

ROBIN RHODE. MEMORY IS THE WEAPON
14.03.2020 – 01.11.2020 **EXTENDED!**
Kunsthalle Krems



Robin Rhode, The Fountain, 2011, Courtesy of the Ekhard Collection and the artist © Robin Rhode

OPENING: Friday, 13.03.2020, 7 pm
PRESS CONFERENCE: Friday, 13.03.2020, 11 am
PRESS IMAGES: <https://celum.noeku.at/pinaccess/pinaccess.do?pinCode=TFS4YSU01L9F>

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„I wanted to work outside. It was a political decision for me to work in the public realm, because I wanted it to become my audience, specially back then. I wanted the South African public not to stand around me in a theatrical way; I wasn't aiming at making a kind of spectacle. I was just doing a wall drawing as a form of performance art.“

Robin Rhode

Robin Rhode's artistic work is characterized by a colorful diversity in which the drawing and body are the focal point. The South African artist, born in Cape Town in 1976, works predominantly on walls or on the ground in public spaces, documenting his works with photographs and videos.

Rhode's artistic work is shaped by a street-art aesthetic and the youth street culture of the socially troubled areas of Johannesburg, where he grew up in the era of South African apartheid. Although he now lives in Berlin, the past and present of his native land and of the "coloured" communities there remain an important element of his works.

The artist's explosively colorful drawings and wall compositions, which take shape more or less spontaneously during the performances, can include acrobatic as well as melancholic and romantic elements. In *Street Gym* (2000), Rhode's first drawing on the ground, which was transformed into a digital animation, the artist enacted gymnastics on a chalk-drawn horizontal bar. In *The Moon is Asleep* (2015), Rhode leans with a pillow against a black wall marked with the phases of the moon and shimmering ocean waves, drifting dreamlike through the nocturnal waters. More objectively constructive are his geometric wall compositions, which depict minimalist objects floating on the image ground. In his most recent work, *Tree of Life* (2019), Rhode paints flowers climbing up building facades in Jericho.

The exhibition shows a representative selection of works from nearly twenty years of Rhode's artistic output. It is presented in cooperation with the Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, which shows Robin Rhode's works from September 29, 2019, to February 9, 2020.

Curator: Uta Ruhkamp, Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg

ROBIN RHODE IN CONVERSATION WITH UTA RUHKAMP (ABSTRACT FROM THE CATALOG)

Uta Ruhkamp: I would like to start with a very basic question: What makes a wall a good wall?

Robin Rhode: From a formal perspective, definitely the surface of the wall is very important. Most people would think that the context or the location makes a good wall; but for me, that's not necessarily the case. I look for walls that have a conducive surface to apply a medium such as acrylic or spray paint, or charcoal or chalk. It has to have a lot of light and a particular characteristic, something which sets it apart. The wall surface must be conducive enough for me to explore a particular mark-making or drawing process.

Can you describe a day at the wall in—let's say—2005 and then in 2018?

If I look at the period from 2003 to 2005, my output was enormous because I was working all the time. I had one assistant that would drive around with me, and we would just make wall drawings. I didn't really have an established career; and you know there's a saying: Beggars can't be choosers. I used to do a lot of illegal wall pieces on industrial walls in Johannesburg. I had lots of issues with landlords that caught me painting or drawing on walls. I didn't care. I was just eager to make as much work as possible. I would visit South Africa even when I was living in Berlin, where my output was zero. I was a young father; my son was two or three years old at the time. When I was in Johannesburg, my output was absolutely relentless. I was making work in my mother's backyard, on the walls, on the ground... I got all the kids from the neighborhood to come to my mother's house so I could do drawings with them: I drew little toy motorbikes and a playground for them.

And in 2018?

Now, I've become more conscious of a wall's surface, and maybe I'm not as desperate as I was in 2005. Still desperate, but not like I was back then. Now I'm more selective about the context, for example, choosing a wall in Johannesburg and why, and choosing a wall in Jericho and why, rather than just going out and hitting walls like a graffiti artist or a tagger. If I look back at my works from 2004, I even drew in the sewers, on bridges, on the walls along the highways. Now I'm more mature and I have a particular discourse that I'm exploring. I'm much more selective of how the images are being constructed. Who's appearing in it? What is the line or mark? How and when is it created? There's more consideration going into the image, the production of the artwork, than thirteen or fifteen years ago.

