

JONATHAN MONK RICHARD PRINCE

April 8th until May 27th 2006

It is a matter of repeated presentation. Jonathan Monk and Richard Prince work with the re-staging of established complexes of meaning.

With Jonathan Monk (b.1969) repetition is to be taken literally. Monk, in his pieces, concerns himself again and again with the so-called masters of Minimal and Conceptual art. His 're-takes' often depict the displacement or rather the consequences of an idea. By following graphical instructions of a Sol le Witt or by realizing ideas and concepts of Ed Ruscha and Robert Barry, certain gaps in their concepts are revealed. This establishes a critical loop in the cognition of their work. It is a relative commentary on questions of production and perception.

Upon the invitation to show his pieces together with Richard Prince, Monk reacts with a series of twelve diptychs, especially developed for this exhibition which carries the title "Newton Illustrated". Monk's 'Newton Illustrated' is a series of 'repro-photographs' of the homonymous magazine, which Helmut Newton published from 1985-1995. "Newton Illustrated" appeared in four editions and convened the staging of the characteristic 'Newton-Model' with images of Hollywood stars such as Sigourney Weaver, Kim Basinger or Angelica Houston as well as photos of avant-garde symbols such as the Empire State Building or the Locomotive.

Placed between popular magazine culture and artistic reflection, Newton sees affiliations to either side ironically. Monk breaks down the high-gloss aesthetic of Newton's photography simply by taking a picture of the flipped opened magazine. He preserves the layout of the original horizontal or vertical position of the photographs. As with Richard Prince, the images lose their initial brilliance, their claim of perfection. The 'snapshotting' of the journals is equivalent to the process of visual consumption but also adjusts the media-charged pictures of Helmut Newton. With 'Newton Illustrated', Jonathan Monk examines the potential of conceptual strategies and simultaneously confronts Prince's iconography with that of Newton's. The construction of identities in the work of Prince and Newton is broken down. Monk succeeds to add the production of usable images to the categories of affirmation and critical deconstruction.

Richard Prince (b.1949) who became well known through his 'repro-photographs' of those cowboys, which still today shape the iconography of a certain cigarette brand, is working with the potential of imagination and projection. By resorting to existent image material, which he primarily takes from magazines, newspapers, books and posters, Richard Prince attempts to discern and grasp the desire these images (should) evoke. In his texts, Prince exclusively writes in the third person, when talking about himself. With this shift from 'I' to 'him', he not only pursues the discussion about the annulment of authorship but this transfer may be understood as the foil of his artistic work. The extracts of the before mentioned advertising images are 'cleansed' of text and yet 'contaminated' by a deficient exposure technique. Prince often uses the incorrect photo material for his reproductions, which instigates an alienated colouring. Consequently, the perfection of the advertising photography is lost. The accidentally 'wrong' colours and the coarse grain are, in reference to the flawless advertising a type of notice of loss but also they mirror one mindset of the artist, which does not take photography so seriously but rather reminds of the daily use of the medium.

GALERIE MEZZANIN

The series 'Upstate, 1995-1999' that is on display here at the Mezzanin gallery, consists of photographs, which were taken in and around a house Richard Prince bought in a little village north of New York called Rensselaerville. The house, held together loosely by insulating plates, mediates a state of forever unfinished. It appears behind unmown grass, a deserted Dodge Barracuda from the year 1973 is parked in front. The surrounding area bears an array of remarkable objects such as artfully crafted flower pots made from tires, basketball hoops, minute swimming pools, billboards as well as tire tracks on the highway. The inside of the house reveals unexpected objects and sculptures, which places it within an art context. Not without a certain sense of humour, Prince designs architectural structures which in their execution and even more so in the photographic representation, are reminiscent of Donald Judd's artistic self-staging. Additionally to such art related references, 'Upstate' also stands for an area which could be the home of 'Cowboys' and 'Girlfriends' whose medial role models find a place in Prince's work. The artist has always had an ambivalent relationship with the art historical categorization of his work as being Appropriation Art. Although he was one of the first to concern himself with 'repro-photography' as an acquisition strategy, his goals differed greatly from those of Appropriation Artists such as Sherrie Levine. For Prince, appropriation stands for a new layer of reality whose main interest lies within the creative strength of vision, whilst Sherrie Levine places her critical analysis on the production and questions of institution and representation.

The confrontation of Jonathan Monks "Newton Illustrated" and Richard Prince's "Upstate" places various forms of appropriation under discussion. The two photographic series depict the paradigm change, which stages the "Drama of gender identity as a repeated rendition" (Judith Butler: "The discomfort of the sexes")

Eva Maria Stadler

Übersetzung: Isabella Vatter

Jonathan Monk

Newton Illustrated

2006

Dyptichs of b/w photographs

21 x 27cm

Edition 3

Richard Prince

Upstate

1995 – 99

Ektacolor photographs

67,9 x 50.8 cm