



Press kit

Renate Bertlmann

AMO ERGO SUM

Ein subversives Politprogramm

curated by Gabriele Schor

Exhibition duration
Feb. 25. – June 30. 2016

sammlung

VERBUND
DUNBURA

Renate Bertlmann

AMO ERGO SUM

Ein subversives Politprogramm

- Exhibition:** Renate Bertlmann
AMO ERGO SUM
A Subversive Political Program
- Venue:** Vertical Gallery of the SAMMLUNG VERBUND, Vienna
Am Hof 6a
1010 Vienna, Austria
- Curator:** Gabriele Schor
Director, The SAMMLUNG VERBUND, Vienna
- Press conference:** Wednesday, February 24, 2016, 10–12 a.m.
- Opening and
Catalogue presentation:** Wednesday, February 24, 2016, 7–11 p.m.
- Exhibition duration:** Feb. 25. – June 30. 2016
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Renate Bertlmann

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The exhibition and monograph present selections from the unjustly underappreciated Austrian artist RENATE BERTLMANN's thrilling oeuvre, which spans more than five decades. For the past three years, the SAMMLUNG VERBUND, whose collection focuses on the perception of spaces and places and the feminist avant-garde of the 1970s, has worked with the artist to compile a comprehensive monograph on her oeuvre (in German and English). The essays offer art-historical insights into the motif of the bride, read Bertlmann's work in light of Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis, explore the subject of skin and touch, and place her art in the context of the international feminist movement.

The exhibition at Vertical Gallery features facsimile reconstructions of installations as well as numerous photographs, drawings, objects, and films from the SAMMLUNG VERBUND collection with a focus on the 1970s, complemented by works from the artist's own collection. Three themes organize the show: *Pornography, Irony, and Utopia*, a conceptual trinity chosen by the artist herself. In her art as in life, Renate Bertlmann's guiding maxim is AMO ERGO SUM (I love, therefore I am). Her work deftly stages the collision of contraries: female and male, soft and hard, attraction and repulsion, eroticism and asceticism.

A master of contrasts

Renate Bertlmann examines the human body, its surfaces and manifold shapes. Since the 1970s, she has used materials such as latex, synthetic foils, and fabrics to probe the form and tonic energy of her "tender objects." Pacifiers, condoms, penises, breasts and vaginas, sharp knives and scalpels are the protagonists. Blown-up rubbers exchange caresses and turn into visions of breasts yearning for contact. Objects that would seem incompatible such as pacifiers and knives are joined in curious union, and soft shapes like breasts end in razor-sharp attachments, so-called "protest objects" that rebel against fetishism and patriarchal fantasies of power. Their emotional ambivalence between tenderness and aggression illustrates Bertlmann's "subversive political program."

Skin

Skin is a central theme in Renate Bertlmann's oeuvre. Skin envelops us, protecting us and marking the boundary between self and environment. The artist's performances and staged photographs focus on the tactility of soft forms in acts of feeling and grasping. In the latex installation *Waschtag* (Washing Day), for example, the laundry items hung out on a string resemble nipples, skins, umbilical cords, and pacifiers.

Sexuality

According to Sigmund Freud, humor allows us to release the pent-up libidinal energies culture enjoins us to renounce. "Jokes for blokes," many of them obscene and pornographic, aim to reduce women to objects of sexual pleasure. Renate Bertlmann defies the hegemony of male humor by turning the traditional object-subject relation on its head and introducing "laughs for ladies." In her art, characters such as the *Farphalla Impudica* or "wanton butterfly," a winged dildo, and Saint Erectus poke fun at the phallus, the symbol of man's omnipresent claim to power.

