

## Painting as Revolution

Ingeborg zu Schleswig-Holstein's career as a painter is marked by a series of paradoxical contrapositions. Her medium of choice, abstract oil painting, has been subject to constant questioning pertaining to its validity as artistic medium. Her perseverance throughout her career in developing her artistic language in the face of the vagaries of taste and art economics, her insistence on her format and its possibilities over a turbulent 35 year career culminate in a position that could be described as punk in its opposition to art world tropes.

She famously encountered Andy Warhol at the opening of Joseph Beuys' exhibition *Kunst=Kapital* in 1981, following him to New York, becoming an assistant in his Factory. At this time, Warhol was already at his peak—his denegation of authorship and embrace of the celebrity as valid form of artistic identity were fully developed as artistic strategies. As Hal Foster has noted, after Pop Art, art became eclectic and started addressing the conditions of late capitalism, indeed, postmodernism is the 'cultural logic of late capitalism'. Warhol was, at this time, the undisputed leader, with his fixation on surface and his prioritisation of the price of a work of art as a signifier of artistic value. This attitude stood in direct opposition not just to Schleswig-Holstein's own practice but to the wider German attitude towards the value and position of art. As she has said herself "While Warhol was concentrating on the emphasis of the surface of things I was beginning to show what is elusive, what cannot be put into words and exists beyond the visible."

In 1983, still an assistant at the Factory, Schleswig-Holstein participated in the exhibition *New Portraits* at the Institute for Art and Urban Resources PS1, now known as MoMA PS1. Founded in 1971 by Alanna Heiss as alternative arts organization dedicated to supporting New York's avant-garde art scene (specifically Minimal Art)—a marked contrast to Schleswig-Holstein's own practice. 1983 also marks the heyday of the *Pictures Generation*—a group of artists dedicated to unseating the primacy of painting, of attacking the legacy of colour field painting and abstract expressionism under the aegis of Douglas Crimp. Viewed in this context, Schleswig-Holstein's work—for she, as a denizen of the New York art scene of the eighties, and its dedication to the twin legacies of pop art and conceptualism, would have been well aware of this discourse—reads like a protest, a protest which raises the primacy of human mark-making above the shiny surfaces, the polished perfection of the vogueish smooth surfaces of the appropriated advertising imagery popular in that decade.

This attitude to art continues to present. Abstraction is yet again caught between the domain of the market and the abyss of conceptual irrelevance, the domain of mostly young, mostly male painters, whose canvases evinced nothing more than a system of internalised mark-making. Schleswig-Holstein's work continues to stand out as a beacon in this sea of market-driven speculative practice.

*Jeni Fulton*

