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View of "Barbara Hammer and Oswald Oberhuber," 2016.
BERLIN

Barbara Hammer and Oswald Oberhuber

KOW | BERLIN

Lindenstraße 35

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The pairing of multimedia pioneers Barbara Hammer and Oswald Oberhuber might constitute a form of art-historical fiction. Born in the 1930s in such diametrically opposed environments as Hollywood and South Tyrol, Italy; going on to practice in the US and Austria, respectively, the artists' paths never crossed. But this juxtaposition of their works dating from the late 1960s to 2013 traces an astounding congeniality—not only in a formal sense but also between two free spirits .

Both artists have strong ties to the gallery: Hammer, a pioneer of queer feminist and experimental cinema, has had three solo exhibitions here to date, while Oberhuber is the father of the *O* in KOW. He is an artist-*cum*-gallerist with roots in post-World War II art informel, and the selection on display focuses on sculptures, assemblages, and figurative painting. The sculptures from 1967 to 2008, half of which are untitled, are made from wooden and cardboard boxes, painted in primary colors, and formally expanded with geometric shapes or numerical series, evoking anarchic architecture as well as Constructivist painting. Sometimes they still bear traces of their former contents, such as “Insulin” or “*ergiebigere Staubwischer*” (productive dust wipers), printed on the boxes. A vertical structure resembling a high-rise kennel—*Hundeleiter* (Dog Trainer), 1975—is confronted with Hammer's transferred 16-mm film *Dollhouse*, 1984, in which the interior of the titular structure is filled with various objects from the domestic realm before it's lifted to the branches of a tree in a rapid montage. In the gallery's basement, a group of Hammer's little-shown works on paper from the late 1960s and early 1970s, which informed the visual language of her later filmic exploration of female and lesbian sexuality in the electronic age, have a psychedelic expressionist style that enters into an almost erotic dialogue with Oberhuber's paintings of animals and interspecies encounters, such as *Untitled*, 2008.

—Eva Scharrer

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