

VISIT

Cathy Wilkes's first retrospective in the US at Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh



In the 1970s, negative aesthetics in art produced by women offered a powerful critique of existing forms of representation and initiated a desire for change. However, as Laura Mulvey later pointed out in her 1987 essay "Changes: Thoughts on Myth, Narrative and Historical Experience," "The great problem then is how to move to 'something new,' from creative confrontation to creativity." Although Cathy Wilkes's work could certainly be perceived outside of the art-historical feminist discourse, her practice often oscillates between the intimate material conditions in which her pieces are conceived and the context in which they are presented. At the Carnegie Museum of Art in Pittsburgh, the artist incorporates paintings into her installations. Attached to sculptures or hung on walls as additional elements, they are juxtaposed with shop-window mannequins that Wilkes alters and arranges into humanistic, if sometimes disturbing, domestic scenes. Sculpted and found objects are often massed in clumped arrangements, dispersed against the walls or laid out on the floor. Combining the abstract and colorful with the austere figurative and personal, her work concentrates on—and, possibly, aims to break—the tense relationship between the gallery space and the abstracted domestic interiors, studios, workshops and street scenes that these installations describe. (Judith Vrancken) www.web.cmoa.org

MEET

Zurich-based performance artist Alexandra Bachzetsis

The works of the Swiss-Greek performance artist and choreographer Alexandra Bachzetsis bring to mind Marie André's film *Répétitions* (1985), a mesmerizing documentation of Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker's rehearsals preceding the premiere of *Elena's Aria* (1984). While literary texts and arias provide the backdrop for De Keersmaeker's choreography, most of Bachzetsis's works, such as *A Piece Danced Alone* (2011), take their inspiration from mainstream culture references inscribed in dance and theater. Nevertheless, these pieces share a stark sensuality expressed by female dancers through a repertoire of precise, repeated moves and gestures that communicate the underlying themes of repetition and rehearsal. Concerned with the language and the marketing of the (female) body, and its culturally and socially fashioned codes and representations, Bachzetsis stages seductive and provocative situations performed in art institutions and theaters. When reciting popular culture—her *Dream Season* (2008) references soap opera, while *Handwerk* (2005) alludes to pole dancing instruction videos—Bachzetsis appears at ease with each genre and role that she creates for herself and her collaborators. In a caricature portrayal of society, she instigates power plays using the body as a tool and a carrier of information. Mirroring strategies are employed here as means to critique. Bachzetsis's message is one of empowerment.

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