as a symbol of gender equality.

The female seahorse produces the eggs along with a supply of yolk that, during mating, she deposits into the male's broodpouch—where they are fertilized and carried by the male. In her film clip, Trockel shows the young as they are released into the world out of the male's pouch.

"To those who are ardently striving to better their daily lot, to those women who long for someone free from the usual selfishness to share their troubles as well as their joys," commented Painlevé on his film "is dedicated this symbol of a reliability which unites the most masculine efforts to the most feminine maternal care."

13. *Studio 45: Haus für Läuse*, 1994

Rosemarie Trockel turns the unkempt brown wig into a work of both metonymy and metaphor with the title *Studio 45: Haus für Läuse* (Studio 45: House for Lice). With "Studio 45," the work employs the rhetorical device of metonymy, in which a name can stand for a system (such as the use of "the crown" to mean the monarchy) or a part can stand for a whole (as in "to sail" may stand for the motion of an entire ship). "Studio 45" reminds us of the Studio 54 which captures a whole era of art in which pop cultural lifestyles were integrated into the works of visual artists.

The legendary Studio 54—located at 254 West 54th Street in midtown New York from 1977 to 1986—is still one of the most famous clubs in the world. Along with Truman Capote, Lee Radziwill, Bianca and Mick Jagger, and Lou Reed, Andy Warhol was one of the regular guests of this nightclub famed for its excesses. Warhol, who never left home without a wig, chronicled nights in the club in his diaries. But he also had a sense of the difficulties of hiring exterminators in cockroach- and lice-infested New York City.

With *Haus für Läuse*, Trockel turns the wig into a metaphor for these difficulties, as anyone unable to rid their home of lice has to shave their hair and cover the bald spots with artificial hair. At the same time, however, the work also speaks of a tender reverence for the world of Andy Warhol as well as for the habitats of the lice. Considering a wig from the point of view of lice, focusing on it as a living space and refuge, is one of Trockel's recurring motifs. The *Haus für Läuse* is only a small step from the famous *Haus für Schweine und Menschen* (House for Pigs and People), which she created at documenta X in Kassel in 1997.

There are two types of lice one might find on a wig: the head louse and the body louse. Although it is scientifically disputed whether these are two separate species or subspecies, they can be differentiated in terms of their habitats. The habitat of head lice is the human head and hair. They suck blood from the scalp after puncturing it with their pointed mouthparts. Body lice, on the other hand, suck blood from the entire human body, except from the head. The two types of lice thus avoid each other's source of nourishment geographically, but they can meet in wigs, since the body louse may use any form of clothing as a place to retreat and rest.

14. *Napoli*, 1994

The film *Napoli* shows the movements of huge flocks of starlings over Naples. Rosemarie Trockel coincidentally had a camera with her when she happened to witness this spectacle of over five million starlings, which has since become famous as a prime scientific example of swarm intelligence.

As daylight fades in the fall and winter, millions of starlings gather in suitable places. A few hundred birds at first, their numbers soon grow to the thousands, as they move together in formation like waves through the air. In its flight maneuvers, the swarm spreads apart as if it were about to disintegrate, only to contract again in the next moment. Based on filmed images of the birds' mid-air swarm, biologists, physicists, and computer scientists surrounding Giorgio Parisi, the Italian physicist and Nobel Prize winner, have studied starling swarms in recent years and detected a remarkably non-hierarchical principle: what looks from the ground as if it was designed by a single choreographer turned out to be an information system fed by smaller local groups—a phenomenon that small-group theorist Pyotr Alexeyevich Kropotkin could hardly have better dreamed up, nor Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in their musings on swarm behavior. The starlings have no central coordination and decision-making authority in their swarm; instead, each bird keeps a constant eye on only six or seven other birds. They concentrate on these and follow their movements—or the movements of these few birds cause them to alter their own movement or direction. What appears as if conducted by a baton is in fact the interplay of ultra-fast self-organized information transmission. The basic principle of self-organization consists in the precise observation of six or seven neighbors; the knowledge is transferred via the behavior; the knowledge variety is finally produced due to their large numbers.

