

“Tatsächliche Vermutungen (real assumptions) are based on principles drawn from life experience. The concept of ‘assumption’ as it is used here derives from the meaning of the word ‘assume’ in its general usage, in the sense of presuming something to be correct.”

(Prof. Hans Joachim Musielak, Juristische Arbeitsblätter 8-9 (2010), 561)

Captain Petzel has been representing Peter Piller since the beginning of this year. Gisela Captain and Friedrich Petzel are thus particularly pleased to be able to present Tatsächliche Vermutungen – the artist’s first solo exhibition at the gallery.

Piller has been working with images from archives as well as his own photographs and drawings since the 1990s. In Tatsächliche Vermutungen, he establishes relationships between his most recent groups of works. Two of the great themes of human activity are linked visually: sexuality and death. Umschläge (2011-12), a block of 30 works is presented in the main space of the gallery; in these works, Piller examined, isolated and removed the text from the front and back covers of more than twenty years of issues (from the 1960s to the 1980s) of the East German army’s magazine Armeerundschau and transformed them into two-part images presented on the wall. On the left side of each, a (clothed) woman looks directly at the viewers; initially, she and her surroundings seem to have absolutely no connection to the military image on the right side of each pair. In the original, the warlike armoured vehicles pictured on the right were on the front cover of the army magazine, and the women – sometimes depicted in a suggestive manner – were to be found on its back cover, in an East German variation on the pin-up girl.

Piller’s intervention renders both systems simultaneously visible, and they bear a direct historical relationship to the gallery’s exhibition space in Berlin’s Karl-Marx-Allee, where – until 1989 – the East German military had passed in review before the East German government.

In the large-scale wall installation Immer Noch Sturm, 2012 (Still Storming), Piller combines images of World War I battlefields from historical postcards and found photos from books with seascapes from a 1920s geography textbook in order to create a grid of 24 black-and-white prints and distributed blank spaces. The landscape

photographs – documents of humanity’s excesses of destruction – and the images of the forces of nature on the open sea equal one another in terms of their immoderation. In relation to the art historical genre of battle paintings, both on land and at sea, Piller depicts the locations of violent

conflicts as empty stages left behind by the actors.

On the lower floor of the gallery, Piller shows Tatsächliche Vermutungen, the 2012 series that provided the exhibition with its title. This wall projection consists of 30 motifs in the form of black-and-white stills of (once again) deserted locations taken from a German detective series of the 1970s. All of these consist of fixed and isolated on-location shots from the existing film material. In this series, Piller deals with the issue of the credibility of supposedly documentary crime scene images just as he also thematises our presuppositions when viewing hackneyed images – in a context where dread seems perfectly at home within the familiar.

The Archiv Peter Piller, which consists largely of images from German regional newspapers, contains more than 100 groups of collected images which complexly reflect Piller's original search for the unintentionally aesthetic and noteworthy image.

The artist has been working on his Archiv Peter Piller since 1998: it deals with the re-interpretation and the re-presentation of images and archives of images already published in other contexts. In his artistic work to date, in addition to the images from regional newspapers, he has also utilized the photographs of a commercial aerial photography archive, images from the internet and from a Dutch factory newspaper as well as a Swiss insurance group's photographic documentation of damage claims.

Piller subsequently transfers this diverse material into his own ordering systems, which he then gives found or invented titles. His sets of drawings (Bürozeichnungen, Peripheriewanderungen) and his numerous art books are further important aspects of his oeuvre. In his precise observation and with his subtle sense of humour, Piller reflects upon media images' potential and the possibilities and limits of photographic and conceptual art.

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