Doing What You Want
Marie-Louise Ekman accompanied by Sister Corita Kent, Mladen Stilinovic and Martha Wilson

The exhibition Doing What You Want focuses mainly on Marie-Louise Ekman (born in Stockholm in 1944), leading artist in the group around the magazine Puss in the 1960s, filmmaker, professor at the Royal Institute of Art and, at present, director of Dramaten. In contrast to many of her contemporary male artist colleagues in Sweden, it wasn’t until the 1990s that Ekman achieved wider notice; however, this did not hinder her from persisting with art, film and theatre. With the present exhibition, her work will be presented within an international perspective for the first time. Everyday surrealism, pop culture, cross-dressing and political satire occupied other artists during the same period, but in other places and in different contexts.

Marie-Louise Ekman has a very important position within Swedish art today, but her art has seldom been exhibited along with that of non-Swedish artists who share kindred interests. Doing What You Want offers a different view of Ekman’s art by showing it together with other non-conformist artists whose interests and ways of working are closely related to hers. The exhibition focuses on which often slides over into the absurd. She was one of the first artists in Sweden to respond to the popular culture of ‘the people’s home’, which she did from both a young woman’s perspective and from a child’s. Labels on jars, comics, satirical political drawings and fashion accessories are all included in her special mix of naivism and pop art combined with surrealistic elements. She elevates the colours—especially pink—and styles of a girl’s room to an aesthetic and makes tinkering with things into a method. Her carefully constructed paintings show no brushstrokes. In several series of paintings from the 1970s and 80s, she makes famous works by male painters such as Sandro Botticelli, Diego Velazquez, Pablo Picasso, Piet Mondrian and Olle Baertling into her own by re-shaping them and placing them into new contexts. Ekman’s repertoire encompasses painting, graphics, textile appliqués, objects, films, TV series and, later, also playwriting and theatre directing.

The fundamental metaphor in Ekman’s art is theatre—role-play, masks, cross-dressing, set design, etc. In 1969 she played herself in Öyvind Fahlstörm’s film Du gamla du fria (Provocation) and in 1976 she played herself once again in her own debut as a filmmaker, Hallo baby, for which she wrote the script and which Johan Bergenstråhle directed. Ekman’s films, TV series and theatre plays deviate from classical genres and approaches and they generally lack linear dramaturgy; her doll house-like space is cramped and the takes can be very long. She reveals constructions and cultivates excesses and artificiality. Not least, her shifts in language and its meaning place the viewer in a condition of stimulating insecurity. In the film Stilleben (Still Life) (1985) ordinary language collapses and the actors begin talking a lively pretend-language, as if nothing has happened. Even in her detailed painting, the composition often involves a scene with characters, be they people or objects, placed in front, highly visible. Her images tend to be narrative but seldom with a ‘normal’ logic; instead something unexpected happens, something remarkable, which in Ekman’s hands seems wholly comprehensible, even self-evident.

As a professor at the Royal Institute of Art in Stockholm in the 1980s—the first female
Ekman was not only an influential teacher but also started the first video department in a Nordic art school. Ekman herself was sent down from Östermalm’s Municipal Girls School and she has never finished any formal education. One important aspect of her art is how art comes about, how it is presented and spread. The 1960s handmade teddy books, handbags and other utilitarian objects were sold at low prices at galleries and in other contexts. Working with silkscreen and oil prints made it possible to multiply an image and sell it cheaply. If her feature films and gallery exhibitions primarily reached a small but enthusiastic public, then her TV series, for example Målarskolan (The Painting School) (1990), were seen by many more. One indication of Ekman’s going her own way is that, during her first twenty years as an artist, she was accepted neither by the modernist establishment, the women’s movement nor the political art scene. She claims that ‘artist’ is the only category she can place herself in.

