

Camille Henrot Builds A Universe from eBay-Sourced Objects

ARTSY EDITORIAL
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Camille Henrot © Photo: Joakim Bouaziz.

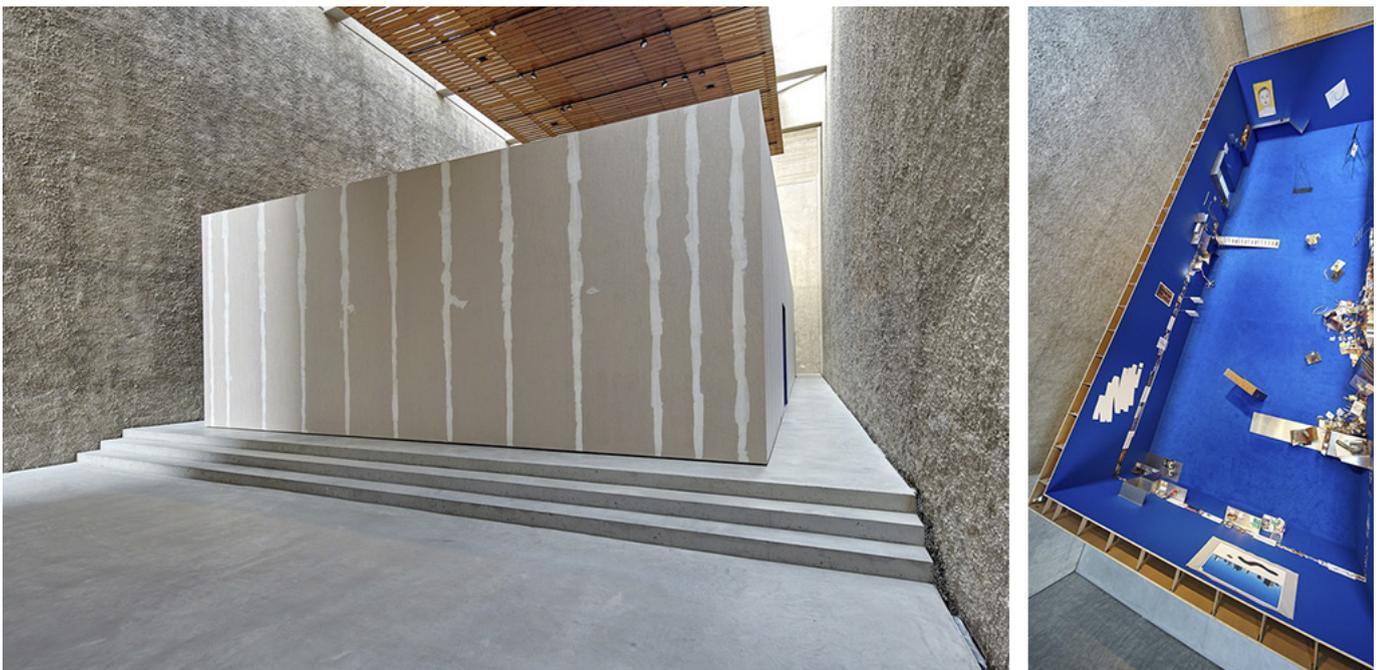
On the eve of the opening of her new exhibition, “The Pale Fox,” Camille Henrot sits on a sofa in the corner of KÖNIG GALERIE’s recently converted space, a Brutalist former cathedral in the heart of Berlin. She wears denim dungarees as the installation unfolds, nearby around a dozen assistants help to arrange objects in a large rectangular room at the center of the gallery’s nave.

Entering the show, visitors step into a deep-blue realm that encompasses four zones in which stages of life—creation, growth, reduction, death—and elements of existence—earth, fire, water, air—are interpreted in a wide-ranging display of objects and images. Found and crafted, hand-

drawn and digital, domestic and exotic, they balance on geometric chrome shelves or clustered on the floor.



