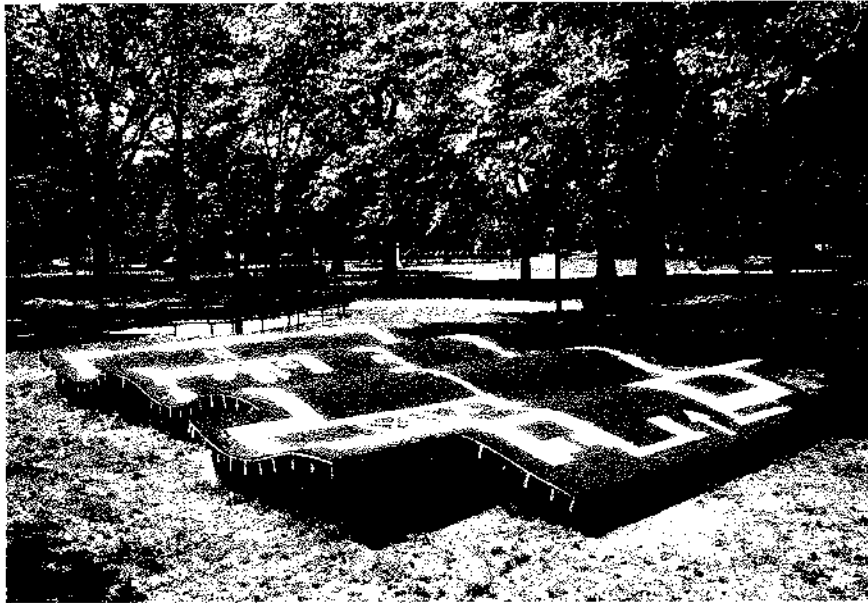


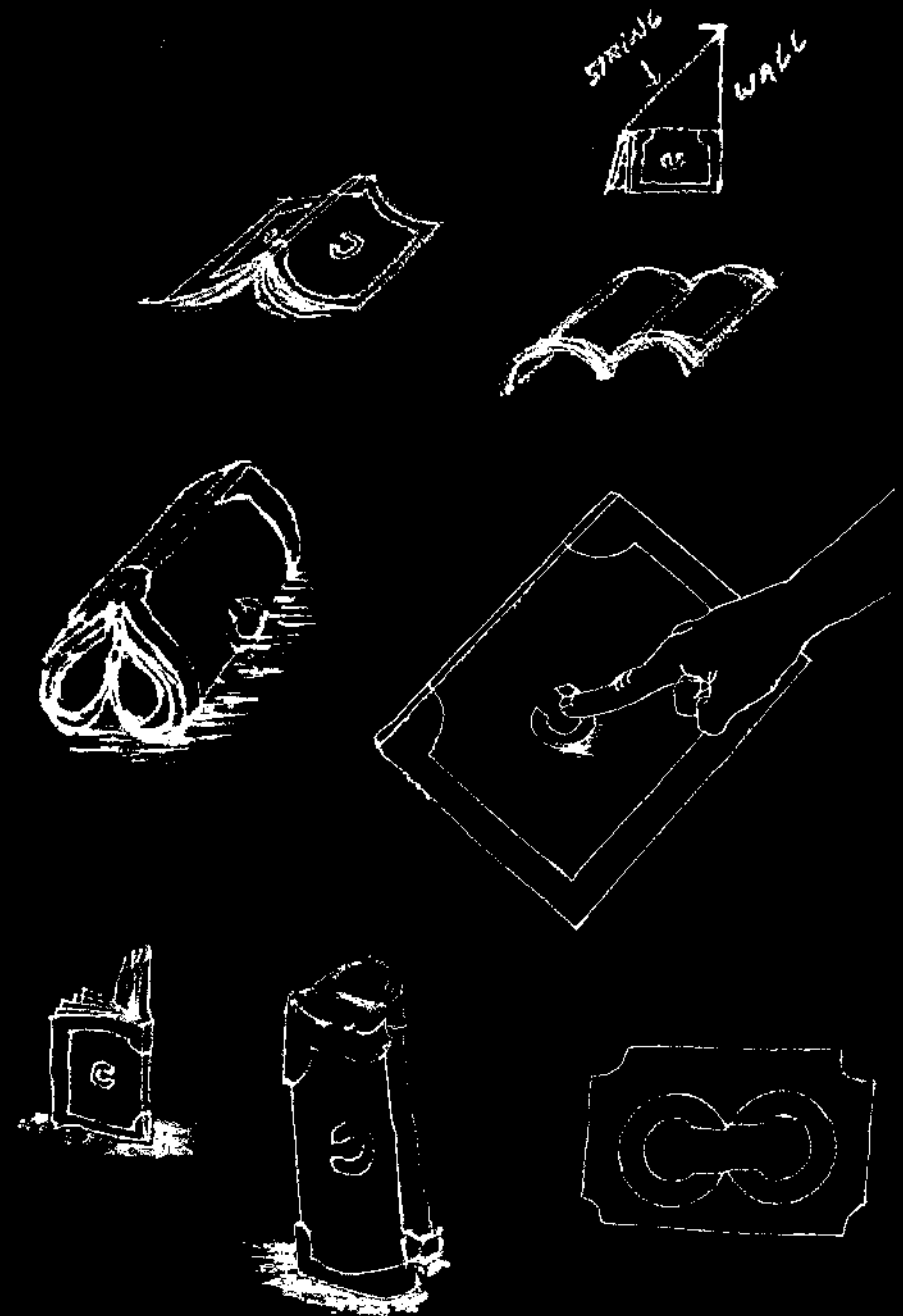
Maria Elena González
Inversion – out of the closet