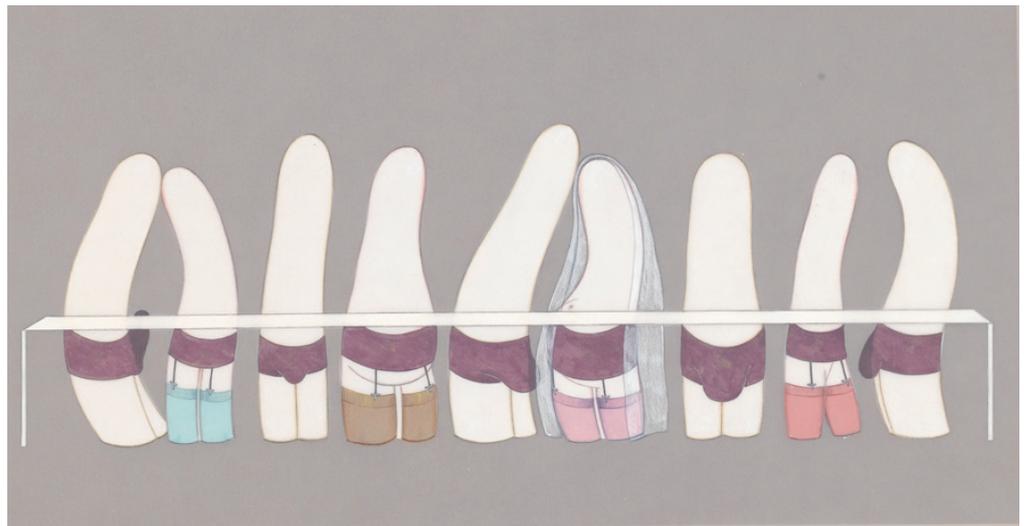
Wheelchair

Thomas Bernhard's play *A Party for Boris* (1970), in which the characters have no legs and sit in wheelchairs, inspired Renate Bertlmann to explore the potential of the wheelchair as a peculiar object. Her first wheelchair drawing (1974) was followed by the cycle "Pregnant Bride in Wheelchair" (1978) and wheelchairs made of acrylic glass.

The wheelchair serves the artist as a metaphor for impermanence, fragility, helplessness, vulnerability, and man's limitations. These themes contrast with the bright and even gaudy colors of Bertlmann's wheelchairs. She notes that "it looks like I'm making fun of disabilities. But I see these colors as an attempt to capture the sense of embarrassment we feel when we meet people in wheelchairs. When someone in a wheelchair approaches us, we don't look them in the eye. Bending down to shake hands, we are often hampered by a sense of awkwardness and embarrassment. Disabilities leave us perplexed and disconcerted."

Bride

In the 1970s, feminists coined the slogan “The private is political.” Renate Bertlmann often chooses the motif of the bride, which has a long tradition in cultural history, to denounce the one-dimensional role—mother, wife, homemaker—society imposes on women. In *The Wedding Guests* (1974), ladies and gentlemen are congregated for a rather formal celebratory dinner, but beneath the table, a very different party is heating up; other scenes are similarly explicit. Men and women alike are reduced to penis-like creatures on stubby legs. The series brings an enigmatic irony to its subject, and in the feminist context, it reads as a defiant challenge to the mechanisms of patriarchal oppression. One such instrument of power, Bertlmann believes, is the bridal system, which ultimately serves to codify the subjugation of women. Even today, the institution of marriage casts the female part in the role of the housewife, rendering her economically dependent and severely stunting her personal development.



Renate Bertlmann, Die Hochzeitsgesellschaft | The Wedding Guests, 1974
© Renate Bertlmann / The SAMMLUNG VERBUND, Vienna / Bildrecht, Vienna, 2016

The Book

Here, the SAMMLUNG VERBUND, Vienna presents the first comprehensive monograph on the work of Renate Bertlmann. The book, created in close collaboration with the artist, is published in both German and English and contains 300 illustrations from a career spanning more than five decades.

Bertlmann divides her work into Pornography, Irony and Utopia, with all three areas gathered under the motto AMO ERGO SUM (I love therefore I am). Her work artfully stages the encounter of opposites: female and male, soft and hard, attraction and repulsion, eroticism and asceticism. The essays in the book provide an art historical overview of the recurring motif of the bride, interpret Bertlmann's work in the light of Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis, explore themes of skin and touch, and contextualize her work within the broader history of feminism. The volume also contains an extensive interview with the artist, a biographical overview, and an illustrated chronology of her films, performances, and staged photographs.

