

The Museum of Modern Art

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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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