

BEA
SCHLINGELHOFF
AUFTRAG:
NO OFFENCE

Milan, 31 May - 1 July 2017
via Vecchio Politecnico 3

Bea Schlingelhoff works with language, posing questions that can't be answered. The questions, sometimes mundane in themselves, demand the impossible, instigating a process of interrogation of the site, conditions of production, and the limits of artistic work. Can an artwork create its own conditions of display and exchange? On a T-shirt? A tattoo? Can a commercial art gallery be turned into a parking garage? What is the labour of an art dealer worth? When I had an exhibition space in Los Angeles she asked me: Can this space be filled with water? Can we paint the earth red?

If Jesus Christ looks after the Pope, what is the Pontifical Swiss Guard doing?

The uniform of the Guardia Svizzera Pontificia, or the Swiss Guard, is a special impermeable wool costume, a self-conscious relic of Renaissance fashion in bright blue, red, and yellow—a wearable flag. The Pontifical Guard, given exemption to operate as a religious mercenary army, and hence liberated from the injunction to wear the colours of national fealty, dress themselves, fly in their own flag, i.e. the colour of symbolic capital: the chameleon camo of extra-national soldiers of fortune, the colours of the Medici family crest.

Why does the Pope need an army? To keep order, though the apparently theatrical costume of this small private fighting force indicates that it is designed for routine defensive manoeuvres on a symbolic order, deployed these days in what appears as an exclusively aesthetic warfare. The extravagant luxury and visibility of the uniform worn by the Guardia marks it as a dress uniform, and a very flashy one at that, the kind of military fantasia that inspired modern pop cultural dreams of a peacetime military regime led by Michael Jackson or Sgt. Pepper, an imagined NATO of love, a postwar euroarmy of militarized entertainment. Soldiers of fashion, the papal bodyguard are also selected according to size to serve the colours of the cloth, themselves living proof that the body is replaceable, the uniform eternal. Which war are these soldiers of fortune assembled to fight?

“At least half of the tax that women pay in the United States is handed over to an increasingly fascist male-dominated military. Every gun, warship, jet and bomb is also a theft from women as a sex class. There is more than enough money for public education, health, state-funded daycare systems, affordable housing, environmentally sustainable energy, food, and other necessities; there is more than enough money to protect single mothers and their children from deadly forms of poverty and social exclusion. There is more than enough money. Austerity is the propaganda of the new fascism, which delivers violent budget cuts against its own citizens just as it ramps up global inequality and steadily arms itself with weapons of mass destruction.” (Abigail Bray, *Misogyny Reloaded*, 2013, Spinifex)

Imperial exploitation of women, the eternal domestic war of the Church: armies everywhere, every city occupied by a standing army, armed men all around us—in spite of the militarization of everyday life, none of us are safe. What questions can an artwork pose in this context? Only possible answers, which are demanding militant demilitarization and de-mercenarization. In an era of continuous global war driven by authoritarian capitalism, why is there no feminist army? Is a mercenary army feminist?

Oscar Tuazon

31 May - 1 July 2017

**Exhibition opening:
Tuesday 30 May, 18.30**

**Opening hours:
Monday - Friday 10.30 - 17.30;
Saturday 14.00 - 18.00, free entrance
Closed Sundays and public holidays**

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Bea Schlingelhoff (1971, Waiblingen) graduated from Hochschule für Künste in Bremen, and with a DAAD scholarship, received a MFA from California Institute of the Arts (CalArts) in Los Angeles in 2000. In 2001/02 she participated in the Whitney Independent Study Program in New York and from 2002 to 2010 led the project “Curatorial Studies” at Satellite Academy High School in Manhattan, New York. Her work was, amongst others, shown at Manifesta 9 in Genk, Belgium; New Jersey, Basel; Honor Fraser, Los Angeles; Museum Villa Stuck, München; Armand Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; MOCA Miami, Miami; Galerie für Gegenwartskunst, Barbara Claassen-Schmal, Bremen and at the Centro de Arte Dos de Mayo, Madrid.

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