

**20 YEARS  
VERBUND  
COLLECTION**

# Ausstellungsdaten

Duration	29. February – 5. May 2024
Opening	28. February   6.30 pm
Venue	Propter Homines Halle   ALBERTINA
Speakers press conference	Generaldirector of the ALBERTINA, Klaus Albrecht Schröder CEO VERBUND, Michael Strugl Curator, Gabriele Schor
Curator	Prof. Dr. Gabriele Schor, founding director of the VERBUND COLLECTION, Vienna
Co-Curators	Eva Haberfellner and Sophie Rueger
Works	cir. 200 works by 53 artists
Brochure	available for free at the exit of the exhibition or for download at ( <a href="https://www.albertina.at/en/exhibitions/20-jahre-sammlung-verbund/">https://www.albertina.at/en/exhibitions/20-jahre-sammlung-verbund/</a> )
Panel discussion	Feministischen Avantgarde (in German) 3.April   6.30 pm
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# The VERBUND COLLECTION

## Vienna, Celebrates Its Twentieth Anniversary

29. February – 5. May

Albertina presents an exhibition of works from VERBUND COLLECTION, Vienna, held in celebration of the collection's twentieth anniversary. The corporate collection was founded by the leading Austrian electricity company VERBUND in 2004 and holds around one thousand works by two hundred artists. The catalogues released by its publishing arm have given a significant boost to some of the artists' careers. The show includes new acquisitions that will be presented in Austria for the first time.

The large bodies of work by artists such as Cindy Sherman, Francesca Woodman, Birgit Jürgenssen, and Renate Bertlmann compiled in keeping with VERBUND COLLECTION's maxim "depth instead of breadth" make up the first part of the exhibition. Sherman is presented side by side with contemporaries like Martha Wilson and younger artists like Aneta Grzeszykowska, who reenacted Sherman's famous black-and-white series *Untitled Film Stills* in color. They are followed by works of the feminist avant-garde of the 1970s that deal with the reduction of women to the roles of housewife, wife, and mother, the use of the female body, and female sexuality. The term feminist avant-garde was coined by VERBUND COLLECTION's founding director Gabriele Schor in 2007 to honor the pioneering work of these artists. She successfully positioned them in the art-historical canon with an exhibition that toured throughout Europe for ten years. Through this focus on in-depth collecting, Schor secured VERBUND COLLECTION's singular status.

In the context of the spatialization of art in the 1970s, another section is dedicated to works that deal with the conceptual, poetic, and psychological perception of spaces and places. Sawing a house in two and tilting one half by a few degrees, Gordon Matta-Clark creates his 'Anarchitecture' as a critique of conventional architecture. David Wojnarowicz poetically links his life in New York to that of the French poet Arthur Rimbaud. And Ernesto Neto creates a psychologically charged space based on Sigmund Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams*

in which a doll dwells in a rocking chair and is mysteriously connected to a superego outside the cage.

The anniversary exhibition presents new acquisitions in the context of 'Gender, Identity & Diversity,' works that have never been shown in Austria before. Artists create spaces of memory; see, for instance, South African-born Lebohang Kganye, who uses photomontages to explore her relationship with her deceased mother, or Kazakhstan-born Alexander Ugay. A descendant of the Korean diaspora, he traces his ancestors with analogue and AI photographs. With her large-format collages, Norwegian-Nigerian artist Frida Orupabo creates scenes that address colonial history, slavery, racism, and sexism. Zanele Muholi identifies as non-binary and actively campaigns for LGBTQIA+ rights in South Africa. Muholi's staged self-portraits criticize the Eurocentric view of the black body. Sin Wai Kin deconstructs and reconstructs social narratives and embodies four non-binary identities of a fictional boy band in the video *'It's Always You'*.

