

NAGEL GALERIE DRAXLER

ALEX WISSEL

Andropause

Eröffnung: Freitag, 1. September 2023

Ausstellung: 2. September – 27. Oktober 2023

Verlängerte Öffnungszeiten zur DC Open:

Freitag, 1. September 2023, 17 – 21 Uhr

Samstag, 2. September 2023, 13 – 19 Uhr

Sonntag, 3. September 2023, 13 – 17 Uhr

Galerie Nagel Draxler

Elisenstraße 4-6, 50667 Köln

PRESS RELEASE

"The beginning of this exhibition is marked by a process of mourning.

Last year, a friend of mine took his own life. Unfortunately, he was the fifth friend of mine from the art scene in Düsseldorf who ended their lives in this way. It led me to contemplate whether these were not just tragic individual fates, but whether there's also a structural component at play. In a way, I have the feeling that to a certain extent, they all struggled with a concept of artistic genius. Especially one associated with the teachings under the then Art Academy Rector Markus Lüpertz.

In the exhibition, I delve into this concept of artistic genius.

To what extent are such terms still a living practice?

Who coined them, and what notions of masculinity are tied to them?

Why does the artistic genius teaching concept still fit remarkably well into the neoliberal narrative of winners and losers?

I attempt to approach these questions by reflecting on my past role as the "Impresario" and "Manager" of the Single Club.

The Single Club was conceived by me immediately after my studies as an alternative model of public space and participatory "Social Sculpture." From June 2011 to June 2012, artists staged experimental parties and performances here, unfolding in collaboration with the audience. Thanks to the complete involvement of all participants, the space was redesigned each time. Many used the events to launch art and music

projects. In that sense, the club was a stage for testing various formats and a catalyst for new bands and collectives.

In a way, the Single Club precisely coincided with the time when behavior and self-perception in relation to public performance and social media were changing. Part of the agreement with the Single Club was that it should serve as a stage for a film yet to be shot, and therefore the right to one's image was relinquished upon entry. From the collected smartphone and camera footage, Jan Bonny and I later developed the film "single" together. In 2011, Facebook, etc., were still in their infancy, and public behavior concerning self-promotion strategies on social media was correspondingly innocent. In reality, relatively few people recorded - I believe that today, the concept would no longer work, as the whole world has become a Single Club. It seems to me that since the early twenties, "publicity" is generated by sharing private matters. In the self-employed realm of the neoliberal Ministry of Loneliness, the dictate of authenticity of the "artistic geniuses" prevails.

For the precursor project of the Single Club, Christopher Williams designed a beer coaster indirectly referring to Martin Kippenberger's "Alcohol Torture." On a altered Schlässer Altbier coaster, two phrases spoken by the waiter, symbolizing death, are written down. Both editions cater to a bourgeois longing for the free, solitary, wild, and unhealthy artist's life, which is always also marked by romantic yearning for death. There is Sigmund Freud's observation that the death drive is conservative.

Part of the exhibition includes an installation quote from the colonnade of the Single Club's basement. Numerous drawings of mine from various times are placed on it. During the time of the Single Club, I couldn't afford my health insurance; at times, substantial amounts resulted from the aftermath - some drawings use debt papers from that time as an image background. What notions of "artist's life" are reflected in this image production?

In 2012, the Single Club ends, and in the same year, Markus Lüpertz illustrates the Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany for the Bertelsmann publishing house and the BILD newspaper - an exclusive special edition with a bronze bust for ZEIT is also produced. It seems to me as if this kind of "artist performance" requires 'tradition' and 'law and order' as a backdrop and pretext to stage its boundless 'freedom fetish'. Even in view of Lüpertz's directorship at the Art Academy in Düsseldorf, a similar performance can be described that flirts with reversing conditions. However, this then once again manifests the actual 'old' state. From Berlusconi to Johnson to Trump, a quite similar 'carnival leadership style' has also established itself in politics at the same time, quasi presupposing the frivolous complicity of subordinates.

I wonder, for which performances was the Single Club a stage?

NAGEL GALERIE DRAXLER

Was it also part of Lüpertz's Basic Law?

Did I also play the artistic genius? In the film 'single', which was not a documentary, I deliberately played the lonely male artist character 'Alex', who draws creative strength from his heartache and creates the Single Club.

Say 'I' again.

I, I, I, I, I, I

However, that wasn't my intention in the film or the club. My focus was on the grace of the role, not having to constantly play oneself.

From the remnants of the artworks and decorations created for the Single Club, I have built a sculpture, which I think I'll call either 'social sculpture' or 'Salon des Amateurs'.

Dancing, dancing, dancing, dancing, dancing, dancing, dancing, dancing, dancing,
dancing, dancing, dancing, dancing, dancing, dancing, dancing, dancing, dancing,
dancing, dancing, dancing, dancing, dancing, dancing, dancing, dancing, dancing,
dancing, dancing, dancing, dancing, dancing, dancing, dancing, dancing, dancing,
dancing, dancing, dancing, dancing, dancing, dancing, dancing, dancing, dancing"

Alex Wissel (*1983, Aschaffenburg) is a German painter, sculptor, performance artist, actor, and film director. Trained at the Ecole Nationale des Beaux Arts in Lyon and as a master student of Rosemarie Trockel at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf, Wissel currently resides and works in Düsseldorf.

Wissel's body of work is characterized by its versatility. His event series "Single Club" (2011/2012) held in an Albanian gambling bar in Düsseldorf became legendary within party and artistic circles. Simultaneously, in collaboration with director Jan Bonny, the experimental film "single" emerged as both a collaborator of the project and an expansion of the club into another medium. It was also with Jan Bonny that he collaborated on the web series "Rheingold" at the Volksbühne Berlin, which artistically intertwined the rise and fall of art advisor Helge Achenbach with the development of neoliberal reality in Germany (2018). The drawings, sculptures, and installations of his solo exhibition "Thymostraining" (2019) at the Sammlung Philara investigate, with a subtly humorous approach, the invention of nationalism through historical artist festivals and nationalist monuments, and their current role in populism and nostalgic propaganda.

Wissel's works have been featured in numerous solo exhibitions at prestigious institutions, including Kunstverein Harburger Bahnhof, Hamburg (2018), Sammlung Philara, Düsseldorf (2019), and Kunstverein für die Rheinlande und Westfalen, Düsseldorf (2019). Group exhibitions have taken place at venues such as Kestnergesellschaft Hannover (2018), Sammlung Julia Stoscheck, Düsseldorf (2021), and Museum Morsbroich, Leverkusen (2021). Additionally, the artist has designed stage sets for Volksbühne Berlin (2018) and Theater Basel (2021). Wissel's debut solo exhibition at Nagel Draxler was titled "Bayerisches Staatsministerium der Finanzen und für Heimat" and took place in the Munich gallery in the summer of 2021. In 2022, Wissel received the Landsberg Prize for the third time, with the exhibition "das Zutrinken" held at NRW-Forum. In September 2023, his next solo exhibition, "Andropause," will be presented at Nagel Draxler in Cologne.