

GALERIE CHRISTINE MAYER

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I had this dream the other night: I worked as a waitress in an American diner and this super famous curator came in together with Patti Smith. I was wearing a doily apron and approached them on roller skates, balancing a pitcher of black coffee in my right hand, and a notebook and a pen in my left. I asked them to place their order. Patti wanted carrot soup. Her companion ordered a steak. I explained that I could do the steak well done, medium or rare, however he wanted, and recommended the medium version. He insisted on getting it well done and I rolled away with a really uncanny feeling of being a vegetarian who has to grill a steak for too long. When I rolled back to the table, I balanced a bowl with carrot soup and a plate with a large T-Bone steak in my hands. About a meter away from my guests, I stumbled and tumbled, the steak flew away like a frisbee and the soup spurted upwards in slow motion.

Justin Lieberman: I admire that you allow political slogans to remain in your work such as on the t-shirt you wear on the invitation card, for example. This is a contradiction which is too much to bear for many artists. It was too much for Immendorf. He quit the party and devoted himself to Art with a capital A. Or maybe we should say with Capital's "A". Can you speak about the shape of the conjunction between politics and art which you imagine?

Kristina Schmidt: As artists, we work in proximity to a nearly unrestricted global market functioning accordingly to capitalist rules. This links to politics almost automatically. It is concerning and I find it crucial to not ignore this. There are a lot of things going on in the art world right now - just to mention one example, political protest from groups like Decolonize This Place removed weapon manufacturer Warren Kanders from the Whitney Museum's board. The shirt I wear on the card was a gift from the group New Sanctuary Coalition. They provide emotional and legal support for people targeted by ICE. When I was invited to contribute work to a one-day street sale show one block from their office in SoHo, I transformed cheap New York tourist shirts into unique pieces by adding a screen-print to them. I used them as vouchers for entering a lottery. The main prize was one of my paintings and the money we raised was donated to support the work of NSC. The slogan on the shirt is totally unspecific and to wear it may even change the meaning. I like how layers of consumerism, object-making and advertising overlap each other.

J.L.: The paintings are self-portraits of you as a super muscled bodybuilder doing things in your studio or visiting places and events. It seems like there is a lot going on in each one. There are depictions of other art in them too. I am just going to choose one to start with. Tell me about the tightrope painting.

K.S.: The tightrope painting re-imagines Carl Spitzweg's 1839 painting "Der arme Poet" [The poor poet] with the addition of a figure on a purple tightrope balancing over the purple framing line that divides the painted painting from the painted blue background.

The Spitzweg painting is a stereotypical icon of the poor artist surviving under miserable conditions. When Spitzweg exhibited it first at Munich Kunstverein, it was rejected for being both romantic and flavorless. The first critics were so harsh that Spitzweg stopped signing his paintings with his name and instead used a cypher (a bun with his initials, the

“Spitzweck”). “Der arme Poet” is still the Germans’ favorite painting right after the Mona Lisa, and in 2008 the Deutsche Post published a commemorative stamp with the motif. Spitzweg’s audience is quintessentially middle-class, he was one of Hitler’s favorite artists and was to be included in his Wannabe Postwar Collection. The original painting existed in several versions, the one in the Berlin Nationalgalerie was stolen and later given back as part of a political action by Ulay in 1976; an early sketch of the painting was sold for 542.500 \$ at Sotheby’s in New York and is now on view in Milwaukee.

The figure balancing on the tightrope is either skinned or wearing a biomechanical bodysuit. They lean backwards and a little bit to the right in order to keep the balance. It’s advantageous that the figure is buff, they need a lot of strength to stay on the tightrope. Some balance might be projected upwards from the umbrella that serves the poor poet as a protective shield against water dripping down from the ceiling.

J.L.: There are lots of poems in your work. Can you talk about how poems work? How do you approach a poem?

K.S.: I feel drawn to fragmentary and short forms in general, such as rhymes, songs, short stories, anecdotes, advertisements, jingles, infomercials, flyers, postcards, memes. I like sharp-edged language and the way it unfolds when it is explored. I feel like visual art, especially painting and those forms or writing, works in similar ways. They are clearly framed in terms of the material but reach out beyond these borders.

My attention span is rather short. Instead of worrying about it, I decided that this suits the world of social media, Instagram, commercial art and self-promotion. Repetition plays a role; I want my time-based works to be watched more than once. It would be awesome to make them work like a lava lamp - something that sucks you in for some time and spits you out after.

The melodies or lyrics of my songs are often fragments borrowed from or inspired by pop music, advertisement, military propaganda or musicals. The dreamboat song tells you a short story about desires and it’s ultimately annoying. It pairs up with the parrot, a small sculpture which listens to the viewer.