

Extract from work biography by Brigitte Ulmer in “Manon - A Person“

pages 262-264

... This led to the staged photo pictures of Manon inspired by glamorous media photos, for example, Manon as a Self-Portrait (Like a Bird).

In 1972, Manon opened her boutique, Manon's, in the old part of Zurich where she sold her own creations: jackets made from glitter fabric with appliqués. She posed in self designed interiors as a model for fashion magazines.

In the early 1970s, she experimented for the first time in photography, creating Polaroids (1973/74), and Fetischbilder (Fetish Pictures, 1974). She introduced mussels, monkey skulls, marabou feathers, and masks into the pictures, as well as other cultural artefacts-objects that she used again in the installation *Das Lachsfarbene Boudoir* (The Salmon-pink boudoir). This was followed by self portraits from photo vending machines and glamorous self promotion in changing styles and intricate settings that she worked out together with her husband Urs Lüthi.

Manon submerged in Zurich's subculture during this time and met the artists Sigmar Polke, Jürgen Klauke, Luciano Castelli, Markus Rätz, Walter Pfeiffer, and Esther Altdorfer, filmmaker Daniel Schmid, and musician Stefan Wittwer. She was always extravagantly done up for her nightly appearances in the club Platte 27.

Manon's meticulously furnished bedroom in a loft on Augustinergasse in Zurich presents a little universe filled with fetish objects, feathers, and glittery materials, and would become the starting point for her first installation *Das lachsfarbene Boudoir* (1974). Further performances and installations followed: *Das Leben im Schaukasten* (Life in a Showcase, 1975/76), *Das Ende der Lola Montez* (The End of Lola Montez, 1975), and *Manon Presents Man* (1976). Her artist's book *Manomanie* (1974/75), which overlapped in part with the work *Das Leben im Schaukasten*, focused on the metamorphosis of a fictional “Manon” using collages and drawings.

The performance *The Artist Is Present* (1977) is a Happening that took place at several sites with sixteen live Manon doubles. The participative performance *Walk on the Wild Side* (1977) involved more than sixty extras.

In 1977, she published the artist's book *On Manon '74-77* in her own Kung-Kong-Sisters press. In the book, Manon merged art and private life to a cinema-like narrative fluctuating between reality and fiction in pictures of lining and working behind the scenes of her performances. In the same year, Werner Büttler portrayed the artist in his TV film *Das Klima Manon*.

Likewise in 1977, Manon shaved her head and moved to Paris where she lived and worked until 1980. There, she created the photo-series *La dame au crane rasé* (The Lady with the Shaved Head, 1977/78), in which she constructed an identity in flux. In Paris, she also created the series of performance photos *Elektrokardiogramm 304/303* (1978) and *Die graue Wand oder 36 schlaflose Nächte* (The gray wall or 36 sleepless nights, 1979). In Amsterdam, Manon realized the performance *Sentimental Journey* (1979), in which she locked visitors, one by one, into a cage, and observed them.

In 1980, she moved to Geneva. There, she created the photo-series *Ball der Einsamkeiten* (Ball of Lonelinesses, 1980), in which she continued her work on the theme of identity construction. John Armleder let her stage the performance *Traps* (1979) in his gallery Ecart, a variation on the Amsterdam performance *Sentimental Journey*. Back in Paris, she created *Das Doppelzimmer* (The double-room, 1982), and *Wendekreise* (Turning circles, 1983): photographic experiments on the relationship between the sexes.

After an extended break during which she withdrew entirely into her own private life, Manon returned in 1990 with the installation *Damenzimmer* (The room of women) and the photo-series *Künstler Eingang* (Artist's entrance), both of which were conceived for the Kunstmuseum St. Gallen. The artist's book *Wege zum Ruhm* (Paths to glory, 1994) followed, a picture collage of personal heroes and stars entering into in depth relationships with their own spaces and settings.

In the 1990s, Manon turned to the field of tension arising between the desire for eternal youth and fleetingness. Symbolic installations resulted, such as *Die Philosophie im Boudoir* (Philosophy in the boudoir, 1993), *La stanza delle donne* (The room of women, 1996), *Seduzione e dolore* (Seduction and pain, 1997), *Blut im Schuh* (Blood in the shoe, 1997), and also the photo-series *Forever Young* (1999). After 2000, she continued her work in the photographic medium and again investigated the construction of identity on her own body, as an echo of *Ball der Einsamkeiten* from 1980, by transforming into around fifty characters – *Einst war sie Miss Rimini* (She was once Miss Rimini, 2003) – and slipping into the skin of a male alter-ego Manon als Edgar (2006).

Since 2004, the visual archive that Manon has built up over the course of three decades has flowed into the continuing photo cycle *Diaries*. The cycle reviews both early works as well as her everyday life, but above all, sounds out her personal realm of experience. The artist's latest, large-format color portraits in the series *Borderline* are extremely direct self-examinations.