But this is knowledge that Trockel—and all other witnesses to this spectacle—could not yet have had at their disposal when this film was shot in 1994. In this respect, it is also not an illustration of this understanding that her starlings swarm to Jimi Hendrix's "Third Stone from the Sun." The musician's largely instrumental piece, with intermittent mention of people who know nothing, was like the inaugural rhythm for his first band, The Jimi Hendrix Experience. The song, released in 1967 on his first album

Are You Experienced, combined elements from different musical forms, such as jazz and psychedelic rock, without synthesizing them. One could say that Hendrix's side-by-side appropriation of every style at his disposal constituted something like swarm intelligence—a free-form coming together of early 1960s rock and pop.

15. *Shutter*, 2006–2010

For her glazed ceramic works entitled *Shutter*, Rosemarie Trockel bought a piece of raw meat from the butcher's shop. She then processed and pressed it in order for it to serve as a template for the ceramic shapes that she then inscribed with linear, grid-like imprints.

What is obscured or made indiscernible when buying any kind of meat is the violence it takes to kill an animal. That which is presented to us at the meat counter in such a rosy and inviting way is the product of a long process of violence. This usually begins by depriving the animals—be they pigs, cattle, or lambs—of their childhood, not to mention the rest of their lives. Slaughtered daily (usually in their first year of life) and turned into meat, no one today knows exactly what the lifespan of these pigs might have otherwise been. For Trockel, however, this dark, shuttered off violence remains present in the violent substance that feeds consumers.

16. *Hoffnung*, 1984

17. *Gretchenfrage*, 1984

Rosemarie Trockel's monkey portrait drawings can be divided into phases based on their titles, which can be read like the history of the relationship of disappointment between humans and monkeys in general. There is the phase of hope, expressed chiefly in the approachable friendliness of the monkey faces in the ten drawings from the series *Hoffnung* (Hope). These faces look directly at us; they seem to not only seek eye contact, but to be not at all averse to proximity to the viewer. This gesture is demonstrated especially by macaques, guenons, and baboons, for whom this direct gaze is not a threatening gesture—as it is for gorillas, for example. Historically, these, like Japanese monkeys, are also those that sought proximity to humans early on at Asian temples and are still famous today as temple monkeys.

These are also the monkeys that were used as laboratory animals and ultimately subjected to experiences that did them no good at all, which may explain the changed expression in the portrait entitled *Gretchenfrage* (Crucial Question). The grin of the monkey here is somewhat exaggerated, and the protruding teeth and the large eyes seem more frightened than friendly. In any case, this face does not inspire confidence. With the "Gretchen question," Trockel refers to the question of trust: in Goethe's *Faust*, Gretchen asks him about his religiosity in order to learn whether she can trust him. Faust, however, cannot answer her question; he has already sold his soul to the devil.

The Gretchen question, the unanswerable question, arose for monkeys from the time that Darwinism placed humans in the ranks of the apes. And it arises today in particular, since the existence of all wild ape populations is dramatically threatened in a terrible way: what did they gain from Darwinism placing humans alongside them? Nothing good, one might conclude from the history of mass destruction of their habitats. In her pictures, Trockel captures something of this grief and of the fright on the apes' faces when they realize that Darwinism was not at all interested in what the apes thought of their new relatives.

18. *Clock Owner*, 2017–2018

In a variety of ways, Rosemarie Trockel's work is pervaded by a preoccupation with time and temporality. In the eleven white ceramic masks of *Clock Owner*, her examination of time becomes specific in one respect: all the masks show male faces. Thus, without exception, the clocks belong to men—men who set the tempo that other bodies must follow. The masks are all different, ranging in appearance from pockmarked and painterly to sober, reductive, and with antiquated beards. Their dispositions span diverse conditions: from comic grotesqueness, sorrow, and mask-like rigidity to carnivalesque facial distortions. They seem to invite viewers to choose their mask wisely; it may become their own face. Yet this choice of masks is limited solely to men.

