

Text for press release

Dieter Meier

«En Passant - Werke von 1969-2010»

30 April – 24 July 2010

Opening times:

Fridays and Saturdays 14h00 – 18h00

and by prior arrangement

Dieter Meier bowed out of the “art race” not long after his solo exhibition at the Zurich Kunsthaus in 1976: his work had been seen in projects by Jean-Christoph Ammann and Bice Curiger alongside that of Peter Fischli, David Weiss, Markus Raetz and Urs Lüthi – now what? He screamed himself hoarse in underground clubs – and two or three coincidences later (thanks be to Boris Blank) there came Yello. Dieter Meier is now opening his archive for the first time. What emerges is much that is unknown: videos, vanished groups of works, scratched contact prints and early sketches dating back to 1969. Many of his early works ended up in Yello videos to cast a spell on MTV audiences. An elementary Situationist, he had explored new open spaces in the cities. Yello allowed him to express his art not only on the street, but to inject it right into MTV viewers’ living rooms. Radicalised Situationism.

In that sense, the gallery is celebrating the ephemeral: fleeing from itself to avoid the crystallisation of success. Like a wheel rolling out of itself, constantly undergoing reinvention. Its hub glowing and throwing out sparks. The chariot arrives, Parmenidean-like, at the gate of the Temple of Night, where the Way of Truth (knowledge) and the Way of Opinion (ignorance) diverge. Meier, as a dabbler in inability, has explored both options: since it is impossible to grasp what it is that the philosophy excludes, all one can do at the moment of failure is to fleetingly touch upon a tangent of the void.

Yello’s success belies Meier’s skill at failure. He also deals in wine and meat, silk and words. All successfully. What will he be selling us here? Himself, or like the Dadaist Walter Serner in *Letzte Lockerungen*, a lady’s stocking? Fashioned from guanaco wool?

He pursues it, not as performance art, but as a business idea using a machine developed by a Herr Adot. Is there such a person – Adot? Or is he imaginary? And is Yello singer Meier just one of those 48 biographies that he exhibited at the Zurich Kunsthaus in 1976? Yes? No?

On 25 February 1971 Dieter Meier sold passers-by the words YES and NO for \$1 on the corner of New York’s 57th Street and 8th Avenue. And at a preview he appeared revolver in hand with a sign reading *This Man Will Not Shoot* as a response to a line contained in André Breton’s *Surrealist Manifesto*. Gone are the days of J.-J. Rousseau’s solitary reveries. The Romantic Walker was replaced by the idle man-about-town, who floats through the crowds on his me-cloud in a constant state of easygoing exaltedness. Meier knows dandyism in all its facets. Yet became just a passer-by.

In 1970, rapturously, minute after minute, he left behind a trace in time in Munich, paving slabs and park benches with his signature. Ephemeral actions – such as the 60 minutes he spent on 23 March 1994 standing on the plaque he had installed back in 1972 as part of *Documenta 5*. A passer-by indeed. Highwayman. Who’s robbing who? Is the artist robbing the businessman? Meier’s Ojo de Agua vineyard in Argentina exists only to generate revenue from one of its hectares, which, until 9 May 2108, will be used to help fund the rolling of the *Boule d’Or Centenaire* (gold-plated centenary ball) in Hamburg und Zurich – or did he create the ball to make sense of the wine?

Many artists in recent years have installed pizzerias or travel agencies in museums without being able to bake pizzas or sell tickets. Meier makes wine. Breeds cattle. In the museum where he hones his art: the world.

For the catalogue accompanying the exhibition and to help illustrate Dieter Meier’s oeuvre (which often itself involved newspapers), curator Stefan Zweifel is working with graphic artist Marie Lusa to harness the power of the past as represented by the graphical space of the newspaper. For further information please contact Florian Seedorf (Tel. +41.43.818 56 07 or [info@grieder-contemporary.com](mailto:info@grieder-contemporary.com)).

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