

Since the late 1990's, Peter Piller (Fritzlar, Germany, 1968) has been dealing with one of the most defining traits of the so-called information-era: the impulse towards the creation and development of archives. The *information-era* is, of course, the most recent and extreme state of the quite ancient phenomena of collecting, organizing and storing data. History (as a practice, as well as as a narrative) is – in a sense, at least – a very direct consequence of this impulse. And History, with its need for sound proofs and undeniable references, got ever more interesting since photography came about. For the last two centuries, not only historical reporting but pretty much the whole of communication has been resting on a highly specialized game of making a collective sense of visual materials that, when freed from any sort of caption, say precisely nothing, but are in themselves all so very telling. This fluctuating, artificial capacity of the visual record to act as the anchor of meaning has been the focus of Peter Piller's artistic practice. His on-growing archive, bearing several thousand found pictures distributed by more than 100 categories, has served as his primary tool for a critical (and often humored) analysis of the shifting ideological ability of images, of the overruling power of the category, and, ultimately, of the frailty of the visual structure of meaning and its multiple subliminal endeavours.

Assembled around the title *Don't Hate the Player. Hate the Game*, the majority of the pieces shown in this exhibition belong to two different categories from the Peter Piller's archive: *Umschläge* (2011-12) and *Bereitschaftsgrad* (2015). The first one is composed of twenty pieces showing found front and back covers of as many editions of an East German military magazine titled *Armeerundschau*. Published between 1956 and 1990, *Armeerundschau* was the National People's Army medium of choice to inspire and prepare young men for their military service. Cleared of all text but maintaining every element of graphic design originally used in the magazine, these full-color couplings of *girls* and *guns* are presented here alongside – and, for the first time, interspersed with – black-and-white counterparts, also found as spreads in the inside pages of the same magazine (*Bereitschaftsgrad*), as well as single-image, large-scale pieces that, by way of their less explicit or direct nature, throw a puzzling level of ambiguity into the mix (*Blicke*).

The importance of the serial component of Peter Piller's production does not pass unnoticed in this exhibition. In fact, repetition and variation are once again key factors in the experience of this artist's works. If repetition functions here as an annihilator of narrative – that is, as the element that lets us know immediately that there is no story being told – variation is, on the other hand, the factor that allows us to concentrate on the slight differences these images carry with them – the minor details through which the ideological apparatus of a military prop magazine comes to show. It is therefore pretty understandable if one finds oneself moving on from the blatant display of power and violence contained in the soldiers' images and the varying degrees of sexual innuendo of the

girls' pictures, into an even more disturbing realization of the inner workings of a carefully designed structure of meaning: one that correlates pleasure and pain, tenderness and violence, technology and flesh, sacrifice and reward, sexual drive and melancholy, equating and effacing everything under the spell of the perfect photographic composition.

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