

AMERIKA

Stephanie Kiwitt

AMERIKA

Sebastian Klemm

Brunnenstrasse 7

10119 Berlin

T 030 40 50 49 53

F 030 40 50 49 54

M 01 77 786 74 19

E gallery@amerika-berlin.de

I www.amerika-berlin.de



o.T. (Küche), 2006, C-print, 72,5 x 102,5 cm, Edition 3+1 a.p



o.T. (Hocker), 2006, C-print, 72,5 x 102,5 cm, Edition 3+1 a.p



#6, 2006, c-print, 35 x 50 cm, ed. 3 + 1 a.p.



#7, 2006, c-print, 35 x 50 cm, ed. 3 + 1 a.p.

quartier#2



#1, 2003, c-print, 35 x 50 cm, ed. 3 + 1 a.p.



#4, 2005, c-print, 35 x 50 cm, ed. 3 + 1 a.p



#9, 2006, c-print, 35 x 50cm, ed. 3 + 1 a.p.



#8, 2006, c-print, 35 x 50cm, ed. 3 + 1 a.p.

quartier#2



Zelt, 2005, c-print, 103 x 152 cm, ed. 3 + 1 a.p.

quartier#1



Lokal, 2005, c-print, 125 x 178 cm, ed. 3 +1 a.p.

quartier#1

Dwellings of carton, tarpaulins without rods, tables with three legs: these objects out of use and situations of ‚exceptional circumstances’ are documented by the Leipzig artist Stephanie Kiwitt in her work ‘quartier’. If there is a potential use for these observed constellations in social space stays a question in the background.

However, Kiwitt reveals their specific fragility and odd poetics by displaying the metaphysics that results from human use.

She herewith applies the delicately tuned method of “straight photography” that always alludes to the ever present narration but which eventually leaves it open.



bricolage

Dia projection, 40 slides
2003

Florian Ebner

Scotch

On contingency and (auxiliary-)construction in Stephanie Kiwitt's urban bricolage

On the way from the inside to the outside, one's gaze stays focused on the strange seating arrangements. A low seating device is in view, bolted to light coloured floor tiles, near a glass pane, which separates the room's interior from the footpath. The metal bars are painted with white enamel; only the base panels have been spared. One surface of the empty twin seats has been covered with a stack of folded cardboard boxes in place of the missing seat, held together with white tape and stuck to the frame in several, as the improvised makeshift chair's creator would call it in a French laundrette, bouts de Scotch.

Scotch is a prevalent brand name of adhesive tapes in Great Britain and France. For Stephanie Kiwitt's new photographic series *Bricolage*, Scotch is more than just a detail. It is the symbolic thread that wends through the pictures when, for instance, in other shots, the tape serves to withdraw a defective petrol pump from operation or to scantily patch together the demolished front end of a car. But the bricolages are not only, as the translation suggests, handicrafts; it is much more about disturbances in the official aesthetic order of the streets or in the urban habitat:

Stephanie Kiwitt's works belong to a documentary style of contemporary photography and, within this paradigm, they represent a young genre, which revitalises itself through new forms of presentation, the examination of its own methods and the impulses of other image media, for instance through video. The series *Bricolage* is, in this sense, exemplary. The 40 pictures, taken in Budapest, Berlin and Paris, are projected. Each photograph holds for seven seconds, enough time for the viewer to be drawn into the construction of the image, which comes across as casual. The pictures draw their ambivalent status from this form of slide projection: they show us something in an almost demonstrative way and, at the same time, they continuously stray away. The fleeting beings they are, they become impressions of the street again, which overlap, modify and complement each other in their progressive reception.

The presentational form corresponds to the structure of the photographic perspective. Two qualities can be worked out, which do not exclude themselves, but rather overlap themselves in the pictures. One is the contingency of the scenic, of the micro-event in the street scene: a woman cowering in a telephone box, or a pedestrian with a bag on her head. The action

seems almost abrupt, the scenery seems disorderly, the perspective seems distorted, the edges of the pictures are marked by street paraphernalia – but the alleged pictorial distortions serve as the actual agents of the reality effect.

If the first quality of these observed events is embedded in our urban reality, then the second gives the staged objects a metaphoric character: it is the eye for details in and of themselves insignificant. The displaced constellations receive a new and unique meaning through the photographic act and through the way in which the things are set in the centre of the image. The insistence of the eye with which the photographer investigates them seems to accord a certain logic and systematic to the quirks found on the street and the careless repair jobs. And so the makeshift handiwork turns into instant sculptures of everyday life; the improvised barricades become installations in public space. This process of transfiguration and the photographer's signature style of bringing into view are structurally related to how the ready-made functions.

Something anarchistic underlies the pictures of the series as a collective characteristic. With a certain satisfaction, they show the marks the pressure of the street leaves on the invention of a city planning that wanted to domesticate public space by trying to assign it a homogenous design. A futile effort, following Boris Groys' reflections on the city on its way: "If, in the end, there is anything lasting in our cities, then only this constant preparation for the creation of something lasting, constant delaying of the final solution, constant reconstruction, lasting repair and fragmentary adapting to the new requirements."

Through their position and method as straight photography, the bricolages distance themselves from those tendencies of contemporary photography, which try to represent the visions of the modern city by penetrating into their matrix and slaving away on models. Instead, Kiwitt documents the rips and tears, the realized plans' manifested deformities and the subversive acts that oppose the plan's realized monotones. Perhaps – as touched on in the found bricolages – the creativity of a modern society shines through in its imperturbable agility with which it can prevent the breaking apart of normalized progress and practiced solutions, with or without Scotch.

