

CALLA HENKEL & MAX PITEGOFF

PARADISE

29 NOVEMBER 2022 – 14 JANUARY 2023

Galerie Isabella Bortolozzi
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Over the three years that they ran TV Bar in Berlin, Calla Henkel and Max Pitegoff used the bar as a set to film an episodic series called *Paradise*. TV Bar was always intended to have two lives: one fictional and one public, both relying on the same infrastructure. For the exhibition *Paradise*, they will screen all four episodes together for the first time, alongside a series of photographs and paintings.

The series *Paradise* takes place in a fictional eponymous bar in 2023, and follows a group of bartenders as they navigate an absent boss who wants the bar to function as a newsroom. Henkel and Pitegoff selected the year 2023 as a near future, one that they could move towards with a blend of speculative fiction and approximate truth. Christmas lights appear. The leaves turn green. The narrative becomes part documentation and has no choice but to follow the queasy timeline of the actual bar. It had always been their intention to close in or near 2023 when the chosen future became the present.

Paradise is about labor and performance, how much one has to give away while working. The bartenders are all forced to read text from a teleprompter to the customers, complying with the chronically out-of-touch boss's hopes of using the bar as a way to spread his own language. When the texts become unhinged, the bartenders decide to take control, but it never quite works out. Instead the story unfolds in their coping mechanisms: the places the bartenders go in their skulls to stay sane. It is a drama about narrative ownership and the struggle to make things in terrible times. It isn't until the bar gets shut down that the bartenders in *Paradise* start using the space as they want, and a complicated collective unity appears.

In reality, Henkel and Pitegoff had intended to hand over TV Bar to their employees when they finished filming *Paradise*. However, the company that owns the building on Potsdamer Strasse is in the process of selling it, and don't believe the new owners will want a bar, thus refusing to renew the lease. Henkel and Pitegoff, out of curiosity, asked what they think the new owners would prefer in the space, to which they replied, "an insurance agency." This is now the ending of *Paradise*.

Paradise is shot on 16mm film and shown with subtitles. The work itself lives somewhere between photography, theater, and long-form poetry. The actors are all friends of the artists, TV Bar employees, or people who drifted into the bar's orbit. Previously, while TV Bar was open, *Paradise* was only shown in other bars, looping on small monitors with no soundtrack. In its projected version, it is accompanied by a soundtrack by artist and musician M. K. Frøslev, a former bartender at TV Bar.

Each time *Paradise* looped at a bar, a new painting was made to accompany it. A selection of these paintings, each named after the bar that originally hosted it, is displayed in the hallway.

The photographs in the exhibition show groupings of objects from the bar's basement, shot in the vernacular of Ebay Kleinanzeigen. The photographs act as an attempt to extract value from the leftovers of the once living/breathing social space. Ripped from their context, they are now simply a stack of glasses, ashtrays, a pretzel tree, a cashbox, staged for sale on a dirty velvet backdrop – originally curtains from Ex'n'Pop, the long-running bar down the street that closed in 2016. The photos play to obvious nostalgia, while nodding to classical still life painting, reminding us that the cosmic fable of every life is a garage sale.

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Paradise

2020–2022

16mm film transferred to HD video with sound

81:42 min.

Episode 1: *Josef & Tara*, 2020

23:14 min.

Episode 2: *Margarite & Tennessee*, 2021

19:42 min.

Episode 3: *Jess & The Neighbor*, 2022

18:34 min.

Episode 4: *The Bartenders Weren't Alone*, 2022

20:12 min.

Score by

M. K. Frøslev

Mixed and mastered by

Enyang Urbiks

With

Ketuta Alexi-Meskhishvili, Patrick Armstrong, Tenzing Barshee, Fredrika Brillembourg, Arthur Chruszcz, Eric D. Clark, Joel Cocks, Bully Fae Collins, Milo Conroy, Horacio Alcolea Crespo, Nicolas Endlicher, Kim Everett, Natascha Goldenberg, Ann Göbel, Mia Goyette, Georgia Gardner Gray, Robert Gründler, Amat De La Gueye, Karl Holmqvist, Lisa Jo, Tarren Johnson, Laura Katzauer, Pablo Larios, Juan Pablo Larrain, Klara Lidén, David Lieske, Mickael Marman, Tabesh Mehrabi, Marlie Mul, Paul Niedermayer, Josip Novosel, Theresa Patzschke, Victor Payares, Jasia Rabiej, Shelly Lea Reich, Niclas Riepshoff, Sarah Rosengarten, Emanuel Rossetti, Christin Rothe, Anaia Roy, Andrew Roy, Ehsan Morshed Sefat, Thor Shannon, Talin Seigmann, Mohamed Lamrani Selmane, Dan Solbach, Tobias Spichtig, Stef Sprinz, Lukas Stoever, Eleonora Sutter, Sabina Maria van der Linden, Ernie Wang and Peimaneh Yaghoobifarah

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