



**ULLA VON
BRANDENBURG**

**IT HAS A
GOLDEN
YELLOW SUN
AND AN
ELDERLY
GREY MOON**

20 May – 17 July 2016

Education Kit

Australian Centre
for Contemporary Art

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Image: Ulla von Brandenburg,
Curtain, Blue 2016.
Courtesy the artist, Pilar Corrias
Gallery, London.
Photo: Andrea Rossetti

Artist Biography

Ulla von Brandenburg was born in Karlsruhe, Germany, in 1974, and lives and works in Paris. She completed studies in Scenography and Media Art at The Staatliche Hochschule für Gestaltung, Karlsruhe, and Art at the School of Fine Arts, Hamburg.¹ Von Brandenburg has exhibited widely internationally, including recent exhibitions at The Common Guild, Glasgow, Scotland; Haus Konstruktiv, Zurich, Switzerland; Performa Festival, New York, USA; Kassel Kunstverein, Kassel, Germany; and The 19th Biennale of Sydney, Sydney, Australia.² Von Brandenburg is also currently one of four finalists nominated for Le Prix Marcel Duchamp, 2016.³

Curatorial Rationale

Bringing film, architecture and installation together in theatrical presentations, German artist Ulla von Brandenburg has created a unique signature style through which she explores relationships between people.

Combining theatrical strategies of staging, choreography, costumes and props, von Brandenburg uses the idea of the 'outsider' to interrogate ideas of community. Particularly interested in the private and nuanced rituals and customs that remain obscure or out of reach to the interloper, her works are characterised by a highly refined and seductive palette of colour and textiles. Often employing the tradition of *song-spiel* – a singing narrative that allows her to create stream of consciousness texts borrowed in part from lullabies – von Brandenburg's works share an ethereal, fairytale-like quality.

This exhibition includes a selection of her films along with installations of objects displayed throughout within a highly keyed and tactile setting designed specifically for the ACCA galleries. The exhibition also features a new co-commission developed in partnership with the Darling Foundry, Montreal; The Power Plant, Toronto and Aarhus, Denmark. Comprising a film and viewing platform of optical elaboration, this new work immerses audiences in a theatrical consideration of language, exchange and colour. *It Has a Golden Yellow Sun and an Elderly Grey Moon* is the first major solo presentation of Ulla von Brandenburg's work in Australasia.

Hannah Mathews, Curator, *It Has a Golden Yellow Sun and an Elderly Grey Moon*



Image: Portrait Ulla von Brandenburg.
Courtesy the artist and Art: Concept, Paris;
Pilar Corrias, London;
Produzentengalerie Hamburg.
Photo: Jan Noordhoff

¹ CCVA, URL: <http://ccva.fas.harvard.edu/ulla-von-brandenburg-talk>

² Galerie Art: Concept, URL: <http://www.galerieartconcept.com/artist/ulla-von-brandenburg/>

³ ADIAF, URL: <http://www.adiaf.com/en/2016-marcel-duchamp-prize-nominated-artists/>

Artist Practice

Von Brandenburg's artistic practice is both prolific and multidisciplinary. She is known for producing expansive exhibitions that combine elements of film, drawing, painting, installation, set design and performance to produce immersive, spatially dynamic environments. Von Brandenburg's academic background and interest in theatre and set design is an ongoing preoccupation, with her works frequently employing curtains, constructed platforms and performers as elements.⁴ The origin of von Brandenburg's interest in theatre is informed by studies in scenography, which she completed before attending art school.

The physical shaping of the exhibition space and oblique connections to historical perspectives are central to von Brandenburg's work. Through films, often shot on 16mm stock, von Brandenburg situates her players in temporally indeterminate spaces. Often items from the film artworks are included within her gallery installations. This technique helps to create a connection between the gallery space inhabited by the viewer, and the filmed space populated by the actors. This blurring of narrative and real-life serves to implicate the viewer within the space of the actors, to create a dynamic slippage between experiences.⁵

⁴ Biennale of Sydney, URL: <http://www.biennaleofsydney.com.au/19bos/artists/von-brandenburg/>

⁵ Galerie Art: Concept, URL: <http://www.galerieartconcept.com/artist/ulla-von-brandenburg/>

⁵ Hannover, 2014

Making, Materials & Techniques

Key Materials:

Fabric, film, rope, wood, actors, folk stories.

Key Techniques:

Set design, photography, construction, projection, sculpture, drama, voice.

As seen through the variety of works in the exhibition *It Has a Golden Yellow Sun and an Elderly Grey Moon*, von Brandenburg uses an array of materials and techniques within her art practice, including: built structures, watercolour painting, film, textiles, photography, found objects, music, voice and performance.

A recurrent quality of von Brandenburg's art practice is the creation of artworks that blur the line between the space of the viewer and that of the artwork. She uses 'methods and approaches of theatre to address the societal, social, and historical issues',⁶ dissolving the divide between viewer and actor, reality and illusion. Through applying aspects of theatre and stage, like stairs, von Brandenburg creates metaphors for the way people live their lives.

When entering the new work *It Has a Golden Yellow Sun and an Elderly Grey Moon* the viewer climbs up stairs and then descends the other side to be immersed in the space of the projected film. The structure of the stairs becomes the seating and all of a sudden the viewer is within a theatrical construction, like that in the film itself.

In order to allow this work to eventuate von Brandenburg had to collaborate with a range of specialists. For instance, because viewers are to walk on the structure an engineer must be engaged to ensure that it is safe for the public. Once these plans have been negotiated and revised to address any concerns a team of technical staff are then engaged to build the structure. This process of labour delegation hallmarks von Brandenburg as a very contemporary artist. Where traditionally the 'artist's hand' was a mark of a true artwork, in much contemporary art it is the concept and motivations that are important, whether or not they physically constructed the work is not particularly relevant. By way of contrast, an example of the an artwork for which the hand of the artist is of central importance would be the *Mona Lisa*, for which Leonardo da Vinci's technical application of paint is what is most important.

To make the fabric images included in the installation *Eigenschatten I-VI (Own Shadow I-VI)*, von Brandenburg has employed a uniquely primitive photographic process involving the use of chlorine as a bleaching agent in combination with natural light. These works can be likened to the form and process of the photogram, although they are not restricted to 1:1 relationship of object to image.

