

**PRESS RELEASE**

**Still Life. Obstinacy of Things**

13.09.18 - 17.02.19

Presseconference: Wednesday, 12.09.18, 10 a.m.

Opening: Wednesday, 12.09.18, 7.30 p.m.



Andrea Witzmann, *In the Wealth of Time*  
4, 2012 © Andrea Witzmann



Andrzej Steinbach, *untitled (wet jacket)*,  
Aus: ordinary stones, 2016 © Andrzej



Annette Kelm, *Pizza Pizza Pizza*, 2016  
© Annette Kelm, KÖNIG GALERIE, Berlin

With around twenty international artists, the exhibition provides an overview of the photographic still life, a genre that has gained an enormous presence once again, especially in recent years.

The photographs tie into visual traditions that may be found in the history of painting, but also - with a view to a fact-based shooting style - in the history of modern photography. Yet it certainly does not imply that the new still lifes merely represent nostalgic references to an old genre. Quite the contrary: the artists - to invoke the words of Rosalind E. Krauss - are actually “reinventing photography.” They do so by developing, while drawing on specific styles and practices, a clear artistic alternative - this applies in equal measure to the space of things, the space of images, and the space of photography. In a certain sense, all are imbued with the notion of *Eigensinn*, a German term which translates as “willfulness,” but also as obstinacy and strong-mindedness. So *Eigensinn* or “willfulness” is to be understood in a dual sense of the word: not only are the images permitted to assert their own logic, a pictorial autonomy as it were, but the genre is worked through with new motifs willfully or even radically with the aim of disrupting the prevailing visual conventions. In the process, photography as a medium is surveyed again and again.

**Counterspace to Networks**

So as to understand the topicality of the still life, it is worthwhile to allude to the high technical and staging effort necessitated by object and studio photography or a still life in terms of realization. Indeed, against this backdrop the question arises as to whether it might also form, through its compositorial stringency and precision, a kind of “counterspace” to the digital present and its uncontrolled streams of imagery. With the still life, vision slows down: its pictorial spaces allow enormous presence to unfold. This presence stands in contrast to the transience of the

digital. Surely it is no coincidence that the still life is now being revived at the very moment our visual cultures are immersed in a state of upheaval and photographic images are beginning to replace language. What could be more appropriate than to respond to this societal phenomenon with photographic images which, in a way, evade verbalization and which no longer want to show what they are rendering as things and only things?

#### The Present-Day World of Things: Outlandish and Emblematic

This moment of resistance, operating in its own aesthetics within the images, has something to do with the things rendered by the photographs being bound to a present that, often, we have not fully penetrated. The new pictures do indeed adopt traditional criteria of form, such as by showing the inanimate objects and items so typical of the genre in liaison with (ephemeral) plants or (perishable) food. But at the same time, it is often difficult to sound out what we are actually seeing: the rendered things appear to be just as emblematic for the present as they are outlandish. But here familiar things are also rendered, such as the global markets and their consumer worlds with the sometimes most remote (high-end or cheap) products. They signify a breeding ground for new motifs. Herein lay their contemporaneity.

At times, things enter the picture by chance, as cultural indices as it were, and as “traces” that allow conclusions to be drawn, for instance about the real life of their owners (in the work of Ketuta Alexi-Meskhishvili). In other concepts, the things become, through strictly formalized views, their own aesthetic symbols that appear to reference nothing but themselves (for instance in the work of Annette Kelm). In yet other works, the things are staged as a kind of aesthetic decoy, not least in order to wash to the surface the remote and unconscious facets of the commodity world surrounding us and its contemporary nature (in the work of Lucie Stahl or Andrzej Steinbach). In the process, contemporary artists emphasize what is frequently a random and changing appearance of the things, but also the openness of their interpretability. The works thus elude the concept of a full mastery of the image—or even a mastery of information. Instead, something different offensively manifests: the willfulness of things, the willfulness of images, the willfulness of photography.

#### Artists' List

**Ketuta Alexi-Meskhishvili (GE), Dirk Braeckman (BE), Moyra Davey (CAN), Tacita Dean (GB), Gerald Domenig (AT), Harun Farocki (DE), Hans-Peter Feldmann (DE), Manuel Gorkiewicz (AT), Jan Groover (US), Matthias Herrmann (DE), David Hockney (GB), Leo Kandl (AT), Annette Kelm (DE), Elad Lassry (IL), Zoe Leonard (US), Laura Letinsky (CA), Sharon Lockhart (US), Anja Manfredi (AT), Barbara Probst (DE), Ugo Rondinone (CH), Lucie Stahl (DE), Andrzej Steinbach (DE/PL), Ingeborg Strobl (AT), James Welling (US), Christopher Williams (US), Andrea Witzmann (AT)**

**FACTS**

Venue	KUNST HAUS WIEN Untere Weißgerberstraße 13, 1030 Vienna
Curator	Maren Lübbke-Tidow
Exhibition	13.09.18 – 17.02.19
Press conference	Wed, 12.09.18, 10 a.m.
Opening	Wed, 12.09.18, 7:30 p.m.
Catalogue	<i>Eigensinn der Dinge, Bilder, Fotografie. Stilleben in künstlerischen Konzepten der Gegenwart</i> With an introduction by Bettina Leidl, and texts by Harun Farocki, Maren Lübbke-Tidow and Martin Prinzhorn 248 pages, hardcover, € 26
Exhibition Program	Thur, 13.09.18, 4 p.m. – 6 p.m. Exhibition tour with curator Maren Lübbke-Tidow and artists of the exhibition. With Dirk Braeckman, Andrzej Steinbach, Gerald Domenig and others  Thur, 18.10.18, 6 p.m. & Wed, 16.01.19, 6 p.m. Guided tour with curator Maren Lübbke-Tidow  Sun, 23.09.18 & 20.01.19, 11 a.m.–5 p.m. Photo Workshops with Kay von Aspern <i>Urban Stills – Still Life in the City</i> Fee: € 95 Information and reservation: <a href="mailto:workshop@kunsthauswien.com">workshop@kunsthauswien.com</a>  Fr, 28.09.18, 12:30 p.m. Public discussion, in conjunction with Vienna Contemporary <i>Still Life. A Genre reinvent itself?</i> With Bettina Leidl, director KUNST HAUS WIEN, and Manuel Gorkiewicz, artist Moderation: Nela Eggenberger, chief editor EIKON In cooperation with EIKON VC Marx Halle, Karl-Farkas-Gasse 19, 1030 Vienna

Wed, 14.11.18, 6 p.m.

Expert talk

*From historical Still Life to modern Photography*

With Martin Prinzhorn, linguist and art critic, Alexander Strasoldo,  
advisor for Old Master Painting at Dorotheum, Bettina Leidl, director  
KUNST HAUS WIEN

In cooperation with Dorotheum Wien

Special edition

In the museum shop are two special editions in context of the  
exhibition from the artist Andrea Witzmann available

*On the Hour on Overcast Days, 2015*

C-Print, 30 x 40 cm, Edition 30 + 5 AP

€ 180

*On the Hour on Overcast Days, 2018*

C-Print, 30 x 40 cm, Edition 30 + 5 AP

€ 180

Opening hours

Daily 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Entrance fee

Museum Hundertwasser € 11 / Still Life € 9

Combined ticket € 12

Annual pass € 22 / Annual family ticket € 39

Children up to 10 years free, 11 to 18 years € 5

Student ticket € 5 (with student ID)

Press contact

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Press photographs and credits can be downloaded here:

<http://www.kunsthauswien.com/en/press/still-life/>

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