

## ARTFORUM

**Peggy Buth****KLEMM'S BERLIN****Brunnenstraße 7****April 4–May 5**

*untitled (figure)*, 2008, textile and wood, 98 1/2 x 80 3/4".

A large rectilinear royal-red carpet, about half an inch thick, hangs on the wall. Its bright, straight, furrowed seams are hand-cut in a pattern that appears geometric, even Constructivist; indeed, the whole work could be an allusion to geometric abstract painting. Yet the use of red carpet, a symbol of nobility, reminds viewers of social issues. In earlier works, Peggy Buth cut similar carpets into long, thin strips that were then arranged on the floor. A symbol of hierarchy, then, is cut up and generally disordered, while retaining something of its normal appearance and forms (the regular format, the rolled-out runner). The lines cut into the material indicate a structure about to collapse. Another panel, on the adjacent wall, possesses a shiny, black, somewhat uneven surface, composed of several tar and lacquer applications—a technique Buth has been developing for years. Tar is a dirty material; in fairy tales, tar and pitch often denote poverty and scorn. In the aggressively hermetic yet seductively lustrous darkness, the same angular lines are carved, as are the words DEFORMATION PROFESSIONELLE (professional deformation). In these works, Buth deftly aligns materials and process to convey social and cultural codes in a completely “artistic” manner.

Elsewhere, a video piece—an audio collage of dialogues from popular films that accompanies a journey through a deserted architectural landscape—and a photo-based conceptual work are also exhibited. The latter is based on pseudoscientific investigations of physical characteristics, such as finger length, as indicative of character and sexual orientation. Buth produced five photographs of individuals, each holding an open hand in front of his or her face. She then etched diagrams on the part of the glass frame that covered the hands, producing an ephemeral grid. Here, pseudoscientific inquiry blends with the sensuality of hands touching. Also on view is a complex two-part artist’s book dealing with the representation of African colonial history in the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Belgium. Though Buth produces work in a variety of media, she consistently addresses the same subjects. Her practice is an attempt to disrupt the hold images have on our imagination by breaking them down and then stitching them back together in new constellations.

—Saskia Draxler

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