

Jack Smith

Antonius Höckelmann

presented by Michael Krebber
& Sebastian Höckelmann

21 April – 22 May 2010

Opening Reception on Wednesday, 21 April, 7-9 p.m.

In showing Jack Smith and Antonius Höckelmann together, it is not intended to build any kind of art-historical bridge between them, or to rewrite existing history. Jack Smith and Höckelmann lived and worked in completely different cultural contexts, but one only has to look at them, I find, to see how similar they are in many ways, not least in their general approaches. Jack Smith's 'Lobster' is Höckelmann's 'Probehopser' (test hopper), both had problems with landlords and house owners, with people attempting to monopolize them, both had attitudes that were anti-authoritarian through and through, both had ideas about organic architecture, both recycled trash, though I would prefer to call what they did 'beautifying trash'. There is an anecdote about Jack Smith in which he walks up to a heap of trash, rearranges some of it, re-composed it and turns and walks on.

Both men were available for hire, both were 'oily actors who act in anything'. Both delayed and neither was ready to finish his work. After 'Flaming Creatures' Jack Smith avoided to complete another film, Höckelmann altered his big drawing of the 'Probehopser' when it had already been exhibited, even when it was already in the museum. One can follow its progression in the various illustrations that have appeared in newspapers, and, I think, in the Morsbroich catalogue, and in the drawing itself as it now hangs in the Museum Ludwig. And both of them were disorganized and made any kind of administration or control impossible, greatly to their own detriment, it seems to me. In the case of Jack Smith this aspect has long been recognized, and it is now understood as the concept which it undoubtedly is. In Höckelmann's case this still should happen, and that could alter his reception and change the connections and hierarchies in which he is mostly seen.

Parallel to Art Cologne, I will show a poster published by Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, that I edited with material relating to Smith's second, less well-known visit to Cologne. He had been invited by Elisabeth Jappe to take part in the side programme that accompanied the 1977 Cologne Art Fair, and after Wilhelm Hein prompted me to look for them we have managed to find the related documents. That happened at the first meeting for the big Jack Smith 'Live Film!' Festival last year in Berlin. Edit deAk's letters show how complicated it was to invite Smith, and the accompanying press release has already been published as the first text in

Jack Smith's collected writings, where his comment that 'this is the best single chunk of writing I ever made' is quoted in a footnote. In fact Jack Smith's main works like his appearance at Cologne Zoo for Birgit Hein's WDR radio feature and the sequence of photographs at the Cologne Flora show were both produced in Cologne, and there is still research to be done for material relating to a third visit, this time to Hamburg, where he was invited by Ernst Mitzka for a performance of 'I danced with a penguin'.

Antonius Höckelmann had lived in Cologne since the beginning of the 70s, and few people were as well known and loved both as an artist and as an eccentric. I used to meet him regularly every six months or so on the street until shortly before his death, mostly he was in his camouflage jacket which had been washed so often that the camouflage pattern was scarcely visible. He still wore it when camouflage had become the fashion.

In the window we are showing parts of one of Höckelmann's main works, the large ceiling sculpture that he constructed between 1981 and 1987 in the Kronenbraustube on the Eigelstein while business went on as usual in the bar below it. The Kronenbraustube was one of the bars prostitutes from the Eigelstein used to go

to, and there are still a few of these pubs left where the old Eigelstein carries on just as it used to be. The Kronenbraustube no longer exists, and Höckelmann dismantled the ceiling sculpture before it closed. Kasper König showed a large piece of it in the 'Von hier aus' exhibition; it was lent by the Kronenbraustube, and after the exhibition it was remounted under the ceiling. The Museum Ludwig recently acquired one of the best of Höckelmann's polystyrene sculptures. It is displayed alongside the big drawing of the 'Probehopser' and a later aluminium sculpture. This offers the opportunity to see high-quality work by Höckelmann. When Höckelmann was alive, Jutta Koether once published a piece where she said how good she found it that Cologne could give an artist like Höckelmann protected status like a monument.

Michael Krebber