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ekw14,90 eh ben

The artists' collective ekw14,90 was founded in Graz in 2000 by Moke Klengel, Christoph Rath, Marlies Stöger, and André Tschinder. Since then it's continued to develop its shared practice of art, both installative and performative, in the fields of video, photography, music, and theater. ekw14,90's works are mainly distinguished by a subtle treatment of associations and linguistic jokes, radical reduction, and absurd exaggeration applied to individual situations.

In the exhibition *eh ben* ekw14,90 tells of a fictitious artistic avant-garde that opposes drastic reality as a whole—starting with a group that calls itself the *Zu-Realisten* (a pun that combines the concepts of being "too realist" and moving "toward realism"). This group vehemently demands a withdrawal from reality. Yet, not only do they simply withdraw, but, precisely because they promote the notion of permanent withdrawal, they also seem to consider themselves a new and vital force in social engagement. In their strongly escapist tendency, the *Zu-Realisten* develop a two-pronged artistic strategy that sheds clear light on their attitude, while also publicizing it. Through their visual productions, the *Zu-Realisten* oppose the painfully perceived, high-resolution images produced by the reality of omnipresent visual technologies.

Interestingly enough, ekw14,90's *eh ben* doesn't at all attempt to test which updated form of Realism and which reservoir of artistic means could be combined to counteract the powerful order of the present and the naturalization of these conditions. Rather, the exhibition presents the elements that the *Zu-Realisten* have decided constitute reality, and how they behave toward it. In addition the *Zu-Realisten* have also set up their concept so that it is consciously non-political. Rooting their motivations for action in abstract, sublime notions of art obviously conceals the inconvertibility of the goals, as well as disappointment and the potential for self-dissolution. In the exhibition at Raum D located on the ground floor of Künstlerhaus – Halle für Kunst und Medien, the *Zu-Realisten's* story is also told twice: first, through a group of works from 2012, which presents works that the *Zu-Realisten* might have made. The works themselves, as well as the *Zu-Realisten's* movement are introduced and explained in an accompanying audio guide. The text is consistently told in the subjunctive. Secondly, the *Zu-Realisten's* narrative is presented once again, but this time, in an altered tone of voice, in the form of a film similar to the films of Jean-Luc Godard. In this tricky setting, ekw14,90's double narrative shows not only the processes that historicize any artistic undertaking, but also refers to the utilization of various media and their equally diverse, subtle, auratic effects. To what extent ekw14,90's own experiences play a role in the yearnings of the fictitious *Zu-Realisten* and their methods of artistic action is certainly of less importance than the fact that today the idea of a historical fiction is perhaps, in general, one of the few remaining forms that Realism can still accept.

Work list

1
Subjonctif, 2012/16
Mixed-Media, 5 color photographs, 50 × 65 cm each,
1 color photograph, 65 × 50 cm,
framed; sound, 12:41 min,
voiced by: Birgit Stöger,
Courtesy the artist collective

2
Imperativ, 2015/16
Digital video, color/sound, 4:3,
6:10 min, voiced by: Aurélie
Gravelat, Romain Boulay,
Courtesy the artist collective

3
*Past (Brennen für das
Biedermeier)*, 2004/16
Mixed-Media, blouse, felt
stopper button, 40 × 40 cm;
sound (radio recording from
23 Dezember 2004), 3:55 min,
voiced by: ekw14,90, Courtesy
Radio Helsinki – Verein Freies
Radio Steiermark and the artist
collective

Thanks
ekw14,90 thanks
Romain Boulay, Aurélie Gravelat,
Karin Harrasser, Andreas Kurz,
Birgit Stöger, Hildegund Stöger,
Radio Helsinki - Verein Freies
Radio Steiermark and the team
of Künstlerhaus Graz for their
support.

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M—

Künstlerhaus
Halle für Kunst & Medien
Burgring 2, Graz, Austria
Di–So 10–18h, Do 10–20h

www.km-k.at

In *eh ben ekw14,90* develops an already existing work series by adapting and expanding it to a complex narration that will be merged as one whole in the exhibition for the first time.

Subjonctif, 2012/16

In the mixed-media installation *Subjonctif* (2012/16) *ekw14,90* introduces the possibility (and the opportunities) of a new artistic avant-garde, a movement that could exist: the *Zu-Realisten*. In short chapters, an audio guide conveys all photographically documented works that could emerge from this artistic movement.

Imperativ, 2015/16

Only a few years later, *ekw14,90* considered necessary to adjust their work to current social intonation that as perceived by the group has significantly changed. The possibility of an avant-garde should give way to the claim for an avant-garde according to the present *Zeitgeist*. In the video work *Imperativ* (2015/16) that is dedicated to the fictional group of the *Zu-Realisten*, the artist collective takes this conclusion into account.

Past, 2004/16

ekw14,90 has already shown a fictional movement that expressed the feeling of uneasiness about the prevailing circumstances. This fiction was introduced in the framework of the weekly show of the group at *Radio Helsinki – Freies Radio Graz*, for the first time in 2004. Today, the previously introduced protest movement can be seen as the precursor or a distant kindred spirit of the *Zu-Realisten*. In the mixed-media installation *Past* (2004/16) the radio recording from 2004 with the title *Brennen für das Biedermeier* (*Burning for the Biedermeier*) is complemented by one object. The object shows the fashion accessory of the sympathizers that is associated with their ideology: a felt-stopper-button that could be worn as a visual sign of the protest.

Example 2: Film

M: Movie. HD. 4K. 8K. Cinema. Documentation. Reality TV. Reality. A painful illustration of the world, harsh and merciless. Presentation must be unintentional, vague and open. Shatter the mirror of specific representation! Keep your distance to reality!

Example 3: Timekeeper

Example 4: The Individual In The Picture

F: We reject the figurative picture.
M: The face. The individual. In the picture.
F: The recognizable face makes us dependent of the reality.
M: This dependence is unavoidable. Representation creates addiction. That's why, we have to alienate ourselves, we have to withdraw the expectations towards the representation of reality.
F: I hold a piece of cardboard in front of my face, in order not to be depicted as real neither to be medially documented.
M: Not to be dependent. An individual process that doesn't have to meet any expectations. Your individualization using the cardboard, for example, withstands the systematic medial grasp of reality.

Example 5: Color Theory

F: The colors force us into a corner of perception. We overcame the dilemma. You are allowed to reject color AND accept its existence. It's no longer a regime: red, blue, yellow. We are blending therefore, we deny. The basic colors just exist in your head.

Example 1: Sign 'i'

F: For sure, it's a problem to wear the 'i' in the public. That's a clear assignment. But the 'i' as imaginary number can never be attributed to one specific scale. You can only imagine it. Descartes said: "only imaginary," there we have to find the way back, now.
M: As complex beings we face a complex world. Not only the real. Do you understand? The real is passé. That is why I wear the 'i'. I am an imaginary entity.

Example 6: Manifesto

M: Writing is ideology. Noun/No. Text is concrete. Authorship is prosecution. F: Speculate. Speculative. Speculation. Bacon. Bacon. Art.