

The Museum of Modern Art

For Immediate Release
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PROJECTS: BERNHARD AND ANNA BLUME

May 13 - June 20, 1989

A photographic installation by Cologne-based artists Bernhard and Anna Blume, part of PROJECTS, a series of exhibitions devoted to contemporary art, opens at The Museum of Modern Art on May 13, 1989. Organized by Lisa Kurzner, The Newhall Fellow in the Department of Photography, the exhibition, titled Mahlzeit (from the series Trautes Heim), purports to document odd occurrences in the lives of a 1950s petit-bourgeois couple.

The installation, like others in the Trautes Heim series, features the artists as the protagonists in sequences of staged photographs depicting claustrophobic domestic settings. Each sequence records nightmarish encounters with inanimate objects--such as potatoes and kitchen utensils--which assume a life of their own. Throughout the installation, activity is directed by "food" that glows, floats, and metamorphoses into mysterious geometric objects.

Küchenkoller, the first sequence in the installation, can be translated as both "kitchen frenzy" and "kitchen corset," alluding to the woman's traditional role in the kitchen. Mahlzeit, the second sequence, is a mealtime greeting that would be heard in a working-class environment; it also calls to mind hearth and home. Through such domestic scenes, the artists reveal the spiritual chaos beneath the stringent order of postwar German society. In their work, the comic, the prosaic, and the mysterious merge to create a highly-charged atmosphere.

The Blumes have collaborated since 1980 on conceiving, staging, and photographing themselves in what they call Photo Actions or Photo Theater. Their work embraces a theatrical experience which emerged from European conceptual and

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performance art of the past two decades. The artists combine two photographic techniques indicative of the passing of time: the sequential format and the blurred image. Although the photographs are sequentially installed, the narrative is scrambled; the images do not unfold in a linear fashion. Instead, focus, distance, and viewing angles are juggled to provoke a sense of vertigo.

Bernhard and Anna Blume were both born in 1937 in Nordheim Westphalia, West Germany. In the 1960s, they studied at the Düsseldorf Art Academy when Josef Beuys was in residence there. Bernhard Blume also studied philosophy at the University of Cologne from 1967 to 1971. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, he was involved with Fluxus and other conceptual art movements. Anna Blume received early training in crafts and has taught art since 1964. For the last twenty years, photography has played a major role in their work. This PROJECTS installation is their first solo exhibition in the United States. The Blumes live and work in Cologne and teach at the Hamburg Art Academy.

On view through June 20, PROJECTS: BERNHARD AND ANNA BLUME is supported by a grant from the Institute for Foreign Cultural Relations, Stuttgart. The series is made possible by generous grants from the Lannan Foundation and J.P. Morgan & Co. Incorporated. The next PROJECTS exhibition, featuring an architectural installation by Elizabeth Diller and Ricardo Scofidio, will be on view from July 1 to August 15, 1989.

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For more information or photographic materials, contact the Department of Public Information, 212/708-9750.