

Annegret Soltau
Das Konstrukt ICH. Das ge-zeichnete Selbst

**ANITA
BECKERS**
CONTEMPORARY ART
& PROJECTS

Vernissage on February 8, 2017 from 7 – 9pm
Duration of exhibition from February 9 – March 18, 2017



Annegret Soltau, *Ich bedrückt*, 1-20, 1977/2013, Photo etching © Annegret Soltau / Galerie Anita Beckers

On February 8th, the Galerie Anita Beckers will open the exhibition *Das Konstrukt ICH. Das ge-zeichnete Selbst* with Annegret Soltau. The exhibition will show sewn photographs, photo etchings and performance videos made by the artist from 1975 until today.

Soltau is a pioneer in the field of feminist art and Body Art, however, her works still generate controversy today. Again and again her artworks are considered offensive, are censored or pulled from exhibitions. In the digital age where the internet offers an anonymous platform to users, such concrete and physical images seem disconcerting. Today, her work boasts an unbroken authenticity.

In her work, Soltau draws her I. However, she does not need pencil and paper for this. Instead she needs a camera, a thread and her body. For over 40 years, the artist has occupied herself with her physical and mental identity. In doing so, she utilizes her environment, her family and children over and over in her work.

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The thread that she uses in her performances and self portraits encompasses faces and bodies like a safe cocoon; hidden and distorted but also flexible. The thread used for sewing over the photographs can also be understood as an element of drawing. However, it also frees the photographs from their purely visual experience and transports them into a haptic reality. Her early works are situated in the contrast of tangled threads and precise pin pricks resembling embroidery, like her series *Selbst (Self)* from 1975. Soltau uses the needle often in her works. She stabs it into her photographs, scratches the negatives with it or sews torn photographs together. It is as if she does not explore the limits of her body anymore, but rather goes beyond them. More and more she neglects the anatomical laws and creates people-like monsters. The questions and concerns that the artist has explored and the prominent biographical relevance, string her oeuvre together, just like the physical threads do.

Soltau's threads are utilized in various ways. In the article *Annegret Soltau. Spinnen, Umgarnen, Nähen – emanzipatorische Fadenspiele* (2015), Leena Crasemann wrote "Through the spider and later mainly through sewing, Soltau uses cultural techniques that are hundreds of years old and connects them to photography. In this way she deconstructs the femininely coded techniques of handiwork and, through her approach, creates a critical, constructive new occupation of the dichotomies of handiwork versus art, masculine versus feminine, photographic image versus installative object – and this is where the avant garde, emancipatory potential of her own artistic language was founded.

BIOGRAPHY

Annegret Soltau was born in 1946 in Lüneburg. She studied painting and graphics at the Hochschule für Bildende Künste in Hamburg under Prof. Hans Thiemann, Prof. Kurt Kranz, Prof. Rudolf Hausner, David Hockney. In 1972, she graduated from the Akademie der Bildenden Künste in Wien. Since 1975, Soltau has been awarded various prizes and scholarships, including the Work-Scholarship from the Kunstfonds eV., Bonn (1982), a scholarship from Villa Massimo in Rome (1986-87), the Maria-Sybilla-Merian-Prize (1999) and the Marielies Hessen-Art Prize in 2011. In Darmstadt, where the artist lives and works today, she was awarded the Wilhelm-Loth-Prize in 2000 and the Johann-Heinrich-Merck-Prize in 2016. Aside from many solo and group exhibitions worldwide, including at MOCA Los Angeles, at NMWA Washington and at MoMo PS1 New York, the Mathildenhöhe in Darmstadt showed a retrospective of her work in 2006. Her works are in diverse collections around the world including the Hamburger Kunsthalle, the Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, the Kunsthalle Bremen and the collection of the Deutsche Bank.

On January 21, 2017, Soltau held a speech at the Women's March in Frankfurt.