

The Kitchen

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Klaus Lutz: *Selected Stories*

October 30 – December 20, 2014

Curated by Matthew Lyons

In Main Gallery, clockwise from left:

Titan, 2008

16mm film, b/w, silent

10 minutes

Courtesy Rotwand, Zürich / The Estate of Klaus Lutz

“Titan moves through a landscape consisting of white drawings. Foreshadowing, a pair of big black legs are dancing simultaneously. Men at work exhume the beautiful face of the muse who opens her eyes slowly. Titan’s journey begins: he paddles in a white boat through outer space, landing in his kitchen where he builds an aeroplane to fly above Manhattan. He rests briefly in the middle of a film crew, continues and then flies through the mouth of a big dragon held by WTO protesters. Titan travels further to the roof of Helmhaus Zürich, tumbles inside where a balloon installation is going on with the second forewarning. Regardless he blows up a big balloon and travels to the Arabic Desert where he falls into the ruins of a mosque. A war is raging, rockets are flying. Suddenly a big black figure attacks Titan, triumphs and nails him to the rocks. Titan begins to shake, a big fish rises up and gives him the strength to free himself. Titan embraces the fish and together they fly over the East river...” —Klaus Lutz

Vulcan, 2004

16mm film, color, silent, projected on balloon

2 minutes

Courtesy Rotwand, Zürich / The Estate of Klaus Lutz

Drawing from the story of Vulcan (Greek: Hephaistos) who fabricated the shield of Achilles, Lutz constructs a spherical shield in this film and develops a narrative similar to Homer’s, but as he would say, “from my perspective, from my place and from my time” (Lutz). Lutz’s imagery is based on five main elements that appear throughout his oeuvre: his own body, a matchstick figure with a wheel, a cone, a grid structure, and a sphere.

Caveman Lecture, 2002

16mm film, b/w, silent, on balloon

9 minutes

Courtesy Rotwand, Zürich / The Estate of Klaus Lutz

In Side gallery, in Vitrine 1, left to right:

Bilderbuch zu "Das Götzenbild" von Robert Walser, 1972

Accordion folder with 13 drypoint prints (black) with cardboard slipcase

Courtesy Swiss National Library NL, Prints and Drawings Collection

nach dem Prosastück von Robert Walser „Das Zimmerstück“ Kupferstiche von K. Lutz, 1974

Accordion folder with 36 copper engravings (two colors) on 9 pages with cardboard slipcase

Courtesy Private collection, Switzerland

Neun Schrift-Stücke, 1975

Accordion folder with 10 drypoint prints (black) on 12 pages with cardboard slipcase

Courtesy Private collection, Switzerland

Robert Walser Jakob v Gunten, ca. 1976

Accordion folder with 13 copper engravings (black) with cardboard slipcase

Courtesy Swiss National Library NL, Prints and Drawings Collection

Robert Walser's *Jakob von Gunten* is a first-person account told by its titular protagonist, a young man who runs away from home and enrolls at the Benjamenta Institute, a school for servants. There is only one textbook at the school, *What is the Aim of Benjamenta's Boys' School?*, and only one lesson, "How Should a Boy Behave?" All the teaching is done by Fräulein Lisa Benjamenta, sister of the principal. Herr Benjamenta himself sits in his office and counts his money. Walser based the novel on his own experiences. Upon arriving in Berlin in 1905 he attended a school for servants, and served as a butler the following winter. *Jakob von Gunten* consists mainly of Jakob's reflections on the education he receives there—an education in humility—and on the strange brother and sister who offer it. The humility taught by the Benjamentas is not of the religious variety, but Jakob is a special case, a pupil for whom the lessons in humility have a deep personal resonance. "How fortunate I am," he writes, "not to be able to see in myself anything worth respecting and watching! To be small and to stay small."

In Vitrine 2, left to right:

"Lebendes Bild" (nach R. Walser), 1976

Accordion folder with separate cover, with 42 copper engravings (black) with cardboard slipcase

Courtesy Swiss National Library NL, Prints and Drawings Collection

Jakob von Gunten (nach R. Walser), Vorspiel Nr.1, 1976

Accordion folder with 16 drypoint (black) prints on 18 pages with cardboard slipcase

Courtesy Private collection, Switzerland

Bilderschrift nach Robert Walser "Frau Wilke," 1977

Copper engraving and drypoint with 48 plates in cardboard folder

Courtesy Private collection, Switzerland

Walser's short story *Frau Wilke* is one of a number of his early stories devoted to women. It details the relationship between a poor young poet and an older woman who rents him a furnished room and shortly afterward falls ill.

