

**Claudia Comte** (b. 1983, Grancy, Switzerland) lives and works in Berlin and Grancy. Comte has shown her work in solo and group exhibitions including: *When Dinosaurs Ruled the Earth*, König Galerie, Berlin (2018); *Swiss Performance Now*, Kunsthalle Basel, Switzerland (2018); *KölnSkulpture #9*, Cologne, Germany (2017); *La Ligne Claire*, Basement Rome (2017); *NOW I WON*, Messeplatz, Art Basel (2017); *10 Rooms, 40 Walls, 1059 m2*, Kunstmuseum Lucerne, Switzerland (2017); *Desert X*, Palm Springs, California (2017); *The Language of Things*, with the Public Art Fund, New York (2016); *NO MELON NO LEMON*, Gladstone Gallery, New York (2015); *Easy Heavy III*, Haus Konstruktiv, Zurich (2014); *Sharp Sharp* at David Dale Gallery, Glasgow (2014); *If I were a rabbit, where would I keep my gloves?*, BolteLang, Zurich (2013); and *Elevation 1049*, Gstaad, Switzerland (2013). Comte studied at the Ecole Cantonale d'Art de Lausanne, Switzerland, ECAL (2004–07) followed by a Masters of Art in Science of Education at Haute Ecole Pédagogique, Visual Arts, Lausanne (2008–10).

*Claudia Comte: Electric Burst (Lines and Zigzags)* is organized for the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis by Lisa Melandri, Executive Director.

This exhibition is generously supported by the Swiss Arts Council Pro Helvetia. The Work in Progress is generously supported by the Robert Lehman Foundation.

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## Related Programs

**Work in Progress: Claudia Comte**  
Wednesday, May 9, Noon–1:00 pm



Claudia Comte, *The Italian Bunnies*, installation view, City Hall Park, Lower Manhattan, New York, 2016. Statuario Venato marble. Courtesy the artist. Photo: Jason Wyche.

Gallery Guide  
Contemporary Art  
Museum St. Louis

May 11–  
August 19, 2018



# Claudia Comte Electric Burst (Lines and Zigzags)



Claudia Comte, *Curves and Zigzags*, installation view, *Desert X*, Palm Springs, 2017. Acrylic wall painting on double-sided wall. Courtesy the artist. Photo: Lance Gerber.

For CAM's 60 foot-long Project Wall, Swiss artist Claudia Comte presents *Electric Burst (Lines and Zigzags)*—the artist's most graphically complex wall painting to date. The Berlin-based artist is known for her multimedia installations comprising wooden sculptures, spatial graphics, and site-specific paintings, which collectively transform the exhibition space into an immersive environment. Here, the zigzag pattern—a motif that Comte has investigated across numerous projects—produces optical illusions when viewed from different perspectives.

*Electric Burst (Lines and Zigzags)* demonstrates Comte's injection of irony and chance into the rigid analogs of European modernist traditions. Comte's graphic forms entertain optical apparitions that take

on a life of their own through the eyes of viewers as they move through the space. In the artist's words: "Rhythm can infuse life with a sense of empathy towards an abstract inanimate form, in this case amplifying the effect of the wall. This also creates an



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Claudia Comte, *Curves and Zigzags* (detail), installation view, *Desert X*, Palm Springs, 2017. Acrylic wall painting on double-sided wall. Courtesy the artist. Photo: Lance Gerber.

emotional connection between the work and the audience.” Comte hopes that by staying awhile, viewers may “bond” with the patterns.

Audience participation is a common thread in Comte’s work, serving to bring people together in unexpected and playful ways. Past projects such as *NOW I WON* (2017)—an outdoor funfair for Art Basel, featuring participatory activities such as arm wrestling, mini-golf, bowling, and darts—evoke joy, or more specifically, *Sorglosigkeit*—a German word describing the lightness of those free from worry.

### Playing with Abstraction

Claudia Comte works across many different mediums, often creating installations that combine paintings, chainsaw-carved wood sculptures, wall hangings, and site-specific wall works—each given equal importance in the gallery. Her art historical influences are numerous and recognizable, from modernist sculptors to Op artists. She reinvents and reinvigorates these legacies by setting aside the stoicism of her predecessors in favor of a joyful and irreverent sensibility. Comte has said, “I think I’m trying to imbue

a bit of humor in these really strict and minimal shapes. I try to give them a bit of life.” The artist has long been drawn to the cartoons and comic books of her childhood, which have found a way into previous works such as her bunny ear sculptures carved from Italian marble, interactive swing sets, and wooden cactus forms. For her, rigor and play are not mutually exclusive qualities in the work.

To build her installations, Comte creates distinct rule-based measurement systems that govern how the patterns and forms take shape. The pieces within an installation relate to one another through these rules. For example, if Comte chooses a measurement for a particular line, she applies this logic to everything. There is a seriousness to the process and an exactness that aligns her with 1960s Minimalist concerns—the grid, modularity, and seriality. In *128 squares and their demonstration* (2015), the artist created a large outdoor wall work for the Domaine Du Muy sculpture park consisting of a black, white, and green square pattern, painted in different sizes and organized by strict rules within a grid format. The piece drew attention to the landscape and the notion that nature appears wild, yet is highly structured. In her larger practice, Comte explores universally perfect