At the more traditional end of art making is the inclusion of watercolour painting in von Brandenburg's practice. She uses this very traditional media to explore dreamlike imagery and her interest in colour and colour theory. The artist will often use antique maps and paper as a surface for these works and the result is a contemporary artwork with a curiously unfixed sense of history. In this sense these works are related to the found objects in *Eigenschatten I-VI (Own Shadow I-VI)*, in that the paper has its own history that is not the result of the artist's making, but rather the result of selection and placement within the framework of a complex contemporary composition.



Storytelling

*Role play, the curtain, and the stage are for Ulla von Brandenburg always allegories of human relations and human society. She shows life as one great theatre play, in which the actors are not at all sure if and when their role will end. Where does the image end and reality begin if life itself is a play?*⁷

Through a diverse range of media, von Brandenburg assembles various histories from different centuries to construct complex narratives, exploring thresholds between reality and artifice. In her film *8*, von Brandenburg positions the actors to tell stories from different centuries, and collages the stories she is interested in to their own narratives in the film.⁸ For example, a woman with a mask in her hand that is referencing a muse in greek theatre. Travelling with a steady camera, the path of her camera guides the viewer for the length of the film. Von Brandenburg appropriates these historical sources from art and literature to transform the present and reveal the rules that govern our collective social reality.

Von Brandenburg also links objects and materials to histories through sculpture, painting and installation. She paints using watercolour on old stained papers, and suspends found objects and old fabrics. These materials come out of other contexts, and leave the viewer wondering about their history and where they came from.

Through filming in black and white, von Brandenburg attempts to reduce the image of information and to make the film timeless, as colour often reveals a strong indication of the time something is made. Von Brandenburg also links the use of black and white to unconsciousness, as it has been said that people dream this way. She allows the viewer to lose their sense of reality and become absorbed in the films.

*"The stage curtain is the architectural equivalent to the mask, an object that delivers a liminal space between interiors and exteriors, between fantasy and the real world."*⁹

Von Brandenburg creates coloured architectures to display her black and white films. Often constructed from coloured curtains, these patchwork environments create a psychological journey, as the viewer travels through and around the installations before reaching the films displayed inside. The colours reference colour schemes of the Bauhaus and a psychological test based on sensory colour perception developed by Dr. Max Lüscher in the 1960's.

Film

In von Brandenburg's projected films it is noticeable that although they have been transferred to digital media the grain of the film is still highly evident. This feature is distinctive to analogue film and is a key feature to set it apart from the appearance of video footage, and explains why the artist's contemporary film artworks often resemble footage dating back fifty years or more. In this way, von Brandenburg constructs a confusing temporal identification because her chosen media has been superseded by digital methods. The artist's use of analogue film is in keeping with the ambiguous relationship to history that she maintains in many of her artworks. She states, 'My films are more about historical perspective than the past. The time is undefined, but it is located within history'.¹⁰

Von Brandenburg's films can often be viewed as installations – site-specific and responding to the architecture of where they are shown.¹¹ The installations often spatially or thematically foretell something in the films and change the place in which they are exhibited. The content of von Brandenburg's films is another defining feature of her work. Architecture, theatrical spaces and highly staged narratives are repeating elements in different film works.

Another feature of von Brandenburg's films is voice. She works with composers to write accompanying music to the lyrics which she writes and sings herself. Often her voice is only heard in a group of actors, male and female, who then lip sync to her singing. The dislocation of the individual's voice occurs in the film *Chorspiel*. In this example, two choirs, one male and one female, sing the lines of each character. When the actors open their mouths it is the voices of many that the audience can hear. Von Brandenburg writes the lyrics to each song in German in a single sitting, allowing absurd thoughts and ideas to come together, and at times not make sense.