There is, however, an entire arsenal of deeper insights here that are rarely addressed when we speak of time. Despite our lives unfolding in a transparent mesh of it, our consciousness has no constitutive category of time. Time, like space, is an attribute of the relationships that each living being enters into with other living beings and things, of the relationships in which we have always been involved. Our temporality is therefore never only our own—even though all life within our time also possesses a "proper time." This proper time can be influenced in various ways. To this day, the prevailing temporality is male-dominated to the extent that, for example, specific symptoms of the female body are studied only in male laboratory animals. Trockel's *Clock Owners* know this, but seem to indirectly suggest a solution to this dispossession: masks can always be removed.

19. *Wette gegen sich selbst*, 2005

The mask of a male face gazes matter-of-factly, looking somewhat deranged, out from this wall-work made from reflective foil and a clock. There's something unfinished about *Wette gegen sich selbst* (Bet against the Self). That's no wonder, for how can one ever win such a bet without watching one's own dissolution?

That time is a deadline, a deadline until death, is one thing. Then there are the two great wagers in the history of European thought. The famous wager of the mathematician and Christian believer, Blaise Pascal, leaves nothing to be desired: Pascal thought that even if God does *not* exist, the better wager is to choose belief over disbelief. The other wager, found at the end of Michel Foucault's infamous 1966 treatise on *The Order of Things*, is somewhat less certain: he wagers that, as soon as his arrangements disappear, Man, who Foucault calls an "invention of recent date," will be erased "like a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea."

20. *Phobia*, 2002

21. *Beyond the Valley of the Dolls*, 2000

A series of works involving reflective aluminum plates, including *Phobia* and *Beyond the Valley of the Dolls*, are called Moving Walls by Rosemarie Trockel. In *Phobia*, the sections of four aluminum plates attached flexibly to the wall are fringed in black cotton on the bottom edge. Thus, while the delicate fabric recalls the light clothing of cabaret dancers, the reflective aluminum plates remain inherently hard and cold. And, as if the plates wanted to convey that one shouldn't come too close, their reflections change depending on the viewer's position. The interplay between the soft fabric and the hard aluminum thus becomes a question of the viewer's perspective.

This constellation is evident in *Beyond the Valley of the Dolls* with its fifty plates arranged in five rows and ten columns, but with a shift: while the contrast between fabric and metal was, as it were, materially tangible in *Phobia*, in *Beyond the Valley of the Dolls* it has been shifted to the title. This title alludes to Russ Meyer's 1970 feature film of the same name. In his artistic quality, Meyer was often misunderstood as a soft-porn director. In Meyer's *Beyond the Valley of the Dolls*, markedly fetishized and sexualized women seek self-empowerment through men's bodies. Trockel's reference to this here is both a joke and an allusion.

22. *Living Means to Appreciate your Mother Nude*, 2001

A young woman lies on the floor absorbed in viewing a group of dia slides. She looks relaxed, her ankles are crossed, and she is wearing only underwear and a sweater. So domestic and secure does the scene seem, that catching sight of the woman like this seems strangely voyeuristic; the intimacy of the scene feels almost erotically charged.

Although only a cut-out pasted onto the three-dimensional scene, the photograph of the young woman seems to come alive in the mind's eye. Ultimately, our own gaze is duplicated—because she, too, is looking at intimate images. The title *Living Means to Appreciate your Mother Nude* hints at a special relationship to nudity: what does it mean to see one's mother naked; to acknowledge her physicality?

While the female body is almost invariably objectified and charged with sexual imaginings, the body of one's own mother is a paradoxical exception: her body and her sexuality are the origin of the self—yet her image is dissociated from any eroticism. To perceive one's own mother as a being with sexual desires seems contradictory and yet is the only way to comprehend one's own life, which is rooted in the sexuality of another human being.

23. *S.h.e.*, 2000/2005

A white liquid splashes mechanically onto the floor. Opposite the projected orange circle is a photomontage of a courtroom scene. The court benches are empty. Using the same motion over and over again, a female figure wipes at the stain created by the liquid on the floor. If the cleaner were to lift her head, she would see her reflection. Thus she is part of the image without really mattering, for she neither diminishes the stain that takes formless shape on the floor nor is her work valued and acknowledged in the symbolic realm that the courtroom suggests. She is present above all in her physical, mechanical movement; in her work.