Sister Corita Kent (1918–1986) was a ‘rebellious modern nun’, who became known as a graphic artist and charismatic art teacher at the Immaculate Heart College in Los Angeles. In the 1950s Sister Corita taught herself silkscreen printing. However, it is primarily her daring visual style of the 1960s, which like Ekman’s was inspired by commercial culture and purveying a spiritual, poetic and social message, that made her famous as an artist. In her prints Sister Corita used texts by writers such as Langston Hughes and Gertrude Stein, the Beatles and the radical Catholic priest and peace activist Daniel Berrigan; she also used texts taken from advertising, street signs, weekly magazines, psychedelic concert posters and the Bhagavadgita. She cut and pasted, creating new contexts for linguistic and visual expressions, and she was especially interested in typography. Words became increasingly important in her rich print production of the 1960s—in 1965 she made no less than 35 images, 100 copies of each—and, in the end, the words themselves became the image. In her prints she raised her voice against poverty, racism and the Vietnam War. Sister Corita ensured that her prints were sold at low prices and unnumbered editions at galleries and markets, in churches and town halls. Her prints could even be sold from cars driving around the town.

Born as Frances Elizabeth Kent in Fort Dodge, Iowa in 1918, she became a nun in 1938 and gradually a strong voice for the 1960s more modern variant of Catholicism. Together with her sisters at the Immaculate Heart of Mary Community, Corita endeavoured to reduce the distance between the religious and the worldly by relating directly to people’s lives and experiences. For instance, the nuns wore ordinary clothing and some of them even permed their hair. They were influenced by art in various ways and transformed, for example, the religious celebration of Mary’s Day, into a playful happening. In her teaching, Sister Corita encouraged her students to pretend they were microscopes and she sent them into town to study in detail for two hours what was happening in and around a car workshop. Los Angeles’ street culture remained an important source of inspiration in Sister Corita’s own work.

Her vitality and her anti-authoritarian attitudes prompted notice—in articles about and art projects by Sister Corita in everything from The New York Times and The Washington Post to Harper’s Bazaar and Look magazine. Her courses and lectures attracted a large attendance and her eclectic but easily recognizable style gave rise to the term ‘nun art’. In many ways her art functioned as a social process. However, she met with opposition from the bishops of Los Angeles and other church leaders. After leaving her order in 1968 she began to carry out large commissions, for example computer screen panels and advertising campaigns. Sister Corita is represented in the present exhibition by a selection of prints from the 1960s and 70s.

Mladen Stilinovic (born in Belgrade 1947) works in Zagreb where since the late 1960s he has made a significant mark with his poetry, experimental films and visual arts. Like Ekman, Stilinovic is self-taught and has embraced language as part of an ideological system that it produces at the same time. Sometimes this results in collages and hand-made books, sometimes in paintings and photographs that also bear traces of imprints of hands. Ridiculing the former Yugoslavia’s nationalistic and political symbols, Stilinovic applies both humour and subversion, for example, in using pink
the socialist state of Yugoslavia where all citizens were provided with employment. During the last decade, Stilinovic's pieces on work have often been taken up in discussions on the post-Fordist way of organizing work within neoliberalism, in which self-motivation and erased boundaries between work and leisure are recurring themes. Stilinovic's piece An artist who cannot speak English is no artist originated from a lecture the artist held in the Serbo-Croatian language in 1979 at de Appel in Amsterdam. It was one of the first times he had exhibited abroad and already the art world had an unofficial language which both included and excluded people depending on their background and other circumstances. A selection of Stilinovic's work from the 1970s and 80s is shown in Doing What You Want.

Like many other artists within the so-called neo avant-garde, Stilinovic's work was tolerated by the authorities but he did not enjoy the kind of support—e.g. free studios and commissions—received by artists who were approved by the government. In order to have access to film equipment and films, the student film club Pan 69 was started, enabling Stilinovic to make ten film experiments between 1970 and 1975. Like many of his colleagues, he arranged exhibitions in his flat, and for a decade he ran a non-commercial gallery for non-official art—the Extended Media Gallery (PM Gallery). He has also worked with performative actions in public space, for example as a member of the Group of Six Artists. Between 1975 and 1979, the group produced, presented and distributed art in public squares, in parks and on riverbanks in places such as Venice, Zagreb and Belgrad. They coined the term 'exhibition-actions' to describe their extroverted method of making their work public. Public space in turn has clearly influenced Stilinovic's work—for instance, what shop window signs say and how they are made.