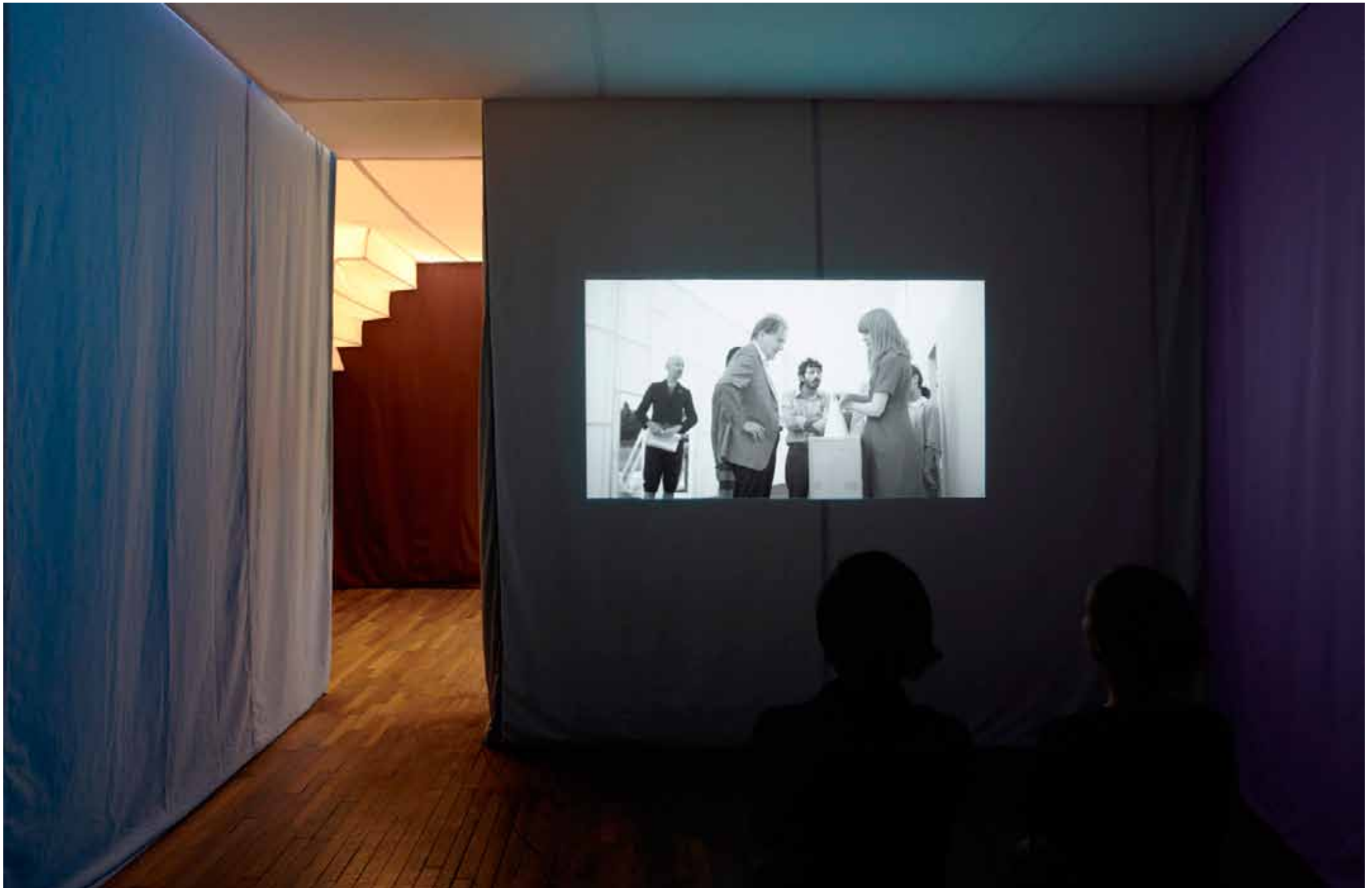
⁷ Hannover, 2014

⁸ Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VVdb5V09-ZU>

⁹ Flash Art, URL: <http://www.flashartonline.com/article/tableaux-vivants/>

¹⁰ Hannover, 2014

¹¹ Hannover, 2014



ULLA VON
BRANDENBURG:
IT HAS A GOLDEN
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Artworks



Curtain, 2013

chlorine, fabric

1420 x 1410 cm

Courtesy of the artist, Art : Concept, Paris,
Pilar Corrias Gallery, London and
Produzentengalerie Hamburg

Von Brandenburg's expansive work, *Curtain*, acts as the entryway into her solo exhibition *It Has a Golden Yellow Sun and an Elderly Grey Moon*. At one point in the curtain, a rope pulls the red fabric to form an opening. The material has a distinct gridded pattern bleached into its surface and appears to have been exposed to the sunlight for a period of time. This pattern of squares refers to the original installation location of the curtain at the The Vienna Secession gallery, in Austria. In that particular gallery von Brandenburg fixed the curtain in place against a glass-tiled ceiling and, over time, allowed the sun to record the gridded structure onto the surface of the fabric, making "a connection with the history and architecture of the building".¹²

At ACCA, *Curtain* instead alludes to a previous history, time spent in use elsewhere, but refuses to confirm or deny the viewers' speculations as to its material past. In this installation the function of the work is instead to contrast the architecture of ACCA, drawing attention to the context of the exhibition in a different way. Here, a separate and crucial facet of von Brandenburg's practice is embodied by the *Curtain*: that of the conceptual shift between fiction and real life experience. As Franceschi elaborates, 'Role play, the curtain, and the stage are for Ulla von Brandenburg always allegories of human relations and human society. She shows life as one great theatre play, in which the actors are not at all sure if and when their role will end. Where does the image end and reality begin if life itself is a play?'.¹³ In this sense the curtain – an unusual, theatrical portal - enables the viewer to enter the exhibition unsure of what to expect, slightly disoriented from their everyday bearings.



Image: Ulla von Brandenburg, *Curtain* 2013.
Courtesy the artist, Pilar Corrias Gallery, London
and Produzentengalerie, Hamburg.

¹² Mousse Magazine, URL: <http://moussemagazine.it/uvonbrandenburg-secession/>

¹³ Hannover, 2014

Gallery 2

Eigenschatten I-VI (Own Shadow I-VI), 2013 mixed media various dimensions

The term *Eigenschatten* translates from the German into English as a contraction of 'own' and 'shadow' - one's own shadow - something that one cannot lose, must take everywhere and is essentially, if imaginatively, our closest companion. For *Eigenschatten I-VI (Own Shadow I-VI)*, von Brandenburg has suspended from the ceiling a collection of talismanic found objects gathered from flea markets during a six-month stay in Rome.¹⁴ Opposite, the viewer can observe several fabric panels, each bearing a silhouette belonging to one of the hanging items. Using a photobleaching technique identical to that used to create the gridded pattern on *Curtain*, von Brandenburg has separated each of the hanging objects from their shadows, which she has then fixed to these canvases.

By choosing to use found objects, rather than making her own, von Brandenburg is allowing a sense of the environment in which the objects were gathered, in this case Rome, to enter the work. An extension of this idea can be found in the prints of the objects' silhouettes, being simply records of the light obscured by each object. This texture of the real, everyday, readymade materials – a doll's costume, a hat, bamboo sticks – create an uneasy identification for the viewer with the content of the work. The objects are of the viewer's world, but dislocated from the places in which they might usually be found. Thinking about the title of this work the viewer might imagine themselves suspended, floating, disconnected from their own shadow in a situation of childlike fantasy.



Image: Ulla von Brandenburg,
Eigenschatten I-VI (Own Shadow I-VI) 2013.
Courtesy the artist and Art : Concept, Paris.

¹⁴ ARTFORUM, URL: <http://artforum.com/picks/id=39630>

Gallery 3

Shadow Play (Schattenspiel), 2012

HD black-and-white video, sound

7 mins

The Objects, 2009

Super 16mm black-and-white film transferred to digital file, silent

4.45 mins

8, 2007

16mm black-and-white film transferred to digital file, silent

9 mins

Von Brandenburg borrows traditions of tableaux vivant, commedia dell'arte, burlesque performance, and nineteenth century shadow plays, examining the language of theatre, artifice, and the fascinating power of fiction.¹⁵ In the film *Shadowplay*, von Brandenburg presents a single shot of a shadow theatre performance. Differentiating this performance from usual shadow plays is that both the puppets and the puppeteers silhouettes are visible to the audience. Each puppeteer (two men and a woman) and their diminutive avatar are dressed in the same nineteenth century costume. Due to this correlation, the viewer can imagine that each of the performers might be playing out their fantasies or desires through the forms of the paper silhouette figures.

