

Seiichi Furuya - Mémoires

9 September - 29 October 2011

Opening Reception - Thursday, 8 September 2011, 18-21h

“In February 1978 he photographed Christine for the first time, and he took pictures of her almost every day from then on. In 1979 the first exhibition of these portraits took place, and at that time, Seiichi Furuya was already aware of the inexorability of this project. “As I see her, take photographs of her, look at her in the pictures, I find myself.” Christine Furuya-Göbller committed suicide after a long illness in 1985. Time and space were fixed in the thousands of pictures that he took over these seven years. Since then Furuya’s new task has been to make these documents – and through them Christine – talk to himself and to others, in order to prevent his counterpart and companion from disappearing.” (Monika Faber)

The work of Seiichi Furuya – the Japanese photographer now living in Graz, Austria – revolves as intensely as ever around the figure of Christine, as he selects new images of her and continually rearranges and re-issues these images. In addition to numerous exhibitions, under the collective title *Mémoires* five artist’s books have been released since 1989, all of which are dedicated to the memory of his wife – a visual labor to preserve her memory. Photographs from their last days together are the focus of the latest publication, which appeared in 2010 and represents the work’s conclusion.

This last volume of *Mémoires* is the point of departure for the exhibition in Berlin. Here portraits of Christine are linked to the stations of the journeys the couple undertook together and their temporary residences, especially in Dresden and East Berlin. The pictures from eastern Germany are an impressive and extremely rare document of the Berlin Wall photographed from the east of the divided nation and a testimony of life in the “DDR” that “oscillates between detached documentation and personal exploration – a dense series of official television images, street scenes, organized outdoor parties, of interiors, of the debts and assets of the everyday lives of normal citizens, intertwined with very personal views of the private sphere of the family” (Urs Stahel). In this way the final part of *Mémoires* becomes a disturbing document of a double death – it describes the process of what in retrospect can be seen as the increasingly inevitable death of a woman, as well as the death of a nation.

In his photographic works Seiichi Furuya brings together conceptual thinking, formal decisiveness and documentary precision with the basic existential experiences of humans.

What becomes especially clear in this compilation of photographs is that a pervasive theme in Seiichi Furuya's large and versatile work is an exploration of the experience of borders. It is an exploration of political and geographical borders as well as an attempt to examine the catastrophic event that Christine's suicide was for the family through the continual crossing of inner boundaries - the boundaries of perception, memory, understanding, language and the creation of meaning. It is a highly introspective work with a special dynamic that penetrates beyond a superficial chronology or topography - a work in which the visible and the effable are subject to negotiation.

For the first time in Berlin, Seiichi Furuya will be presenting a selection of photographs and a slide projection featuring 81 images - a format that wavers between epiphany and volatility, which corresponds to the element of continual ordering and rearranging of the same material that is so crucial to his work.

In 1996-1997 Einar Schleeff wrote a text about the photographs of Seiichi Furuya from his time in East Berlin entitled "Schwarz Rot Gold" (Black Red Gold). This text will be available to read at the exhibition.

Since 1975 Furuya has had numerous exhibitions both in Europe and overseas at such venues as Forum Stadtpark and Camera Austria (Graz); Fotomuseum Winterthur; Albertina (Vienna); Vangi Sculpture Garden Museum (Shizuoka, Japan). Furuya's works are included in the collections of various museums around the world, including the Stedelijk Museum (Amsterdam); Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography; National Museum of Modern Art (New York) and the Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York).

The exhibition at Thomas Fischer is the first presentation of his works in Berlin.

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Opening Hours Tuesday-Saturday 11-18h

