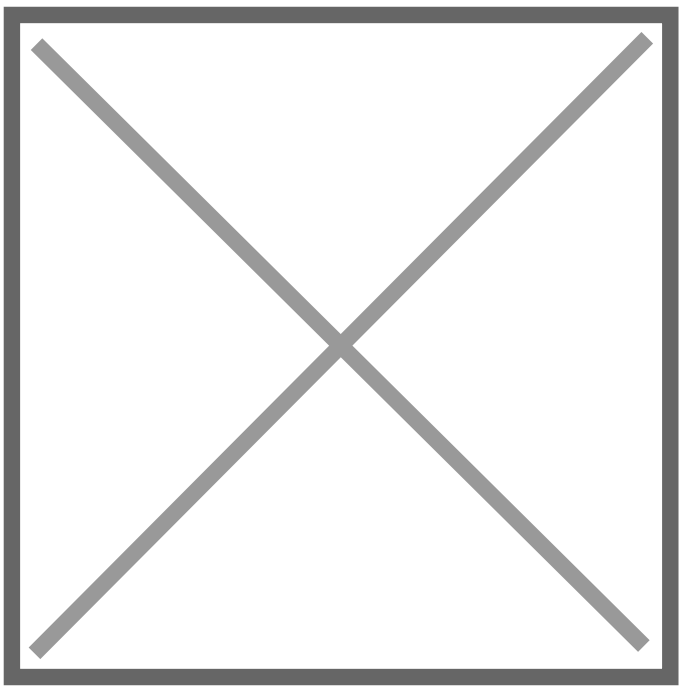
VAN GRINTEN
DER GALERIE



Ruth Marten

THE SCHUH SHOW – Artist Statement

20.09.2022–

The genesis of this co-curation about shoes with the Van der Grinten Galerie was the visit Franz and I made in 2021 to the Cologne Art Fair, where we fell in love with the macabre pencil drawings of Rudolf Schlichter. One depicted a man's Oxford shoes, a suggestion of his trousers, and an unmistakable shadow under those shoes that revealed the subject matter to be a hanging man. Provocative and irresistible, it immediately inspired us to find other works that touched on that mystery.

I think we have created a very interesting "Euro-American" mélange and, though I can only speak with any authority about the works that I have chosen, I am delighted that we have such a wide range of media – from watercolor and antique prints to a digital sculpture built by a 3-D printer; a ballpoint ink on linen drawing penned by a famous San Francisco woman tattooist; the toile de Jouy embroidery of Richard Saja; the true-to-life model of a French frigate by Australian artist Timothy Horn; Yvetta Fedorova's wonderful cut paper lady's boot; a velvet

upholstered boot by Janet Stein from Barcelona; and Robert Fontanelli's inventive modernist chairs- cum-shoes, modeled and photographed. As for the odd finds I accumulated at flea markets in New York and in Mexico City, I'm infatuated with them all: the early 20th century momento mori box containing the funeral trappings of black shoes, black hat and veil, a real hairpiece, and the tintype that shows our wearer in all the parts. The Mexican shoeshine box, which I reduced down to its lid and clasp. The watercolor on pulp paper of a Chinese cobbler, a very rare survivor of the practice of wrapping goods in these original watercolors to attract Western buyers. Warhol's contribution speaks for itself and it was, in fact, his 1950's commercial shoe illustrations that first drew attention to him as a great artist. The inclusion in this show of two collages by Antonio Lopez on his Carnegie Hall stationery might, however, require some background. Antonio Lopez, working with his creative collaborator Juan Ramos, was one of the most eminent fashion illustrators of his time. From the early 1960's until his death in 1987, he and Juan worked primarily in New York and Paris. They were known for their avant-garde approach to illustration, which included models of color, art historical motifs and queer subculture. If you were around at that time, you knew the work.

There are numerous aspects to that small necessity that we all know, all possess, cannot move without. I count five: architecture, fantasy/fashion, humility/utility, theatricality and bearing witness. The later is shown most directly in the video by Deborah Luster, who has for a long time photographed inmates at Louisiana's infamous Angola prison. In her piece we see a man grabbing a moment of independence in a pair of tap shoes borrowed for the occasion. I call that: being a witness. Sasha Brodsky employed an entirely different means in his watercolor of a deceased friend's boots on the tiled floor of his Roman flat, yet here, too, we are allowed to bear witness - to his memory at work. A combination witness/fantasist with a definite nod to architecture, New York artist and photo editor Scott Teplin was struck by a photograph of a car crash with one lone shoe out on the street. So he made a multi-part mountain of that shoe that echoes the auto wreck. The poet Max Blagg created a poem for the show and typed it, at my insistance, within the shape of a woman's pump, then also had the good manners to create a German rendition. Colette Robbins' extraordinary archaic-looking monument is digitally printed yet implies ancient civilizations. Justen Ladda, a German artist who has long lived on New York's Lower East Side, used his prodigious skills to create a piece with a three-dimensional quality, picturing medieval sabatons. Too many wonderful and inventive works to write about here.

I hope you enjoy and are touched by our efforts.

Ruth Marten, September 20, 2022, NYC