

Slawomir Elsner: ON STAGE

Galerie Nicola von Senger is very pleased to present Slawomir Elsner's first solo-exhibition, *On Stage*, in Switzerland.

Slawomir Elsner, born in 1976 in Wodzislaw Slasli, Poland, has lived and worked in Germany for over 15 years. Project-related and organized as different series, his works deal with various topics, but are always grappled with a common thread: the overlap between the public and the private. At first glance, his works make an idyllic and intact impression. What prevents us from averting our eyes too quickly is the feeling that something's not quite right. A closer look reveals fractures, abysses, something subtle and not easily categorisable. Therewith, Elsner succeeds in questioning the image presented. Nothing is as it seems, empty backgrounds become a stage, the spectator himself is put *On Stage*.

The drawings from the series "Stills" form the central part of the exhibition, presenting Western interiors and landscapes that gain stage-like character through the absence of physically recognizable protagonists. Nonetheless, the images are emotionally laden. The scenery suggests somebody just having left the frame of the picture. And one will probably find himself trying hard to remember where else he had seen this kitchen or that backyard before. The reason for this may be certain memories and associations evoked in each of us, or the fact that the artist with his "Stills"-series refers to the work "Untitled Film Stills" of the 70ies by Cindy Sherman. Her black and white photography depicts the artist impersonating various stereotypical female characters, emulating film stills known from the cinema showcases, advertised in public to make one curious.

By leaving out the protagonist as the part of Sherman's photos giving them their fictional character, Elsner depicts what remains: space, environment, reality. Elsner let's go of the idea of a star as a role model and by focusing solely on the background gives it the maximum weight, letting it speak for itself. Meanings superimposed by the spectator allow the image to become fictional again, another frame of a possible film. Consistent with this thought is the drawing as form of expression, which takes the material not so much as documentary but as fiction and renders possible the performative transformation of visual motifs into own experiences.

A second, smaller part of the exhibition is dedicated to the series "Selfshots". The unintended effect of the photographic originals, triggered by the flash of the camera splattered in the mirror, functions like a filter, placed over the visible, rehearsed poses of the adolescents. It brings up an honest, spontaneous view on aesthetic conventions and styles prevalent in today's pop-cultural youth magazines which are commonly in high gloss, artificial and conformist. The curious search of the juvenile for identity for Elsner becomes worthy of all attention, and of a place *On Stage*.

Alexandra Gmür, February 2010

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