

PHOEBE COLLINGS-JAMES, VANESSA CONTE,  
VANESSA DISLER, EBECHE MUSLIMOVA & CHARLOTT WEISE

***The Yellow Wallpaper***

November 10 - December 16 2017

*The Yellow Wallpaper* brings together works by 5 female artists: Pheobe Collings-James, Vanessa Conte, Vanessa Disler, Ebecho Muslimova and Charlott Weise.

The exhibition borrows its title from Charlotte Perkins Gilman's short story "The Yellow Wallpaper".

Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1860-1935) lived her life, for the most part, on the margins of a society whose economic assumptions about and social definitions of women she vigorously repudiated. Out of this resistance to conventional values and what she later characterized as "masculinist" ideals, Gilman produced the large body of polemical writings and self-consciously feminist fiction that made her the leading feminist theoretician, speaker, and writer of her time (Nina Baym (Ed.), *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, New York and London 2003:1658).

First published in 1892, "The Yellow Wallpaper" is regarded as an important early work of American Gothic literature, illustrating attitudes in the 19th century toward women's health, both physical and mental. Presented in the first person, the short story is a collection of journal entries written by an unnamed woman, who slowly descends into madness after having been confined in one room in order to recuperate from "nervous exhaustion". With no stimulus other than the wallpaper, the pattern and designs become increasingly intriguing to the narrator unfolding into a world of its own. She soon begins to see a figure in the design, and eventually comes to believe that a woman is creeping on all fours behind the pattern. Convinced she must try to free the woman, the narrator begins to strip the paper off the wall. By the last day of summer she believes herself to be the woman living behind the pattern. When her husband returns home, he finds her creeping around the room, circling the walls and exclaiming, „I've got out at last,...". Her husband faints as she continues to circle the room, stepping over his inert body each time she passes.

The works in the exhibition *The Yellow Wallpaper* all have the female body as their subject. Furthermore, the artists of these works share a preoccupation with corporeality. From vigorous brushstrokes that bare witness the movements of the body producing them to the subject matter itself, that ranges from explicit depictions of the body to depictions of extreme actions afflicted on it. The show ironically toys with clichés about women and hysteria, whilst genuinely exploring the urgency and individual motivation of these artists to employ this subject matter and the stylistic means applied in this effort.