



Stefanie Mayer, *Demonstrators*, 2001, installation view

Demonstration

**Stefanie Mayer at
Galerie Simon Spiekermann, Düsseldorf**

**by Anne Rodler
translated by Corinna Ghaznavi**

They are alienatingly long and stiltlike, looming far above human dimensions in a scurrilous manner. Stefanie Mayer's *Demonstrators* do not possess torsos or arms. Their legs tower high to merge with shoulders and thin, perforated necks, balancing precariously between steadfastness and fragility. Will these strange beings topple?

Their seeming frailty and the raw surfaces of their plaster are reminiscent of Giacometti's work, especially his *Woman on the Wagon* in the Duisburg Lehmbruck museum. On his small wooden wagon is an elegant, unnaturally thin female figure holding herself upright, knees bent, legs together—what will happen when the wagon is set

in motion? Mayer takes this idea one step further; the moment of motion and gesticulation is present in the installation of demonstrators, despite their missing arms. They seem to interact among themselves, to approach one another and form two groups within their screened enclosure. The viewer, circling around the installation, oscillates between the two groups of puzzling figures, which represent the demonstrators and the police.

A sparing use of clothing differentiates the two groups. The police wear only boots, which are made of shaggy Flakati material in dark green or black that demonstrate their groundedness, steadfastness, persistence, and possibly also unyieldingness.

The demonstrators wear pullovers that have been cut apart and reassembled, underlining their group affiliation. Next to their readiness to fight for an idea, they appear to be in agitated discussion and sending signals of delimitation.

Questions arise at this organization of the figures. To which group do you belong? Viewers ask themselves not only what has led to the strange appearance of demonstrators and police, but also what experiences have led to this event. "Each of us has our own unique story, our own experiences that shape us," Mayer explains. Every person has deficits and problems, carrying unresolved conflicts within, a state expressed by the mysteriously reduced, partially amorphous forms created by the artist.

Mayer shows that two apparently polarized groups, like demonstrators and police, are actually next to one another. "Sometimes people fall into a certain group involuntarily," the artist points out. Polarization, group membership, and the dissolving of political boundaries are the themes she has addressed. Her *Demonstrators* is an installation that implies tremendous activity, that polarizes and suggests movement, not only in the form of group associations and communications, but also in the heads of viewers.

Stefanie Mayer lives in Essen, Germany. She studied at the Hamburg Fashion School and decided after a short but intensive education with Kiki Smith, the resident for fine arts, to pursue art. She achieves a surprisingly high impact with minimal, skillfully applied materials.