Installation view of "Camille Henrot: The Pale Fox," KÖNIG GALERIE, Berlin. Photo: Ulf Saupe. Courtesy KÖNIG GALERIE and the artist



Installation views of "Camille Henrot: The Pale Fox," KÖNIG GALERIE, Berlin. Photo: Ulf Saupe. Courtesy KÖNIG GALERIE and the artist

This Berlin outing is the fifth iteration of "The Pale Fox," first commissioned in 2014 by The Chisenhale Gallery, London. The project

borrowed its title from a work of 1960s French anthropology by Germaine Dieterlen and Marcel Griaule that chronicled and categorized the sophisticated systems of Mali's Dogon tribe, tracking rituals related to astronomy, agriculture, family planning, and mathematics. "I wanted to create this crazy obsessional system, where each word stands for a different element and moment in human life," says Henrot.



Installation view of "Camille Henrot: *The Pale Fox*," KÖNIG GALERIE, Berlin. Photo: Ulf Saupe. Courtesy KÖNIG GALERIE and the artist

She identified numerous topics from *The Pale Fox*—such as "placenta" and "moon"—and searched for them on eBay. The accumulation of those search results is now on view at KÖNIG GALERIE. "eBay was not only a source of materials but a way to understand how we process images of objects and how objects are photographed in the intimacy of people's homes," says the artist. "What are we ready to get rid of?"

Based on the assemblage on view, plenty: a telephone, printed papers, wooden animals, a toy snake. "The status of these objects is ambiguous: they are not properly trash," Henrot adds. "I was more interested in objects that were neither very precious nor completely without value but existed somewhere in-between."



