



Elina Brotherus, *Contente enfin?*, from the series "Suites françaises 2", 1999, color photograph on paper, 70 x 88 cm.

Elina Brotherus

& : gb agency, Paris

In her series of photographs, "Suites françaises 2," Finnish artist Elina Brotherus draws on her own experiences as the basis for her images, just as she has done in all her previous works. Recounting details from her personal life, she confronts the universal problems that deeply effect the lives of us all. In the cycle of large-scale works on display, the artist puts under the spotlight those who live alone in a foreign country, and explores the sense of alienation that strikes them when they lack the linguistic skills necessary to build relationships with the outside world. Language is an essential tool with which we can create order from chaos, by giving a name to the everyday objects that surround us and fill the spaces in which we live. The key element in these works are small yellow post-it notes, which Brotherus has applied to everything she sees around her, and on which she has written the name of the object in French. Thus the artist has catalogued everything in the images: the bathroom, the toothbrush, the toothpaste, make-up creams, the sink, the mirror, and various other pieces of furniture. Similarly, in other images, walls, suitcases, door, and bed are all labeled—the latter bearing the poetic elaboration "the bed of my dreams and of my nights of tenderness." The artist does not stop at sticking post-it notes on walls and on objects, however. She places them on herself as well, in an attempt to describe and define her varying moods. In *Desolée*, Brotherus stands between a door and a light switch, both labeled with post-it notes; her look discloses emotions of desolation and alienation, and the piece of paper attached to her chest proclaims, in fact, the existential condition of her soul. In *Contente enfin?* ("Are you happy now?"), on the other hand, Brotherus is portrayed sitting on a chair, the post-it stuck to her this time discovering the question she poses herself. Our overall impression is that the artist isn't contented. It would appear, in fact, that her state of mind reflects a sentimental confusion not dissimilar to the disorder that fills the room.

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Translation by Rosalind Furness