

KATZ CONTEMPORARY

Thomas Müllenbach
beyond selfie

15 January - 5 March 2016

Book presentation & signing *Thomas Müllenbach - ORIGINALE*
Saturday, 27 February 2016, 12 - 5 pm

KATZ CONTEMPORARY is delighted to present the first solo exhibition with new works by **Thomas Müllenbach** (*1949, Koblenz, Germany, lives and works in Zürich, Switzerland). In the exhibition *beyond selfie* Müllenbach primarily devotes himself to the current theme of selfies. Further works show his workbench and the beds he has slept in as well as other motives that intrigue him (e.g. *Camp*). Additionally, watercolour paintings are exhibited along with drawings in the basement. All the works shown in the exhibition have never been displayed before making this exhibition a debut.

Thomas Müllenbach's new works address the „selfie-culture“ that has thus far remained foreign to the artist: His selfies are images of self-representation, yet they are all created with an analog camera in front of a wholly unspectacular background, i.e. the author can't see himself while taking the photographs and, according to Müllenbach, transforms the „dreadful“ photograph into the painting of the „amiss“. Through this process the „self“ comes to light in the depiction, yet often finds itself inevitably being amiss. Müllenbach's approximation to the artistic self by means of the selfie is achieved with his distinctive critical eye while the artist simultaneously becomes the target of his own self-irony.

It's fitting for Müllenbach to choose an undisturbed background for his selfies and to let himself almost fade away in the corner of his painting, like in *Selfie with russian cap* where only his cap and two button eyes gaze directly at the viewer. Specifically, the artist takes issue with the heroic in art - the meaningful, illustrious and symbolically charged is disliked by him. On the contrary, he's intrigued by the quiet and ordinary things that are taken for granted and lets his eye unintentionally wander over these objects. Equivalent to each painting, drawing or any other form of art perpetually only being able to depict a detail, the excerpt or the fragmentary naturally constitutes a subject in Müllenbach's selfies. Albrecht Dürer had already realized: By creating an excerpt, you create art. Yet Müllenbach often leaves out precisely the most important things (there is after all always something more important), to demonstrate the less important and the insignificant that in itself refers to something else altogether. His ironic and humorous view on life, himself included, evokes a contemplative layer of meaning in which the simple appears anew as complex. The ordinary and the familiar become alienated (like a table, when viewed from underneath for the first time), occasionally nearly eerie. Boredom, the dilation of time, is another significant aspect for the artist which painting achieves to a great extent - it serves as a creative process and motor for him; boredom being a state one wishes to escape from.

Müllenbach's oil and watercolour paintings as well as his drawings are created rapidly, yet skillfully and never in a creative frenzy - especially for the development of motives and deciding, what can suitably be painted, the artist takes his time. In his oil paintings surface and space are treated differently: While Müllenbach adheres to certain conventions concerning the perspective order of the objects in the room, he simultaneously transforms

them into an abstract treatment of colour surfaces. The application of colour in his new works is noticeably thinner than in his earlier oil paintings; his skin has also grown thinner and he has become more sensitive, as he states. Whilst shaded areas are portrayed in his paintings, the artist doesn't hatch in his drawings. His explanation is that the pencil was designed to produce lines, whereas the paintbrush, being a „surface-instrument“, is suitable to create colour and tonal values. On principle, the artist doesn't create sketches for his watercolour paintings or drawings, consistent with his process for oil painting.

In his drawings nothing gets erased nor is Müllenbach interested in reproducing the correct perspectives, his images aren't reconstructions. His own photographs or images from the media often function as templates which he then transposes freehand into a larger format, creating deliberate distortions in the process.

Thomas Müllenbach's revealing eye penetrates the surface of things and momentarily unveils the mysterious that lies concealed in the trivial - in his opinion mystery and triviality aren't mutually exclusive - and whoever loses themselves in the contemplation of Müllenbach's works will undoubtedly have to agree.

Stefanie Bissig

translated by Eva Meyer

For visual material and further information please contact the gallery:

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PREVIEW

Urs Lüthi

19 March - 7 May 2016

Opening: 18 March 2016