The Authors

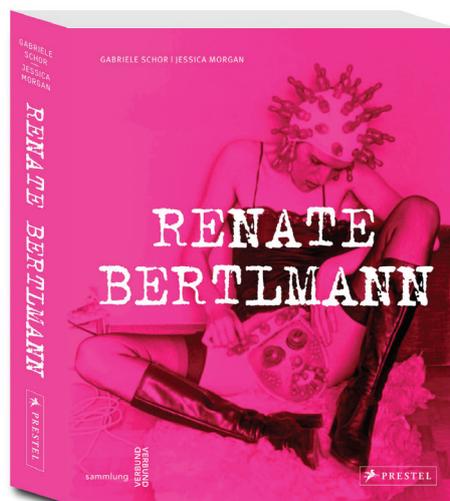
Gabriele Schor is the director of the SAMMLUNG VERBUND, Vienna.

Jessica Morgan is director of the Dia Art Foundation, New York.

Katharina Sykora is professor for fine arts with the focus on art history of the 19th and 20th century at the Braunschweig University of Art.

Berthold Ecker is director of the Collection of the Department for Cultural Affairs of the City of Vienna – MUSA Museum Startgalerie Artothek, Vienna.

Abigail Solomon-Godeau is art historian, curator, artcritic and author in Paris.



Biography



Renate Bertlmann

Renate Bertlmann was born in Vienna in 1943 and studied painting at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna from 1964 until 1970. After graduating, she taught painting techniques in her alma mater's master class in restoration and technology until 1982.

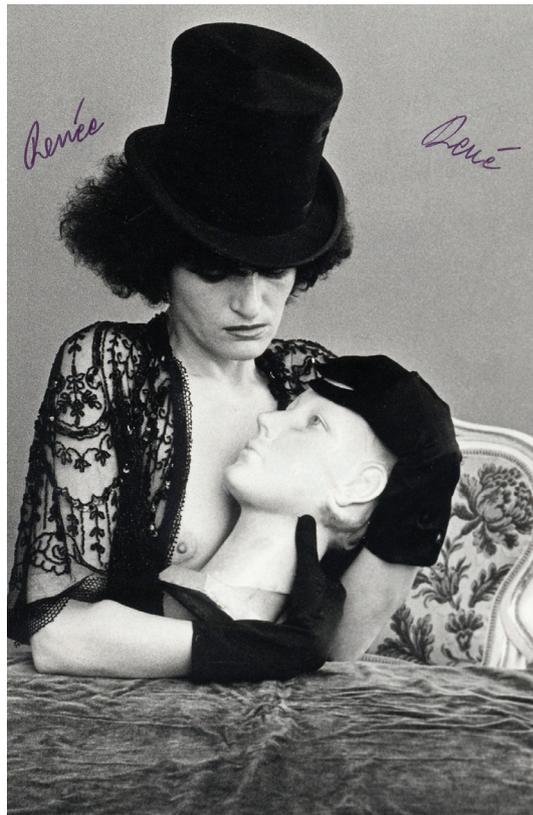
She becomes involved in the feminist cause and, in 1973, publishes the pamphlet "Why Doesn't She Paint Flowers?" With Barbara Strathedee and Emanuela Marassi, she founds *Marebagroup* in Trieste, and from 1974 on she designs the layout for the feminist journal *AUF–Eine Frauenzeitschrift*. Between 1977 and 1980, she is an active member of the women artist's group *IntAkt–Internationale Aktionsgemeinschaft bildender Künstlerinnen*.

In 1977, Bertlmann spends a year in Dubna near Moscow, where she collaborates with Russian artists, and receives an invitation to the Bologna performance festival, where she stages her first piece of performance art. Until 1980, she also presents performances in Vienna, Düsseldorf, Amsterdam, and New York.

Beginning in the 1970s, Bertlmann devises a distinctive style leavened with humor and irony in which she probes models of both femininity and masculinity as well as sociological aspects of sexuality and the relations between the genders. Her provocative phallic objects cast an ironic light on the male sex and decry the patriarchal system. For over fifty years, Bertlmann has worked in a wide range of media, making graphic art, photography, films, drawings, objects, installations, and performances. Since the 1980s, she has been interested in the phenomenon of kitsch as 'dense fantasy' and created numerous objects. The artist lives and works in Vienna.



