

SPRÜTH MAGERS BERLIN LONDON

Paste Up

Barbara Kruger

Sprüth Magers London november 21 2009 - january 23 2010

OPENING RECEPTION NOVEMBER 20, 2009, 6 - 8 pm

Sprüth Magers London is delighted to present a survey of early work by acclaimed American artist Barbara Kruger. Using contrasting layers of text and image, Kruger's work has for almost three decades probed the nature of a media-saturated society in late capitalism, and the significance of highly evolved cultures of consumerism and mass politics to the experience and making of social identities. In addition to offering acute, indeed often piquant cultural insights, Kruger's work also presents a serious conceptual exploration into the relationship between language and image, and their dynamics as collaborators and antagonists in the bearing of meaning. The artist's unique blend of conceptual sophistication and wry social commentary has made Kruger one of the most respected and admired artists of her generation, and this timely reappraisal of her early practice reveals the ingenuity and precision of her craft.

The early monochrome pre-digital works assembled in the exhibition, known professionally as 'paste ups', reveal the influence of the artist's experience as a magazine editorial designer during her early career. These small scale works, the largest of which is 11 x 13 inches, are composed of altered found images, and texts either culled from the media or invented by the artist. A negative of each work was then produced and used to make enlarged versions of these initial 'paste ups'. The influence of Kruger's magazine publishing training extends far beyond technique however. The linguistic and typographic conventions of consumer culture, and an understanding of the inherent potential of a single image, are appropriated and subverted by Kruger, as the artist explores the power of the soundbite and the slogan, and the method and impact of 'direct address' on the consumer/viewer.

Although Kruger's practice is embedded in the visual and political culture of mass media and advertising, the work moves beyond simple appropriation and the ironic meditation on consumerism which animated earlier movements such as Pop art. The emblazoned slogans are often slightly yet meaningfully adjusted clichés of common parlance and the commercial world, and are overlaid on contrasting images which range from the grotesque to the banal. The juxtaposition of pictorial and linguistic modes of communication on the same plane thereby begs conceptual questions of human understanding, and the means by which messages are transmitted and distorted, recognised and received.

Barbara Kruger was born in Newark, New Jersey in 1945. She currently lives in both Los Angeles, California and New York and teaches at the University of California, Los Angeles. She has been the subject of many one-person exhibitions, including a comprehensive

retrospective at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles in 1999, which travelled to The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York in 2000. More recently, she has exhibited large-scale installations at the Moderna Museet in Stockholm, Tramway in Glasgow, Scotland, the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art in Melbourne, Australia, and at BCAM at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, among others. She was honoured with the "Golden Lion" award for Lifetime Achievement at the Venice Biennale in 2005.

For more information, interviews, or images, please contact Sally Hough:

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Visitor Information

Address: 7A Grafton Street, London, W1S 4EJ

Opening hours: Tuesday Saturday, 10am - 6pm

Admission: Free

Nearest Tube: Green Park

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