

Bernhard Fruehwirth changes his name on the occasion of the comprehensive project PHESBUK.

Starting point thereof is an artist book, which Frue created from 2008 to 2011 of newspaper and magazine clippings featuring faces that he partly reworks. Using a ballpen, Frue “scratches out” the faces to the point that they come off by themselves.

The information flood narrows down to a vast number of faces, which are divorced from their original context and gather anew in a picture sequence, which follows the artist’s subjective criteria.

Bernhard Frue reasons his motivation for the present approach from his endeavor to a contemporary and apt discussion of the topic portrait. “I started to work on this book during my first stay at a hospital, where newspapers functioned as window and contact to the world outside. At first, I was visually and emotionally attracted to individuals who are permanently in the limelight of the media, which, due to my own weak bodily condition upset me up to a physical extent. Quickly, I lost the interest in the celebrities and I focused on the selection of photos showing faces of ‘unknown people’. From the information flood, only the cut out faces remain as a kind of residual information.”

The artist book is presented in the exhibition as installation representing on the one hand a model of coping and the questioning of filters, which continuously edit our perception when it comes to the “fetish face”.

The serial work produces, beyond a medially influenced chronology, variations of always the same: the depiction and display of a flood of anonymous, attention- and distinction seeking faces.

For the exhibition PHESBUK Frue extends his originally graphic approach towards the medium video, for the first time. Frue uses and questions the formal similarities of both media by linking up the sketch quality of the drawing with the swift and dynamic handling of the medium video.

The video works are equally guided by the classical genre of the portrait, hence advancing a contemporary interpretation of the self-portrayal addressing topics such as reflection and self-reflection, detachment and dissolution or rhythm and coding. Since Frue overlaps the sketch quality of the drawing with the simple handling of the medium video, the artist introduces different possibilities of perceiving the “fetish face” to the audience. Frue comments on the loss of privacy, the possibility of perception and self-reflexion, and the constituted subject which has always been threatened by dissolution, deconstruction and momentariness.

The catalogue which accompanies the complex exhibition presents the new monographic show PHESBUK and reflects on the works of the last years. The homonymous artist book is published in a limited edition and is available as artist donation at Kunstverein Medienturm. Bernhard Frue was born in 1968 in Bad Radkersburg, grew up in Graz and lives and works in Vienna.

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