

OCULA

Rosa Loy



In Conversation with
[Laura Thomson](#)
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Rosa Loy was born in Zwickau, Germany (1958) and lives and works in Leipzig, Germany. She completed her BFA and MFA at the Academy of Visual Art in Leipzig. Along with her husband, Neo Rauch, Loy is associated with the New Leipzig School of contemporary German painting.

Loy has exhibited widely including solo exhibitions at the Städtische Museum Zwickau, Germany; Kunstverein Elsterpark E.V., Leipzig, Germany; Kunstverein der Stadt, Backnang, Germany; Michael Kohn Gallery, Los Angeles; André Schleichriem, New York; and [David Zwirner](#), New York. Rosa Loy is represented in major museum collections including the Museum of Modern Art New York, the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, and the Deutsche Bank Collection.

I understand you didn't initially train as an artist but first studied horticulture and later graphic arts before turning to painting? How did your journey as an artist begin and what role if any does your early education play in your practice today?

My parents worked in horticultural services. They were gardeners belonging to the City Hall, but my mother always painted. After studying for Abitur, I majored in horticulture at Humboldt Universität. After graduating, I worked as a gardener for five years, but my real passion was for art and books. Thus I eventually returned to university, majoring in art at the Hochschule fuer Grafik und Buchkunst Grafik und Buchgestaltung. Completing my master's degree was a deeply satisfying experience. While I was working in horticultural services, I realized that excellent skills were the prerequisite for success. Plants do not thrive if they are not watered sufficiently or grown at the wrong temperatures. This rule also seems to be applicable to painting.

You are one of the few female painters associated with the New Leipzig school and your work is very much rooted in the theme of the feminine — your paintings are populated by women in all their many variations. Do you consider yourself a feminist artist?

Feminism, to me, means equality between women and men. This point sometimes makes me look like a human rights activist. I want woman to be independent, wise and beautiful and to have equal rights with men in all aspects of society, both family and work life. I believe that a true partnership between women (Yin) and men (Yang) could see our society develop into a more progressive one.

Tell us about your show at Gallery Baton, your first exhibition in Korea? Is it all new work?

The exhibition was in development for over a year so there was plenty of time to prepare and select the right works. The space of a gallery is always very important to me in deciding what to show so I created a gallery like environment in my studio to help me to figure out when the works were ready. The paintings were all completed between 2013 - 2014 and the exhibition is called Green Heart in reference to my deep interest in the natural world and the depiction of women as a positive and active force.

I am interested that you work with the ancient but rarely used casein, a water based paint derived from milk protein. Can you tell us about how you came to work with casein and the challenges it presents in your practice?

I first saw a work in casein at the Maria Santa Novella church in Florence. The fresco on wooden board was shining brightly, forgetting the passage of the time. I had experienced numerous difficulties working in acrylics and, since oil took a very long time to dry, I began to work in casein. There are technical challenges but I am used to working in casein now. I create my own colors, and I can produce pure colors without the mixture of the additives.

Ambiguous, dreamlike, mysterious, and disturbing are all frequently used to describe your deeply enigmatic works in which intrigued viewers decipher their own meaning. However, I have read that for you, more important than the meaning of these narratives, is the form—the color and composition of your work. Can you talk to us about this? Is there a key message that you are trying to communicate?

The basis of a successful work is always good composition of color and form. Even the cleft is welcomed as beauty and comfort in my works. Of course the stories, tying up certain situations, history or experiences, become excellent foundation for the works.

Painting figures allows me to place people in the center of my world. As I am most interested in the world of women at the moment, the people appearing in my works are mostly women. When I begin a painting, I have a very clear idea about the color, shape and composition, as if I can see an imaginary painting in front of me. Unfortunately or fortunately, this image is not often found in the finished work. At some point, the painting is made on its own. It calls together the best elements of my imagination so that in a sense I act as a craftsman, using my tools to bring the painting together. Hence I am often surprised by what my paintbrush painted. Dreams, hopes, the past and what will come in the future are all contained in my works.

Balthus and Giotto are frequently observed as influencers on your work, in what ways most substantially? Which artists are you inspired by today?

All artists who make great works inspire me. I like going to exhibitions with other colleagues. I went to the Sigmar Polke exhibition at MoMA in May with a colleague Ena Swansea, and we unexpectedly learned many things. It is not important whether the artist is a sculptor, painter, graphic designer or video artist. Rather, I just enjoy discovering great art - although I can be slightly jealous for not being able to have come up with such magnificent ideas myself!

To me, inspiration does not appear directly but appears through a unique passage. I went to see the SeMA Biennale, Ghosts, Spies, and Grandmothers, in Seoul and was deeply touched. It was a wonderful and astounding exhibition. I discovered the familiar in the unfamiliar.

What's next for Rosa Loy?

There is an exhibition coming up in Marbella, Spain and another exhibition is being prepared at Michael Kohn Gallery in LA next year.—[O]