Works from following artists will be on display:

Renate Bertlmann, Barbara Bloom, Marcella Campagnano, Veronika Dreier, Renate Eisenegger, VALIE EXPORT, Gerda Fassel, Simon Fujiwara, Simryn Gill, Nan Goldin, Aneta Grzeszykowska, Suzy Lake, Lebohang Kganye, Anne Marie Jehle, Birgit Jürgenssen, Kirsten Justessen, Sin Wai Kin, Joachim Koester, Auguste Kronheim, Brigitte Lang, Louise Lawler, Angelika Loderer, Karin Mack, Gordon Matta-Clark, Anita Münz, Zanele Muholi, Ernesto Neto, ORLAN, Gabriel Orozco, Frida Orupabo, Florentina Pakosta, Margot Pilz, Ingeborg G Pluhar, Elodie Pong, Tomoko Sawada, Senga Nengudi, Ulrike Rosenbach, Elaine Shemilt, Cindy Sherman, Lorna Simpson, Penny Slinger, Annegret Soltau, Sophie Thun, Alexander Ugay, Jeff Wall, Gillian Wearing, Carrie Mae Weems, Hannah Wilke, Martha Wilson, David Wojnarowicz, Francesca Woodman, Nil Yalter.

# Exhibition Texts

**VERBUND COLLECTION, Vienna, celebrates 20 years.**

The ALBERTINA presents an anniversary exhibition to mark the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the renowned VERBUND COLLECTION in Vienna. The corporate collection was established in 2004 by the Austrian energy company VERBUND and comprises some one thousand works by two hundred artists.

The philosopher Walter Benjamin noted that the literal collection of objects was ultimately an exercise in futility. It is only through a critical awareness of one's own present and its social conditions that collecting becomes a cultural technique, something that is then visible and recognizable in society.

The VERBUND COLLECTION contrasts art from the 1970s with contemporary artistic positions. Indeed, it was in that decade that many artists moved away from painting as a genre and created new forms of expression. They began to discover their own bodies as a medium. Concepts such as postmodernism, feminism, the spatialization of art, the questioning of identities and staged self-portrayals emerged as a result. Photography, video, film and performance established themselves as art forms in their own right.

Since its founding in 2004, the VERBUND COLLECTION has dedicated itself to the 'Feminist Avant-Garde of the 1970s' and the aspiration of broadening the canon of art history. Indeed, the term 'feminist avant-garde' was coined by Founding Director Gabriele Schor in recognition of the pioneering achievements of these female artists. In that decade, they established a lasting new 'image of women' from a female perspective. The exhibition also features works that explore the conceptual, poetic and psychological 'Perception of Spaces and Places' as well as the third theme, namely 'Gender, Identity & Diversity', with a number of works being shown in Austria for the very first time. The VERBUND COLLECTION attaches a great deal of importance to publications. Besides the catalogue raisonné on the early work of Cindy Sherman, it has published books on Birgit Jürgenssen, Francesca Woodman, Louise

Lawler, Renate Bertlmann, ORLAN as well as a standard reference work on the feminist avant-garde.

## Role Plays

In the 1970s, female artists began to turn to role playing as an aesthetic strategy. With clothes, wigs and make-up, with facial expressions and poses, they assumed various female identities in front of the camera. While these get-ups served to illustrate the restricting roles that society held ready for women at that time, paradoxically they also created the artistic space within which to rebel.

The first works acquired by the VERBUND COLLECTION were four *Untitled Film Stills* (1977–80) by Cindy Sherman. Thereafter, its collection activities focused on her early work, which preceded the *Untitled Film Stills*. Sherman had enrolled as a student at the State University College in Buffalo from 1975 to summer 1977. Alongside the College, the self-run Hallwalls Contemporary Art Center was similarly instrumental to her artistic development, providing opportunities for performance, body art and conceptual art. Artists such as Vito Acconci, Lynda Benglis, Suzy Lake, Martha Wilson and Chris Burden attended the Centre as visiting artists. In 2012 VERBUND COLLECTION published the Catalogue raisonné of Cindy Sherman's unknown early work.