Renate Bertlmann, Zärtliche Pantomime | Tender Pantomime, 1976
© Renate Bertlmann / The SAMMLUNG VERBUND, Vienna /
Bildrecht, Vienna, 2016



Renate Bertlmann, René ou Renée mit Kopf |
Renée or René with Bust, 1977
© Renate Bertlmann / The SAMMLUNG VERBUND, Vienna /
Bildrecht, Vienna, 2016



Renate Bertlmann, Zärtliche Berührungen | Tender Touches, 1976
© Renate Bertlmann / The SAMMLUNG VERBUND, Vienna / Bildrecht, Vienna, 2016



Renate Bertlmann, Messer-Schnuller-Hände | Knife-Pacifier-Hands, 1981
© Renate Bertlmann / The SAMMLUNG VERBUND, Vienna / Bildrecht, Vienna, 2016



Renate Bertlmann, Performance: Deflorazione in 14 Stazioni, 1977
© Renate Bertlmann / The SAMMLUNG VERBUND, Vienna / Bildrecht, Vienna, 2016



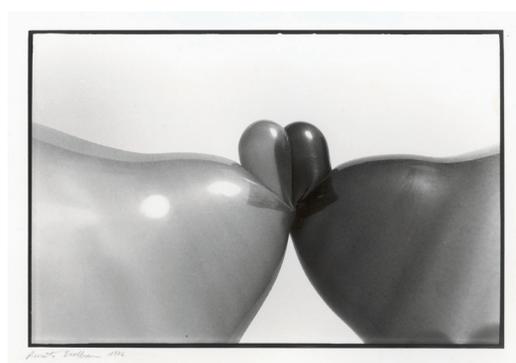
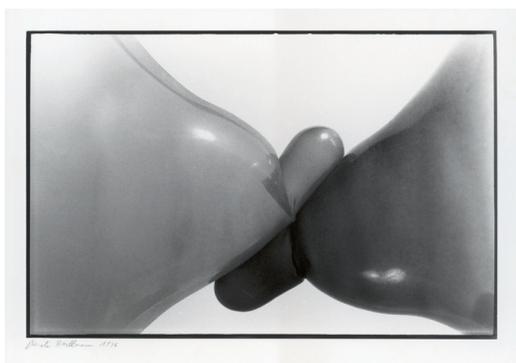
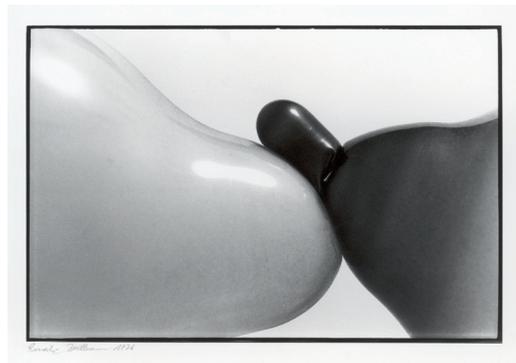
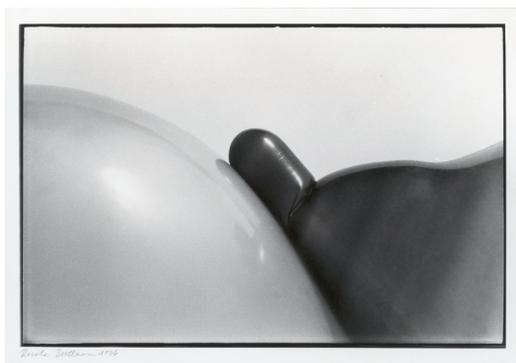
Renate Bertlmann, Die schwangere Braut Station 9 |
The Pregnant Bride Station 9, 1978
© Renate Bertlmann / The SAMMLUNG VERBUND, Vienna /
Bildrecht, Vienna, 2016



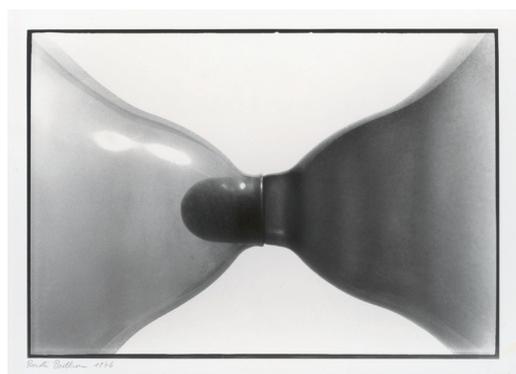
Renate Bertlmann, Le charme indiscret de la bourgeoisie |
The indiscreet charm of the bourgeoisie , 1972
© Renate Bertlmann / The SAMMLUNG VERBUND, Vienna / Bildrecht, Vienna, 2016