In *S.h.e.*, Rosemarie Trockel creates a circuit of projection, image, and bodily experience that interconnects the woman, the artist, and the worker. While we inevitably associate the white liquid with milk, reference is made here to the metaphor, often invoked in mythology and Christianity, of immortality or the blessing of physical female reproduction. Visitors would also come into this “stream of milk” if they entered the installation. With the presence of the machine-powered worker and the femininity embodied by her in the museum space, Trockel also highlights the blind spots of an art business that is still patriarchally structured and dominated by extreme economic inequalities. The museum too is a center of symbolic as well as real capital: who receives recognition? What art is bought? What artists are exhibited?

24. *Musicbox*, 2013

The shadow box assemblage *Musicbox* is reminiscent of a herbarium in a natural history museum. The material that Rosemarie Trockel has collected within *Musicbox* jumps back and forth between two kinds of history of knowledge—about art and science—in the same way as Franz Kafka’s animal stories. We can see a lifelike plaster cast of primatologist Jane Goodall’s left hand holding open a book with white woolen thread entwined around her fingers. Goodall, a figure long-admired by Trockel, moved to Tanzania in 1960 to observe chimpanzees in the jungle, accompanied only by her mother. She was the first ever researcher to chronicle and record the everyday lives of great apes—up until then people had known virtually nothing about how chimpanzees really lived out in the wild.

In Trockel’s version of this absence of knowledge, Goodall’s hand is placed on a shelf above a black and white photograph of a chimpanzee wearing a three-piece suit, necktie, hat, and lace-up ankle boots. The significance of this image of a chimp posing with an unlit cigarette in its mouth and leaning against a console table, is understood together with the sentence printed above it: “WHAT IT IS LIKE TO BE WHAT YOU ARE NOT.” In this way, *Musicbox* establishes a direct link with Kafka’s visionary short story “A Report to an Academy,” which was written in 1917: the reporter, an ape Red Peter, announces that he has adopted the language of humans after they taught him to drink alcohol. The ape becomes a person by adopting this human toxin, and just as the German term for great ape—*Menschenaffe*, or “human ape”—robs the apes of their wild nature, the chimpanzee before Goodall would not have discovered itself in any story. But Kafka’s Red Peter didn’t just learn how to imbibe alcohol, he had also been taught to make human gestures, “like an artist.” In fact, you could say that this is one of the unintentional consequences of human experimentation with animals: like spiders dosed with LSD, they literally become artists.

Trockel emphasizes this effect with *Musicbox* by adding a reproduction of a page containing notes and drawings by Marcel Duchamp. The notes read “Toile d’araignée comme exemple d’isolement ‘naturel’ d’une carcasse (pseudo-géométrique) d’inframince,” which means something like: “Spider web as an example of ‘natural’ isolation of a (pseudo-geometric) carcass of infrathin.” While the drawings appear

to show splayed human legs and potentially indicate a coupling, Duchamp's meaning, alternating between word and image, leaves no connection between the two.

25. *Question of Time*, 2012

26. *Pattern Is a Teacher*, 2013

27. *Evening Sun*, 2013

While Rosemarie Trockel's early knitted pictures from the mid-1980s were still connected to the classically feminine activity of knitting—albeit machine-knitted and supported by computer-generated design—the late wool works went a step further: the proverbial “little housewife” no longer knits, but glues the wool yarn in colorful stripes directly onto the canvas. The traditionally female-connoted handicraft becomes a gesture of abstract painting. And one can also read the striped wool pictures *Pattern Is a Teacher*, *Question of Time*, and *Evening Sun* as a narrative. A pattern can become a teacher but is also a question of time. And time—the possibilities it brings for the other, the further, even the better—never moves forward without the sun.

