

PARIS

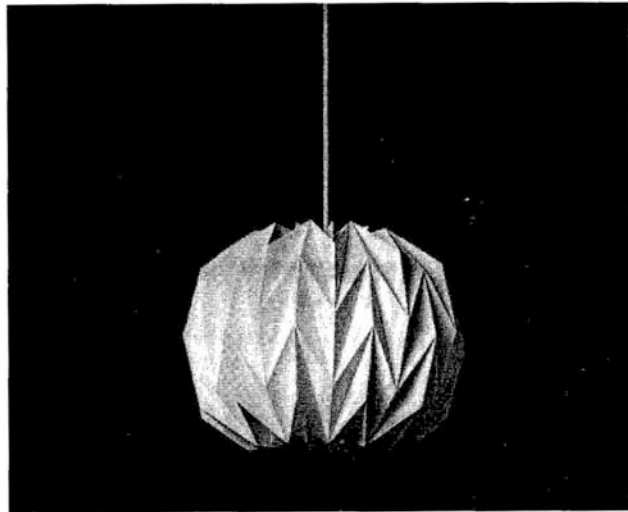
PIA RÖNICKE

GB AGENCY

There is something documentary-like about Pia Rönicke's first solo exhibition in Paris. Except this is not a film, a fact all the more surprising when you consider that this thirty-year-old artist became known for her animated videos—playful, subtly critical collages of photographs, music, architectural plans, drawings, and advertising images, some of which have just been released on video. At a time when artists' names function as logos in this industry that contemporary art is becoming, we should admire the daring of an artist who does not hesitate to change her practice completely, to abandon a personal aesthetic that has only just been "branded" in order to explore new forms of expression.

And so this documentary-like exhibition. In it we see archival images, books on top of tables, and old newspaper articles through which we can retrace the true and unfortunate history of Le Klint, a Danish designer who created lamps of folded paper from the '40s through the '60s but was dispossessed of her work and even her identity: When at eighteen she gave her father the right to use her name in creating a family design business and opening a chain of Le Klint boutiques, she did not realize that she had just privatized her name—in short, conceded it forever to the logic of capital. Hence the title of the exhibition, "Without a Name," which Rönicke devotes to this forgotten woman, a marginalized figure whose lighting fixtures nevertheless adorn Copenhagen's Museum of Applied Arts, as we can see in one of the color photographs taken by the artist. This dispossession is all the more ironic since Le Klint did not hesitate to publish the instructions for making her hanging lamps, Nordic cousins of Noguchi's famous Akari line.

"We can try to be critical, to give something to the viewer, to raise some questions or doubts, but I don't think we can claim our work to be political," Rönicke said in a recent interview. "But the framework of our work might have a potential of becoming political, depending on how it is put into use." Beyond the fate of an individual, her exhibition also subtly tells the story of a certain history of intellectual property from the '60s to the present



Pia Rönicke, *Film Snow—Without a Name*, 2004, still from a two-channel video installation.

without mentioning it explicitly—from the utopia of "Do It Yourself" to the hegemony of copyright.

This is a story of alienation told through Le Klint's own words. On the ground floor, extracts from her book *Erindringstræde* (Memory Threads), published in Denmark in 1998, were projected on the wall. In the basement of the gallery, Rönicke relays fragments of her conversation with the Danish designer—often innocuous words that nevertheless often evoke disappearance or madness: "Paper is perishable"; "These shades have no name." Why this montage, why these distorted forms, and why these lamps made of folded paper floating in the exhibition space, fashioned by Rönicke herself according to Le Klint's formula? Because they soften, poeticize, and undermine the administrative and austere forms of an exhibition that is "documentary" in nature. Because here we find all the critical subtlety of Rönicke's first video collages and her delicate way of fitting together our private lives and our collective history.

—Jean-Max Colard

Translated from French by Jeanine Herman.