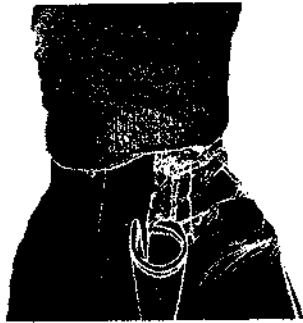
Maria Elena González has designed the cover of this issue of *Frauen-KunstWissenschaft* as an artist's edition. The work focuses on the issue of *Tomboys*; it turns it inside out, physically, literally and assertively. The printed paper represents the surface structure of Eternit, currently the artist's favourite construction material.¹ Eternit is a mixture of tiny paper fibres, cement, water and air, which after drying becomes as hard and impermeable as stone. On the cover, though, the material is again represented in the form of paper. The two C-shaped signs of the relief print, facing each other with their open sides, are the literal representation of the inversion. On the front cover, the C is printed mirror-inverted. If the issue is turned around its vertical axis, the signs appear similar, but not uniform. Turned around its horizontal axis, the work comments on queer theory by means of reflection and inversion.



1 Maria Elena González,
„Magic Carpet/Home“ (1999)

2 Maria Elena González, →
Edition Nr. 21, instructions for use





3 Maria Elena González, „Sitting I“ (2001)

Within the enclosing frame, the two characters are designating a particular space; they are markings within a blueprint and stand as a symbol for *closet*, an integral part of the floor plans of American homes. On the one hand, this refers to the colloquial meaning of closet as a place of hiding; on the other hand, it hints at the expression *to be in/to be out of the closet*, and thus at the overt and covert sanctions that bear upon queer lives. Although in Western societies queerness is not legally prosecuted, by shifting discussion of the taboo to the level of civil rights implies that this is a matter only of the individual subject, and therefore irrelevant to the definition of public rights. By placing the closet signs on the cover of this edition of *FrauenKunstWissenschaft* and making them stand out physically from a homogeneous surface, the artist brings queerness back to visibility.

Such blurred relations between the so-called public and the private sphere are the focus of many of the artworks by Maria Elena González. One of her most recent monumental sculptures, *Magic Carpet/Home* (1999) is designed as a flying carpet. In 1999, the artist placed one of the first carpets in a park near Red Hook Housing, a public block for low-income residents in Brooklyn, New York (fig. 1). An undulating wooden ramp is covered with a black rubber surface, normally



4 Maria Elena González, „Packing I“ (2001)

used for children's playground facing. On this surface, Maria Elena González has copied with white road-marking paint the blueprint of a four-room unit in Red Hook Housing, on a 1:1 scale.² *Magic Carpet/Home* reveals the mechanics of ghettoization by indicating how this publicly subsidized architecture serves to hide unsuccessful social groups; the work brings the architecture of hiding back to the public space.

