

Sandra Vásquez de la Horra

*Tu pelo es mi bandera*

1 May – 5 June 2010

Nolan Judin Berlin are proud to present *Tu pelo es mi bandera*, Sandra Vásquez de la Horra's first exhibition in Berlin. More than 60 recent works, created since the beginning of this year, are combined by 13 works produced between 2007 and 2009.

Sandra Vásquez de la Horra, born 1967 near the Chilean city of Valparaíso, is six years old when Augusto Pinochet seizes power in a coup, running the country as dictator for 17 years. Following a psychologist's recommendation, the somewhat maladjusted but well-read and highly intelligent girl applies, at the age of twelve, for a place to study at the Academy of Fine Arts—and is accepted. Sandra Vásquez de la Horra soon encounters the protest movements and takes part in student demonstrations. At the age of 19 she moves to the capital and joins the artists' and students' association *Chile Crea* and its struggle for democracy. At the same time, the young artist is drawn into her studies of contemporary Latin American literature, but also of world literature, from Rimbaud to Kerouac. She engages with the religious beliefs and philosophies of a diverse range of cultures—and applies her anthropological gaze to South American myths and popular fairy tales, while discovering a passion for typography. In 1995, Sandra Vásquez de la Horra spends a year studying with Jannis Kounellis at the Kunstakademie in Düsseldorf, but afterwards returns to Chile. Four years later, she resumes her studies in Düsseldorf—this time with Rosemarie Trockel—and has lived in Germany permanently since then.

Sandra Vásquez de la Horra is first and foremost a draughtswoman. Although she has produced a number of sculptural works, it is the short distance between thought and paper that has turned out to be the medium best suited to her desire to render visible a strangely familiar yet at the same time uncanny universe. Her drawings, all of them in moderate scale, are not “beautiful” in the classical sense of the word, but on the other hand reveal much about the artist's personality. They speak of fears, visualise dreams (or nightmares), recount memories. The dominance of the female figure as motive stands out: far more than half of her drawings are populated by female figures: mothers, nuns, saints, seductresses, prisoners, damned ones. They are objects of desire, while desiring themselves. They are deeply catholic or deeply pagan, but in any case radiate a raw sexuality. The numerically inferior male figures are soldiers, clowns, men with erections, men dangling off trees, little boys—or Christ. It strikes the observer that the figures mostly seem to hover on the paper—perspective plays almost no role in her compositions. Instead, they fixate the viewer with their gaze, radiating a certain voyeurism. A key element in Sandra Vásquez de la Horra's drawings is her typography. The artist will often place words in the foreground, as a result of which they dominate the motif, indeed becoming the main sujet. Or she distributes these words across the entire page, ignoring questions of grammatical correctness. Mostly she uses Spanish, but also English and occasionally German. Sometimes she mixes all three languages in one sentence—lending a somewhat Dadaist touch to some of her works. Usually, the words reinforce the mysteriousness more than the elucidate the drawing.

After drawing—usually only with pencil, very rarely in colour—the artist immerses the paper in wax. This unusual procedure endows the works with a strange materiality and ultimately a certain haziness. The wax that seals the drawing generates a patina, the works appear timeless. Sandra Vásquez de la Horra uses everything, used paper, that she likes to find in flea markets. The treatment with wax unifies the papers to a certain degree, and leads the viewer back to concentrating on what is being represented.

After exhibitions in the Centre Pompidou in Paris, and the Museum Kunst Palast in Düsseldorf, the hitherto most extensive exhibition of Sandra Vásquez de la Horra's works will be put on in the Bonnefantenmuseum in Maastricht, Holland. At the beginning of June, Hatje Cantz will publish an extensive large-format monograph. The artist is represented in many important museum and private collections.