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PRESS RELEASE

exhibition: Anna and Bernhard Blume: Scenes from a Photo-Novel
dates: 3 June – 22 July 2016

Peter Freeman, Inc. is pleased to present *Anna and Bernhard Blume: Scenes from a Photo-Novel*, the first exhibition in New York dedicated to the couple's work since their exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in 1989.

For over 30 years, until Bernhard's death in 2011, the Blumes collaborated on an ongoing photographic project, a philosophical critique of bourgeois life, for which they staged scenes of German middle-class domesticity gone mad, portraying themselves as the central characters. The situations, at once surreal and familiar, are presented in sequences and arrangements of prints—that the artists sometimes reconfigured from installation to installation in ways that subtly alter the meaning—and are marked by a wry, ironic humor. Most of the works on view were made in the 1980s but feel relevant today, in their prescient pairing of photography and performance, a coupling that since has become the core of many artists' investigations into identity.

In *Küchenkoller* (1985), Anna Blume—as a stereotypical housewife—is at the center of a kitchen out of control. Potatoes whirl around in the air, as if possessed. Furniture is upended. The title can be translated as either “kitchen corset” or “kitchen frenzy” (a play on the phenomenon of “prison frenzy” in which the incarcerated lose their minds), and the series articulates a central dichotomy within the Blumes' body of work: the repression and repetition of traditional daily rituals, versus the fantasy of subverting and breaking free of that conformity. *Mahlzeit* [Meal Time] (1985-86) also plays with the quotidian but weighs it with—and transforms it through—religion, another recurring motif in the Blumes' investigation into the tropes of typical family life. “Mahlzeit”—a German greeting often said at the opening of a meal—is spelled out with french fries in a photograph that comes between a shot of the couple apparently having been force-fed (that image conjures the act of taking communion) and one of Bernhard graphically rejecting the meal. Catharsis through chaos is presented as one possible way out of domestic imprisonment.

Natural sites—in particular forests—are also frequent settings for the Blumes' work. *Metaphysik ist Mönnersache* [Metaphysics is Men's Work] (1991) and *Hänsel und Gretel* (1990-91) are documentations of elaborately staged situations, set among trees. The images are disarmingly precise, convincing representations of physical impossibilities. Summoning the camera's role as a truthful witness to reality is among the reasons that the Blumes—who both trained as painters—chose photography for their project, in order to smuggle the fantastic into the realm of the plausible.

Anna Blume was born 1937 in Bork, North-Rhine/Westfalia, Germany and lives and works in Cologne; Bernhard Blume was born 1937 in Dortmund, Germany, and died 2011 in Cologne. They studied together at the Staatlichen Kunstakademie Düsseldorf in the 1960s, but didn't exhibit their joint work until 1977, at documenta VI (1977). Most recently their work was featured in a solo exhibition at the Pompidou. Other venues that have presented exhibitions dedicated to their work include Künstlerhaus, Stuttgart (1984), Kunsthalle Basel (1987), Museum of Modern Art, New York (1989), Wiener Secession, Vienna (1993), Milwaukee Art Museum (1996; exhibition travelled to Joslyn Art Museum, Nebraska and Busch-Reisinger Museum and Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University), among many others. In 2000 they were awarded the prestigious Berliner Kunstpreis.

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