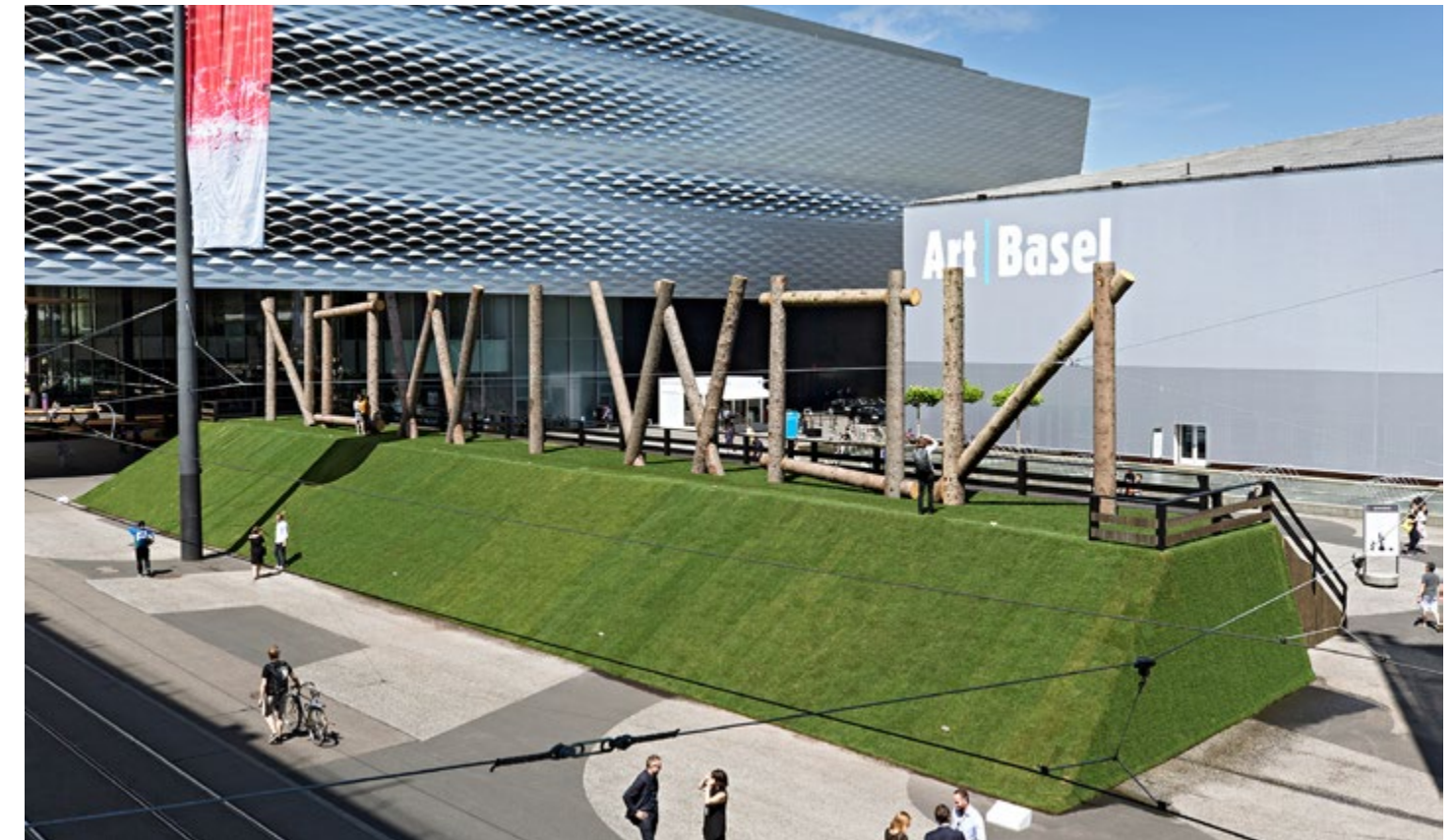
shapes—a spiral, a cylinder, a pine cone—and their limitless patterns created by nature’s mathematics. The artist is also drawn to the modularity and repetition of simple forms. The zigzag pattern of both *Curves and Zigzags* (2017) and *Electric Burst (Lines and Zigzags)* was organized to fit within a grid and was precisely measured, yet the stringent geometric composition slowly morphed, softened, and became malleable, breaking free of the assumed logic of the piece.

Comte challenges our expectations of how art should function and explores how to activate sculpture through playful and participatory installations. In 2016 Comte created an outdoor site-specific installation for Public Art Fund in New York, *The Italian Bunnies*, consisting of carved marble bunny ears that appeared to emerge from a grassy lawn. The shapes reference the language of modernist abstraction, but also read as cartoon-like figures, with each taking on its own character and named after an Italian Renaissance sculptor—Leonardo, Michelangelo, Donatello. Visitors were invited to sit on the sculptures. In 2017 the artist designed an immersive funfair, *NOW I WON*, for the art fair Art Basel, which featured seven activity booths located directly outside the entrance. Through games like bowling and darts, visitors were encouraged to throw darts at Comte’s target paintings and knock down her sculptures like bowling pins. The nominal entry fee of three francs allowed many audiences to



Claudia Comte, *128 squares and their demonstration*, installation view, Domaine Du Muy, France, 2015. Freestanding block wall, double-sided acrylic. Courtesy the artist. Photo: Jeanchristophe Lett.

participate, especially those that were just walking by the fair, with the chance to win original artworks by the artist. In this interactive environment Comte introduced art as a catalyst for love and joy in the public sphere, a main concern of her artistic practice. She has stated, “For me, the work is about bringing people together.”



Claudia Comte, *NOW I WON*, installation view, Messeplatz, Art Basel, Basel, Switzerland, 2017. 23 tree trunks, grass, chainsaw carved wood, marble, yew, platanus, three arm wrestlers, two bartenders, two DJs, two Queens of the funfair. Courtesy the artist. Photo: Gina Folly.