

Natalie Czech

Fiction Mood

26.6.–31.7.2021

“Can a poem be an image at the same time, the photograph itself a visual poem and the historical object a reading matter?”

(Natalie Czech)

The staging of dialogs between image and text is at the core of Natalie Czech’s conceptual photography. Adapting aspects of pop and conceptual art, Natalie Czech plays with the “power of images” and the “meaning between the lines”. Objects become “words” and texts become “images”.

Natalie Czech’s new works presented in the show are directly influenced by the political and social experiences during the lockdown: What impact did the spatial, social and media-related limitation have on the view to the “outside”? The new works, “Window Views”, are based on this, their motifs are drawn from historical issues of the iconic magazine The New Yorker from the 1960s, 1970s and 1990s. The magazine was founded in 1925 and is famous for its cover illustrations that themselves are already collectibles and for the most part depict interiors and window views. A striking feature of the magazine, which contains the legendary sections “Talk of the Town” and “Goings on about Town” along with reviews of current Broadway productions, theater plays, movies or nightlife events, is that it dispenses with photographs. Natalie Czech cuts out certain parts of the respective covers and the following pages to make visible the original texts of the legendary columns. There she finds and marks through overpainting poems by literally “hidden voices” such as Anne Waldman, Langston Hughes, Tim Dlugos, or Hannah Weiner that reflect the social mechanisms of the search for identity. For her photographs, Natalie Czech stages a complex dialog between the original historical motif of the illustration, the original text of the “impression of the times” and the statement of the respective poet, creating a play with “history that repeats itself”, although it never remains the same.



A window view by Langston Hughes (Boats), 2021

2 archival pigment prints, framed behind museum glass
55,3 × 65,5 cm, 63 × 65,5 cm (total dimension: 116 × 65,5 cm)

This subtle form of making political statements is taken up by the “Capitol” motifs. All four works are based on motifs of so-called “generic record sleeves,” in which the American label “Capitol Records” distributed the 1966 Beatles song “Got To Get You Into My Life” to radio stations and music critics.

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Therefore, all motifs show the Capitol in the form of image or text. In the respective original text, Natalie Czech finds and marks the minimal poem by Larry Eigner “get for – got for – go”. The minimalism of the words, which can stand for the present and future, leave everything open. In combination with the Beatles, the motif of the Capitol and the collective knowledge of the attack on it on January 6, 2021, Natalie Czech constructs a moving dialog between different stories that connect the personal with the political.



A poem by repetition by Larry Eigner (Capitol s/w),

2021

3 archival pigment prints, framed behind museum glass
total dimension: 112 x 66,3 cm

The series “Cigarette Ends” adapts aspects of Advertising Photography, Pop- and Conceptual Art. Natalie Czech stages smoked cigarettes of iconic brands from the 1930s until today. Before starting this series she had to make a time consuming research for finding and acquiring the original cigarettes.

By arranging the brand names, Czech “writes” a minimal poem that becomes a visual poem through the photographic mise-en-scène. The title, “Cigarette Ends”, can be interpreted ambiguously – as the end of the tobacco industry or simply as a story that the cigarette has ended. The series plays with sociopolitical and individual “longings,” with each motif creating an autonomous poetry. Her series creates an intriguing play with the entire history of Photography, constructing a perspectival shift from a romantic view to a documentary inventory.

Natalie Czech’s new pieces literally make “hidden” voices visible and audible. Text becomes image, image becomes text, and the photographic motif a message of multiple perspectives.

Biographical note:

Natalie Czech’s work is known through numerous international solo exhibitions and museum collections such as Pinakothek der Moderne Munich, Fotomuseum Winterthur, Museum of Modern Art New York, Bundeskunstsammlung or Musée d’Art Moderne in Geneva. Natalie Czech was born in Germany in 1976 and studied photography at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf. Since 2020, she has held a professorship in photography at the Kunstakademie in Braunschweig. In July 2021 the MAMCO in Geneva will open an artist room, before that solo exhibitions were shown at Kunstverein Heilbronn (2021), KINDL - Center for Contemporary Art, Berlin (2019), CRAC d’Alsace (2016), Palais de Tokyo Paris (2014) or Kunstverein Hamburg (2013).

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