Von Brandenburg plays out the overlap of narrative and real life by placing the puppets and puppeteers in the same field. This prompts the viewer to consider not only their actions, but also how they might appear carrying out their everyday activities from the perspective of others. The actors lip-synch to the singing of an off-stage choir, producing a feeling of remove and alienation.¹⁶ Lacking in progression, the narrative is poetic and melancholic. Shadows can be linked to both reality and the world of illusion, making the spectrum of meaning broad. A shadow could be an image of the psyche, associated with the dark regions of the soul.¹⁷ The actors in *Shadowplay* sing about their lives as actors and the roles they are playing, related to the roles we play in society.

Human presence is rejected in von Brandenburg's film, *The Objects*, and instead several objects are presented in the black and white film as animated still life.¹⁸ Filmed in Paris in 2009, the autonomous objects - a mirror, a chessboard, a crystal ball and compass, are brought to life by the camera. By suspending the objects on a string, von Brandenburg reminds us of backstage mechanics, 'probing the distance between artistic ideals and lived experience'.¹⁹ The repeated procession of animated props is hypnotic and hallucinatory.

The film *8* traces a day in the castle of Chamarande, located near Paris. A camera slowly travels through its spaces presenting various still tableaux scenes. The title pictographically references an upstanding infinity sign or Möbius strip, and throughout the film the audience is presented with different positions and narrations, with no one clear story. The camera follows the path of the Möbius strip, with the first and last image in the film being identical - a small fisherman from a painting by Hubert Robert (1733-1808) kept in the castle. Von Brandenburg's intention was to collect positions of interest to her and distribute these across the plan of the castle. Each position in the film exists on its own and tells a different story from a different century.

¹⁵ Vimeo, URL: <https://vimeo.com/album/2454955>

¹⁶ High Line Art, URL: <http://art.thehighline.org/project/ullavonbrandenburg/>

¹⁷ Hannover, 2014

¹⁷ Vimeo, URL: <https://vimeo.com/album/2454955>

¹⁷ The Guardian, URL: <http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2009/dec/02/ulla-von-brandenburg-artist>



Gallery 4

Mamuthones, 2011

16mm black-and-white film transferred to digital file with sound

3.06 mins

The house (La maison), 1994-2014

Super 8 black-and-white film transferred to HD video, silent

5.46 mins, looped

Ghost (Geist), 2007

16mm black-and-white film transferred to digital file, silent

0.55 mins, looped

Dance macabre (Tanz makaber), 2006

Super 8 black-and-white film transferred to HD video, silent

0.56 mins, looped

Von Brandenburg is interested in traditional dances and performances, and the costumes and objects that accompany them. In 2011 she was invited to participate in the exhibition *Un'Espressione Geografica*, a project that saw twenty artists sent to twenty different regions within Italy to make work inspired by or in reference to that region. Von Brandenburg was sent to Sardinia, an Italian island in the Tyrrhenian Sea between Italy, France, Spain and Algeria. There she became interested in a traditional folk festival Mamuthones, from which the title of this artwork is taken, which celebrates the resistance of the Sardinians against numerous conquerors.²⁰

In the film *Mamuthones* von Brandenburg has captured the choreography and folk costumes of a traditional dance, which is usually performed around a fire. Here von Brandenburg placed her 16mm camera in place of the fire, and so by extension placed the viewer at the centre of the action. From this vantage point we see dancers, frightening masks and animal skins, and hear the sound of cowbells attached to fearsome, fur covered creature characters. In this enhanced reality the viewer is surrounded and within the dance, as if in a dream or nightmare. Von Brandenburg has stated that she was also interested in this ritual because the costumes reminded her of those found in folk cultures of the Black Forest, which is near the artist's birthplace of Karlsruhe, in Germany.²¹

Interested in different forms of consciousness: past and present, living and dead, real and imagined, von Brandenburg introduces a ghostly figure covered with a sheet in her film, *Geist*.²² The actor approaches the camera facing the viewer, turns, and begins walking slowly as an act of disappearance. The camera directed at the viewer is suggesting that illusion and the unconscious constructs our own reality. Von Brandenburg explores how our stream of unconsciousness, beginning with our dreams and the spiritual or supernatural are connected to water, fire, earth and air.

Von Brandenburg's fascination with ghostly figures and visualising internalised fears or memories²³ is also evident in the short film *Dance macabre*, which features a skeleton performing a dance of death. An actor, dressed in a skeleton costume, dances this choreography repeatedly in the film that echoes a Charles Baudelaire poem of the same name. Von Brandenburg has said, 'I am fascinated with dance, but also with movement, because it allows us to act within a space without using 'spoken words'. We dance to give rhythm to our life, and to give rhythm to time'.²⁴ She believes that repetitive movements are connected to early dances meant for conjuring an outcome and connecting to unconscious memory. 'If we dance, it is also because we dream of conquering gravity, or perhaps even conquering—or fighting—death'.²⁵



Images: Ulla von Brandenburg, *Mamuthones* 2011 (film still), courtesy the artist and Pilar Corrias Gallery, London.

²⁰ Kunstverein Hannover, URL: http://www.kunstverein-hannover.de/files/kvh_uvb_press_release_long.pdf

²¹ this is tomorrow, URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uD4ajN0HmM8>

²² Vimeo, URL: <https://vimeo.com/album/2454955>

²³ Frac des Pays de la Loire, URL: http://www.fracdespaysdelaloire.com/public/pdf/journal_recits.pdf

²⁴ Melbourne, Montreal, Toronto, Auhaus, 2016-2017

²⁵ Melbourne, Montreal, Toronto, Auhaus, 2016-2017

Choral Play (Chorspiel), 2010
HD black-and-white video with sound
10.35 mins

Stages, 2009-14
Super 8 black-and-white film transferred to HD
video, silent
1.27 mins, looped

Around (Herum), 2005
Super 16mm black-and-white film transferred to
HD video, silent
2.45 mins, looped

Chorspiel translates from German into English as *choral play*, and describes the type of drama in the film. This work was developed from a live performance of the same concept originally enacted in Malmo, Sweden. For this film von Brandenburg took her cast into a forest location where she 'painted' the white stage of the action using white sand. The audience views a family scene with five characters from three generations - a young woman, her mother, and grandparents, and the unfolding of events after a stranger carrying a box enters the familial environment.

In a possible nod to influential filmmaker Ingmar Bergman, who was known for writing his own screenplays, von Brandenburg has included music and lyrics that she wrote herself.²⁶ With every line uttered by the actors a chorus of voices in harmony supplies the line in the form of song. As the drama unfolds, sung entirely in German, the characters move about the small white stage 'like pieces on a chessboard'.²⁷ The choir acts as authority in the film, as it sings at times when the family do not speak, presenting summaries of actions.

