

ERNA HECEY GALLERY
Press Release

Suzanne Lafont
How Things Think

Private View in presence of the artist 23 April 2021, 6pm – 9pm

Meeting with Suzanne Lafont 24 April 2021, 2:30pm – 6pm

Exhibition 24 April – 14 August 2021



Suzanne Lafont, *Accessories Counter*, 2001-21, Pigment ink on cotton rag paper, 85 x 67,5 cm, Edition of 5 + 2AP

Erna Hecey is delighted to present *How Things Think*, a solo exhibition by Suzanne Lafont from 24 April to 14 August 2021.

The exhibition brings together images from various bodies of work the artist has been working on since the early 1990s. Selected among these artworks, the images are arranged and reactivated in a specific way to create a new situation: the exhibition. The chosen framework is the theatrical model. “A situation is dependent on the interplay of elements.” As this statement illustrates, Suzanne Lafont’s photographic practice has developed through associations. The artwork (or the exhibition, or the book) is an arrangement of fragmented elements, that can be temporary: photographic images in variable media and formats, often accompanied by a word or group of words.

The arbitrary juxtaposition of elements and the nature of the assembled objects recall post-Cubist collages or *papiers collés*. Grouped together under the heading *Accessories Counter*, ordinary things - work gloves, food cans, cooking utensils, chairs - camp out on a stage where they take on a gestural function and express intention over the general situation. Hence the exhibition's title, *How Things Think*.

This active community of objects confers onto images the ability to talk. A tilting head, a recalcitrant deck chair, a vinyl disk on a revolving turntable, colored-light fields with the names of absent actors as subtitles all become verbal gestures. It’s as though the viewer were assisting a show of language without words.

Lafont’s use of language gains in density and becomes a driving force in *Strips* (presented in the Viewing Room of the gallery’s website). Here, words call upon images, animating them, and become images themselves. The mental trajectory first goes from the word to the thing. From these assembled things, the mind then returns to language – generally through a basic sentence.

Just like a nursery rhyme, a reading manual for children or a riddle, *Strips* pertain to the anthropological field. They capture our need for language, onto which is etched what Bertold Brecht’s terms “human social life”, and where the political is rooted.

In 2013, Jonathan Crary published an essay entitled *24/7. Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep*. In 1997, for Documenta X, Lafont presented a project that portrayed a society of migrants, some performing insignificant tasks and others lying motionless, absorbed in dreams and deep sleep. She saw in the mental activity triggered by inactivity a response to the dogged ‘sleep’ mode that reigns over social media, manages information circuits, and regulates societies of control.

Created in 2020, *Science, fiction* is inspired by a 19th century engraving that represents the botanist Linné and his dog, sound-asleep after a walk through the countryside. Constructed around the same formal model, the images in the slideshow form a digital collage that brings together plants, printed documents and comments. The viewer, witnessing the dog’s dream, embarks on a journey through space that will ultimately reveal the dog’s name. The cosmic get away is suddenly catapulted into the land of the entertainment industry. In turn, the adventure’s imaginary force takes over the leisure industry.

Crary’s plea for the figure of the dreamer at the end of his essay will most likely have prompted Lafont to pursue her artistic practice of free associations, arrangement of disjointed fragments, and play on words. A continuation, in sum, of her practice of collage.

Suzanne Lafont (b. in Nîmes in 1949, lives in Brussels and Paris) is well known for her conceptual work on images and narrative compositions of theatrical scenes. She turned to the visual arts following literary and philosophical studies, questioning the cultural processes of image construction. Her more recent works delve into the fictional aspect of images and explore the ludic potential of illusion.

Since the 1980s, she has participated in numerous collective exhibitions worldwide, including: *Dar la cara: El retrato incierto. Fotografía y vídeo 1972-2011*, Centre Pompidou Malaga (2021), *Des visages: le temps de l'autre*, Carré d'Art – Musée d'art contemporain de Nîmes (2020), *La photographie en France, 1950–2000*, Maison européenne de la photographie, Paris (2011) – *elles@centrepompidou*, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris (2009) – *Street & Studio: An Urban History of Photography*, Tate Modern, London (2008) / Museum Folkwang, Essen (2009) – *Universal Archive*, Macba, Barcelona (2008) – *REAL. Portrait from a corporate collector of DZ Bank*, Städel Museum, Frankfurt (2008) – *Ghost in the Shell: Photography and the Human Soul, 1850–2000*, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles (1999) – *documenta X*, Kassel (1997) – *Hall of Mirrors: Art and Film since 1945*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (1996) – *documenta IX*, Kassel (1992).

Her work has been presented in several solo exhibitions, including: *Nouvelles Espèces de compagnie. Roman*, Galerie des Beaux-Arts, Bordeaux (2019, catalogue) – *Situations*, Carré d'art-Musée d'art contemporain, Nîmes (2015, catalogue) – *Situation Comedy*, MUDAM, Luxembourg (2011, catalogue) – Pinacoteca do Estado, São Paulo (2005) – Musée d'art contemporain de Marseille (1999) – Galerie nationale du Jeu de Paume, Paris (1992, catalogue) – Museum of Modern Art, New York (1992) – Centre genevois de gravure contemporaine, Genève (1991).

Other monographic books include: *Suzanne Lafont. Appelé par son nom*, Actes Sud (2003) – *Suzanne Lafont. Lectures*, Actes Sud (2001) – *Suzanne Lafont*, Éditions Hazan (1998) txt. Suzanne Lafont, Paul Sztulman. The exhibition *How Things Think* will be accompanied by a publication entitled *Sketches*, Erna Hecey Gallery (2020).

Index marked the beginning of Suzanne Lafont's collaboration with Erna Hecey Gallery in Brussels (2008). The exhibition was followed, in 2010, by the display in the Brussels gallery of *Situation Comedy. From General Idea's Pamphlet 'Manipulating the Self'*. For Paris Photo in 2015, Erna Hecey dedicated a solo show to Lafont, centered around *Index* and *Situation Comedy*.

Erna Hecey
20C Boulevard Emmanuel Servais
L-2535 Luxembourg
office@ernahecey.com
www.ernahecey.com