

Justus Köhncke
I WILL SURVIVE

07. Februar - 07. März 2009

Eröffnung am Samstag, dem 07. Februar 2009 von 20 - 22 Uhr

I WILL SURVIVE, the first exhibition by Cologne musician and DJ Justus Köhncke in Galerie Cinzia Friedlaender, showcases drawings and sculptures that refer to places, encounters and technologies, which point to an existence between recording studios, tours as a live musician and DJ not to mention the gay social scene.

The relics of types of older and more recent, present or simply represented technologies, (digital photo albums, neon advertising, gambling machines and music studios), and in part the relics seem to be found objects, generally revolve around the creation of closeness or playful absent-mindedness. We encounter a barman learning the ropes in a pub in old town Cologne, a railway scene that could be from a boulevard piece with a cockatoo serving as an amusing means of gaining people's attention, or the demolition of a bank building. The sleazy aura of the objects and situations reinforces the impression that what we see is somehow existential and yet absent-minded.

As a music producer and DJ, Justus Köhncke is aware of the seductive nature of such technologies above all that of the music studio. In the large-format, fuzzy reproductions of music studio photos from the 1960s and 1970s his intention is not so much to show an enthusiasm for Paul McCartney, David Bowie, Chic/Sister Sledge or the Carpenters as a fan (though that might also be the case) - here he sees himself more as a colleague. Nor is the intention a comparison with such larger-than-life sized role models or one of the meanwhile innumerable Pop music references in the visual arts, but identification with certain journeys through life that interest him and the working day it involves. It is the simple recognition that you have the same profession. And like every profession such a profession demands certain ways of working and efficiency. This identification makes it interesting to see how the others work, or worked.

Roland Barthes describes a comparable situation in relation to the author "colleagues", he so admires Flaubert, Balzac, Proust or Kafka (The Preparation of the Novel), by exploring the conditions surrounding the production of such writing (the work space, lighting, working hours and rules of life through to matters of illness and survival, which either led to a withdrawal from the world and into production or have a rather negative impact on production), so as to derive insights for your own approach to work (writing a novel).

The studio is a working environment that shows a Pop musician not on the stage or the record or magazine cover, in other words as a star, but as a "normal", focused or relaxed worker? Here you don't see the musician as a star but as a (working, normal person, not staged, but in their "natural state" and consequently in their beauty. Nonetheless, there is still something of the star status in these images (Paul McCartney will always be Paul McCartney), which distinguishes the Pop musician from the author (as Roland Barthes describes him. After all, the identification media of Pop stars (film, photography) always emphasize their superiority and in doing so foster what might be called a painful desire in the involved observer. That said, the closeness to the admired star is more direct, more physical, it can be produced via work and technology, but also via the masochistic desire itself, via consumption, pleasure, dependence - all things you are exposed to less in a reflective manner but rather lacking in detachment, highly emotional, and even vulnerable, it is existential exposure.

The theatrical array of this exhibition operates within this complex relationship involving admiration, identification, the need for intimacy and fear of closeness - and the central relic deployed is an older glass display case. The artist seems to gaze out from a hermetically sealed space out onto the world around him and simultaneously to protect himself from unpleasant contacts.

Michael Kerkmann
Translation: Jeremy Gaines