



Aanant & Zoo

# MARTIN BOTHE & MAX SCHAFFER

June 23 – Aug 04, 2012

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As different as the focus of the artistic practice of Max Schaffer and Martin Bothe appear to be, they meet in the same place. Some call it poetry, others literature. The artwork as a poetic object is their frank, perhaps even democratic medium. The gallery Aanant & Zoo is proud to present these two different approaches for the first time together.

Max Schaffer, born 1985 in Santiago de Chile, grew up in Bremen, studied in Bremen and Vienna with Daniel Richter and Heimo Zobernik. Early on, he experimented with graffiti. A result of this experience Schaffer looks at the public space from a different viewpoint. He views the space as malleable, which he uses and brings to the foreground in his work. The words that find their way from the spray can to the wall are in Schaffers case political or art historical in nature. Schaffer for example grabs quotes from art-theory, de-contextualises these and surrenders them to the public realm when plastering them in the urban space. There they have to hold their claim, dare to speak and be understood. Having been schooled both theoretically as well as on the street caused an almost contradictory approach in his artistic expression. Namely, items “found” in the public realm, which serve a purpose, such as a marquee, dust trap on a construction site or insulation material, are taken from their natural environment and transferred into the vast and open space of art. These *objets trouvés* bear the marks of their own story as for instance the dust, yet also at the same time reflect in an astonishing, oftentimes ironic manner on the big schools of 20th century art history. The american colour-field painters are questioned as well as minimal objects from the sixties and seventies or russian constructivism. This embedment in quasi-art historical discourse, as well as the shifting perspective from the function of the object to its history and aesthetic quality are important to Schaffers creative process.

In the work *Collection Privée* from 2010, residue and traces of the artists involvement can be found. Over the years Schaffer leafed through the previously blank pages of the sketchbook with hands soiled by his artistic craft. Called to question are the time and work, a Chimera of other artworks created during this period, as well as the romantic notion of the artistic process in the studio when the visitors are asked to wear gloves while engaging with the work.

The question of authorship is taken to the extreme in the work *w.t (Lüpertz on Picasso)* also from 2010. The work is potentially best understood as the outcome of a performance. The artist demanded from his colleague Markus Lüpertz, at the opening of his retrospective at the Albertina in Vienna, to sign a, just minutes before from the museum shop stolen, postcard showing a portrait of a woman by Pablo Picasso.

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PRESS RELEASE

Also in the work of Martin Bothe, who born in 1980 studied at the Hochschule für bildende Künste in Dresden, does the question of authorship play a rather forceful role. Countless times the face of the artist appears as if he refuses to allow any ambiguity concerning himself. Two examples of this are *Germanboy*, 2003, alter ego and existential study, as well as the untitled anonymised passport picture from 2010. The portrait is most certainly used as a mask or persona. The artist as individual (and perhaps as the quintessential entrepreneurial ideal of our time) and Martin Bothe become in his own individuality *pars pro toto* [a part represents the whole] of the viewer. This occurs through a soft, but at the same time hard, vulnerable form of poetry, which does not full fill the narcissistic-egological quota. *Art as the promise of an adventurous and intense life etc...*, but instead appearing broken and reduced.

The simplicity and disposability of the used materials, the pizza box, the simple wooden trestle, the somewhat tattered canvas and especially the stickers, which always poignantly show the title of the work, are a sign thereof. The intensive preoccupation with oneself and the forthcoming tension are what brings Bothe to his idiosyncratic, fundamental artistic viewpoint. In his newer works, the portrait does not emerge directly anymore. Man, with all its inadequateness, weaknesses and animal urges, but also in its search for transcendence and everything in between, is still the centre of attention. *Without title (Time / Vergänglichkeit)* 2011, in which the found and already dilapidated image is cut out and stuck to a pizza box is an example of this sentiment. The interaction between text and image is as always there, yet the text does not solely comment on the image. In an uncanny and annoying manner the text dominates the image. The chosen words, in all their pathos and banality, gain in the dialogue with the image a true presence and engage the viewers inner monologue concerning oneself.

The artist uses words as a way to convey meaning, but also at the same time shows their inner vacuity. The titles of a number of works, for instance *The Meaning of it All / I just can't stand it anymore* appear like advertisement slogans. Kitschy and not to be taken too serious. In combination but also in confrontation with the simple materials used by Bothe, the words begin to speak once again, and rephrase themselves as a need for the viewer. Perhaps the strength lies there, when detected, one can engage with them. And thus, throughout the exhibition, a story of energizing and letting go, an oscillation between significance, pathos, weakness and the emptiness which is so often hard to handle, emerges.

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