

Nicole Wermers



1. Infrastruktur

Responding to the ubiquity of design-culture in the modern city, Nicole Wermers' sculptures and installations explore the relationship between urban infrastructure and social experience.

In *Palisades* (1998) – an important early work, her only moving image work to date – Wermers flips a video camera 180 degrees and walks it, without permission, through a series of semi-public buildings. Viewed upside down, the previously recognisable architectural and design features of the buildings are abstracted; an aesthetic dimension lent corporal tension by the film's clever camerawork. Shot in the first person mode, *Palisades* gives the impression that Wermers is actually walking on the ceilings of the various rooms she traverses. Semi-public space is thus doubly appropriated: visually, in terms of the way the architectural and ornamental features are reconstituted by the camera angle and socially: by means of Wermers' contentious presence in the buildings, her clandestine movement along their roofs and ceilings.

Another key element to *Palisades* is the way it evidences how forms that functionally recur across the built environment can also be identified in more celebrated modes of cultural production. For what can be seen in the lattice of beams supporting a roof, might also be observable in venerated modernist painting. In this way the film points to the chaotic operation of art and design along digestive – one could even say, cannibalistic – lines. This phenomenon, the endless circulation of forms and styles through culture, is something Wermers' work is keenly attuned to. Indeed at times her work is the very embodiment of its dynamic principal.

Double Sand Table (2007) is an L-shaped floor sculpture comprising two conjoined steel table structures. The surface of the two tables is recessed in order to contain a few inches of white sand. The presence of neatly welded steel within the crisp environs of a white cube gallery space evokes the minimalist turn in modernist sculpture. This is underwritten by the simple form of the tables, their Euclidean logic. Yet there's a problem. Stubbed intermittently into the sand we have cigarette butts. The elegance of this initial minimal gesture, its purity as an object in space and time, has been compromised. Indeed, the presence of the butts opens up another abrasive possibility: that this is not only a sculpture, but also an ashtray. A big, useful, ashtray.

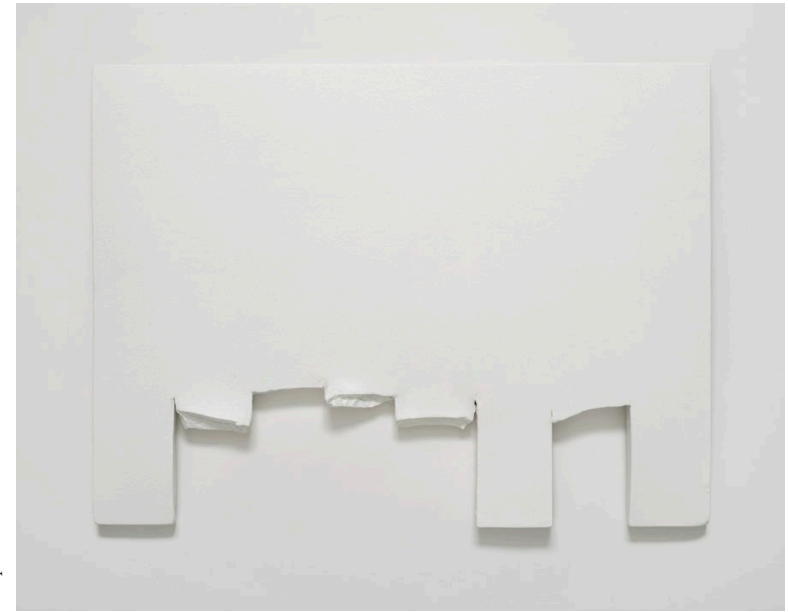
The intentionally duplicitous approach taken in *Double Sand Table* allows Wermers to engage what otherwise might be considered an exhausted critical dialogue – the legacy of Minimalism – with unusual freshness and dexterity. As critic Barry Schwabsky has written about his first encounter with Wermers' sand tables: "I felt I was for once seeing something unfamiliar in sculpture. These works had a Mannerist incongruity about them but one that paradoxically seemed unforced. They often seemed too simple to sustain real interest but thanks to the artist's acute judgements of scale, materials, and references, the case turned out quite otherwise: I had to keep thinking about them."

Untitled Chairs (2014-15) make up a central element in Wermers' Turner Prize presentation. The individual sculptures comprise women's fur coats sewn around Wermers' adapted version of Bauhaus designer Marcel Breuer's 'design classic': the Cesca

chair. The vision of a coat draped over a chair recalls an everyday ritual performed in cafes, restaurants and other venues. For convenience we also place our coats on chairs in order to claim them, to mark out a private area in otherwise public space. In *Untitled Chairs* this fleeting action is solidified into something permanent. Not only are the coats sewn around the chairs, they actually constitute part of the backrest itself: the two elements becoming one thing. Though outwardly cultivating familiarity,

Wermers' chairs refute their immediate contextual reading. They both are and are not what they seem. A complexity emphasised by their presence, not on a busy boulevard café, of course, but in an art gallery: a place ordered by a radically different set of social and behavioural codes to those governing their indigenous urban settings.