Von Brandenburg views the world as a stage, referencing theatre and blurring the divide between illusion and reality. The film *Stages* is looped footage of four stages from different sites, ranging from the Levitt Shell outdoor amphitheatre in Memphis to a majestic indoor theatre. *Around* circulates a group of people standing facing each other with their back to the camera. As the camera rotates around the people they slowly change position to ensure their backs are always facing and their faces are not revealed. This slow motion, repetitive choreography and cyclical nature of the silent film focuses on a certain ambiguity.²⁸



Image: Ulla von Brandenburg, *Choral Play* 2010 (film still), courtesy the artist and Pilar Corrias Gallery, London.

²⁶ The Common Guild, URL: <https://www.thecommonguild.org.uk/programme/exhibition/neue-alte-welt>

²⁷ Vimeo, URL: <https://vimeo.com/album/2454955>

²⁸ Vimeo, URL: <https://vimeo.com/album/2454955>

Gallery 1

Forest, 2011

acrylic paint on wall

dimensions variable

Courtesy of the artist, Art : Concept, Paris, Pilar Corrias Gallery, London and Produzentengalerie Hamburg

At the midway point of the exhibition the viewer encounters another immersive, transitory installation in *Forest*. When studying the imagery painted on the specially built curved wall, the viewer can recognize the black silhouette of a copse of trees. However something unusual is happening, and that is the Rorschach effect. The shadows of the trees are doubled back on themselves, as if in a mirror image, as they could not possibly be in nature. The viewer is within and confronted by a psychological forest. This work gestures towards von Brandenburg's interest in elements of psychoanalytic theory, that is, the study of the unconscious mind and its images. *Forest* appears as if from a dream, a high-contrast, unreal image that once again refers to the theatrical and imaginary.

The outlines of the trees are sharp and there is no tonal graduation between light and dark. This is because the wall drawing was developed from earlier, smaller-scale works made from cutout paper. Once again von Brandenburg refers to the theatrical set, as this work can be imagined as being taken from a play, as the backdrop for a scene set in the forest. Again the viewer's status as viewer is questioned because, if this is a set, then are they the performers? The wall painting we view is essentially a picture of shadows, linked to both reality and the world of illusion, as an image of the psyche associated with the dark regions of the soul.²⁹



Image: Ulla von Brandenburg, *Forest III* 2009, courtesy the artist and Art : Concept, Paris.

²⁹ Hannover, 2014

Dance with Skirt, 2015
watercolour on ancient paper
152.5 x 122.5 cm (framed)
Courtesy of the artist and Art : Concept, Paris

Torero, 2015
watercolour on ancient paper
152.5 x 122.5 cm (framed)
Courtesy of the artist and Art : Concept, Paris

Von Brandenburg draws the subject matter of her watercolour paintings from found images, usually photographs, that she then translates into large scale artworks. The two watercolours included in this exhibition each depict a performance archetype - the Torero, a Spanish bullfighter; and a lone costumed dancer. The artist has chosen to paint on old, yellowed paper, which lends these works an artificially aged appearance. This generates an interesting confusion for the viewer, given that each work is very recent, having been completed in 2015. This technique of employing materials and media that blur the temporal line between the present and the past also recurs in von Brandenburg's films and installations.

The artist describes the method by which she selects her images as haphazard,³⁰ another word for random. This makes sense in reference to the incredible variety of characters that typically populate her watercolour works, including deep sea divers, bullfighters, dancers, headless men, ostriches and white bears, amongst others. The artist's application of colour is similarly random - producing a free play between hues from every section of the colour spectrum. The artist actively engages with the flowing, liquid quality of watercolour by freely bleeding different coloured paints into one another and creating long paint drips across her compositions, an example of this is the top-to-bottom drips we can see in *Torero*.

³⁰ this is tomorrow, URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uD4ajN0HmM8>



It Has a Golden Yellow Sun and an Elderly Grey Moon, 2016

digitised Super-16mm film, plywood, paint

18 mins

Courtesy of the artist, Art : Concept, Paris, Pilar Corrias Gallery, London and Produzentengalerie Hamburg

It Has a Golden Yellow Sun and an Elderly Grey Moon was captured on 16mm film in a single take on the stage of the Amandiers Theatre in Nanterre, France. This installation is a co-commission between four different institutions around the world and the exhibition will travel to each of these venues to showcase this major new work from the artist. At each new location the title of the exhibition, which is taken from this new commission, will change according to the colours these locations embody. For instance, in its Toronto iteration the exhibition will be renamed *It Has a Golden Red Sun and an Elderly Green Moon*.

One of the only of von Brandenburg's film artworks to feature colour, the brightly keyed pieces of cloth that the dancers exchange act as powerful focal points in the otherwise monochromatic set. These exchanges, highly redolent of choreography, carry an air of unknown ritual. This is possibly due to von Brandenburg's interest in Indigenous American and Canadian Potlatch economies, but the specific ritual not what matters,³¹ rather, she is focused upon the quality of ritual activity itself. Von Brandenburg states, 'The idea was first to make a colour film, unlike the previous ones, and if there was going to be colour in one of my films, I decided that the film would be about colour. The dancers appear in a white space, and each one is holding a sheet dyed a bright colour'.³² *It Has a Golden Sun and an Elderly Grey Moon* uses colour as a form of abstraction, while von Brandenburg's previous films have been in black and white, structured around a narrative.

The staircase plays the role of the stage. The structure in the film functions to mirror that upon which the viewer sits in the gallery space. The viewer is at once implicated within the actions and rituals of the footage, poised to act. Another recurrent preoccupation of von Brandenburg's is the blurring of the divide between the narrative, or fantasy, of the artwork, and the real life space of the viewer. The grainy appearance of the film invests the footage with an atemporal, uncannily historical quality - the film is at once within history, but the answer as to the question as whereabouts remains ambiguous. This effect is reproduced in von Brandenburg's watercolours when she uses aged papers on which to paint, also confusing the past with the contemporary time. Accompanied by a sound score performed by Laurent Montaron and others, the work draws on modern dance movement, constructivist theatre, and performed notions of exchange.

