

Text for press release

Christian Jankowski
Tableau Vivant

30 August – 26 October 2013

Opening hours:
Wednesday - Friday 13h00 – 18h00
Saturday 11h00 – 17h00
and by appointment

Grieder Contemporary is delighted to present Christian Jankowski's first solo exhibition in Zurich, which comes after his initial solo exhibition in Küssnacht in 2010. The exhibition centres on the gallery's architectural cube, which is being re-purposed as Kabinett Grieder (Grieder Cabinet) and framed by the film Tableau Vivant TV and a series of works titled New Paintings. The exhibition as a whole is based on the phenomenon of the "tableau vivant" (living picture), the art form in which living people are used to depict paintings and sculptures.

Christian Jankowski ranks amongst the most important media artists of his generation. Using humour in his performances and videos to subvert the media and art scene, he frequently involves people in their own professional capacities to pursue - partly unaware - seemingly absurd artistic activities. In Kunstmarkt TV, for instance, two teleshopping presenters sold artworks via a television shopping channel during the 2008 Art Cologne art fair. In Strip the Auctioneer (2009), an auctioneer from Christie's Amsterdam auctioned, item by item, the clothes he was standing in.

Kabinett Grieder finds the gallery's staff relocate to the exhibition space itself, complete with office desks, computers, telephones and a printer. Taking the architectural cube as a starting point, architects Florian Baier and Nina Bischofberger have designed costumes for the gallery's proprietor, director, assistant and bookkeeper. Occupational apparel specialist John Arnold has taken these designs and interpreted them into actual garments, which the staff wear while the gallery is open. Not only that: all four have received instructions from the artist to create an immobile tableau vivant at specific times. As a result, the day-to-day operations of the Zurich gallery transmogrify into a long-term performance with an indeterminate outcome.

By way of complement to the Kabinett Grieder, the exhibition is screening the film Tableau Vivant TV, which Christian Jankowski produced for the 17th Biennale of Sidney in 2010. The work is also a montage of its genesis. Every milestone, from the first meeting with the curator to its previewing at the opening of the Biennale, is represented as a tableau vivant featuring the artist at the centre, each scene interpreted for the television audience by a presenter.

A number of paintings hang on the rear wall of the gallery: taken from the artist's New Paintings series, they call to mind icons of the history of art. For this series, Christian Jankowski has taken amateur photographs of tableaux vivants from the internet depicting famous images borrowed from the history of art. The artist commits reinterpretations of the Madonna of Chancellor Rolin by Jan van Eyck and The Dance by Henri Matisse to the original medium of canvas, thus closing a circle composed of several layers. This circle begins with the original, which is then reproduced countless times in art historical books before being recreated as a living sculpture, documented using the medium of photography, posted on the internet and made accessible to a far wider audience, and finally copied by the artist onto canvas and thus returned to its original medium.

Christian Jankowski (*1968 in Göttingen, Germany) lives and works in Berlin. He holds the Chair of Sculpture at the Stuttgart State Academy of Art and Design. His retrospective, "Heavy Weight History", runs at the Centre for Contemporary Art Ujazdowski Castle, Warsaw until the end of August, and a catalogue detailing his entire oeuvre is also due for publication. Alongside numerous exhibitions and film screenings worldwide, he is currently working on the scenery of a play about Martin Kippenberger to be premiered at the Schauspiel Köln in Cologne on 12 October 2013. Looking further ahead, the Santa Monica Museum of Art, California, is planning a major all-embracing exhibition of the artist's work in 2014.

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