

Sebastian Stumpf - Ozean [Ocean]  
9 April - 4 June 2016

For some time it appeared that the city was the fundamental setting of Sebastian Stumpf's work, its phenomena his essential material. He developed a particular approach to the urban situations that he encountered - the underground parking garages, bridges and trees found in Tokyo, London, Lyon or Berlin. He moved through Lyon by walking on air or on his head, inserted his body into the narrow spaces between highrises in Tokyo or cast himself over the railings of bridges in London. In his new works, however, a movement out of the exhibition space (Performance #1-#32, ongoing since 2004) into cities and through transitional suburban areas leads to the edge of the European and North American mainland - the Atlantic Ocean.

The first part of the exhibition consists of a series of analog colour photographs entitled "Zenit" [Zenith]. In a landscape of rocky shorelines and abandoned buildings a figure is placed in an imaginary coordinate system that stretches from the horizon to the concrete ruins to the airspace over the water's surface. Similar to the earlier slide series from Lyon, the figure is seen either upside down on his head or standing in the air. The base is always the last architectural element, while the feet seem to touch the horizon from above or from below. In this way the body is converted into a unit of measurement with its own relationship to gravity, the vast landscape and optical laws. The difficulty of the physical act and photographic precision ends in a temporary constellation - a slapstick-like gesture in a limitless expanse.

The video projection "Ozean" [Ocean] features a variation of this approach. In a series of shots we are presented with an ever changing ocean panorama. After some time a figure appears, crosses the broad shoreline cliff and enters into the water. This act repeats itself in scene after scene, at the end of each of which the figure disappears into the sea. As casual as the action might appear at first, it lends the work a subversive character. It is about escaping from the picture. If in "Zenit" the body was a unit of measurement in complex dialogue with the camera and horizon, in "Ozean" it serves to put an end to this conversation. The presence of the figure defines the image, which is immediately dissolved again. A radical, potentially existential manner of disappearing becomes an exercise, a repetitive, ever varying motion.

Christina Landbrecht

Sebastian Stumpf (b. 1980 in Würzburg, Germany) lives and works in Leipzig and Berlin. Solo exhibitions of his work have been held at the Museum Folkwang, Essen; Kunsthalle Schweinfurt and Museum für Photographie Braunschweig. His work has been featured in exhibitions at Le Corbusier's Mill Owner's Association Building in Ahmedabad, India; Kunsthalle im Lipsiusbau in Dresden and at the Contemporary Arts Center in Cincinnati, Ohio. In 2013 he was awarded the EHF grant of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and in 2016 the Villa Aurora grant with a residency in Los Angeles.

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