¹ Boris Groys, »Die Stadt auf Durchreise«, in: *Logik der Sammlung*, München: Hanser, 1997, S. 95



Two Japanese People Who Are Looking At ...

Projection, installation view, Institut Français Leipzig
2003

Sightseeing or What is seen when viewers view viewers

We receive a guided tour. Right at the beginning of the trip we see the tour guide over our shoulders, an older man with greying hair. He is holding a microphone in his hand and accompanying the sights passing by the bus window with extra information for the short-term memory. Before our view can pass through the window to the outside, the picture dissolves into white light. Without fading to black for even a second, the next picture comes into view from the gleaming bright field of light and two figures form: a man and a small boy from behind, looking at something. But what?

Already in the title of her work, Stephanie Kiwitt points to that which is seen, without letting it be seen. The unfinished line “Two Japanese people who are looking at...” describes the content of her pictures nearly perfectly yet is more than a pure pleonasm between picture and language: it declares the ubiquity of Japanese tourists as prototypes for global short trip makers as well as that of the English language as a worldwide idiom. This contemporary as well as unexplained omnipresence comes into the foreground; in contrast, the object of the subjective interest goes unmentioned – that is, the specifics of time and place, which has just caught the attention of the passers-by. The following is to be seen: the photographically recorded view of people looking at something; these people, in particular, who cross the view of the photographer as tourists, people out on a walk or simply pedestrians; and finally, the object of desire or, at least, the surroundings of that which is being viewed. Should not that which does not fall within the framing of the picture or which is covered by the figures’ bodies yet has their attention catch the attention of the viewer among these guided views through the lens and over the shoulder? But what could that be?

In Stephanie Kiwitt’s work there are some moments that could serve as a reference to 19th century painting: the motif of the figure from behind

looking at a landscape in the distance is tightly anchored in the collective image consciousness with Caspar David Friedrich’s depiction of the *Wanderer über dem Nebelmeer* (Wanderer across sea of fog) and is, in current interpretations, drawn in connection with mystic-covered introspective and a longing for the hereafter fully conscious of death. Kiwitt picks up this motif and unveils it at the same time in her medium as a projection with a double meaning: her figures from behind neither descend from the imagination in the studio nor transport a mystical programme, rather, they are the subject of casual photographs with documentary character, from which a light irony can often not be denied. The pictures’ romantic moment is played through as a means of staging the photographic perspective as well as – as in the case of the artificial rocks – as a model quotation shown in reality. However, in the centre of the pictures stands the yearning of people who want to see something, without any demands to answer what that could be. This yearning, which interests Kiwitt here, is a very routine, not to mention banal yearning: it is the yearning for sight itself.

Tina Schulz



Two Japanese People Who Are Looking At ...

detail, Institut Français Leipzig
2003



Paar, das den Weg hochgeht

The scene is a young pair climbing up a slope. The sequence's filmic narrative structure leads astray from the pictures' limited informative content; even though the photographs were taken in intervals of only a few seconds, they hardly tell anything about the event they contain. The portrayed pair's clothing, manner and look, the path's condition and the surrounding vegetation lure the viewer to conclusions, which inevitably end in the cul-de-sac of rigid attributions.

Tina Schulz

3 c-prints, 120 x 180 cm
2003

Stephanie Kiwitt

Exhibitions (selection)

1972 born in Bonn

1992-94 stay in Prague

1994-95 photographic assistant in Berlin

1994-98 studies photography at Institut of Photography Opa-
va, Czech Republic

1995-97 Communication Studies, Fachhochschule Potsdam

1997-2004 Studies at the HGB (Academy of Visual Arts) Leip-
zig, class of Photography and Media of Prof. Joachim Brohm

since 2004 Meister student in Prof. Timm Rautert's class

Scholarships and Awards

2007 working stipend of the Kulturstiftung of the State of Sa-
xony

2006 DAAD scholarship Marseille, France

2002-03 Working stipend École Nationale Supérieure des Be-
aux Arts, Paris

2002 Art Award of the city of Bonn

2001 Budapest scholarship of the city of Bonn

2007 Cornerville, Galerie b2, Leipzig / Cornerville, La
Traverse, Les Ateliers de L'Image, Marseille / European Berli-
ner, Maison de la Culture, Amiens

2006 urban appearances, Verein zur Förderung von Kunst
und Kultur am Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz e.V., Berlin / A3, Ame-
rika, Berlin / Photo-Trafic, bac, Genf / séquence urbaines, La
Filature, Mulhouse / Stephanie Kiwitt, C/O Berlin / quar-
tier#2, Amerika, Berlin

2005 Alles was glänzt, Kunstverein Göttingen / AND,
Amerika, Berlin / Vor aller Augen, Goethe Institut Paris / The
Leipzig Lens, Glasgow School of Art; German Embassy Lon-
don

2004 Der Sprung im Wasserglas. Verfahren im Raum,
Kunstraum B2 Leipzig / outdoor, Kunstverein Leipzig (EA) /
Junge Kunst 9, Galerie Kleindienst, Leipzig

2003 Two Japanese People Who Are Looking At ...,
Institut Français Leipzig (EA) / bricolage, Kunstmuseum Bonn
(EA) / Your Present Is My Perfect, Ausstellungsreihe, Kunst-
verein Leipzig / Demokratie als Prozess, Neustadt an der Orla

2002 Performativität und Übergabgszonen, HGB Leipzig
/ Psychoscape, Kunstraum B2 Leipzig / urban layers, Galerie