

# ARTFORUM

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I N T E R N A T I O N A L

ART IN L.A.

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Sejla Kamerić, *Glück* (Happiness), 2010, still from a 16-mm film transferred to HD video, 18 minutes 25 seconds.



can stand in the way of awareness but can also set things in motion and forge a connection to the present. Along with remnants of the past, for instance, the camera also captures recent graffiti. *Glück* moves back and forth between two main characters: the young woman and an older one who sits indoors at a typewriter, preparing to write. One can imagine that the two women are the same person at different ages (they wear the same red, fingerless wool gloves) and that the older woman is remembering earlier experiences. She hesitates before beginning to write; the descent into the past is difficult. But at some point she makes a connection and lost time comes to life. Music emphasizes the moment, as a piano is heard after a long silence. There is no single, clear historical time in which the events of the film take place, although all the footage was shot in 2009–10, and this is one of its strengths. Even the seasons are unstable. One moment autumn leaves are blowing across the ground; a breath later, the same street is filled with snow.

The artist took inspiration for the film from passages in *Nebeski zaručnici* (The Fiancés of Heaven), a 1987 collection of short stories—imaginary autobiographies—by Mirko Kovač. She first read the book as a sixteen-year-old in the besieged city of Sarajevo, and she has said it helped her to understand her position in life. *Glück* is not the first work in which Kamerić makes overt reference to her origins, in a tone both ironic and wistful. But the new film deals with memory in a more abstract sense than did earlier works such as *homeSick*, 2001, and *Bosnian Girl*, 2003. It reveals Berlin to be a city that, by virtue of its own tumultuous history, can accommodate memories from Sarajevo and elsewhere. The essential thing is not geography, but a city's mode of consciousness and spiritual climate.

The film evokes a hushed atmosphere. Not a word is spoken, and everything seems to take place in a world of possibilities rather than certainties. Its power to raise the spirits, despite its melancholy undertone, stems from a slow surrender to time in the course of its approximately eighteen minutes. The burden of the past gradually seems to lighten, bringing the present into sharper focus. It is here that we seem to find the happiness referred to in the title. It is the happiness of an imagination that voyages freely through space and time, and the happiness of experiencing time as cinematic.

—Jurriaan Benschoop

Translated from Dutch by David McKay.

## Larissa Fassler SEPTEMBER

Produced in the wake of Nicolas Sarkozy's scandalous move in July 2010 to "clean up" France by closing down Roma camps and orchestrating large-scale deportations, Larissa Fassler's recent exhibition

explored inequities in Parisian life by asking how and how freely individuals may navigate public spaces, and investigating the politics of failed urban planning. Sarkozy's policy was evidence, even before the mass killings in Norway this summer, that Europe is again burdened with xenophobia-tinged questions of national identity. With drawings and sculptures, Fassler foregrounded perspectives on the French capital that darkened its legend as the City of Light, in the process giving form to narratives that challenge the postcard-ready image officials prefer to promote.

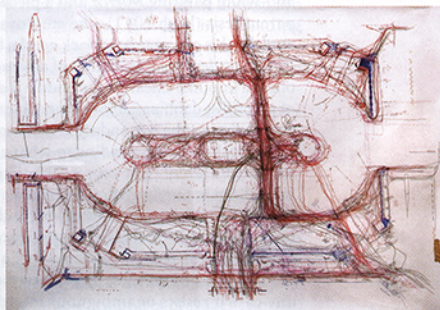
The Berlin-based Canadian artist's on-site study of the Place de la Concorde provoked the most layered works in the show. The large-scale drawing *Place de la Concorde I* (from a series of three, all works 2011) traced individual paths around and across this largest of the city's squares in colored ink (mainly pink), mapping a mesmerizing web of human activity. Briefly annotated field notes, among them, SCAM. WOMAN PRETENDING TO DROP RING!, POLICE PULL OVER DARK BLUE HATCHBACK, and ROMA GIRL RUNNING FROM POLICE (there were repeated references to Roma and police) countered the bland imaginings of exclusionary politics. At the same time, Fassler charted her own presence here via an invented scale measured by her footsteps, which highlighted her experiential process. A pair of drawings, *Place de l'Europe I* and *II*, replaced the focus on individuals with an analysis of the array of signs (political posters and stickers, personal ads, graffiti, traffic signs) crowding its visual field. While similar in approach to her earlier street-based projects in London and Berlin, Fassler's Paris observations evidenced troubling racist undercurrents. Superimposed on a graphite diagram of the complex of bridges that forms its intersection, slogans of the far right, including A QUESTION OF BLOOD and THE NATIONALISTS ARE BACK, reverberated through the driving colors of the graphics, above all the blue, white, and red of the French flag.

These colors reappeared with still greater stridency in *Les Halles* (*Tricolore*), one of the show's two sculptures, in which Fassler's miniaturized replica of parts of this run-down housing, shopping, and transit complex crowned two fictitious monumental towers painted in the national colors. Constructed in the late 1970s in a wave of "modernization," and having displaced the beloved iron-and-glass arcades of a faded mid-nineteenth-century marketplace, Les Halles has become infamous as a dilapidated center for drug dealing and petty crime and is suspect to some for its direct train connections to impoverished suburbs. It is now in the midst of yet another redevelopment. With its cheap and ready materials—largely cardboard and Plexiglas—replicating the site's dereliction as attentively as its contours, the piece intimated links between urban renewal and gentrification, class inequity and claims to urban space, unrest in the *banlieues* and conservative politics. It was impossible not to think

of T. J. Clark's analysis of Haussmannization and its consequences for the struggles between the classes, and of how this manifested in Impressionist painting. But where Clark's attention to social inequalities emphasized ambiguities in class depiction, Fassler's are comparatively direct. By observing details that are ubiquitous but easy to overlook, she verifies that inequity and the political structures that support it are deeply entrenched, an inescapable part of the urban landscape.

—Margaret Ewing

Larissa Fassler, *Place de la Concorde I*, 2011, pen on paper, 54 1/2 x 75 1/2".



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