

Victoria Colmegna
Love Needs Care
12.03–16.04.2022

Oskar Weiss and Oliver Falk are pleased to announce *Love Needs Care*, the first solo exhibition of Victoria Colmegna at the gallery.

The ranch is the Spahn Ranch, the place lodging Charles Manson's cell, but photographed as if it were the guest cabin in a country house near Buenos Aires. The mania with places and objects floating in her memory leads Victoria Colmegna to translate personal emotions and recollections into journalese reconstruction, not of historical facts, but of states of terror and fugue. It is as if all the photos were from a scratchbook, a diary (as in Frida Kahlo's paintings) that lights up to the touch. Could it be felt on the fabric, what Manson's followers felt when they escalated degrees of panic and euphoria? Is it possible to experience someone else's schizophrenia?

In her idea of fashion, each statement corresponds to an organ and a garment. (There is a connection between organs and latitudes, as in Chinese medicine.) Marshall McLuhan could have been a medical alchemist as well: healing is unblocking a path, he would have said. The healthy state is like driving on a drizzly road, listening to the radio: pain moves freely, but alleviated. Hot states of attention are like a river that overflows, covering what is nearby. Meridians got estrangulated. The mind is captured by attentional relief. *I feel the drug going up*, Lee Lozano nearly said about her investigations into drug use. *But if my work is to get high, what hits me is my work.*

Love needs care was the slogan of a clinical investigation conducted by Dr David E Smith. ("I'd spend the day in the lab, injecting white rats with LSD, mescaline, and amphetamines," recalls Smith. "Then I'd walk home through the Haight and see kids who were taking those same drugs." He was the founder of Height Ashbury Clinic, a free hospital for hippies with bad trips, founded in 1967.) „Organs are also lines of advance," said Deleuze and Guattari a few years later. Victoria Colmegna's interest in health and wellness institutions dates back a long time.

Charles Manson had a waistcoat, which has been described as his ceremonial vest. It was a coat of many colors, made up from embroidery depicting scenes from the life, travels and adventures of the Family. Across the shoulders were flowers on vines, and it included scenes from the Black Bus, the Ranch and the desert. It was begun in 1967 by Mary Brunner and Lynette Fromme, and featured embroidery work by all female members of the group. In addition to the detailed embroidery the vest also had tassels made up from locks of hair from the women members of the Family (reputedly from during the Tate-LaBianca trial when the women shaved their heads).

The Mansonite women were fashion guardians, with fashion a matter of speech disorders. (Fashion doesn't take place in statements, but fragments of discourse.) Fromme and her pals scavenged the restaurant bins around L.A. for discarded food. A normal diner would throw out so much fresh food, they'd say you could produce an "American salad" out of the garbage.

Colmegna picks photos of the Manson women, then she looks for the specific fabrics they happened to wear. If she finds the right fabrics, she applies them in the painting. The rest (clothes she can't find) she paints them. Post Picabian obsession meets pop political. True crime genre paintings, mass produced 90s memories.

But in the method of these paintings there is also a dilemma: Are artists allowed to tell stories and impose trends the way journalists and film directors do?

"At first Lyn would only take the pickings from the top of the bins, but soon, as she saw the promise of buried treasures, she dived in. There were tomatoes between her toes, apples, pears, cucumbers, cheese, eggs — a stew of perishables all over her. 'Wow,' she



thought. 'It's like being in a giant salad... You could feed the world, you really could, with America's garbage.'" — *Squeaky: The Life and Times of Lynette Alice Fromme* by Jess Bravin quoted by H. Allegra Lansing, "You Could Feed The World On America's Garbage!"

This wannabe anthological show is completed by a hedonist set of portraits of the coast of Uruguay inspired by Picabian paintings dispersed in the brothels of occupied North Africa. The theme of it girls reappears in *AutreChienne* and *Decadance*, derived from fan fiction art of the court of Marie Antoinette.

"I was reading this novel, *Girls*, where the author takes the point of view of one of the girls who doesn't participate in the assassinations, just falls in love in the ranch with one of the girls so its the pov of a peripheral character. The clothes, the surroundings, and the mood... she sees everything, like a fictional journalist doing research. Imagining what they would be wearing..." *Victoria Colmegna*

Claudio Iglesias & Victoria Colmegna

This exhibition and an upcoming publication have been curated by Fredi Fischli and Niels Olsen.

