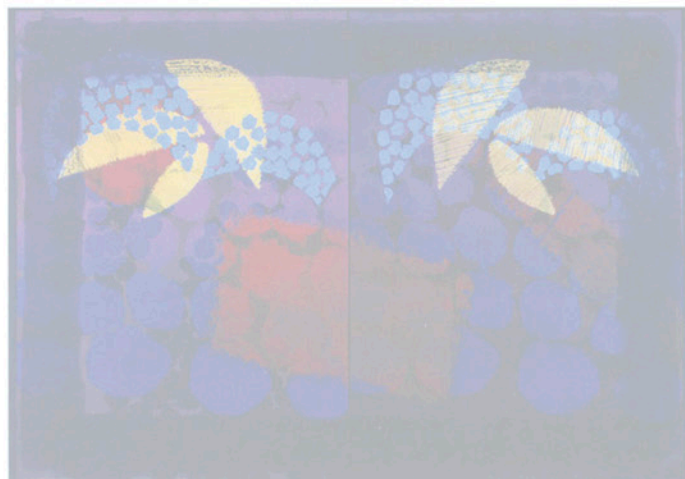


REVIEWS



Howard Hodgkin, *For Bernard Jacobson, 1977-79*, lithograph on paper, two sheets, overall 41 1/2 x 59".

named for the purveyor of this gallery, who supported the production of many of the prints that were on view. In that work, bright blue and yellow are nearly enveloped in blackness. More hedonistic is *Birthday Party*, 1977-78, with its lush, even lavish, surface and yellow slices that vaguely recall leaves. In *Bleeding*, 1981-82, a lithograph hand-colored in gouache, the sharp contrast between a broad black interior frame and a small, amorphous, eerily luminous landscape of turquoise and tan suggests that the hedonism and melancholy cannot always be reconciled. *Monsoon*, 1987-88, reveals the artist's appreciation of nature, a joie de vivre that clashes with the darker, more nihilistic chords struck in other works. Hodgkin transforms nature by letting it mirror his own brooding.

*Indian Room*, 1967, like many pieces from the 1960s, exhibits simpler handling than the majority of the prints made later; it has a streamlined look. Inspired by a trip to India, the image is also suggestive of a landscape, featuring a narrow band of alternating black and white stripes as the ground beneath a red sky. A circle with a reddish lower half and a grayish upper half may represent the sun; a single black gestural mark touches the print's edge and "slashes" through it to the picture's bottom. Later, in the 1980s, Hodgkin would allow his colors to mix, applying pigment in layers and bringing about an odd roughness and sultry intensity. Such works are masterpieces of aesthetic control and concentration. For all their intimacy—the way in which they evoke Hodgkin's inscape—they are peculiarly grand statements of romantic abstraction.

—Donald Kuspit

## Maria Petschnig ON STELLAR RAYS

Is voyeurism ever nostalgic? Do Peeping Toms yearn for simpler times? *Vasistas* (all works 2013), the first of two videos in Maria Petschnig's solo exhibition "Petschnigs," certainly raises the possibility. Not so long ago, the privileged text for pop-Lacanian analysis of voyeurism was Hitchcock's *Rear Window* (1954). Recall Jimmy Stewart, his leg in a cast, dodging the "proper" sexual advances of Grace Kelly by spying on his neighbors, consumed with the suspicion—or the fantasy—that a husband has killed his wife. There, voyeurism's instruments are no more sophisticated than binoculars. *Vasistas*, which is French for "transom window," harks back to that earlier period, even while acknowledging its passing. Each scene in the video is preceded by footage of a private residence shot from the outside at night. Had Petschnig

been following Hitchcock's playbook, she might have then used a zoom lens to draw us closer to the houses' windows. Instead, she abruptly changes views, to snapshots of casual gatherings and domestic interiors. The photographs, judging from the blurred visages, were likely being screened without the subjects' knowledge or permission. Through the schlockiest of green-screen effects, Petschnig uses these images as backdrops for recording herself in outré outfits. Whether she fidgets in a bra and panties, or wields a vacuum while draped in velour, Petschnig adds, or perhaps activates, an unseemly element to these otherwise mundane scenes. Though she appears before the camera, Petschnig asserts herself most strongly behind it; like Hitchcock in *Rear Window*, she constructs a gaze that, however discomfitingly, aligns what the viewer sees with what the pervert seeks out. That gaze, however, is caught between two eras. The window footage nostalgically evokes a prurient period eye from the 1950s, but the other tics of *Vasistas*—the blurred faces, Petschnig's own eccentric vamping—are conditioned by today's technologically accelerated cycles of surveillance and self-exposure.

The exhibition's second video, *Petschniggle*, is likewise imbued with nostalgia, but in a more garden-variety manner: It was shot partly at Petschnig's childhood home in Austria, in collaboration with her twin sister. The two cavort—petschniggle?—wordlessly, performing inscrutable actions that, at times, produce indelible images: of both of them sliding down a stairway on a bare mattress, or sitting side by side encased in heavy rope nets. As in *Vasistas*, Petschnig crafted a furtive gaze. She employed poorly lit, low-angled camera shots and clad the gallery in wood paneling that mirrored the video's dim attic interiors. The combined effect projected the viewer into the same space as the twins, just out of sight, underneath a table or behind a door, evading detection.

Curiously, despite *Petschniggle*'s explicitly familial aspects, it never elicits for viewers the sort of ethical quandaries that mark other recent artistic engagements with voyeurism, such as Laurel Nakadate's manipulative displays of vulnerability or Leigh Ledare's compromising portraits of a troubled parent. Instead, the video's actions hew closely to the impenetrable, self-sufficient logic of the fetish, which, while often highly particularized, can be strangely impersonal. Petschnig's preoccupation with the fetish is evident enough in costumes and props patterned after BDSM paraphernalia, but it also reveals itself in sequences of feet wrapped in ballet slippers squeezing cushions. These recall crush videos, a genre of online content sold to an audience that derives sexual pleasure from watching drawn-out performances of pressing and smashing. Notoriously, many such videos depict women in high heels crushing insects and small animals. In *Rear Window*, Stewart's illicit viewing stokes a fantasy of violence; today, a voyeur's mouse clicks, downloads, and credit-card payments feed markets that make such fantasies real.

—Colby Chamberlain



Maria Petschnig, *Petschniggle*, 2013, HD video, color, sound, 7 minutes.