The formal properties of the *Untitled Chairs* – their materiality – also contain a nuanced historical comment. On a superficial

2. *Palisades*3. *Double Sandtable*4. *Sequence 2*

1. *Infrastruktur*, Installation view, Herald St, London, UK, 2015

Courtesy: Herald St, London

2. *Palisades*, 1998, Video, 4 minutes

Courtesy: Herald St, London, Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York and Produzentengalerie, Hamburg

3. *Double Sandtable*, 2007, mild steel, sand, cigarette butts 71.5 x 450 x 250 cm / 28.1 x 117.2 x 98.4 in HS4-NW1499S

Courtesy: Herald St, London, Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York

4. *Sequence 2*, 2015, Painted ceramics, 25.8 x 34.2 x 1.5 cm / 10.1 x 13.4 x 0.5 in, HS10-NW4959S

Courtesy: Herald St, London

level, stainless steel tubing and fur point to a popular combination in modernist interior design. Beyond this, the combination of an autograph design object – redolent of the male-dominance of modernist canon – with a series of feminine coats also resonates with the problematic history of famous cross-gender partnerships in modernist architecture and design. Often subsumed under the name of their male collaborators (notably the case with Eileen Gray's collaboration with Le Corbusier – though there are many other examples), it has only been relatively recently that female designers have been given their proper place in the history of that era.

Though in this way historically minded, Wermers' art remains firmly grounded in the experience of living and working in the contemporary metropolis. By extruding novelty from recognisability via subtle acts of transformation, her work displaces the certainty with which we appoint function and value to objects as well as the urban spaces in which they appear. Wermers makes a repeat point about cultivating a degree of autonomy from the determinations of the built environment; in doing so her work demarks a vitally important space in order to contemplate the intentional order of the world that surrounds us.

— Paul Pieroni

Assemble



Bonnie Camplin



Janice Kerbel



Nicole Wermers

TURNER PRIZE

2015

The Turner Prize will be awarded at Tramway in Glasgow on 7th December 2015, during a live broadcast on Channel 4, to an artist under 50, born, living or working in Britain, for an outstanding exhibition or other presentation of their work in the preceding year.

An exhibition of work by the four shortlisted artists will be free and will run from 1 October 2015 until 17 January 2016 at Tramway, Glasgow.

Tramway.org
@GlasgowTramway
#TurnerPrize

The Artists



Assemble

For projects including the ongoing collaboration with local residents and others in the Granby Four Streets, Liverpool. Assemble are a London-based collective who work across the fields of art, design and architecture to create projects in tandem with the communities who use and inhabit them. Their architectural spaces and environments promote direct action and embrace a DIY sensibility.

Bonnie Camplin

Bonnie Camplin has been nominated for *The Military Industrial Complex*, South London Gallery. Camplin gathers her expanded practice under a single idea: the 'Invented Life'. Central to this idea is what Camplin describes as a "myth-science of energy and consciousness research" in which subjective experience is taken as the primary datum of evidence. Her work spans the disciplines of drawing, film, performance, music and writing as well as immaterial and situational research. *The Military Industrial Complex*, South London Gallery took the form of a study room exploring what 'consensus reality' is and how it is formed, drawing from physics to philosophy, psychology, witchcraft, quantum theory and warfare.

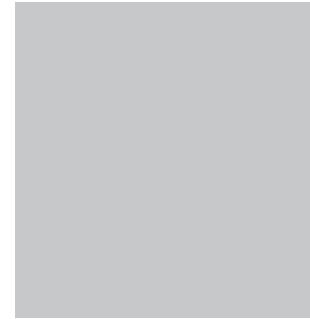
Janice Kerbel

For her operatic work *DOUG*, commissioned by The Common Guild at Mitchell Library, Glasgow. Kerbel borrows from conventional modes of narrative in order to create elaborate imagined forms. Her precisely crafted works often take the form of audio recordings, performance and printed matter. *DOUG* is a performative work which takes the form of nine songs for six voices.

Nicole Wermers

Nicole Wermers is nominated for her exhibition *Infrastruktur*, Herald Street, London. Wermers creates sculptures, collages and installations, which explore the appropriation of art and design within consumer culture. Her installation *Infrastruktur* adopted the glossy aesthetics and materials of modernist design and high fashion, alluding to themes of lifestyle, class, consumption and control.

Assemble



Bonnie Camplin



Janice Kerbel



Nicole Wermers