Renate Bertlmann, Ausstülpungen | Protrusions, 1982
© Renate Bertlmann / The SAMMLUNG VERBUND, Vienna / Bildrecht, Vienna, 2016



Renate Bertlmann,
Zärtliche Berührungen 1-5 |
Tender Touches 1-5, 1976
© Renate Bertlmann / The SAMMLUNG
VERBUND, Vienna / Bildrecht, Vienna, 2016





Renate Bertlmann, Rollstuhl (rot-groß) | Wheelchair (red-big), 1975
© Renate Bertlmann / The SAMMLUNG VERBUND, Vienna / Bildrecht, Vienna, 2016

The SAMMLUNG VERBUND, Vienna

The SAMMLUNG VERBUND, Vienna was established in 2004 by the Austrian electricity company VERBUND AG. A corporate collection of Austrian and international art primarily from the decades since 1970, the SAMMLUNG VERBUND, Vienna has quickly built a reputation for its distinctive repertory of now almost eight hundred works of art. Gabriele Schor, director of the collection, Vienna; Jessica Morgan, director, Dia Art Foundation, New York; and Camille Morineau, curator, Paris, serve on the international advisory board that selects works to be purchased for the collection.

In keeping with its stated preference for “depth over breadth,” the SAMMLUNG VERBUND, Vienna prioritizes the acquisition of entire ensembles of works that exemplify an artist’s oeuvre or a particular creative period. The collection’s two foci are the feminist avant-garde of the 1970s and the perception of spaces and places.

The SAMMLUNG VERBUND, Vienna vigorously promotes research and art-historical studies that reassess the significance of individual positions or creative periods. Past scholarly efforts have included the production of the first monograph on the art of Birgit Jürgenssen (2009), a catalogue raisonné of Cindy Sherman’s early works (2012), a monograph on Francesca Woodman (2014), and the reference book *The Feminist Avant-Garde of the 1970s*. Works from the SAMMLUNG VERBUND, Vienna (2015).

EXHIBITIONS INTERNATIONAL

Upcoming exhibitions

2016 open spaces | secret places

Works from the SAMMLUNG VERBUND, Vienna

June 17.–Sept. 4. 2016, BOZAR Centre for Fine Arts, Brussels

The Feminist Avant-Garde of the 1970s

Works from the SAMMLUNG VERBUND, Vienna

Sept. 30. 2016–Jan. 8. 2017, The Photographers' Gallery, London

Exhibitions

2015 Feministische Avantgarde der 1970er-Jahre

Works from the SAMMLUNG VERBUND, Vienna

Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg

Francesca Woodman / Birgit Jürgenssen

Kunst Meran, Italy

2014 WOMAN. The Feminist Avant-garde from the 1970s.

Works from the SAMMLUNG VERBUND, Vienna

Mjellby Konstmuseum, Halmstadgruppens Museum, Sweden

BOZAR Centre for Fine Arts, Brussels

2013 MUJER. La vanguardia feminista de los años 70, PHotoEspana, Madrid

Cindy Sherman. Das Frühwerk 1975-1977, Kunst Meran, Meran

2012 open spaces | secret places. Works from the SAMMLUNG VERBUND, Vienna

Museum der Moderne, Salzburg

Cindy Sherman. Das Frühwerk 1975-1977, Centre de la photographie Genève

2010/11 Birgit Jürgenssen – Erste Retrospektive

Cooperation Bank Austria Kunstforum / The SAMMLUNG VERBUND, Vienna

2010 DONNA. Avanguardia femminista negli anni '70

Galleria nazionale d'arte moderna e contemporanea, Rom

2008 Suyun Bir Arada Tuttugu. Verbund Kleksiyou'ndan Sanat.

HELD TOGETHER WITH WATER. Art from the SAMMLUNG VERBUND, Vienna

Museum Istanbul Modern, Istanbul

2007 HELD TOGETHER WITH WATER. Art from the SAMMLUNG VERBUND, Vienna

MAK – Museum für angewandte Kunst, Vienna

EXHIBITIONS

VERTICAL GALLERY, VIENNA

Upcoming exhibitions

2016 Renate Bertlmann

AMO ERGO SUM. A Subversive Political Program

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Exhibitions

2014 my private world

Works from the SAMMLUNG VERBUND, Vienna

Francesca Woodman

Works from the SAMMLUNG VERBUND, Vienna

2013 open spaces | secret places.

