

Tracey Emin

(London, 1963)

Profane and brazen, Tracy Emin's art is inseparable from its author, revealing the artist's most private passions, weaknesses, turmoils, and joys. However, while it is true that Emin manages to utilize her daily reality as material to share with the public, her act is not a vain, exhibitionistic gesture. The desperate urgency that animates her work relates Emin to an entire genealogy of artists in the modern era who have made art a tool of pitiless psychological introspection. In *Take what the fuck you like*, 2001, Emin uses letters, sewn or made from pieces of cutout fabric, following a methodology that cites the aesthetic of anonymous messages through the choice of typically feminine techniques. Although the subject of the challenge put forth by the phrase is not explicated, the work, uniting precarious materials and approximate forms, seems to embody a weak attempt at self-defense, perhaps addressed at the viewers themselves by an adolescent alter ego of the artist.

Using herself as a point of departure, including and above all her physical self, Emin often turns her attention to the female body. Exposed, erotic, but also fragmented, broken down, and thus abject, the body is a field of investigation where private life and the memory of art are interwoven. In *Dolly*, 2002, a frenetic embroidery delineates a head in an Expressionist style connected to a body that seems to exist only to expose itself to the eyes of others. Irreverent, the body is placed in a position that reveals the genitals, which Emin has hidden and thus emphasized, substituting them with an intensely pink and obviously blooming flower. (MB)