³¹ Melbourne, Montreal, Toronto, Auhau, 2016-2017

³² Melbourne, Montreal, Toronto, Auhau, 2016-2017

Curriculum Links

VCE Art

Unit 1, Area of study 1 *Art and meaning*

Using the Formal Framework, visually analyse von Brandenburg's work *Forest*, 2011. Consider especially the elements of tone and shape and the principles of contrast and symmetry. How have these qualities contributed to the meanings and messages of the work? Create a mind map linking together these observations in a diagram.

Unit 2, Area of study 1 *Art and culture*

Using the Cultural Framework analyse von Brandenburg's film *Mammothones*. Von Brandenburg produced this film whilst on residency in Sardinia, Italy, and the dance pictured is a specific folk tradition of the area. Usually danced around a fire, here the camera is placed in the centre of the dancers instead. In what ways does placing the viewer at the centre of the action affect the viewer's experience of this traditional dance? Note your responses and then discuss in class.

Unit 3, Area of study 1 *Interpreting art*

Choose one of von Brandenburg's watercolour pieces from the exhibition. Create an analysis of this using the formal and contemporary frameworks. Consider the artist's choice of ancient paper and the all-over application of bright colour. Choose another pre-1970 watercolour picture from the collection of the National Gallery of Victoria, such as *View of Sydney from North Shore* by Conrad Martens. Apply the same frameworks and then chart your observations against one another to understand what commonalities and differences exist between these pieces.



VCE Studio Art

Unit 1: Artistic inspiration and techniques

Area of study 1: *Developing art ideas*

Von Brandenburg's practice is richly informed by her earlier studies in the discipline of scenography and the languages and form of theatre are central to her practice. Look at the artwork *It Has a Golden Yellow Sun and an Elderly Grey Moon* and try to locate the different ways in which von Brandenburg has referenced the materials and techniques of theatre in this work and in the wider exhibition.

How has von Brandenburg used the structure of the stage and stairs to blur the relationship of viewer and the actors in her film? Think of a building location within the grounds of your school and brainstorm ways in which you could use that piece of structure – stairs, a doorway, a stage – as the setting for a short film artwork to be filmed with your iPad or digital camera. A door, for example, might act as site of revelation (opening) or repression (closing). Make this short artwork either with a partner or in a small group.

Alternatively, think of a theme that inspires you – a past time, relationship or memory for instance, that you could use as inspiration for your own artwork. Create a list of symbols, phrases or materials that reference your chosen inspiration and which could be incorporated into your artwork.

Unit 2: Design exploration and concepts

Area of study 2: *Design exploration*

The realisation of von Brandenburg's structural artworks requires a rigorous process of design and engineering to ensure that the artist achieves the desired effect and also that the engineering safety requirements required for an artwork on which the public can stand are met.

The new co-commission *It Has a Golden Yellow Sun and an Elderly Grey Moon* required several design modifications before the final structure was approved for construction. This involved plan drawings being made and structural specifications being decided upon. Create a structural design for your own artwork that you would like to make if there were no restrictions on scale or size. Consider the effects of great height and precarity to generate responses from your viewers. Consider how structures themselves can become highly dramatic when expressed in extreme ways.

Unit 3: Studio production and professional art practices

Area of study 3: Professional art practices and styles

Analyse and discuss the ways in which von Brandenburg has used materials, techniques and processes in her exhibition. Of particular interest is *Curtain* at the entrance to the exhibition. The artist was trying to get the curtain to look as if it had been bleached by sunlight in Vienna's Secession Gallery, where it was previously shown. To do this von Brandenburg used a technique of bleaching using chlorine. Discuss how the artist's interest in time and history has led her to replicate the effects of time using artificial means.

View the short films in the exhibition. Analyse the effect of the 'single shot' film. To von Brandenburg the lack of editing is significant and integral to her work. What does this particular technique lend to her art films?

Unit 4: Studio production and art industry contexts

Area of study 3: Art Industry contexts

It Has a Golden Sun and an Elderly Grey Moon is an artwork which required a lot of technical assistance to be realised. Use this as a case study to map out the roles of curator, designer, engineer and builders in the production of this work.

Look around at the different areas of von Brandenburg's exhibition. Note how lighting has been used differently in different parts of the exhibition. For example compare the lighting around the film works to the lighting around the watercolour pieces.

ACCA promotes its exhibitions through diverse media outlets. The following outlets host ACCA promotions:

Social media: Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

Online journals: Art Guide, Broadsheet and Time Out online magazines.

Physical advertising: Billboards in Flinders Street Station.

Radio: 3RRR

Create a collection of photographs and screenshots of these sources and create a scrapbook resource.



VCE Visual Communication Design

Unit 2: Applications of Visual Communication Design

Area of Study 3: Applying the design process

Look at the structures that have been built to accommodate and extend Ulla von Brandenburg's artworks in this exhibition. Of particular interest are the curved wall built for *Forest*, 2011, and the staircase structure built for *It Has a Golden Sun and an Elderly Grey Moon*, 2016. Write a brief for an artwork that requires a structural support - think on towers, fences, walls and platforms. Give your brief to one of your classmates and take someone else's to work on yourself. Create a set of plan drawings and a short statement to illustrate how you have answered your classmate's initial brief.

Unit 3: Design thinking and practice

Area of Study 2: Design industry practice

For this activity you will try to unpack the processes that resulted in Ulla von Brandenburg's exhibition coming about. Focus either on:

The exhibition catalogue: Analyse the different design professionals involved in the production of the exhibition catalogue. Try to interpret the tasks involved in the following roles: Photographer, Editor, Graphic Designer, Printer.

OR

The built structures in the exhibition: Analyse the different design professionals involved in the production of the exhibition structures. Try to interpret the tasks involved in the following roles: Designer, Builder, Structural Engineer.

Investigate the nature of ACCA's business as a medium sized art institution, and how that may impact marketing opportunities and methods of competing with other arts organisations of the same size. In groups discuss ACCA's competitors in the market, then brainstorm and develop a marketing plan for one of ACCA's exhibitions or public programs.

VCE Drama

Unit 1: Dramatic Storytelling

Area of Study 1: Stagecraft

Ulla von Brandenburg's film *Mamuthones* takes a Sardinian folk dance as its central subject matter. Choose a ritual behaviour, dance or everyday practice from your everyday life within community and/or culture as the basis of a short dramatic piece. Devise a script or screenplay and costumes to use to portray your personal experience as a story. Film your short piece and screen it to your class.

