

Birgit Jürgenssen

Drawings and Photographs

Fergus McCaffrey, New York, April 14 – May 16, 2026

Fergus McCaffrey, New York, is pleased to present *Birgit Jürgenssen: Drawings and Photographs*, an exhibition of twenty-four works bringing together the Austrian artist's most inventive works on paper alongside her pioneering photo-based practice. Spanning more than two decades, from the Surrealist-inflected drawings of the late 1960s and 1970s through her groundbreaking experiments with photo linen and mixed-media photography in the 1980s and early 1990s. This presentation offers a rare and comprehensive view of an artist whose importance to the history of feminist art is only now receiving full recognition.

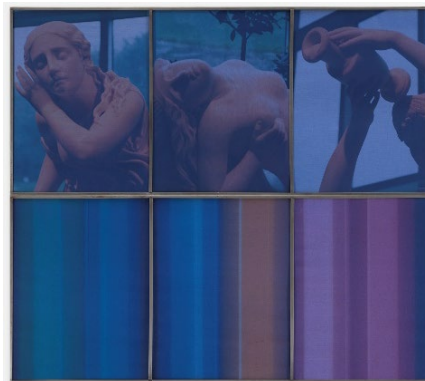


The Echo in the Mountains, 1977. Pencil, colored pencil on handmade paper. 24 5/8 x 17 3/4 inches (62.5 x 45 cm)

Birgit Jürgenssen (Vienna, 1949–2003) is one of the most significant and singular figures of the international feminist avant-garde. Educated at the University of Applied Arts, Vienna, 1968–71, she came of age in an art world dominated by the violent transgressive masculinity of the Viennese Actionists and the conservatism of the Austrian bourgeoisie. Rather than confronting this milieu directly, Jürgenssen developed an extraordinarily rich private studio practice rooted in drawing, performance, photography, and sculpture. Her work powerfully subverted gender hierarchies, social stereotyping, and the fetishization of the female body, engaging feminism, psychoanalytic theory, and Structuralism through a language of Surrealist irony, material dexterity, and autobiographical depth. Jürgenssen's first major recognition came in 1975, when Valie Export invited the artist to participate in the landmark Vienna exhibition *MAGNA Feminismus: Kunst und Kreativität*.

Between 1980 and 1997, she lectured at the University of Applied Arts and the Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna.

The exhibition opens with sixteen works on paper from 1969 to 1984, executed in pencil, colored pencil, collage, and mixed media on handmade paper. These intimate, dreamlike compositions draw on Surrealist iconography while engaging questions of gender, the body, domesticity, and representation. Works such as *Stone Henge*, 1977, *Veins - Borderlines in the Body*, 1978, *The Echo in the Mountains*, 1977 demonstrate the delicacy and conceptual ambition of her graphic practice. The monumental mixed-media work *...wenn man ein Fräulein ist / ...if you are a young lady*, 1984 stands as one of her most commanding statements on gender and social constraint.



Untitled, 1994. Color photography, fabric. 31 1/2 x 35 3/8 inches (80 x 90 cm)

Eight photographic and photo-based works from the mid-1980s to 1994 form the second section of the exhibition. Employing photo linen, multiple exposure, chemical manipulation, and overlaid fabric, her *Stoffarbeiten* (fabric works), Jürgenssen created images of extraordinary formal complexity in which the body appears and dissolves, mediated by layers of material and process. Key works include the large-scale *Cocktail*, 1986, *Stimulating the Senses*, 1987/88, and *Untitled*, 1988, in which ghostly human forms dissolve into the linen ground. A group of photcollages, *Untitled*, 1990, and *Untitled*, 1994, implement grid formations of photographs overlaid with mesh fabric that resembles stockings. Mediated by this layer of transparent material, the images are imbricated in a play of illusive opticality, their appearance shifting depending on the viewer's position.

This exhibition opens at a moment of remarkable institutional momentum around Jürgenssen's legacy. Her work is currently on view at the Centre Pompidou-Metz, *Endless Sunday*, through February 2, 2027 and at Tate Modern, London, *Quarters*, from March 2026. Her work entered the collection of MoMA, New York, and was featured in the 2022 Venice Biennale, curated by Cecilia Alemani. A major two-person exhibition curated by Maurizio Cattelan and Marta Papini, *Lonely Are All Bridges: Birgit Jürgenssen and Cinzia Ruggeri*, was presented at Fondazione ICA Milan in early 2025. An exhibition of her work at Muzeum Susch is scheduled to open on December 12, 2026. Jürgenssen's work is held in the permanent collections of MoMA, New York; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Tate, London; and MAK, Vienna.