However, Trockel did not eschew her original feminist intention by moving away from knitting and toward gluing the wool. These late knitted pictures can be understood as a commentary on the striped pictures of her male precursors and colleagues, such as Barnett Newman, Daniel Buren, and Gerhard Richter. To their seriousness, Trockel adds witticisms in the playfulness of her titles and glued woolen stripe patterns, which on the one hand signal her continuing interest in phenomena of displacement, juxtaposition, and allusion, but on the other hand, remain skeptical of the grand gesture of painting on canvases.

28. *Geruchsskulptur 2*, 2006

Everything on the *Geruchsskulptur* (Odor Sculpture) is glossy: the tile-like design of the black table surface as well as the black ceramic child's leg separated from the body. There is also a glass filled with whiskey, from which the smoky odor of alcohol continuously rises.

What at first glance could be taken for an arrangement from a Surrealist dream in black turns out to be one of Rosemarie Trockel's metonymies, the content of which is as sinister as the surfaces are glossy: shiny tabletops can be cleaned without leaving any residue and thus also easily erase the traces of the crime at issue here. The child's leg in combination with the whiskey refers to child abuse; the consumption of alcohol is often used as an excuse by perpetrators. The sculpture is thus not a metaphorical representation of an artistic tradition such as Surrealism, but rather a metonymic reference to a crime that takes place daily and that society is as likely to overlook as it is to drink whiskey.

29. *Château en Espagne*, 2014–2015

Each of the two works called *Château en Espagne* (Château in Spain) is composed of a folding bed mounted on the wall in a blend of readymade and design discourse. On the one hand, their materials remain the same throughout, in contrast to Rosemarie Trockel's sofas made of ceramic or steel: the foam mattresses are covered in plastic, while the frame is made of wood. There doesn't seem to be much more to say about the "château in Spain." On the other hand, the bare mattresses without sheets are simply what they are, issuing no demands for staff to provide them with bed linen. Thus, it would also be possible to interpret the works as making a political statement in favor of the power of Minimalism.

30. *Ageism*, 2005

Ageism is the title of one of Rosemarie Trockel's arm sculptures made out of plaster. The cast arm rests on an armrest, as if it were on a throne. What is striking are its traces of ageing, which are particularly noticeable in the folds of skin around the elbow. Hands also play a prominent role in Trockel's oeuvre, represented in many ways from assorted allusions to actual casts, as with the hand of primatologist Jane Goodall.

"Ageism"—discriminating against somebody on account of their age—is a global phenomenon, but one that is most prevalent in so-called "developed societies." However, this particular form of prejudice does not restrict its social savagery to deeming female actors over the age forty as uncastable: similar discrimination also affects those who suffer from it by influencing the way they view their own bodies. According to Michel Foucault, power is productive inasmuch as it creates the bodies that succumb to it. This process, the creative aspect of power, can only be effectively countered by taking control of one's own self-observation once more—and that means physically as well as mentally. If the arm is not merely an arm but rather the strong arm of one's own cause, even the wrinkles of old age cannot bend it.

31. *Copy Me*, 2013

Rosemarie Trockel's work *Copy Me* is an incredibly long designer sofa cast in steel. The cast steel is almost completely covered with plastic film, which can be interpreted as a hint that this sofa has retained little of its original inviting softness.

In this case, *Copy Me* is not a play on words but rather an aspect of Trockel's method of reproducing her earlier works. *Copy Me* of 2013 is modeled after a sofa work with the same title from 2010, which in turn was based on a 1954 sofa by designer Florence Knoll. Trockel often uses sofas as easels on which to look at her paintings. In this respect, the work—in addition to the connotations of privacy that sofas always suggest—can also be understood as a glimpse into the artist's atelier.

32. *Grater 2*, 2006

33. *Zum schwarzen Ferkel 3*, 2006

Their spikes stand out clearly, sharp-edged and hard. The large, shiny metallic ceramics have an immediate violent effect—like gates shielding the outside world, monumental instruments, or weapons. Yet the materiality of these works made out of ceramic testify to their fragility and heaviness, to handicrafts, and lengthy production processes.