The role of the artist and the function of a work of art are recurring themes in Stilinovic's oeuvre, for instance in the well-known photographic piece Artist at Work (for Nesa Paripovic) from 1978 which shows the artist at sleep in a bed in broad daylight. His many micro-strategies relate in many different ways to the question of how one manipulates what one is manipulated by. When the above-mentioned piece was created, work was a central part of the official rhetoric in movement since the early 1970s. Wilson herself often performs in her work, for example in A Portfolio of Models (1974) in which she 'dresses up' in the different female roles offered and approved by society at that time and photographs herself in a studio. Using clothes, makeup, facial expressions and bodily poses she performs as a 'housewife', a 'goddess' and a 'working woman' among other roles, but none suited her. She draws the conclusion that she can objectify her own body, her own self and in so doing create an arena where she can test all possible roles and positions. What remains is the artist, and Wilson states that 'the artist operates in the vacuum which is left when all other values are rejected.' In strong contrast to the invisibility that she experienced amongst male colleagues in Halifax and New York, in her work she makes herself and the various forms of femininity attributed to her both visible and possible to question.

When the legendary critic and curator Lucy Lippard invited Wilson to the wholly female exhibition '7,500' in Valencia, California in 1973, she described Wilson's and the other artists' work as 'expanding...
Wilson likes to use parody and the burlesque to stretch the boundaries of identity. This became clear in her conceptual punk bank Disband (1978–82), consisting of five female artists (which included Barbara Kruger as a guest artist) and in her personifications of politicians’ wives such as Nancy Reagan and Barbara Bush. Parody flourished also in the Guerilla Girls, of which she was a seminal member. With humour, donning an artificial fur, by spotlighting facts about the extreme inequalities in museums and magazines, and publishing these facts on posters and in advertisements, the Guerilla Girls helped to raise consciousness of the gendered state of the arts. They claimed, for instance, that amongst the advantages of being a woman and an artist were that ‘you work without demands for success’; ‘you don’t have to participate in the same exhibitions as men’; ‘you get to experience how your ideas live on in other people’s work’ and ‘you don’t have to suffer through the embarrassment of being called a ‘genius’.’

Many of Wilson’s photo-based works anticipated what Cindy Sherman would do—and popularize—later on. As an artist and organizer Wilson has been important for New York’s art scene for several decades. As founder of the non-commercial New York gallery Franklin Furnace, Wilson promoted artists’ publications and various kinds of time-based art, especially performance. Through her work with Franklin Furnace she also landed in the middle of the so-called ‘culture wars’, when the conservative senator Jesse Helms and others attacked art they considered pornographic and otherwise obscene. Their main target was Robert Mapplethorpe but many others were included. Half of the artists who were pinpointed by the conservatives, for example Karen Finley and Annie Sprinkle, had worked with Franklin Furnace, which was exposed to several inspections by the authorities. Exhibited in Doing What You Want is a number of Wilson’s identity-related and performance-based works from the 1970s and 80s.

The exhibition will be introduced by Tensta konsthall staff at 14.00 every Thursday and Saturday.

The exhibition has been produced in cooperation with Henie Onstad Kunstsenter in Oslo, where it will be shown during the spring of 2013. A catalogue with texts by among others Silvia Eiblmayr, Katarina Wadstein Macleod and Kalliopi Minioudaki will be published by Sternberg Press in conjunction with the opening in Oslo. Thanks to Pontus Bonnier, Fredrik Wachtmeister and all other lenders to this exhibition who want to remain anonymous, and to Angelica Knäpper.
Martha Wilson  
1–6

2. Posturing: Male Impersonater (Butch), 1972/2008, color photograph and text, 51×36
4. My Authentic Self, 1974/2008, black and white photographs and text, 85×58
5. Captivating a Man, 1972/2008, color photograph and text, 51×36

Marie-Louise Ekman  
7–36

7. Life and death, 1973, oil on canvas, 124×137
8. Striptease, 1973, oil on canvas, 63×90
10. A good night apparatus, 1984, gouache