Majority groups define the democratic public space, which in addition is almost thoroughly ruled by interests of the private sector (with the support of public authorities). These structures are the focus of Maria Elena Gonzalez' works inside this issue (fig. 2-4). Following the artist's instructions, the edition/issue may be turned either into a permanent or temporary installation. This procedure is thoroughly ambivalent. It makes it possible to participate in the creation of the artwork; moreover, it ironizes the selective process of choosing the suitable and of leaving other matters aside. Two digitally processed photographs (fig. 3-4) may even be purchased as art editions. They are, therefore, closer to becoming exclusive artworks. As we know, those works are usually intended for educated connoisseurs and, paradoxically, often reach a broader public than participatorically/serially produced artistic works offered at low cost. With these two photographic works,

Maria Elena González carefully negotiates the difficulties and possibilities of an artistic analysis of the public sphere. The pictures show how to place our edition, like a fake phallus, between the legs or how to *pack* it into the pants as drag kings might do. Whoever wants to make complex reflections on queer coding; do as you please. But just do it!

Susann Wintsch
 Translation by Ursula Robrer

- 1 Maria Elena González has been working as an artist in residence at the Eternit plant in Payerne, Switzerland.
- 2 The unit is shown unfurnished: permanent installations like a bath tub, a stove and a toilet are outlined; several closets are marked with the character C. Living room and bed-room (LR, BR), on the other hand, are left undefined. Together

with the low ramp, the low-cost, common and traffic-proof materials are intended to secure accessibility and usability of the installation. *Magic Carpet/Home* in the neglected park in Red Hook Housing was used by teens and kids as a meeting point and playground during its installation.

Maria Elena González

Maria Elena González* has been investigating the possibilities of formal sculpture for over a decade. Her work accesses classical elements of sculpture while reworking what these elements represent complicating our interaction with form to evaluate identity, emotion, history and the nature of metaphor.

González has been awarded grants by The Penny McCall Foundation (2001), Creative Capital (1999 & 2001), The Joan Mitchell Foundation (1998), The Pollock-Krasner Foundation (1991 & 1998), The Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation (1997), Anonymous Was A Woman (1997) and The CINTAS Foundation (1989 & 1994). She has also had recent solo exhibitions at The Project Gallery, NYC, The Ludwig Foundation of Cuba, Manhattan's El Museo del Barrio, Brooklyn's Rotunda Gallery and HailWalls in Buffalo. She presented public art projects with New York City's The Public Art Fund and at Pittsburgh's Three Rivers Arts Festival. Recently she was invited to exhibit at Sonsbeek 9 in Arnhem, Holland, The Queens Museum of Art's *Crossing the Line*, and P.S. 1's *Greater New York*. The Bronx Museum invited González to present her work in their Projects room for 2002. Her Creative Capital project *Magic Carpet/Home* will be presented in Los Angeles and Baltimore in 2002-2003.

Other upcoming exhibitions include, Oct. 6th, 2002 Solo show at The Project, NYC; Nov. 1st – Dec. 14th, 2002 Solo traveling show, DiverseWorks, Houston Texas; March 8 – April 19th, 2003, Art Museum University of Memphis, Tennessee; May-June 2003 Art in General, NYC.



„Sitting I“ (2002)

Digital Fine Art Print & Pencil on Arches Hot Press, b/w, paper size 21,5 x 28 cm; image size 10 x 9,5 cm
 Edition: 10
 Price: € 325 (not including shipping)



„Packing I“ (2002)

Digital Fine Art Print & Pencil on Arches Hot Press, b/w, paper size 21,5 x 28 cm; image size 10 x 9,5 cm
 Edition: 10
 Price: € 325 (not including shipping)

The prints (please specify your selection) can be purchased under www.frauenkunstwissenschaft.de

* Born in Havana, Cuba, 1957, lives and works in Brooklyn, New York and Basel, Switzerland.