

<https://www.schinkelpavillon.de/exhibition/paul-mccarthy>

PAUL MCCARTHY

12. September 2015 – 22. November 2015

A solo exhibition by US-American artist Paul McCarthy opens at the Schinkel Pavillon on 11 September, 2015, on the occasion of Berlin Art Week. McCarthy's works arise from continuous engagement with the social obscuration of seeing, meaning, and knowledge. McCarthy, who lives and works in Los Angeles, confronts the viewer with scenarios of raw reality via events transmitted by film and television, exploring the tension between the surface of the transmitted images and their invisible, unsettling origins, with concrete references to the Hollywood film industry and American pop entertainment culture. Consumption, sexuality, violence, voyeurism, discomfort, guilt, loss of control, and fantasy worlds are subjects that McCarthy theatrically, provocatively, and ironically renders into images. Employing such diverse media as photography, drawing, painting, sculpture, video, performance, and installation, the artist confronts appearances with reality, taking on the contradiction between taboo and spectacle. His analyses of the process of seeing include the viewer subtly but directly in works based on action and reaction.

McCarthy's point of reference is always the human body, which he sets (often through his own performances) in relation to socially established conventions and calls into question – both through sculpture and directly, in his actions – as a figure in space. Masks, as a symbol for the duality of the subject, are frequent references and objects in the artist's works, positioning the body in relation to space as the perimeter and contour between inner and outer. McCarthy's body casts have a similar meaning. These, like the intersection of the body, (living-) space, and the object, are central to the works exhibited at the Schinkel Pavillon, which are oriented around themes of waking and sleeping, life and death, presence and illusion.

At the center of the exhibition is a synthetic replica of the artist. "Horizontal" (2012) presents the faithful reproduction of a naked McCarthy lying horizontally on a table, a gesture that suggests the existential, the obsessive, and the voyeuristic. This work is related to an earlier whole-body sculpture by the artist, "Paul Dreaming, Vertical, Horizontal" (2005). In the new work the bare body appears as both subject and material. The silicon skin displays every wrinkle and fold, the color reveals every detail of the skin, the real hair presents every indication of life – while remaining an empty form, the representational container of a modeled avatar. An old door from the main office of the Bank of America in downtown Los Angeles, on which the reproduced McCarthy lies with closed eyes, underlines the material aspect and, at the same time, suggests a membrane dividing real existence, time(-lessness), and dream.

The physical blurring of a given form is also made tangible in the work "Rubber Jacket H, Horizontal" (2012), which emerged from the work process for "Horizontal". This sculpture is a sort of rubber jacket, materialized as an independent, amorphous body cast in the shape of a letter H (also a reference to earlier works) through the dynamics of the material after the initial reproduction of McCarthy's body. The formerly fluid substance of the silicon resembles a momentarily frozen intermediate stage between material and form, presence and absence.

A special extension of the exhibition space, the former Schinkel-Klause in the ground floor of the Schinkel Pavillon, hosts McCarthy's sculptural video installation "That Girl T.G. Drawing Table – Drawing" (2011–2013), a work composed of a wooden table with marks in graphite and a six-channel video installation. Film and photography serve McCarthy as both index and document, in this case as a preliminary study for a female body cast from the artist's

“Life Cast” series (“That Girl T.G. Asleep”, “That Girl T.G. Awake”, 2012-2013). The six videos sketch, from different perspectives that frame various details (hands, feet, genitals, and so on), the process of drawing and the finding of positions on the tabletop: with a graphite pencil, McCarthy traces the contours and shadows of the body of Elyse Poppers, who sits and lies on the table. In part, the camera generates views that refer to traditional pictorial motifs from art history, while the expressive trajectory of the graphite line follows the movements of the body along with its shape, inscribing the wood with the traces of a conceptual nude. The gesture becomes a performance, the body a spectacle.

In order to generate as detailed a reproduction of her facial features as possible for future life-cast sculptures, McCarthy employed a 3-D photo light scanner. Digital photographic prints that were generated as part of the scanning process are being shown for the first time in the exhibition at the Schinkel Pavillon, and constitute a continuation of the life casts, “That Girl T.G. Asleep”, “That Girl T.G. Awake”. The three different views of the model’s head form a pop-futuristic contrast to McCarthy’s gestural markings on the table, confronting the originality of the graphite drawing with a technological image. In these photographs the head of the model appears almost sculptural, combining in a completely new pictorial language McCarthy’s studies of “T.G.” and their relation to space, body, and image.

— Christina Irrgang

September 12 – September 27, for the first time in a theatre: REBEL DABBLE BABBLE in Berlin’s Volksbühne

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