26. A Salvador Dali man, a Picasso lady, a baby monument and an Olle Baertling painting, 1980, gouache on silk, 52x62
27. A Salvador Dali man, Donald Duck and an Olle Baertling painting, 1980, gouache on silk, 42x50
28. A Dali monument, a Picasso monument and an Olle Baertling painting, 1980, gouache on silk, 57x79
29. Olle Baertling with Picasso ladies, 1980, gouache on silk, 103x133
30. A split-open frog monument and an Olle Baertling painting, 1980, gouache on silk, 40x31
31. A ripped-up crocodile monument and an Olle Baertling painting, 1980, gouache on silk, 40x31
32. Broken male classic monument and an Olle Baertling painting, 1980, gouache on silk, 40x31
33. Monument and two Olle Baertling paintings, 1979, oil on canvas, 68.5x89
34. Broken lady classic II and an Olle Baertling painting, 1980, gouache on silk, 56x42
35. Four Olle Baertling paintings and three monuments, 1979, oil on canvas, 82.5x99
36. Sleeping Venus monument and an Olle Baertling painting, 1980, gouache on silk, 70x56

Sister Corita Kent  
37–53

37–38. Road signs (two parts), 1969, screenprint, 29×57
39. Somebody had to break the rules, 1967, 76×91
40. E eye love, 1968, screenprint, 57×57
41. Yellow submarine, 1967, screenprint, 63×88
42. Stop the bombing, 1967, screenprint, 45×63
43. T is for two, 1968, screenprint, 43×57
44. E is for everyone, 1968, screenprint, 43×57
45. Men will kindle light, 1972, screenprint, 30×42
46. Different drummers, 1967, screenprint, 64×46
47. There is only one thing that has power, 1967, screenprint, 63×45
48. Purple deep, 1971, screenprint, 20×25
49. We must be turned upside down, 1972, screenprint, 63×63
50. Perhaps we could endure, 1973, screenprint, 57×87
51. In our daily life, 1973, screenprint, 57×87
52. No right to the fruits, 1972, screenprint, 63×63
53. You should not let yourself be confused, 1973, screenprint, 57×87

Martha Wilson
54–56

54. I Make Up the Image of My Perfection/I Make Up the Image of My Deformity, 1972/2008, two color photographs and text, 48×64
55. Painted Lady, 1972/2012, two color photographs and text, 75×37
56. A Portfolio of Models, 1972/2012, six color photographs and text, 51×36

Marie-Louise Ekman
57–61

57. Hommage to Julia Pastrana, 1973, black hair, mixed media, 95×55×25
58. Hommage to Julia Pastrana, 1973, white hair, mixed media, 95×55×25
59. On the toilet (Aftonsnäbben), 1971, lithography, 100×70
60. Home at a lady’s, 1973, oil on canvas and teddy, 50x60
61. Untitled, 1976, gouache on silk, 300×570 cm, scenography for the film Hallo Baby (the scene/actors have been removed)

Marie-Louise Ekman
76–102

76. Restaurant KB, 1973, oil on canvas, 65x92
77. Interior, 1972, oil on canvas, 60×72
78. Me, 1972, oil on canvas, 22x26
79. Cupboard I, 1971, mixed media, plexi, 24x32x13
80. Cupboard II, 1971, mixed media, plexi, 24x32x13
81. At a lady’s home I, 1974, oil on canvas, 22x26
82. Cupboard with fireplace and portrait, 1973, mix media, 43x41x15
83. Exit, oil on panel, 50×59
84. The dinner, 1971, oil on canvas, 52x63
85. The Painting School, 1970, 72x103
86. Untitled, 1968, graphic, 50x60
87. Lady and wallpaper, 1973, oil on canvas, 55x48
88. Britt Edwall, 1972, oil on canvas, 22×16
89. Walter Hirsch, gouache on silk, 22×16
90. Man who comes from the sea, 1974, oil on canvas, mix media, 26x21,5
91. Shadow lady and flowery wallpaper, 1975, oil on canvas, 26x21,5
92. Inez in the hotel room in Italy, 1973, oil on canvas, 51x41
93. Dance/Dancer, 1973, oil on canvas,