In this exhibition, Sherman's early work is displayed next to contemporaries such as Martha Wilson, Suzy Lake and Marcella Campagnano. They too engaged in various transformations of female identities in the 1970s, unaware of Sherman's works. Aneta Grzeszykowska and Tomoko Sawada, two more recent artistic positions, have now revisited staged role playing as they reflect on social norms and stereotypes of female identities in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## Birgit Jürgenssen

Birgit Jürgenssen (1949–2003) created outstanding drawings and was a master of detail. Already by the mid-1960s, during an extended stay in Paris, she was absorbing French literature, Surrealist art and Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis. It was from that period onwards that, over the course of four decades, she evolved a multi-layered and stylistically diverse oeuvre.

Birgit Jürgenssen was an outstanding graphic artist and illustrator, a master of detail. Her kaleidoscopic approach to art moved freely from one medium to the next, with little regard for recognisability: lithographs and drawings were succeeded by photographs, Rayograms, Polaroids, collages, paintings, sculptures and objects. Her oeuvre is characterised by enactments of the female body in the light of masquerade, disguise, fragmentation and 'animalisation'. Her critique of society is expressed in razor-sharp yet ironic reflections. 'For me, self-irony is a form of autobiographical strategy that makes it easier to convey subversive and deconstructive potential.'

Birgit Jürgenssen began her teaching activity in the master class of Arnulf Rainer at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna in 1982, establishing the first photography class, which she went on to teach for 20 years. The VERBUND COLLECTION has acquired around 50 works from each decade of her creative output; in 2009, it published the first monograph on her oeuvre.

## Raumtext Francesca Woodman

Over the space of nine years Francesca Woodman produced an extraordinary photographic oeuvre. She once explained that her aim was to use photography to capture what could not be captured any other way. She grew up bilingual, in the US and Italy. While studying at the Rhode Island School of Design in Providence from 1975 to 1978, she spent a year in Rome, where she discovered her love of surrealism and literature through the Libreria Maldoror bookshop and took up André Breton's invocation to *pratiquer la poésie!*, i.e. practise poetry. In 1979, she moved to New York and began to take photographs in various rooms of her apartment, earning a living with odd jobs in fashion photography, among others.

Some of her photographs feature the female figure as a fleeting apparition. Her skilful use of

light, her subtle formal reflections, her poetic play with props, and her passionate staging of the female body within the space elevate her black-and-white photographs to the status of masterpieces.

The VERBUND COLLECTION acquired works by Francesca Woodman early on, long before her retrospective at New York's Guggenheim Museum in 2012, which brought her international renown. The collection boasts the largest inventory of her photographs outside of the artist's estate, with 79 photographs, 20 of which are vintage; in 2014, it published the first German-language monograph on the artist.

## **Feminist Avant-Garde**

### **The Private Is Political – Mother | Housewife | Wife**

After the Second World War, conservative values continued to disseminate an ideal of the woman as the sole person responsible for the home, for raising children, for attending to her husband and adhering to moral principles. The second wave of feminism fought hard against these constraints, deeply rooted as they were both politically and socially. It campaigned for equal pay for equal work, and the legalisation of abortion. A particular concern was to make publicly relevant – and political – various subjects considered private, i.e. violence against women, pregnancy, childbirth, housework, raising children, and pension provisions.

Many female artists addressed these conditions with irony and rage. They felt that irony was their weapon of choice against the oppressive mechanisms of patriarchal society. They used their art to confidently step out of invisibility and into the public eye, making themselves the subject of their works. An aesthetically stunning trope of 1970s feminist art was to render visually a sense of anxiety, along with the liberation hoped for as a result. Some female artists therefore chose to render visually the feeling of being locked up inside and out by tying up their faces and bodies. What is remarkable is that even though most of the artists did not know one another, they performed this feeling with similar forms of expression.