Camille Henrot
The formation of Teeth, 2013
KÖNIG GALERIE



Camille Henrot
Self Organizing, 2014
KÖNIG GALERIE

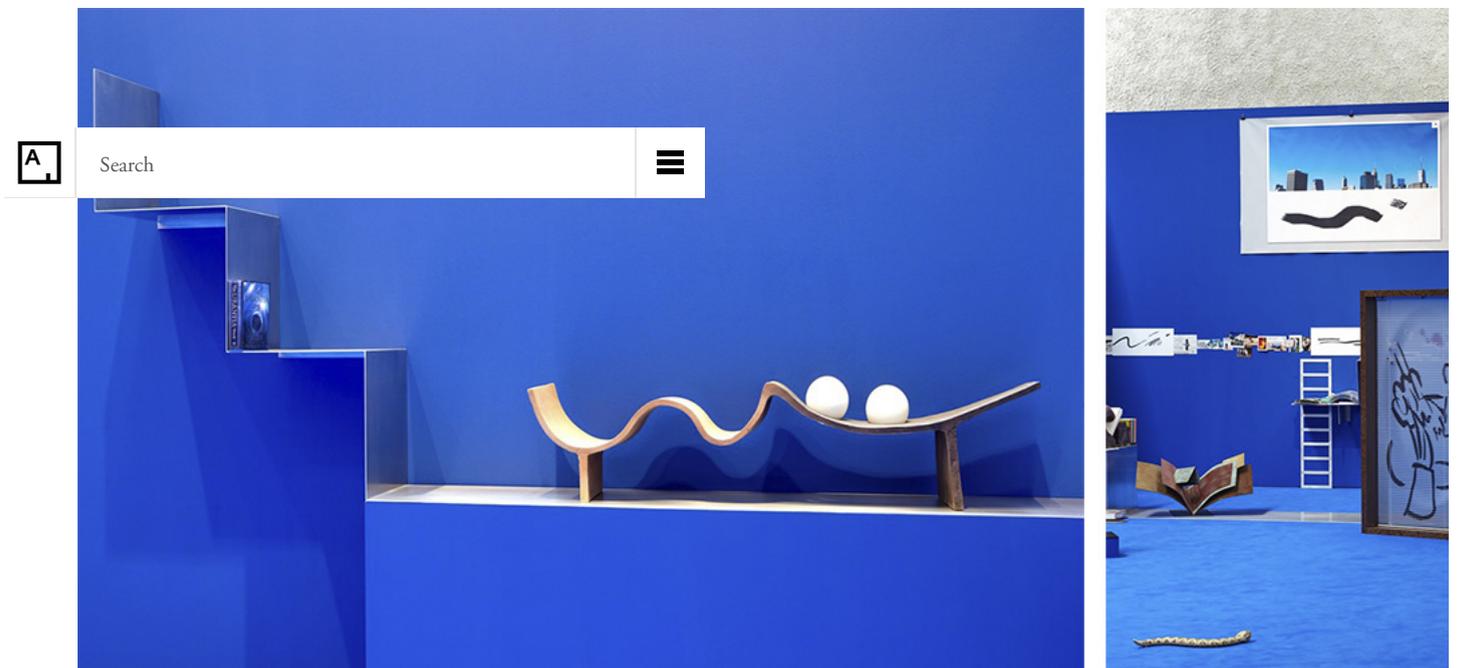


Camille Henrot
Involuntary Adjustment, 2014
KÖNIG GALERIE



Camille Henrot
The transformation of
KÖNIG GALERIE
SOLD

Interspersed amidst these eBay finds are Henrot's own bronze and ceramic sculptures, their extravagant curves and solid forms calling up reference points from African sculpture to Brancusi. They are part of a previously unexhibited series, "Desktop" (2013-ongoing). The works are placed not in opposition with each other, but rather as a heterogeneous network for each visitor to navigate and create linkages between for themselves. "There's a certain element of correspondence and a certain element of disruption that creates a narrative that's interesting," says Henrot. "In the end it's not so much about making sense but about creating stories that are stimulating for the brain; to open up a world of ideas."



Installation view of "Camille Henrot: The Pale Fox," KÖNIG GALERIE, Berlin. Photo: Ulf Saupe. Courtesy KÖNIG GALERIE and the artist

"The Pale Fox" contains many threads of Henrot's output: a fascination for what it means to study other cultures, seeded in early films like *Coupé / Décalé* (2010); a penchant for spatial design according to Eastern principles, present in her Ikebana flower arrangements; and a hunger for knowledge metabolized in the research behind her preceding film *Grosse Fatigue* (2013), a 13-minute history of the universe, which earned her the

Installation view of "Camille Henrot: *The Pale Fox*," KÖNIG GALERIE, Berlin. Photo: Ulf Saupe. Courtesy KÖNIG GALERIE and the artist

At some point, the ambition of the artist must face reality: "Next comes a phase of mourning, where you become resigned to finding some limits. You have to make these limits dear to you, and for me that meant coming back to something very personal." Alongside National Geographic magazines and mass-produced posters are photographs of a young Henrot and her family, favorite books, and homely ephemera. While the room, and the individual items within it, refer to everyday life, the installation and its stream-of-consciousness layout feel more surrealistic than domestic—the stuff of dreams. The one vertical sculpture, *Amma's Door* (2014), transformed from a figure in the book, poses as a portal to another world. Here the bedroom is a universe, the artist's studio is a cosmos, and the gallery is a galaxy unto itself.



Camille Henrot
Amma's Door, 2014
KÖNIG GALERIE



Camille Henrot
Sharp drops (Desktop series), 2014
KÖNIG GALERIE



Camille Henrot
The formation of Nails, 2011
KÖNIG GALERIE
SOLD

The chosen shade of blue sets a unifying background to the visual stimulation. "I wanted the objects to seem to float, scattered in the atmosphere. Blue is connected with water, air, nothingness. It is one of the colors that has the widest possibility for interpretation, just as the show was about being as wide and expansive as possible."



Installation view of "Camille Henrot: The Pale Fox," KÖNIG GALERIE, Berlin. Photo: Ulf Saupe. Courtesy KÖNIG GALERIE and the artist

Henrot has said that what drew her to the principles of Ikebana was its goal to present a "privileged space" away from the unpredictability of life. Stepping into this incarnation of "The Pale Fox," the phrase follows me; the show's privilege lies in its place outside of reality and its ability to command an aura both curious and precious.

—Hannah Gregory

"The Pale Fox" is on view at KÖNIG GALERIE, Berlin, Sep. 5–Nov. 1, 2015.

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