

The new director of the Kunstverein für die Rheinlande und Westfalen, Düsseldorf, Hans-Jürgen Hafner, will inaugurate his programme of exhibitions with Josephine Pryde's solo show, *Miss Austen Enjoys Photography*. Hafner was appointed director of the Kunstverein on September 1, 2011. His exhibition and art educational programme will focus thematically upon "exhibiting" itself and discuss the topic in all its respective guises.

Fittingly, the new design concept will be presented at the opening of the first exhibition. In so doing, the Kunstverein is continuing its collaboration with the Berlin graphics studio, Lambl Homburger. Alongside a new look for the Kunstverein, the concept primarily embraces the spatial impression as well as lines of orientation within the building. Henceforward, a grey skirting board will demarcate the foyer and exhibition areas.

Josephine Pryde (born 1967 in Northumberland, England) favours a photographic approach. However, her artistic practice extends far beyond this. Although she makes use of the technical and iconic potential of photography in its various forms in order to create visually attractive and conceptually precise images, it should not be overlooked that her work also encompasses a great variety of artistic media and, indeed, even incorporates the format of the exhibition itself.

Thus Josephine Pryde's current intention in the show at the Kunstverein für die Rheinlande und Westfalen, Düsseldorf, has a dual aspect. In the form of a new, immediate photographic work produced on site, the artist has created a framework narrative for this retrospective – her first in a museum context – of her photographic and artistic oeuvre over the past two decades. This retrospective of her own oeuvre thus becomes the object of her new work which has been conceived especially for this event. For two days an arrangement for taking photographs has been set up within the exhibition rooms in the Kunstverein.

The new black and white/colour photographs of guinea pigs compliment the large-format images and objects from the series "Thérapie Thank You" and "Thérapie Thank You Thank You" (both 2010). The components of both exhibitions have been combined for the first time for this show. A diverse selection of older works completes the presentation. This combination conveys a clear impression of the broad spectrum of Josephine Pryde's work and, at the same time, demonstrates its pronounced specificity. This selection also shows the extent to which her work generates a dynamic tension by juxtaposing visual and conceptual strategies, in order to produce specific references and levels of interpretation in keeping with the given occasion or situation. Moreover, the images themselves are extraordinarily attractive.

As a pictorial motif, guinea pigs conjure up a number of associations, ranging from their use as pets – particularly popular among small children – to their typical deployment in laboratory research, which is directly reflected in the usage of guinea pig in English to denote a person or thing used for experimentation.

However, it is not easy to specify the motif of the photographs in the “Thérapie Thank You” and “Thérapie Thank You Thank You” series. The elegant, expansive drapery and fall of the folds that fill out the given format clearly depict exquisite fabrics, the silhouettes contained within them suggesting their use as clothing. They are also contrasted by various mobiles comprising bows, fishhooks and woven baskets (“The Mystery of Artistic Work”, all from 2010).

Josephine Pryde’s photographic oeuvre presents itself as a wholly diverse, indeed, combatively different amalgam that incorporates photographic and technical darkroom experiments as well as pictorial models reminiscent of amateur snapshots or professional studio photographs. Miss Austen Enjoys Photography. doesn’t merely presents individual objects – the exhibition also generates specific contexts. On the one hand, the show pursues the general question regarding what it might mean today, from an artistic or institutional point of view, to stage exhibitions; in this way, it conceptually opens up “exhibiting” from the perspective of production and its communication within the museum-based context. On the other hand, the question is immediately referred back to images and objects in the exhibition which, for their part, are bound up with the exhibition situation itself and even treat it thematically.

This has an influence on the images themselves and invites a way of looking which makes free use of photographic codes and cannot be classified exclusively as a specific style or a particular motif.

The exhibition Miss Austen Enjoys Photography., which Josephine Pryde conceived in conjunction with the Kunstverein für die Rheinlande und Westfalen, Düsseldorf, will be continued towards the middle of 2012 at the Kunsthalle Bern, entitled Miss Austen Still Enjoys Photography.

Parallel to Josephine Pryde’s exhibition, the group show featuring work by the Karl Schmidt-Rottluff stipend holders will open at 7 pm in the Kunsthalle Düsseldorf.

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