

“Couple – Self – Made”

NO - PORN

Series in 5 parts, c-print, each 60” x 70”

This photography work presses together all participants into one place: the starting point of the process beginning with a camera click and a view, and whose voyeuristic pathways cross each other between self-critique, viewing of the self, and the lust of viewing. This place is identical with the place behind the viewfinder of every camera involved in taking the image.

This virtual density fosters the role switching of all participants, which is typically helpful in processes intending to be critical:

- Group 1: those who take pictures of themselves in the mirror (the photo used as outline for the oil paintings)
- Group 2: those who ostensibly simulate the hanging of the oil paintings onto a photo paper wall and who moreover could be the ones who are portraying themselves (Group 1)
- Group 3: the viewers or recipients
- Group 4: the painter and photographer of the finished artworks as in one person

Within the direct other, at the opposite end of the viewing axis, the camera lens sits in the middle of the image, in the mirror, in the photograph, in the painting, as well as it was centrally located during the photo shooting. It is along this tightly conceived multi-axis that the intended processes within the participants can oscillate and the designed image layers can unfold their bemusing and complex potential.

The layers of the image:

Outline photo and painting

The paintings can be understood as props used for the finished work of photography. The oil paintings show the (pornographic?) self-portrait of four women and one man in postures that follow orientations of the image axes (Group 1). The visible edge of a mirror and the finger at the release button of the digital camera define each image as a painted (private) photo. The painting uses a style reminiscent of Pop Art aesthetics, which presumably matches the visual taste of Group 2.

It is clear that the painting style is adapting to the particular concept of each photography series, which therefore I call ‘adapted painting’ (“affirmative Malerei”). Due to the adapted painting style and its openly presented superficiality, the painting itself exerts a playful critique of current art institutions and markets.

The eyes of the people depicted in the self-portraits either remain hidden or are closed. Centrally located on eye level the lens substitutes the view of the depicted model. The lens steers the recipient’s view into the camera’s eye, next to the model’s genitalia or it replaces them altogether.

As self-made images they hardly represent traditional patterns of voyeuristic, pornographic or commercial praxis, but also they critique those only peripherally. The ratio between women and men in this series equals the gender ratio of pornographic images offered in the Internet.

Photography

Four women and one man hang the painting onto a wallpapered wall. Wearing casual pajamas they simulate a private situation, while hardly running the risk of becoming a sex object or voyeuristic object themselves.

Contrary to studio photography the simulation becomes visible by depicting the setting. The photo wall is located in the courtyard of the studio building, which continues to serve in related series as microcosm and experimental field for performative praxis. The protagonists live in the neighborhood or they are acquaintances who have little to do with contemporary art in their lives. Thus, with respect to its content and formal aspects, this series references other series such as Stranding 2, Fishing Record, Couple-Objects, Couple-Gun, Couple-Couple etc. A lively exchange of ideas and thoughts happened in the course of the work on Couple-Self-Made. It remains unclear whether Group 2 equals Group 1, meaning whether we see them hanging their own painted "self-portraits" or images of others.

At first they look onto the painting, which includes the depicted lens of the digital camera, then they turn to the analogue large-format camera, the lens which is located behind them: thus they also define the axis plying between the analogue and digital image, the oscillating directions of views, that is to say that line that sews everything up or renews it.

This becomes visible through long exposure resulting in depicted simultaneity of both directions. Thus a portrait of a turning towards and turning away person is generated.

The size of the finished photo equals the size of the painting. Like the painting, hung as an unframed sheet of paper onto the wall, the photo is tucked directly to the exhibition space wall.

Outlook

Within this dense fabric the place of viewing, the real and imagined end point of the axis, becomes a point for converging all, an assembly point. The recipients are invited to experience quasi physically the switching from one voyeuristic praxis of viewing to the next, from one art reception to other habits of receiving.

Thus the engagement of the recipient is not simply an intellectual one that is concerned with a playfully swapping between different realities and their relationships, but also with a directly perceptible, very close and physical connection: the recipients become part of the performative process, the part of that action, which surpasses the microcosm of the experimental field.