Unit 3: Non-naturalistic Ensemble Performance

Area of Study 2: Responding to Devised Ensemble Performances

Use *It Has a Golden Sun and an Elderly Grey Moon* as an example of a devised performance. Using language and terminology specific to drama analyse and evaluate the construction of the performance, dramatic elements and stagecraft conventions. Focus upon the artist's use of abstract signifiers (such as the pieces of fabric) and choreography to represent the concept of exchange.



Secondary Visual Arts

LEVELS 7 – 10

Explore and Express Ideas

Von Brandenburg frequently devises filmed artworks that include actors, though her artworks are different from traditional plays or movies because there is often no clear story or narrative. This allows the viewer an unusual and unexpected experience of film.

Activity: Back at school create your own filmed artworks. You could recreate a famous scene from an inspiring film, or create a work based on your own experiences. Do this in small groups. First, decide on characters and a setting and then as a group decide on what kind of a film artwork you would like to make. If possible use costumes and props and decide on who will film the activity - it might be best to take turns at this. When you have finished have a special screening of your works in the next class or at lunch time.

Visual Arts Practices

Von Brandenburg is a multi-disciplinary artist, this means that she uses diverse media and techniques in her artistic practice.

Activity: In the exhibition *It Has a Golden Yellow Sun and an Elderly Grey Moon* which types of artworks – drawing, watercolour, film, and sculpture - in the show were the most interesting to you and why. Discuss as a class.

Present and Perform

Von Brandenburg is very interested in colour and its effects. Consider von Brandenburg's use of coloured walls in the installation of the exhibition. How has the artist used colour to add an extra layer of meaning to her artworks?

Activity: Back at school, experiment with presenting your artworks within a field of colour. To do this take an artwork you have made and place it on or against a large sheet of coloured paper or fabric. Try using warm colours (red, orange, yellow) and then using cool colours (blue, green, purple). Do the different coloured surrounds change your perception of your artwork? Try this out on an audience of your classmates as well, then compare results.

Respond and Interpret

Von Brandenburg uses many different references in her work from different cultures and periods of history. For instance, the artist's use of analogue film (rather than digital video) gives her filmed works the appearance of being perhaps older than they actually are. This kind of mixing up of places, time and contexts creates interesting results in her artworks. Do you agree?

Activity: Choose an artwork that you found very interesting from the exhibition *It Has a Golden Yellow Sun and an Elderly Grey Moon*. Using your visual diary or digital device make notes on: What form the artwork takes (watercolour painting, film, sculpture)? What you think the artist was thinking about when she made the work? Are there any ideas or viewpoints being expressed? Can you identify any cultural or historical references within the work?



Primary Visual Arts

LEVELS 4 – 6

Explore and Express Ideas

In the artwork *It Has a Golden Sun and an Elderly Grey Moon* we enter via a set of specially built stairs before being able to see what is on the other side.

Activity: Imagine that this is your artwork and that you get to decide what is on the other side of those stairs. Decide what this would be and then make a drawing of it. Everyone should share their drawings and explain their imaginative idea to the class when finished.

Visual Arts Practices

In her artwork *Forest*, von Brandenburg has created a kind of theatrical backdrop like you might see at a play or pantomime. This then places the viewers (you!) in the position of the actors!

Activity: As a class create your own theatre backdrop with a theme - underwater, up in the clouds, out in the bush - are some examples. Decide on your own idea by voting in class and then on a big piece of paper make this together. You could use paint, pencil or collage. As a second stage, come up with a play that is set in front of the backdrop you have made. It could be an adventure, a story about friends or even a wild tale about what happened on the way to school. Decide on characters and, with your teachers help, put together a script that everyone contributes to (like a 'choose your own adventure'). Then stage it; maybe even get another class in to be your audience.

Present and Perform

Von Brandenburg has included two very beautiful and colourful watercolour paintings in her exhibition. Look at the adventurous way in which she has used all-over rainbow colour. Think about how it makes you feel.

Activity: Back at school create your own watercolour paintings but, like Von Brandenburg, use colours where you would not usually expect them - think *green* skin, *purple* eyes, a *red* sky. When you are finished make a group exhibition by putting all the pictures up on your classroom walls and then move around the classroom looking at everyone's artworks. How are theirs different to yours?

Respond and Interpret

Von Brandenburg uses many different historical and cultural references in her artworks. These all come together to create a kind of strange world in her exhibition.

Activity: As a class sit down in a circle with a notebook and pencil and discuss together any different ideas that you might have picked up on in the artwork *It Has a Golden Sun and an Elderly Grey Moon*. Make notes of each other's interpretations, especially when someone contributes an idea that had not already occurred to you. Place this sheet in your visual diary under the heading 'Artwork Interpretation'. Notice how each person brings their own unique perspective to the artworks.



LEVELS FOUNDATION – 3

Explore and Express Ideas

In Ulla von Brandenburg's artwork *It Has a Golden Sun and an Elderly Grey Moon* there is a set of stairs and until we see the other side we can only imagine what will be there.

Activity: Imagine for yourself what else could be on the other side of the stairs - something scary? Funny? Gigantic, like a dinosaur?! Make a drawing of your idea using pencil, text or any other media. Show them to your classmates and explain your idea to them.

Visual Arts Practices

The artwork *Eigenschatten I-VI (Own Shadow I-VI)* is a group of everyday objects hanging from the ceiling as sculptures. Next to them is a series of artworks that feature the shadows of these objects. In the shadow works these ordinary objects appear very mysterious.

Activity: At school look around you for objects with interesting shapes in your classroom. One person should hold the object up and the other person should trace the shadows to see what interesting shapes are made by these shadows. Using the same piece of paper take turns drawing and change colours each time so that you get a picture building up of all the different shadow shapes.

Present and Perform

The exhibition *It Has a Golden Sun and an Elderly Grey Moon* is large and complex, containing many different types of colourful, exciting artworks.

Activity: Back at school make a drawing of the exhibition that shows the different artworks that you saw. It will be a bit like a personal map of the space. When finished, make an exhibition of your 'map drawings' and invite a class who didn't come on excursion to show them all the things that you saw.

Respond and Interpret

Everyone has a different experience of an artwork. It is interesting to hear about other people's ideas about artworks and exhibitions and compare them to your own.