## Feminist Avant-Garde

### Female Body | Female Sexuality

The booming advertising industry of the post-war era circulated a standardised ideal of the flawless beauty of the female body, which feminist artists looked upon askance. The medium they opted for in order to do so was their own bodies, often in naked form. Voyeuristic outside gazes were deflected back with self-assurance and defiance using photography and public performances. They did so with a determination to empower, explore and stage the representation of the female body from a woman's perspective. Female artists used their bodies as the main aesthetic means of expression to convey their narrative to society, under their own terms.

One of the primary concerns of the feminist movement in the West was the sexual liberation of women; indeed, there was no such thing as a public understanding of any self-determined female sexuality. The emergence of the contraceptive pill gave women the possibility of birth control and the freedom to live out their sexual self-determination unfettered by religiously conditioned moral concepts. In their works, female artists opposed the quotidian reduction of women to mere objects of sexual desire as well as the male voyeuristic gaze which, for centuries, had dominated the depiction of naked women in art. They countered a phallogentric world view with irony, addressed yearnings, feelings and physical needs from a female perspective, and rebelled against sexualised violence against women in publicly staged 'actions'.

### Spaces | Places

Against the backdrop of the spatialisation of art in the 1970s, the VERBUND COLLECTION – founded in 2004 – has dedicated itself to another main area of emphasis alongside its focus on the 'Feminist Avant-Garde'. It includes works that explore the conceptual, poetic and psychological 'Perception of Spaces and Places'.

Ernesto Neto is known for his open space-defining installations. Here, for the first time, the artist presents an enclosed and psychologically charged space. Some artists create spaces of recollection through their works. And in those imagined spaces, they return to their childhood or recall their family. British artist Simon Fujiwara encounters himself as a child as

he revisits the 'primal scene' of his emergence as an artist. South African artist Lebohang Kganye retrospectively reconnects with her deceased mother while Alexander Ugay, who was born in Kazakhstan, retraces the footsteps of his ancestors in the Korean diaspora.

David Wojnarowicz poetically associates his life in New York with that of French poet Arthur Rimbaud as he tells of abandoned and unloved places that no longer exist in his city. The artist Nil Yalter speaks of the dreams and longings of migrant workers as they journey from their place of work to their homeland.

### Zanele Muholi

Zanele Muholi was born in Umlazi, South Africa, in 1972. As a non-binary person, they are actively committed to LGBTQIA+ rights in their home country. Muholi themselves experienced the racism of the apartheid system. 'Like many black women, my mother served as a domestic worker for white people for decades. These women,' recalls Muholi, 'were often instrumental in raising the country's future white bosses. But they never saw their own children.'

Some 80 photographs for the series *Somnyama Ngonyama* were taken between 2012 and 2016. The title in Zulu, Muholi's mother tongue, translates as 'Hail The Dark Lioness'. The self-portraits convey a sense of pride and dignity. They take a stand against disrespect, racism and controversial representations of the black body.

Muholi's piercing gaze is directed straight at the camera. The self-portraits often involve the use of props. With a leather bag on their head, the artist evokes associations with the black street vendors selling fashionable bags in tourist spots. In the richness of traditional African masks, Muholi's portrait seems to disappear in the undertow of a clichéd collection of African culture. Muholi feels that the mirror sometimes reflects the image of a family member, a reflected identity, as it were, based on resemblance. In the case of *Mfana*, which means *young boy* in the Zulu language, Muholi reveals themselves with their deep sense of loss. Their brother died when he was 20.

## Spaces | Places

Since the 1960s, the visual arts have been marked by an emergent collective awareness characterised by an approach along spatial lines. More and more, artists were abandoning the two-dimensional plane as painting lost its supremacy as a genre. Since 2008 for instance, the stunning intervention *Yellow Fog* by Olafur Eliasson has been on display in the public space at dusk every evening, along the 40 m façade of the VERBUND headquarter (Am Hof 6a, 1010 Vienna).

Gordon Matta-Clark took a chainsaw to a house scheduled for demolition and split it into two parts over weeks of physical toiling, then tilted one half by a few degrees thereby deconstructing the predefined spatial structure. In doing so, he created his 'Anarchitecture' as a critique of conventional architecture. Jeff Wall has been interested in places that exist on the periphery of the urban, where people find their way beyond the predetermined urban topography. Simryn Gill sketches out the discrepancy between man-made living space and nature.