Sister Corita Kent
62–65

62. The cry that will be heard, 1969, screenprint, 29×57
63. News of the week, 1969, screenprint, 29×57
64. A passion for the possible, 1969, screenprint, 57×29
65. Feelin’ groovy, 1967, screenprint, 76×91

Marie-Louise Ekman
66–74

66. The melancholy of a street, 1983, 140x100
67. Exit, 59x50
68. Good, 59x50
69. Mother-father, 59x50
70. To my love, 1973, 105x75
71. Lady and a dog, 1973, 45x32
72. Lady and a dog, 1973, 45x32
73. Bacchanal, 80,119,5
74. In the djungle, 77x100

Mladen Stilinovic

75. An Artist Who Cannot Speak English is No Artist, 1992, acrylic on artificial silk, 140×430

Marie-Louise Ekman
103–102

103. Guerilla Girls posters
104. 71x28
105. 56x43

Marie-Louise Ekman
105–119

105. Portrait of a collector, 1976, oil on canvas, 85x101
106. Lisa and Tant Fritzi, 1976, gouache on silk, 45x55.5
107. Dentist’s waiting room, 1976, gouache on silk, 81x75
108. The bleeding city, 1976, gouache on silk, 27x22
109. The Toilet, 1976, gouache on silk, 27x32
110. The conversation, 1976, gouache on silk, 22x28
111. Shadow lady drawing someone shitting, 1975, oil and mixed media on canvas, 28x36x6
112. Shadow lady painting a lamp, 1975, mixed media, plexi, 28x34x6
113. The uninvited, 1976, oil on canvas, 65x92
114. Waking up, 1977, gouache on silk, 77x61
115. Theatre monologue, 1976, gouache on silk, 22x27
116. Monologue, 1976, gouache on silk, 23x29
117. The bitter end, 1976, gouache on silk, 19,5x26
118. Living room, 1976, gouache on silk, 89x109
119. The City II, 1976, gouache on silk, 71.5x85

120. Ten Rules for students and teachers: Corita on teaching and celebration. We Have No Art: 26 minutes, Mary’s Day 1964: 12 minutes

121. Harriet och Gunnar, original drawing, 48x67
121. Paper doll Gunnel I, 1972, original drawing, 43x50
121. Paper doll Gunnel II, original drawing, 30x50
121. Exhibition catalogue
121. Invitation cards

122. A house, original drawing, 49x99
122. Love performance, poster, 53x28
122. A real man and a superficial lady, original drawing, 17,5x27,5
122. At the doctor’s, original drawing, 32x19,5
122. Las Meninas, sketch, 38,5x31,5
122. Swan Lake, costume sketch, 28x9
122. Antingone, costume sketch, 28x9
122. Antingone, costume sketch, 28x9

123. Work Cannot not Exist, 1976, screenprint on paper, 44x69
124. Artist at Work, 1978, black and white photographs, 30x40
125. Work is a Word, 1982, acrylic on cardboard, 31x62
126. Work is Disease (Karl Marx), 1981, acrylic on cardboard, 16x58
127. The Work is Finished, 1977, acrylic on artificial silk, 36x50
128. The Foot-Bread Relationship, 1977, eight black and white photographs, 30x40
129. DVD, Exhibitions-actions Group of Six Artists, video documentation 1975–1978, 65 min

130. Lady and telephone, 1974, oil and mixed media on canvas, 12x12
130. Set table I, 1976, mix media, plexibox, 15x15x5
130. Set table, 1976, mixed media, plexibox, 14x14x5
130. A lady in a house, 1976, small wooden house, 8x9,5x8
130. Rabbit dinner, 1976, mixed media, plexi box, 12x12x13
130. The fly sofa, 1976, mixed media, plexi box, 12x10x12
130. The crime, 1976, mixed media, plexi box, 12x10x12
130. Anna, 1984, mixed media, glass cup, d.7x12
130. In the baby carriage, 1976, gouache on silk, 17x24
130. A shut door, 1975, canvas in a plexibox, 34x13
130. Palm Jack-in-the-box, 1970, mix media, teddy, 9x9x30
130. The evening dance, 1972, mix media, plexiglass box, 15x12x15
130. Playmate, 1968, prototype, teddy handbag, mixed media, 15x23
130. Playmate, 1973, teddy, 10x15

