

Sebastian Stumpf - Unforeseen
14 September - 9 November 2013

Opening Friday 13 September, 18-21h

Sebastian Stumpf's solo exhibition "Unforeseen" features new works of video and photography showing interventions in urban spaces. Included in the exhibition are the video projections "Bridges" (2011) and "Puddles" (2013), two photographs of urban advertising displays as well as documentary projections of a series of site-specific works made in museums, galleries and art collections since 2004.

The new video work "Puddles" is projected across the entire length of the first room. The artist is seen lying in puddles in ten urban locations during different times of the day and under different weather conditions. The surface of the water becomes a glossy reflection of the squares, footpaths and streets where they have coincidentally formed. The artist remains in a fixed position, face downwards, feet spread and arms at his side. His tensed body forms its own axis, a static pole across the video screen. Seen from different perspectives, the stationary image of the motionless figure is only occasionally animated by passersby or traffic. The individual seems embedded in the shallow surface of the water.

The almost life-size projection establishes a direct relation to human proportions. Seen together with the plastic everyday sounds of the city, the video emphasizes the physicality of the performative act created explicitly for the camera. The repetition of this action - carried consciously out in puddles that are unsettled by the falling rain or reflect the urban surroundings - recalls a typology that illuminates the urban fabric precisely where it is most flawed. In the video installation the artist not only appears as an actor on the undefined, open surfaces of the image but also descends into these surfaces, casting the viewer's erring attention onto the city itself.

In the second room ten documentations created in the course of the artist's work on the series "Leaving White Spaces" are projected as a row of small-format installation views. A small projector has been placed on a narrow shaft in front of each photo, showing the respective original video over the photograph, thus reconstructing the element of the exhibition experience. The works do not just show a reduced view of the visible exit from the institutional exhibition space but also - in the video projection - the body's disappearance from the image.

A first glance into the next room only reveals a small section of the large-format, wallpaper photograph "Display (Sharks)". The back of a figure is seen diving into the image and into the open mouth of a shark. The poster is seen in two views, as the motif is in reality an outdoor billboard in Canary Wharf, London.

In the room itself viewers also see a smaller color photograph that shows Sebastian Stumpf as a silhouette amidst a framing structure of empty advertising displays. Taken in Brussels in the early morning hours, in "Display (Dawn)" structure and figure alike appear as flat silhouettes. The lights of the advertising signs have been turned off. The absence of an image and the replacement of it by the artist's body place emphasis, in a symbolic sense, on the interface between image production and action. The advertising display is present in these works as a formal and thematic element, questioning the power of images, their presentation and the extent to which they can be manipulated.

The video installation "Bridges" has been adapted to fit into the long corridor at the end of the exhibition space. The work shows a loop of nine sequences filmed in such cities as Tokyo, Berlin, Geneva and London in which Sebastian Stumpf is seen crossing a bridge and effortlessly springing over the railing at an unexpected moment only to disappear into the river. As the figure is never seen again in the video image, the impression of performative act and motion before the static camera becomes a single dialectic figure - the diving into the river and out of the picture is to be understood as both an escape from the image and as an opening up of the image itself, which is in turn made possible by the open spaces in the urban surroundings to which the actor draws attention.

The sequence of rooms in the gallery allows the two framing projections to be seen as an examination of the aesthetic of disappearance (Virilio). The tension between presence and absence, image and act, dematerialization and plasticity is reinforced by the physicalness of the projections, which is in turn emphasized by the verticality of "Bridges" and the horizontality of "Puddles".

Sebastian Stumpf's interventions explore perception and question the nature of images, their function, their appearance and their disappearance, yet perhaps more importantly they are to be seen as interferences in the public, post-urban, liquefied spaces of our age and as unexpected gestures within the social fabric. Stumpf's unexpected, reductive actions confront this fragile and disturbable system with an element of irritation, with an unclear message and with a closer focusing of the viewer's perception.

Lilian Haberer

Sebastian Stumpf (born in 1980) lives in Leipzig and Berlin.

He studied at the Academy of Visual Arts Leipzig and completed post-graduate studies under Timm Rautert. Solo exhibitions have been held at Museum Folkwang, Essen, Museum for Photography Braunschweig, Kunsthalle Schweinfurt and Landesgalerie Linz. He has been included in the 6th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art and in numerous group exhibitions in such spaces as Frankfurter Kunstverein, Z33, Hasselt, Tokyo Wonder Site/Institute of Contemporary Art and Onomatopée, Eindhoven.

At the new offices of the Kulturstiftung des Bundes in Halle (Saale) Sebastian Stumpf realized a site-specific video projection which is on permanent display.

Galerie Thomas Fischer

Potsdamer Str. 77-87, Haus H
10785 Berlin +49 30 74 78 03 85
mail@galeriethomasfischer.de

T/F