Many artists document places that no longer exist in their original form, linking transience and memory in the process. Joachim Koester has followed in the footsteps of Immanuel Kant. Indeed, it is said that the philosopher of the Enlightenment always took the same paths on his daily stroll in Königsberg, the present-day Kaliningrad.

## Gender | Identity | Diversity

The anniversary exhibition marking twenty years of the VERBUND COLLECTION is presenting here new acquisitions on the theme of 'Gender, Identity & Diversity'. Some are on show in Austria for the first time ever.

The 1980s and the early 1990s saw the emergence of a new generation of African-American artists who grew up under the impact of the civil rights movement. Certain concessions to equality between black and white people notwithstanding, ethnic and racial prejudices have continued to prevail in the US. In their works, a number of artists such as Carrie Mae Weems and Lorna Simpson pose the deep-rooted question: can art counteract the spread of

stereotypical and racial prejudices? Both artists subversively combine photography with text in their works.

With her large-format collages, Norwegian-Nigerian artist Frida Orupabo represents the younger generation addressing colonial history, slavery, racism and sexism from a black artist's perspective. Sophie Thun and Paul Sepuya for their part reflect erotic desire in their photographs while Sin Wai Kin subverts narratives and the binary gender order of the patriarchal system.

## Pressebilder

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Francesca Woodman  
From Polka Dots, 1976, from the Polka Dots series  
Gelatin silver print, 13 x 13 cm © Woodman Family  
Foundation / Bildrecht, Wien / Vienna 2024 /  
SAMMLUNG VERBUND  
Wien / Vienna erworben / purchased 2006



Aneta Grzeszykowska  
Untitled Film Stills, 2006  
© 2023 Aneta Grzeszykowska / Courtesy of the artist and  
Raster Gallery, Warszawa / SAMMLUNG VERBUND  
Wien / Vienna erworben / purchased 2008



Lebohang Kganye  
Setshwantso Le Ngwanaka I, from the series Ke Lefa  
Laka (Her-Story), 2013  
© 2023 Lebohang Kganye / Courtesy  
ROSEGALLERY, Santa Monica / SAMMLUNG VERBUND  
Wien / Vienna erworben / purchased 2023



Frida Orupabo  
Spagaten (Detail), 2022  
© 2024 Frida Orupabo / Courtesy Galerie Nordenhake,  
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Wien / Vienna erworben / purchased 2022





Gillian Wearing  
Me as Cahun Holding a Mask of my face, 2012  
© 2023 Gillian Wearing / Courtesy Maureen  
Paley, London / SAMMLUNG VERBUND  
Wien / Vienna erworben / purchased 2012



Renate Bertlmann  
Zärtliche Pantomime, 1976  
© Renate Bertlmann / Bildrecht, Wien / Vienna 2024 /  
SAMMLUNG VERBUND  
Wien / Vienna erworben / purchased 2014



Brigit Jürgenssen  
Ohne Titel (Selbst mit Fellchen), 1974/77  
© Bildrecht, Wien / Vienna 2024  
Wien / Vienna erworben / purchased 2005



Zanele Muholi  
Isililo XX, 2014  
© Zanele Muholi. Courtesy of the artist and Yancey  
Richardson, New York / SAMMLUNG VERBUND  
Wien / Vienna erworben / purchased 2023



Sophie Thun  
Double release / autocunnilingus / the letting go, 2018  
© 2024 Sophie Thun / Courtesy Galerie Sophie  
Tappeiner / Bildrecht, Wien / Vienna 2024 /  
SAMMLUNG VERBUND  
Wien / Vienna erworben / purchased 2018



Gordon Matta-Clark  
Splitting Exterior, 1974  
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Vienna 2024 / SAMMLUNG VERBUND  
Wien / Vienna erworben / purchased 2006