

## Jeronimo Voss

GALERIE CINZIA FRIEDLAENDER

Only two years after completing his studies at the Städelschule in Frankfurt, Jeronimo Voss has just had his first solo show in a Berlin gallery, "Восстание рыбаков" (Revolt of the Fishermen). Its subject: the ghosts of history and their manifestation in art. Appropriately enough, his method was illusion—smoke and mirrors. Nothing was as it seemed. The six translucent, framed prints that welcomed the visitor in the main room of the gallery, *Invitation (Восстание рыбаков)* [Invitation [Revolt of the Fishermen]], 2011, proved to consist of separate, overlapping transparent pictures, dramatically spotted. The abstract drawing of a wave that practically crashes against the gaze lay beneath a lens that spatially distorts the image; this was *La vague (Восстание рыбаков)* [The Wave [Revolt of the Fishermen]], 2010. A similar operation was undertaken in the audiovisual presentation *Восстание рыбаков* (Revolt of the Fishermen), 2011, with its images cast on the wall—seemingly by an overhead projector, though this is merely a prop—along with the disembodied hand that appears to be swapping out the transparencies. The overhead projector was itself part of the stage set. Voss's voice-over relates the ways in which film, theater, and their predecessors have given visual expression to the theme of revolution. Once upon a time, we learn, phantasmagoric portraits of revolutionary heroes (the accompanying images are of Danton and Marat) were projected on curtains or walls of fog. Then came the new medium of film. It took on historical subjects, exemplified here by the German theater director Erwin Piscator's *Aufstand der Fischer von St. Barbara* (The Revolt of the Fishermen of St. Barbara), made in the Soviet Union between 1931 and 1934. Piscator's only film, it is based on the book of the same name by Anna Seghers—but transforms the failed rebellion of Breton fishermen she describes into a successful one. But once the National Socialists came to power, this ideologically motivated work could not be shown in Germany, and Piscator's call for Communist revolt went unheard in his homeland. Voss narrates all these things while showing us images of theater sets and film locations as well as portraits of Piscator and Seghers, his voice-over forming a sort of text collage of historical facts, fragments of the novel, and biographical sketches of the writer and director.

Voss's excursus on Piscator is more than a lesson in political events of the twentieth century and their reflection in politically engaged art,

however. He is also always concerned with the production of images, above all immaterial ones. He collages descriptions of landscapes from Seghers's book and invokes Piscator's words to describe what we would now call a multimedia theater incorporating film and projected images. The exhibition functions like a series of nesting dolls. Voss chooses a succession of ungraspable pictures swiftly flashing by and a voice without physical presence to tell his ghost story via images that have to be animated in the truest sense of the word.

In his use of narration and images, Voss is not indebted to any of the currently predominant strategies. He neither presents history as an unreliable, changing construct, nor insists on adhering to an ostensibly factual, documentary approach. In addition, he neither denies the expressive power of the image nor employs it solely to self-reflexive ends. His show was a contemporary phantasmagoria aiming not to dazzle its audience with images but rather to reveal the staging and ghostly nature of these images. Voss believes in telling stories in art, including political stories, even if their representation is a chimera. The main thing is that we remain conscious of this fact.

—Astrid Mania

Translated from German by Oliver E. Dryfus.



Jeronimo Voss, *Invitation (Восстание рыбаков)* (Invitation [Revolt of the Fishermen]), 2011, six laser prints on film foil, theater lights, pass-partout, 17 x 11 1/4 x 13".