

Ulla von Brandenburg: Wagon Wheel

Over the past decade, Ulla von Brandenburg has developed a sophisticated practice that draws from elements of theater, architecture, and other disciplines to investigate the behavioral codes and social mores of the present. She often employs archaic aesthetic strategies such as the tableau vivant, silhouetted figure, or nineteenth-century costuming to further reveal connections between historical events and contemporary life.

The artist created her seven-part quilt series *Wagon Wheel* (2009) following an extended research-based stay in Memphis, Tennessee. There, she was inspired by the traditions of such Southern female collectives as Gee's Bend, as well as the quilt patterns and alleged symbols and signs used by enslaved people to communicate when planning escape through the Underground Railroad in nineteenth-century America. In the installation at CAM, von Brandenburg reimagines the Underground Railroad's secret visual language. For example, while the exhibition's eponymous "wagon wheel" quilting pattern likely carried the hidden directive of packing one's belongings for an epic journey to freedom and traditionally features a wheel surrounded by radiating spokes, the artist alters the design by zooming in and then cropping it. Fabricated from old clothing, curtains, tablecloths, and other fabric remnants, her vivid compositions recall folk art aesthetics and the Pattern and Decoration Movement as well as the reserved elegance of Modernist abstraction. Their originally subversive function obscured in this manner, the works toe the line between colorful abstraction and sociopolitical imperative. Von Brandenburg's presentation ruminates on history and justice by demonstrating the power of folk vernacular to showcase the resilience of the human spirit in the face of seemingly insurmountable adversity.

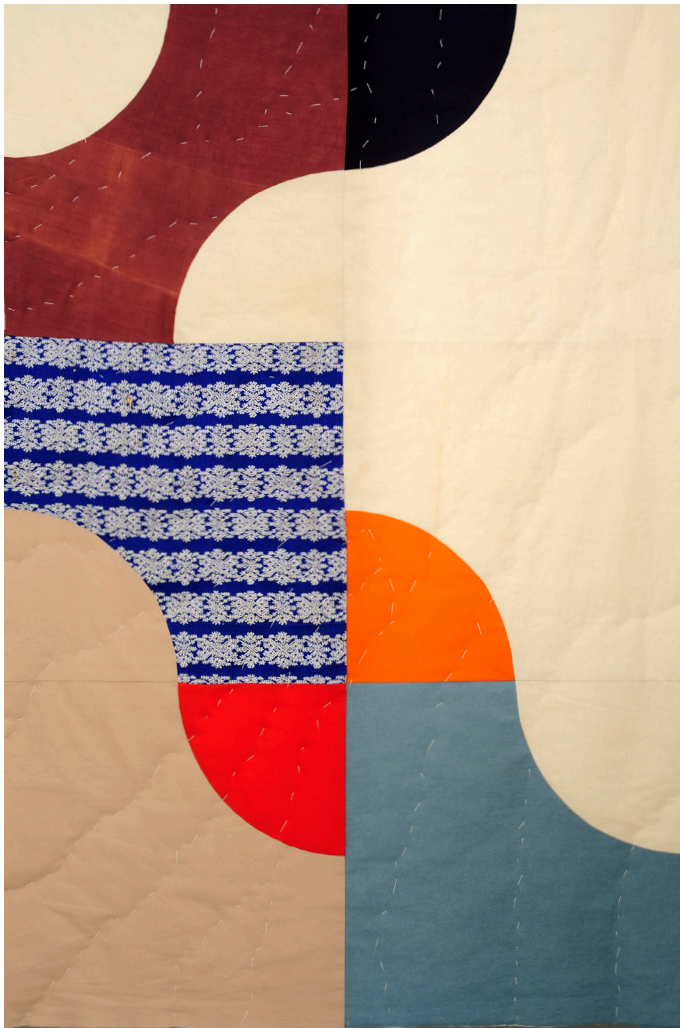


Wagon Wheel, 2009. Installation view, Kunstverein Hannover, 2014.
7 fabric quilts, dimensions variable. Courtesy the artist and Pilar Corrias, London.
Photo: Raimund Zakowski



Audio Tour

Download the CAM app at camstl.org/app or ask for an iPod at the front desk to hear directly from the artist and curator on the audio tour.



Drun kard's Path, 2009. Fabric quilt, 78 ¾ × 60 ¾ inches. Collection of the Institut d'art contemporain—Villeurbanne/Rhône-Alpes.

Ulla von Brandenburg (b. 1974, Karlsruhe, Germany) lives and works in Paris. Recent solo exhibitions of her work include Secession, Vienna (2013); Kunsthaus Hamburg (2013); The Common Guild, Glasgow (2011); Chisenhale Gallery, London (2009); Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin (2008); Stedilijk Museum, Amsterdam (2008); Wattis Institute for Contemporary Art, San Francisco (2008); Kunstverein, Düsseldorf (2007); Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2006); and Kunsthalle Zürich (2006). Recent group exhibitions include *19th Biennale of Sydney: You Imagine What You Desire*, Sydney (2014); *The Crime was Almost Perfect*, Witte de With, Rotterdam (2014); *Film as Sculpture*, WIELS, Brussels (2013); *1966–79*, Institut d'art contemporain, Villeurbanne, France (2013); and *Tools for Conviviality*, The Power Plant, Toronto (2012). The artist has been the recipient of numerous awards including the Finkenwerder Art Prize (Airbus-Prize, 2013), Kunstpreis der Böttcherstrasse in Bremen (2007), and Arbeitsstipendium Jürgen-Ponto-Stiftung (2006).

Ulla von Brandenburg: Wagon Wheel is organized for the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis by Kelly Shindler, Associate Curator.

This exhibition is generously supported by the Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen e.V.



Special thanks to the Goethe-Institut, Chicago.

Related Program

Sunday Studio: Quilt-Making

Sunday, March 15, 1:00 pm

\$10. Free for members.

In partnership with Jackman's Fabrics, CAM presents a special workshop exploring the traditions and techniques of quilt-making found in the work of exhibiting artist Ulla von Brandenburg. This workshop explores the history of quilting as well as provides unique insights on the processes of this traditional, yet always evolving, visual art form.



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