VAN GRINTEN
DER GALERIE



Ruth Marten

THE SCHUH SHOE

05.11.2022–11.02.2023

The Van der Grinten Galerie is thrilled to present an exhibition co-curated and organized together with New York artist Ruth Marten.

The shoe. A fascinating, fetching, adored and also disturbing, even polarizing, object; an object of daily life with remarkable historical, socio-political relevance; an eminently inspiring artistic motif: the shoe has been the linchpin of our research, inquiries and discoveries of the past twelve months. Ruth Marten ignited the initial spark of inspiration to create a work on this subject. Her own enthusiasm soon spread like wildfire throughout a broad international network of fellow artist friends, bringing them on board for the project. Many collectors, too, intrigued by the proposal, were eager to contribute ideas, impulses and suggestions along the way. We were thus able to enrich the presentation with some choice exhibits on loan from private collections, and a few special contributions also came from our own existing gallery program.
The result is an exhibition with installation character featuring over 60 works by 35 artists,

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which can now be explored in our gallery space. It is a many-faceted thematic ensemble of paintings, drawings, photographs, video and three-dimensional works, and found objects.

Our heartfelt thanks to Ruth Marten, who developed the "Schuh Show" project with such tremendous élan and engagement. We couldn't have done it without her. Ruth Marten has this to say:

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 I've chosen, I'm delighted that we have such a wide range of mediums –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 embroidery of Richard Saja; the true-to-life model of a French frigate by Australian artist Timothy Horn; Yvetta Federova'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, and 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.

That small necessity that we all know, all possess, cannot move without, has numerous aspects. 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 Bodsky 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, at my insistence, he typed it 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, though digitally printed, 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 dimensional window 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

Our sincere thanks to all the artists who created new works especially for this show or contributed older treasures, to the colleagues who supported us, and the friends and private collectors in Cologne, Düsseldorf and Hamburg who entrusted us with pieces on loan.