131. The false human, 1981, radio play, 90 min
### Film program at Tensta konsthall

18.10 2012—13.1 2013

#### Wednesday 11–21.00

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Film Name</th>
<th>Director</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Duration</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>1976</td>
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<td>The Painting School</td>
<td>Marie-Louise Ekman</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>20 min x 10</td>
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*The Painting School (1990, 20 min x 10) – not every Wednesday because we often have seminars.*

#### Thursday 11–18.00

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<tr>
<td>11:30</td>
<td>Still Life</td>
<td>Marie-Louise Ekman</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>110 min</td>
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<tr>
<td>13:30</td>
<td>The Story of the Little Girl and the Great Love</td>
<td>Marie-Louise Ekman</td>
<td>1986</td>
<td>24 min</td>
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<td>Public tour of the exhibition</td>
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<tr>
<td>16:00</td>
<td>Story of the lonely lady</td>
<td>Marie-Louise Ekman</td>
<td>1977</td>
<td>5 min</td>
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#### Saturday 12–17.00

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<td>The Story of the Lonely Lady</td>
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<td>Modern People</td>
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**Hallo baby** (1976, 106 min) is to a certain extent an autobiographical film in which Marie-Louise Ekman plays the main role and for which she has written the script. It is about a little girl growing up in a big city in the 1950s and her pathway to adulthood. It is directed by Johan Bergenstråhle with scenography by Carl Johan De Geer.

**Mother, Father, Child** (1977, 30 min) written by Marie-Louise Ekman, is her debut as a director. The short film is about 24 hours in a family’s life during which a little girl’s strong will is pitted against a tired mother and a father who drinks on the sly. Several times the girl stresses that ‘you can do what you want’, and she does as well. Actors include Krister Henriksson and Liselott Nilsson.

**The Story of the Lonely Lady** (1977, 5 min) is based on Marie-Louise Ekman’s illustrated children’s book with the same title. It is read by Margaretha Krook.

**Modern People** (1983, 101 min) concerns a very short, mute girl with a little child, who lives in a flat with an unhappy sister. The film follows the sisters’ preparations for Christmas dinner. The set resembles a theatre and the film has long takes. With Annikka Nuora and Ulla-Britt Norrmann, amongst others.

**The Secret Friend** (1990, 79 min) was made by Marie-Louise Ekman after a long break from filmmaking. It plays with roles and identities, where Margaretha Krook, Ernst-Hugo Järegård and Gösta Ekman play a wife, a husband and a friend who dress up in each other’s clothes and act out each other’s roles.

**The Painting School** (1990, 20 min x 10) was written and directed by Marie-Louise Ekman as a 10-part series for Swedish television. The series revolves around the lives of students and teachers at an art school. Each episode ends with a song of some sort. With Tommy Körberg and Örjan Ramberg, amongst others.
Dream and Reality: A series of seminars based on the work of Marie-Louise-Ekman

As part of Doing what you want: Marie-Louise Ekman accompanied by Sister Corita Kent, Mladen Stilinovic and Martha Wilson

Tensta konsthall in collaboration with the Institution for Culture and Communication at Södertörn University and ABF (the Workers’ Educational Association)

Friday 19.10, 15.00–18.00
On changing roles, cross-dressing and the artist as joker, with the artist Martha Wilson and the curator/art historian Silvia Eiblmayr

Friday 16.11, 15.00–17.00
The Living Room: Marie-Louise Ekman, Art and politics in 1970s Swedish art, with art historian Katarina Wadstein Macleod

Wednesday 21.11, 18.30
Much less talking: Maria-Louise Ekman in conversation with Maria Lind, director of Tensta konsthall

Friday 30.11, 15.00–17.00
Women and P/pop Before the ‘Theoretical’ and the ‘Bad Girls’, with the art historian Kalliopi Minioudaki

Sunday 13.1, 13.00–15.00
Stockholm at the moment of Pop, with art historian Annika Öhrner

For more information www.tenstakonsthall.se
Doing What You Want
Marie-Louise Ekman accompanied by Sister Corita Kent, Mladen Stilinovic and Martha Wilson