Activity: Write a few short sentences or words that describe your experience of visiting *It Has a Golden Sun and an Elderly Grey Moon*. Draw a picture of your favourite artwork to illustrate your writing.



Image: Ulla von Brandenburg, *7 ribbons* 2014, courtesy the artist and Pilar Corrias Gallery, London.

Glossary Of Terms

Archetype: *a typical example of a certain person or thing.*

Artifice: *clever or cunning devices or expedients, especially as used to trick or deceive others.*

Commedia dell'arte: *a form of theatre characterized by masked "types" which began in Italy in the 16th century and was responsible for the advent of actresses and improvised performances based on sketches or scenarios.*

Möbius Strip: *a paradoxical surface with a single continuous side, formed by joining the ends of a rectangle after twisting one end through 180 degrees.*

Rorschach effect: *a psychological test in which a subject's interpretations of a series of standard inkblots are analysed as an indication of personality traits, preoccupations, and conflicts. These inkblots are always symmetrical, abstract images.*

Shadow play: *type of theatrical entertainment performed with puppets.*

Tableau: *a term that refers to the composition of figures and objects within a picture or scene to create balance, harmony or dynamic effect.*

Tableaux vivant: *A French phrase meaning 'living picture', used to mean a silent and motionless group of people posed to portray a famous scene or event.*

Talismanic: *An object possessing or believed to possess magical power.*

Further Reading

REPRESENTING GALLERIES

Pilar Corrias Gallery:
<http://www.pilarcorrias.com/artists/ulla-von-brandenburg/>

Galerie Art : Concept:
<http://www.galerieartconcept.com/artwork-collection/ulla-von-brandenburg-artworks/>

INTERVIEWS

Ulla von Brandenburg, interview with The Common Guild:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DL2zKM3IPHc>
Ulla von Brandenburg, interview with Nina Möntmann:
<http://www.secession.at/en/exhibition/ulla-von-brandenburg-2/>

ARTIST TALKS:

Artist Talk at The Common Guild:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uD4ajN0HmM8>

Turner Prize 2007 Artist Talk:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lxcsQLIAaKk>

PAST EXHIBITION REVIEWS

Frieze Magazine:
<https://www.frieze.com/article/ulla-von-brandenburg-haris-epaminonda-francis-upritchard>

Scotsman Newspaper:
<http://www.scotsman.com/lifestyle/visual-art-reviews-man-fred-pernice-ulla-von-brandenburg-jonathan-owen-winston-roeth-1-1588552>

The Seen:
<http://theseenjournal.org/art-seen-international/ulla-von-brandenburg-secession/>

References

ADIAF: Association for the International Diffusion of French Art. This site lists nominated candidates for the 2016 Marcel Duchamp Prize. URL: <http://www.adiaf.com/en/2016-marcel-duchamp-prize-nominated-artists/>

ARTFORUM: Rome. This site provides a summary of von Brandenburg's debut solo exhibition in Italy. URL: <http://artforum.com/picks/id=39630>

Biennale of Sydney: Ulla von Brandenburg. This site provides an overview of von Brandenburg's practice in relation to her work in the 19th Biennale of Sydney. URL: <http://www.biennaleofsydney.com.au/19bos/artists/von-brandenburg/>

CCVA: Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts. This site provides information on current and previous exhibitions and residencies at this center. URL: <http://ccva.fas.harvard.edu/ulla-von-brandenburg-talk>

Flash Art: Tableaux Vivants. This site discusses the reinvention of forms of theatre and dance for visual art. URL: <http://www.flashartonline.com/article/tableaux-vivants/>

Frac des Pays de la Loire: Récits Anamorphiques. A journal discussing artists related to anamorphosis – looking at pictures from another readable point of view. URL: http://www.fracdespaysdelaloire.com/public/pdf/journal_recits.pdf

Galerie Art: Concept: Ulla von Brandenburg. This site provides biographical information on artists represented by the gallery. URL: <http://www.galerieartconcept.com/artist/ulla-von-brandenburg/>

Hannover, 2014: *Innen ist nicht Außen*, exh. cat., Hannover, Kunstverein Hannover, Berlin, Mass.: Revolver Publishing, 2013.

High Line Art: Ulla von Brandenburg *Shadowplay*. Details of von Brandenburg's presentation of her work *Shadowplay* on the High Line in New York. URL: <http://art.thehighline.org/project/ullavonbrandenburg/>

Kunstverein Hannover: Ulla von Brandenburg "Inside is Not Outside". A press release for von Brandenburg's exhibition at Kunstverein Hannover. URL: http://www.kunstverein-hannover.de/files/kvh_uvb_pressrelease_long.pdf

Melbourne, Montreal, Toronto, Auhaus, 2016-2017: *It Has a Golden Yellow Sun and an Elderly Grey Moon*, exh. cat., Melbourne, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art; Montreal, Darling Foundry; Toronto, The Power Plant; Aarhus, Denmark, Milan: Mousse Publishing, 2016.

Mousse Magazine: Ulla von Brandenburg "Innen ist nicht Außen" at Secession, Wien. Ulla von Brandenburg in conversation with Xavier Franceschi. URL: <http://mousemagazine.it/uvonbrandenburg-secession/>

Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam: La Maison / Dockingstation. This site is a montaged video interview with von Brandenburg. URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WVdb5V09-ZU>

The Common Guild: Ulla von Brandenburg 'Neue Alte Welt'. This site includes a summary of von Brandenburg's exhibition. URL: <https://www.thecommonguild.org.uk/programme/exhibition/neue-alte-welt>

The Guardian: Artist of the week. A feature written about von Brandenburg's films. URL: <http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2009/dec/02/ulla-von-brandenburg-artist>

this is tomorrow: Ulla von Brandenburg. This site is a comprehensive artist talk. URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uD4ajN0HmM8>

Vimeo: Ulla von Brandenburg. A private video account of von Brandenburg's films with summaries. URL: <https://vimeo.com/album/2454955>

Visiting ACCA

ACCA's FREE education programs are available for Primary, Secondary and Tertiary groups between 10am - 4pm from Monday to Friday.

Maximum 25 students per group for THINK and MAKE programs.

Bookings are required for both guided and self-guided School and Tertiary groups.

10am - 5pm Tuesday – Friday

Monday by appointment

Acknowledgments



Education resource written and compiled by Eliza Devlin, Schools Education Manager and Andrew Atchison, Artist Educator, ACCA, May 2016


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