

ELISABETH WILD

Featuring works by Raúl I. Lima and Sophie Thun

Curated by Adam Szymczyk

September 12–October 24, 2020

Opening September 11 2020, 12–8pm

Karma International is proud to present the exhibition of collages by Elisabeth Wild (1922–2020), featuring works by Raúl Itamar Lima and Sophie Thun. The first solo show since Elisabeth Wild's passing earlier this year at the age of 98, this exhibition brings together a group of meticulously crafted works the artist created through her daily, dedicated practice during the past two decades, and for which she has become known.

The *Fantasías*, as Wild titled some of her previous exhibitions, transform the brightly saturated pages of art, culture and lifestyle magazines—mass-produced commodities that get thrown away soon after they're purchased—into unique objects that materialize the worlds only she could see and chart. Combing through the magazines, usually brought to her by friends visiting her and her daughter Vivian Suter's home in Panajachel, Guatemala, Wild plucked colors and textures from photographs and advertisements with a keen understanding of how to make them cohere harmonically—or produce a dissonance. The shapes she cut—their slight imperfections showing the artist's hand in the process—would then be carefully assembled into a bouquet of bright geometric shapes, often in an overarching symmetry, and pasted down in an act defying the ephemerality of her material. Though the collages are no larger than a magazine page itself, the dense and thoughtful combinations of lines and curves open up a vertiginous depth of field, as shapes adjoin, pass into each other and collide, letting the viewer's gaze wander around the surface of each *papier collé*, and zoom into its nuanced, kaleidoscopic details.

Born in 1922 in Vienna, Wild embraced art making early on, taking drawing lessons. Her family was forced to flee Austria in 1938, upon the then-imminent rise of Nazi regime, to Buenos Aires where Elisabeth would continue her art studies at the Academia Nacional de Bellas Artes, learning from a painter Leo Eichhorn, likewise émigré from Vienna, and participate in a handful of group exhibitions. While earning a living as textile designer, she married August Wild, a Swiss textile industrialist. Together with their young daughter Vivian, the couple left for Basel, Switzerland, faced with worsening of the political climate in Argentina, in early 1960s. In Basel, Elisabeth Wild opened an antique shop at St. Johannstor, supporting her family while following her creative impulse. She left Switzerland after 1996 to join her daughter in Panajachel near the Lake of Atitlán.

In 2011, while researching for a retake on a 1981 exhibition at Kunsthalle Basel, Adam Szymczyk reached out to the painter Vivian Suter in Guatemala to gradually find out about her and her mother Elisabeth's work, which at that time seemed made

for no one but for the artists themselves. Becoming an early advocate for their work, Szymczyk included Suter's paintings and Wild's collages in "Olinka, or Where Movement Is Created", the show he curated at Museo Tamayo in Mexico City in 2012, and in 2014 he organized Vivian Suter's solo show *intrépida*, featuring Elisabeth Wild's *Fantasías 2* at Kunsthalle Basel. Most recently, in 2017, both artists participated in documenta 14 in Athens and Kassel.

In the current show at Karma International, collages are presented against the background of a wall painted light turquoise green, invoking Elisabeth Wild's own way of staging her works: when choosing works for an exhibition, the artist always included color instructions for the wall, or a color sample cut out of paper.

Featured in the exhibition are works by two Vienna-based artists that take their cues from two different moments in Elisabeth Wild's biography, seen through the lens of each artist's own practice. In his digital video *Elisabeth's Garden* (2020), Raúl Itamar Lima (who met Wild in Panajachel in 2019) used Edgar Kindler's casual Super 8 footage of Wild in her house in Nidfloh, Simmental from the early 1990s. Sophie Thun created a photogram *EW (W, VS, AS, ST), 22.–23.06.2020, Grafisches Kabinett, Secession, Vienna* (2020) as part of her recent show at the Secession, for which she used a digital printout of a .jpeg file of Elisabeth Wild's portrait made in the 1940s or early 1950s by a photographer named Walter. Both works engage with biography as it is perpetuated via images: their making and their subsequent iterations.

Elisabeth Wild's two-person exhibitions with her daughter Vivian Suter include *Fantasías 2*, Kunsthalle Basel (2011) and *La Canicula*, The Power Plant, Toronto (2018). She took part in documenta 14 in Athens and Kassel (2017), as well as group shows at Museo de Arte y Diseño Contemporáneo, San Jose (2013) and Museo Tamayo, Mexico City (2012). She also realized, in 2018, a temporary public work on High Street railway bridge, commissioned by Focal Point Gallery, Southend-on-Sea. Her work is in the collections of a.o. the Guggenheim Museum, New York; Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago; and Centre National des Arts Plastiques, Paris. A retrospective of her work is planned for 2021 at mumok, Vienna.

A forthcoming monograph *Elisabeth Wild. Fantasías*, edited by Adam Szymczyk and designed by Julia Born, with poems by Negma Coy and new essays by Noit Banai, Barbara Casavecchia, Karolina Dankow and Adam Szymczyk, will be published by Sternberg Press.