Works from the SAMMLUNG VERBUND, Vienna

2012 Cindy Sherman. Das Frühwerk 1975-1977

Works from the SAMMLUNG VERBUND, Vienna

2011 Loan Nguyen - Prinzip Zartgefühl

Works from the SAMMLUNG VERBUND, Vienna

2010 Real Estates

Works from the SAMMLUNG VERBUND, Vienna

2009 Birgit Jürgenssen

Works from the SAMMLUNG VERBUND, Vienna

2008 Double Face

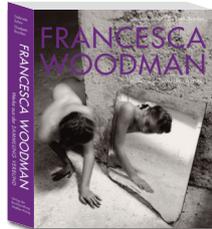
Works from the SAMMLUNG VERBUND, Vienna

Fred Sandback / Olafur Eliasson (Yello Fog-Opening)

Works from the SAMMLUNG VERBUND, Vienna



PUBLICATIONS



2016 Renate Bertlmann
Works 1969–2016. A Subversive Political Program
The SAMMLUNG VERBUND, Vienna
Exhibitor catalogue, Prestel, german / english



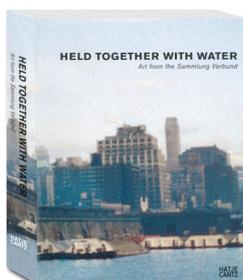
2015 Feministische Avantgarde der 1970er Jahre
Werke der SAMMLUNG VERBUND, Wien
Hamburger Kunsthalle and SAMMLUNG VERBUND, Vienna
Exhibitor catalogue, Prestel, german and english volume



2014 Franceca Woodman. Works from the SAMMLUNG VERBUND
Publisher Walter König, Cologne, german and english volume



2012 open spaces | secret places. Works from the SAMMLUNG VERBUND
Exhibitor catalogue, Walter König, Cologne
Cindy Sherman. The Early Works 1975-1977
Catalog Raisonné, Hatje Cantz, german and english volume



2010 Birgit Jürgenssen
Exhibitor catalogue, Prestel
DONNA. AVANGUARDIA FEMMINISTA NEGLI ANNI '70
dalla SAMMLUNG VERBUND di Vienna
Galleria nazionale d'arte moderna e contemporanea, Rom
Exhibitor catalogue, Electa Mondadori, german and italian volume

2009 Birgit Jürgenssen
First Monograph, Hatje Cantz, german / english
2008 Suyun Bir Arada Tuttugu. Verbund Kleksiyou'ndan Sanat.
HELD TOGETHER WITH WATER. Art from the SAMMLUNG VERBUND
Museum Istanbul Modern / The SAMMLUNG VERBUND, Vienna
Exhibitor catalogue, english / turkish

2007 HELD TOGETHER WITH WATER. Art from the SAMMLUNG VERBUND
Collection book, Hatje Cantz, german and english volume

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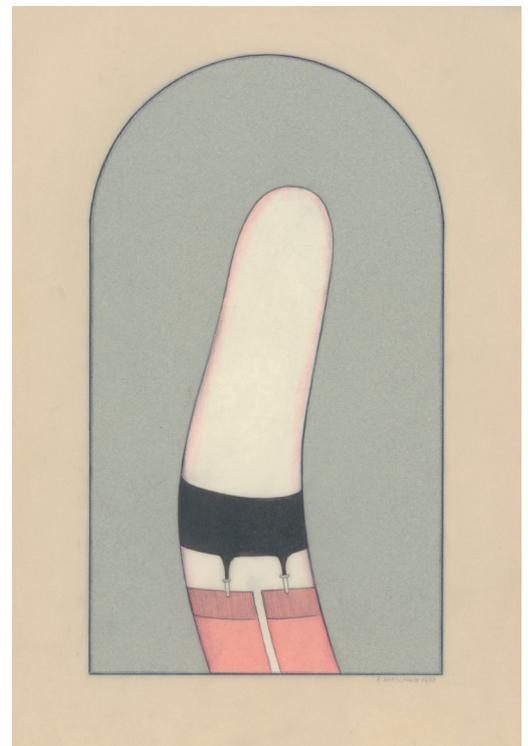
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Renate Bertlmann, Frau I | Woman I, 1974

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