

REVIEWS

The somewhat Jasper Johnsian *Language Is Not Transparent* is of singular importance, for it indicates the continuity and consistency that actually exist between his works from the '60s and his



painting. This wall painting consists of a matte-black form whose upper portion suggests a rectangle—and whose lower half dissolves into streams of drips. Onto this ground, drawn in chalk as if the first item on a list, is 1., followed by the work's title. In this formative piece, Bochner pits the notion of the conceptual (an engagement with abstracted definitions and essential relationships) against representation (the means by which it may be actualized). It is in this conflict that we discover there is no real break in his principal concerns, only a change of format and medium. Despite the apparent accessibility of the language he uses and his painting style, everything about Bochner's paintings is opaque. How he paints suggests a concern for Clement Greenberg's formalism in that he differentiates between what is seen and what can be read.

Consideration must be given to the fact that each word or letter is painted as a single color-form—that is, as an individual figure. The resulting mix of hues often makes the text difficult to read. Bochner opposes his words' legibility with what makes them visually and structurally present. If the paintings are viewed with these contradictions in mind, it appears that the constant in Bochner's career is his ongoing exploration of the antagonism that exists between concepts (the signified) and their representation

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Heidi Bucher

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"I AM FREE FROM THE skins that surround me," narrates the late Heidi Bucher in the 1981 film *Räume sind hüllen, sind Häute* (Rooms are surroundings, are skins) as she and a handful of mostly female assistants silently peel opalescent sheets of latex from the walls of her countryside ancestral home near Winterthur. One of a series of videos documenting Bucher's intensely physical process, on view in the Swiss Institute's basement level as part of this compact retrospective, the piece, gauzy as it is, gives us insight into the formal and emotional mechanics of the large-scale skins featured upstairs.

The finished sculptural works—variations following a process similar to that of the ancestral-home project—are mostly near monumental in size, a slight patina accenting their earthy teal-and-copper coloring. The undated *Untitled (Herrenzimmer)*, a skin molded from the master bedroom of her parents' home, hangs in the center, its room-within-a-room placement creating an elegant architec-

Heidi Bucher
Untitled
(*Herrenzimmer*),
undated. Latex
and cotton,
102¼ x 71 x 7½ in.

tural intervention. Elsewhere, smaller pieces reconstitute architectural elements like parquet flooring (*Parquet floor of study in Winterthur-Wüflingen*, 1979) or the ornate front door of a Swiss hotel (*Grande Albergo Brissago [Eingangsportal]*, 1987). *Jetzt fließt das Wasser aus der Vase* ("Now the Water Flows from the Vase"), 1986, hung with invisible wire, captures liquid mid-spill, a more animated reminder of the moments and memories frozen in these floating walls.

There's something deeply satisfying about the physicality of these pieces: They appeal to the person who relishes the process of, say, ripping off a Bioré pore strip or to those who play with layers of wax that have dripped from a lit candlestick. At the same time, the work offers a meditation on memory, place, and familial ties that assumes Bucher's process of personal excavation and preservation as its center, a quietly but powerfully feminine move. The final arrangement feels remarkably timeless, even as we are confronted with time's very passage through these filmy vestiges of now changed or erased locations. —Thea Ballard