During the last eight years, you worked on one favorite wall in Johannesburg. Since not everyone is acquainted with Johannesburg, could you explain where this wall is located?

The wall is located in the West Rand of Johannesburg. Johannesburg is divided into northern, southern, eastern, and western suburbs. It's in a Colored community called Westbury. There are other Colored suburbs in the surrounding area. Bosmont, where I grew up and went to school, is a neighborhood nextdoor; so it's all very close. I had friends that lived in Westbury, and I played cricket there. I coached cricket in Westbury at a primary school while I was unemployed or starting out my career as an artist. It was my mother's hairdresser who brought this wall to my attention, because she cuts people's hair by going to their homes. Fadiyah, the hairdresser, knows the areas and, in 2010/11, she recommended this huge wall that's opposite a liquor store. She even knows the owner of the wall, Mr. Mills. He's a local businessman. He owns the gas station close by, as well as a few other small businesses. The wall used to be that of a local bakery that had been closed down for over ten years. So inside it was actually a squat. Mr. Mills agreed that we could use the wall. I think what convinced him was the fact that I was somehow an established artist and from Germany, so I had some kind of

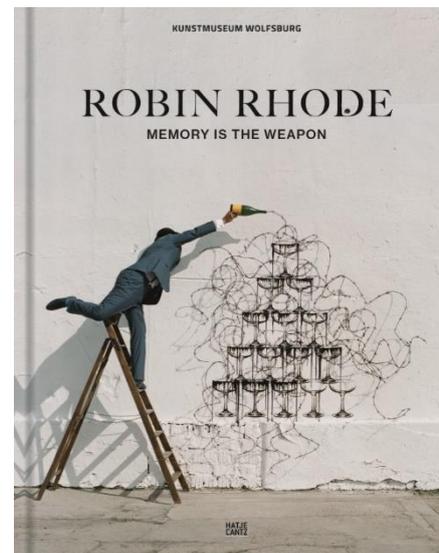
credentials. He allowed me to use his wall on the condition that I always visit him, and I always bring a bottle of whisky or gin, and we drink together when I'm in town.

The complete interview can be found in the exhibition catalog.

EXHIBITION CATALOG

available at the Kunsthalle Krems store

Title	Robin Rhode. Memory Is The Weapon
Editor	Uta Ruhkamp
Year of publication	2019
Published by	Hatje Cantz
Format	246 x 316 mm
Cover	Hardcover
Pages	224
Language	English / German
Authors	Uta Ruhkamp, Andreas Beitin, Florian Steininger, Don Mattera, Gladys Thomas, James Matthews
ISBN	978-3-7757-4605-2
Price	€ 34,90



WORKS OF THE EXHIBITION (SELECTION)



Robin Rhode, *Classic Bike*, 2002
12 Diasecs
each: 29,8 x 45,7 cm
© Courtesy of the artist



Robin Rhode, *Melancholia*, 2019
4 C - Prints
each: 54,6 x 72,6 cm
© Courtesy of the artist



Robin Rhode, *Paradise*, 2016
8 individual C - prints
each: 56 cm x 70 cm / 58,6 cm x 72,6 cm (framed)
© Courtesy of the artist



Robin Rhode, *Harvest*, 2005
Digital Animation
03:45 Min
© Courtesy of the artist



Robin Rhode, *Piano Chair*, 2011
Digital Animation
03:53 Min
© Courtesy of the artist



Robin Rhode, *Twilight*, 2012
8 individual C - prints
each: 41.59 cm x 61.59 cm (framed)
© Courtesy of the artist



Robin Rhode, *Delta*, 2018
4 C-prints
each: 58,6 x 72,6 cm
© Courtesy of the artist

EXHIBITION DETAILS

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OPENING HOURS

Tue–Sun

10 am – 6 pm (March–October)

10 am – 5 pm Uhr (November–February)

Mo closed (except on public holidays)

Closed on 24.12., 31.12., 01.01.

ADMISSION

Adults € 10

reduced € 9

Family tickets € 18

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