The larger-than-life sculptures can be read as kitchen graters, but the points penetrating the space give the household utensils the appearance of weapons. Trockel reveals the cool violence inherent in the objects: when oversized, they no longer seem like harmless tools. If—exhausted, distracted, or tired—you were to brush against the surface in a careless moment, the prongs would prick your skin. The sheer dimensions of the ceramics reinforce this martial effect. Like heavy, mounted gates, the wall sculptures are also reminiscent of other works by Rosemarie Trockel—such as *Shutter* (2006–10) or *Challenge* (2020)—in which the supposed passage through windows, ventilators, or doors remains closed and opaque.

34. *Rush Hour*, 2021

35. *White Hope*, 2021

There is a series of oil paintings, including *Rush Hour*, and *White Hope*, which were painted by a specialist company in China after Rosemarie Trockel's templates. Having paintings made from templates is not a production method specific to late modernism; commissioned works have long been part of the business of art—like, for example, the production of church windows in artisanal workshops.

The form of Trockel's collage, however, remains idiosyncratic. In *Rush Hour*, she combines a bus in the upper part of the picture with the front page of *Village Voice*, a weekly New York newspaper. While the newspaper's headline, above a particularly effeminate portrait of Andy Warhol, asks whether God is dead, the one-line inscription on the bus above it quotes the poet Ingeborg Bachmann: "Wenn ich winken muss, werde ich winken" ("If I have to wave, I'll wave"). In Bachmann's original text, this is followed by the lines (omitted by Trockel): "If I may kiss you for the last time I will do it, quickly, on the cheek." In the painting, it seems as if Andy Warhol heard this pledge and is holding out his cheek to be kissed. Mourning can hardly be visually articulated more beautifully.

But even if God is dead, the final chapter has not yet been written. *White Hope*, a collage of three portraits, carries hope in the now iconic image of Julian Assange. Assange stands for the truth that lies dormant beneath all the lies of global politics and the media. But it can be dragged into the light—even if only with a portrait.

36. *CLUSTER V – Subterranean Illumination*,
2019

37. *CLUSTER VI – Door Ajar*, 2021

A “Cluster” is Rosemarie Trockel’s title for a group of works in which she brings together her own artworks in the form of digital prints and rearranges them in new combinations. In *CLUSTER V – Subterranean Illumination*, twenty-five reworked large-format prints collectively produce a compact frieze of images: it is many things, but it is most definitely not a unit. Even heterogeneous would be too weak a word to describe the diversity of the overall picture. When the artist arranges a portrait of the author Michel Houellebecq at one edge of the work while the former Bavarian politician Franz Josef Strauß is shown on the opposite side, slouched in an armchair on the phone, she is not representing two possible endings of a parable, for example. Instead, this is all about divergent coincidences, just like the two cars that are facing in opposing directions, and likewise with the shoes.

This allows us to establish a more or less transitional link to *CLUSTER VI – Door Ajar*, where two vehicles are similarly depicted in the group of fourteen digital prints. In this case it is one and the same car that has simply been duplicated, which explains why both cars are driving in the same direction. The image of the eponymous “door ajar” is arranged above an index of names from what appears to be a philosophical book—which includes the name of the philosopher Martin Heidegger. Heidegger, an anti-semitic and sometime Nazi sympathizer, was not only the teacher of the Jewish philosopher Hannah Arendt but also her lover. And thus the continuing reverence for this leading thinker on democracy—who never uttered a bad word about Heidegger, not even once she had reached safety in exile in the USA—also represents a counterpoint as unceasing, participative movement in the room.

In this manner, the viewer can become a nerd in front of every individual image, showing off their insider knowledge or remaining alone, without synthesizing them both—just as there is no intrinsic core to be found in the Clusters themselves. It would be possible to describe all of Trockel’s Clusters by slightly adapting a quotation from Bertolt Brecht’s “Hymn of Baal the Great”: “Pick two eyes, for one is too many!”

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Rosemarie Trockel

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Rosemarie Trockel, *Demanding Person but a Sublime Poet*, 2016 (detail), Private Collection, © The artist & VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2022

IMAGE PAGES

Rosemarie Trockel, *Rush Hour*, 2021 (detail), Private Collection, © The artist & VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2022

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