

# Annette Lemieux

## *Search*



Opening on September 6, 2019, 6:30 pm

September 7 – October 26, 2019

Galerie Mazzoli in Glashaus is proud to present the first exhibition in Düsseldorf by conceptual American artist Annette Lemieux. The exhibition takes the title from the main installation in the show, *Search*, from 1994, and functions as a complement to the upcoming show *Broken* at Galerie Mazzoli Berlin, which will feature a variety of new works by Lemieux.

To gain entry into Annette Lemieux's work, we must consider its content, thematize the object. Each of her artworks, regardless of medium, requires narration. Her artistic enterprise is anchored in fragments of evidence that lead us toward the inevitable articulation of narratives that expand across multifarious lines. Whether some trace informs the making of an object, or a clue discloses the origin of an image, in Lemieux's work these hermetically held aspects are revealed in an instant, but require pensive journeys to explore. This is the way her work operates, plying the interstitial gaps that divide recognition and reference. In each of her works the clue to 'something greater' obliges us to confront elements integral to our cultural constitution, whether these unfold along ideological, historical, national, religious, or at times even economic themes.

Lemieux's work posits the clue as supremely open metaphor, continually evading specification as quickly as it adopts a fixed orientation. This is the case in all of the show's paintings. Indeed, technically they are not paintings as the canvases have been printed upon, creating an immediate sense of ambiguity. Photographs from found footage are manipulated and iconized in the form of painting, inspiring the visitor to look beyond the surface and investigate the process, in a quest for determination. In *Journey through abstraction* for example, an old photo of a person moving on a train track through a rural landscape is printed on the top half of the canvas. Parts of the photo, however, are extraced and reproduced in a mirror-like fashion in the bottom half. This creates a piece that is both figurative and abstract, both speaking to us about evenescence and passage as much as it is about stability and structure. Multiple interpretations of this kind leave us disoriented, longing for a truth that will never be exposed.

The installation *Search* emblemizes the epiphany we continually seek, the urge for a logic or a conclusion that can settle the compensatory reckoning with conflicted realities, the past of battle that has enabled our present.

*Search* appears to be the most elusive piece in the show. The vehicular squad of army helmets dispersed over the floor have each been equipped with wheels, as well as a battery pack connected to a front-mounted head-lamp. Caparisoned with elastic straps, the helmets' innate military signification becomes displaced by mining association—each helmet not serving to illuminate subterranean crevices rich with precious metals and more. Alternatively, we may puzzle over the wheels and view the helmet as the chassis of a vehicle rather than armor to protect the human head. Such constructs are figments of the mind, attachments made through hypothetical extension. But exactly this method is emblematic of Lemieux's work—we are meant to mine with her works the crevices of our minds. And in the case of *Search* this association is spawned. Metaphorically these hybrid constructions are reflections of ourselves. Like Joseph Beuys' sign of the sled—outfitted with a ration of fat, a felt blanket, and flash-light. Lemieux's helmets carry the weight of ominous ideological overtones. *Search* deliberately absorbs the insinuation of Beuys' programmatic refutation of Fascism. Lemieux's *Search* is more subtle and evades the blunt literalizing of Beuys. The scattered helmet-vehicles move in disparate directions, are intent on discovering their own path, whatever that may be. If military affiliations must prevail as primary, then *Search* highlights that essential aspect of any military maneuver—namely, that despite regimentation and faultless planning, the reality is chaotic, multidirectional, unpredictable.

We cast shadows when we walk amongst *Search*. We become both the figure and the silhouette—shadows inhabiting bodies, moving through dim space. Here one can rethink the cumulative implications of Lemieux's work, arrive at reflections that gather the various pieces into streams of content. Thought flickers as history invades, cautioning prospects over how futures are constructed. The process is intertextual, spanning art's diverse media and art history's checkered past—questioning the allure of a structuration that will yield to solvable essence.

Lemieux's work effects such a theoretical totality. Each piece ignites possible interpretations that must be unfolded along major narrative lines such as 'chronology, topography, anthroponymy, etc.' We must draw upon our knowledge of art history, social and political history, biography and personal experience to reckon with her various works. Only through this combination and interaction of histories can we determine the specific 'given' of each work and permit each to singly become an 'object of as many validations' as our narration demands.<sup>1</sup>

Born in Norfolk, Virginia, in 1957, **Annette Lemieux** has dedicated her life to a form of art that makes use of various techniques, such as: painting, sculpture, photography and, above all, medium and large-sized creations. Her artworks are characterized by the use of pre-existing images and objects: elements apparently distant from each other that are skilfully combined and assembled by the artist to create new and unexpected meanings and suggestions. Hence, her art consist of black and white photographs or frames and scenes from films of the 1950s next to everyday or historical objects, among the most frequent we find those belonging to the time of war. In addition to these elements taken from the real world, the artist adds some fragments of the history of her country and her personal story, so that her intimate and personal experience merges with the historical and cultural one.

Her works were displayed in the 1987 and 2000 Whitney Biennial exhibitions at the Whitney Museum of American Art and in 1990 in the 'Open' section of the Biennale di Venezia.

Her works are also housed in the permanent collections of several museums of art, including the Museum of Modern Art, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, the Victoria & Albert Museum in London, the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, the Yale University Art Gallery in New Haven, the New York Public Library, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, as well as in many other museums around the world where she has participated in solo or group exhibitions.

She has also received awards and scholarships from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Mies van der Rohe Stipendium from the Kaiser Wilhelm Museum and the Pollock-Krasner Foundation. In 2009 she received an Honorary PhD in Fine Arts from the Montserrat College of Art.

She is currently teaching at Harvard University, lives and works in Boston.

<sup>1</sup>Jean Francois Lyotard, *The Differend: Phases in Dispute*, trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele (Minneapolis; University of Minnesota Press, 1988), pp. 38-39.