

## Maria Eichhorn

KUNSTHAUS BREGENZ



Maria Eichhorn, *Baudiagramm*, 12 Pendel, 8 Ruten (Building Diagram, 12 Pendulums, 8 Rods), 2014, floor drawing, texts, object descriptions, hose, pump, pendulums, rods, dimensions variable.

One visitor to Maria Eichhorn's recent exhibition wrote in the guest book that the most interesting thing about the show was reading the guest book. The book in question was filled with protests that the show was a complete waste of money, and that it wasn't even art. And indeed, non-art and money have long played a central role in Eichhorn's work: Among the objects on display were fifty thousand euros in cash, a part of the work that, presented at Okwui Enwezor's Documenta 11 in 2002, launched the artist's international reputation. It represents the foundational capital backing the Maria Eichhorn Public Limited Company, a legally functioning enterprise that explicitly undermines corporate principles—its charter stipulates that its capital must not increase in value. As in Kassel, Eichhorn exhibited the complete internal correspondence of her company in the form of enlarged backlit copies, and here updated it with quarterly reports, maintaining the ironic pattern of a process that seems to offer inconclusive insights.

Two more ongoing works were displayed nearby: *Vorhang (Denim)* (Curtain [Denim]), first shown in 1989, is augmented each time it's exhibited with the addition of a video of one more lecture by a local opponent of nuclear power. In this case, the video of a recent conversation with an environmental activist from Bregenz could be seen alongside those of two older talks on monitors installed in front of a denim curtain covering the entire wall to the right. The bare concrete surface directly opposite served as a screen for seventeen 16-mm films, provided that visitors were bold enough to ask the guards for a private screening: The individual titles of the works that make up the *Filmlexikon sexueller Praktiken* (Film Encyclopedia of Sexual Practices), to which Eichhorn has been adding since 1999, range from *Analkoitus* (Anal Coitus), 2008, to *Zungenkuss* (French Kiss), 2005. But the pale, small-format film images were not so much pornographic as picturesquely abstract. Both works, then, address possibilities for articulating and representing projections, and their juxtaposition exposed equally elaborate asymmetries of social interaction.

*Baudiagramm*, 12 Pendel, 8 Ruten (Building Diagram, 12 Pendulums, 8 Rods), 2014, was created for the Bregenz show in collaboration with Michael Berbig, Austria's most renowned master of the divining rod. A drawing on the floor whose lucid geometry of red, yellow, and blue tape conjured the art of Mondrian, Newman, or LeWitt crossed with basketball-court markings mapped out the energy radiating from the earth and the cosmos along with their points of intersection. Twelve pendulums and eight divining rods on the walls invited visitors to try their hand at a parascientific experiment that involved dreaming up the perfect feng shui for the kunsthaus. But the delicately individual divining rods exuded a different sort of radiance, one that invited viewers to ponder the artistic value of human craftsmanship.

The most striking work in the show from this perspective was positioned near the guest book, right beside the cash register: *Eichhörchenkäfig* (Squirrel Cage), 2014. This object, a cousin of Duchamp's bottle rack, is the reconstruction of a nineteenth-century wooden cage whose original can be found quite close to Bregenz, in the Austrian town of Schwarzenberg, at the Angelika Kauffmann Museum, named for the most famous female painter of the Neoclassical era. The work's title plays on Eichhorn, but at the same time the piece toys with the name "Kaufmann," meaning "salesman": Eichhorn's squirrel cage is for sale as an edition at six thousand euros. Not for nothing, the work epitomizes both the imprisonment of the feminine artist-ego by the art market and a response to that condition: augmenting a site-specific approach with a combination of self-referentiality and outsourcing.

—Tobias Vogt