CABALA, 1981

Accordion folder with 21 drypoint prints (black, red) in cardboard slipcase
Courtesy Swiss National Library NL, Prints and Drawings Collection

AUSWANDERN, 1981

Accordion folder with 16 drypoint prints (black, red) in cardboard slipcase
Courtesy Swiss National Library NL, Prints and Drawings Collection

LAVORI IN CORSO 2, 1982

Accordion folder with 5 copper engravings (black) in cardboard slipcase
Courtesy Swiss National Library NL, Prints and Drawings Collection

In Front gallery, in Vitrine 3, left to right:

NYC SITES blizzard ALAMO, 1996

Two accordion folders, with 7 drypoint prints (black) each in cardboard slipcases with black round shape and white square shape
Swiss National Library NL, Prints and Drawings Collection

gieb Acht!, 2008

Accordion folder with 6 drypoint prints (black, red) in black cardboard slipcase
Courtesy Private collection, Switzerland

Untitled (Description of Titan Grammar), 2008

Typewriter on paper
Courtesy Rotwand, Zürich / The Estate of Klaus Lutz

Untitled (Titan Grammar), 2008

Photo
Reproduction by the Estate of Klaus Lutz

Vulcan Project (Variante der Performance), 2004

Photocopy on paper
Accordion folder, 4 pages
Courtesy Rotwand, Zürich / The Estate of Klaus Lutz

Vulcan Project by Klaus Klaus, 2004

Photocopy on paper
Accordion folder, 21 pages
Courtesy Rotwand, Zürich / The Estate of Klaus Lutz

On flatscreen monitor:

Frank Matter

The Beauty of My Island – Shooting Klaus Lutz, 1999

Video

33 minutes

Courtesy of Frank Matter

In 1999, Klaus Lutz agreed to collaborate with filmmaker Frank Matter on a documentary about his

work. The footage was shot over the course of ten days in August, mostly in Lutz's apartment on East 7th Street in the East Village.

About Robert Walser

Since his beginnings as an artist, Klaus Lutz was devoted to the writing of Swiss author Robert Walser (1878–1956), who is considered one of the most mysterious writers of his time. Born in Biel, Switzerland, he left school at the age of fourteen to serve an apprenticeship at a local bank. Walser's early poems were first published in 1898, and his success quickly allowed him access to Munich's literary circles.

Walser subsequently achieved some recognition with his first three novels—*Geschwister Tanner* (The Tanners) (1907), *Der Gehülfe* (The Assistant) (1908) and *Jakob von Gunten* (1909)—yet he was unable to establish himself fully in the literary life of Berlin, where he lived since 1905. In 1913, feeling he had utterly failed, Walser returned to his native city of Biel. He rented an attic room in the servants' quarters of the Hotel Blaues Kreuz, where he lived in extreme poverty and wrote a number of short prose pieces. *Der Spaziergang* (The Walk) (1917) is widely considered to be Walser's most important work from this period of his life. In 1921, Walser moved to Bern, where he frequently changed lodgings. He continued to publish his work in the "feuilleton" sections of newspapers; however, except for the collection *Die Rose* (The Rose) (1925), Walser failed to publish another book. Various stories, including the novel *Der Räuber* (The Robber), were later contained in the so-called "microscripts," i.e. a large number of loose papers covered to "the edges" with a minuscule, almost illegible pencil script, which at first was considered to be some kind of secret code.

After a mental breakdown in 1929, Walser first entered the asylum in Waldau, Bern, and then the Herisau sanitarium (Appenzell) in 1933, where he ceased to write and spent the last twenty-three years of his life in almost complete anonymity. Walser died on a solitary walk in the snow on Christmas Day, 1956. Although Walser was greatly admired by such writers as Hermann Hesse, Kurt Tucholsky, Robert Musil, Franz Kafka and Walter Benjamin, he remained unappreciated by a wider audience. Today, however, he is considered one of the most important writers of the 20th century.