

LES CHANTS DE MALDOROR

TAMARA LORENZ // ALEXANDRA SCHUMACHER // CHRISTOF ZWIENER

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In the words of Roland Barthes, “what the Photograph reproduces to infinity has occurred only once: the Photograph mechanically repeats what could never be repeated existentially.” Photography is thus a proxy for a momentary state of the object depicted; only in its visibility does that object exist beyond the irrecoverable loss of the moment, in which realities are kept like secrets. In processual space, perception is focused on everything that does or does not take place in and after signification. In this way moments of reality are produced - including in the “space” of the photographic - that demand meaning and significance from countless fragments of memory and expectation. The simultaneously documentary and constructive nature of photography touched on here lends the medium an unsettling quality. The intermediate states of actual moments of reality recorded by photography do not indicate an objective reality; rather, they are assembled in the viewer’s head into perpetually new realities. In the quest for categorization and codification, strategies of appropriation are infiltrated by blind spots, by gaps, that conceal a radical acknowledgment of the imaginary - which, on the other hand, may be understood in terms of its irrefutable connection to the symbolic order of the real.

These contradictions and paradoxes raise questions about “truth” and “staging,” which are addressed by Tamara Lorenz, Alexandra Schumacher and Christof Zwiener in an expansive display of overlapping installation elements.

In this context the exhibition’s title, “Les chants de Maldoror,” is initially disconcerting. It comes from the book by Lautréamont, which, on account of its bizarre narratives and stubbornly alogical combinations of different “realities,” was read by the Surrealists as a world of early Dadaist/Surrealist ideas. In the enigmatic arrangement titled L’Enigme d’Isidore Ducasse, Man Ray referred to that now-famous passage in which a young man’s beauty is compared to “the chance encounter of a sewing machine and an umbrella on a dissecting table.” This object wrapped in burlap was created specifically to be photographed, its contents to remain unseen. The moment of concealment is critically underscored, as is the destruction of the object after the act of photography. Man Ray used photography, with its reference to a real object, as a way of preserving his secret and creating an imaginary reality.

Man Ray’s process of de-arrangement, entailing as it does impermanence and the impossibility of discovering a universally valid reality behind that which is hidden, leads us back to the current exhibition at Stedefreund. While the sign that reads “Display” in Tamara Lorenz’s installation is a conscious allusion to the staged artificiality of the situation, in which various experiences of “imagery” (in the form of sculpture, photography and film) are played off against each other, Alexandra Schumacher’s elements confront precisely the paradox of photography cited above. In their function as a documentary medium, the photographic works incorporated into the installation (as wallpaper, or laminated on aluminum) refer to a working process that investigates an artistic idea at various stages on a space-time continuum. Yet photography does not so much reflect the inherent reality of a provisional installation as it invents it, in that the staging of the photograph assigns prime importance to particular moments. Here is where Christof Zwiener’s pieces pick up. “Shadows” on national monuments are revealed to be temporary constructions of satellite images from extreme perspectives, or - as with the bust of Karl Marx in Berlin’s Straußberger Platz - the action of a deliberately planned counterreality frozen in time. The space created through the juxtaposition of installation with works in other media heightens awareness of the impermanence of appearances and representations, as the materials gathered are exposed and restaged as vehicles for meaning.

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