

alexanderlevy

Fabian Knecht

_UNG

Jun 13 – Aug 08, 2015

Opening, Jun 13, 2015, 6 to 9 pm

alexander levy is pleased to present new works by Fabian Knecht with the exhibition *_UNG* from 13 June to 8 August 2015. The focus is on five works, *VERACHTUNG* (contempt), *ENTFERNUNG* (removal), *VERNEINUNG* (negation), *EMPFINDUNG* (sensation) and *BEDROHUNG* (threat), which are grouped to form a complex emotional and political constellation created with little material.

VERACHTUNG (contempt), the invitation to the installation, consists of envelopes, each containing 1g of bombing rubble in a plastic bag: the dust of a strike in Hillah, Iraq in March 2014, sent by mail without comment. Knecht's exhibition plays, both in the invitation and in the space, with the thin line between poetry, politics and entertainment. War comes to you; like a bag full of "uppers": "There is a thin line between entertainment and war."

One of the works only takes place during the opening and will later be shown as a film: a crocodile on the floor of the exhibition space. The reptile, transformed into an exhibit, becomes "living sculpture", a metaphor, and remains nonetheless an animal, a breathing life, a potential *BEDROHUNG* (threat) to viewers.

ENTFERNUNG (removal) consists of a flagpole removed by Knecht from an embassy building: a mute object liberated of its function, the empty form of a claim to sovereignty, "underpinning the state", homeless. Without a flag, the pole becomes a sculpture. The "place of power" becomes a blind spot.

EMPFINDUNG (sensation) consists of a water tap that drips on the gallery floor. Each impact echoes quietly, is acoustically amplified, makes the room into a body of sound. The dripping water thus becomes "Vanitas", a small, unsettling experience. An incrementation of time. Time that fills space. An endless series of detonations.

VERNEINUNG (negation) consists of a tarp that Knecht installed in Baghdad, visible from afar, 8 x 3 m, on a high building on the Al-Tayaran Square: "WAR IS NOT OVER!" The caption is a variation on an advertisement that was published at the end of 1969 by John Lennon and Yoko Ono on billboards worldwide. The message: "WAR IS OVER! If You Want It – Happy Christmas from John and Yoko".

Lukas Toepfer

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Fabian Knecht is a German performance artist. He was born in 1980 in Magdeburg and now lives and works in Berlin. With his art, he pursues a consistent and uncompromising path, one which causes irritation, which marks an exceptional state in the current of everyday life, and which scratches at societal mindsets. This is expressed in his precisely positioned, temporary actions, which he realises at specific, sometimes historically connoted locations in urban space or in (rural) boundary areas.

The boundaries between White Cube and habitat are dissolved, the museum as a mausoleum is converted into a power plant. Knecht maintains the hope that art is a means to break power and authority, that art can also move outside of conventional boundaries. His art stands in our way, sharpens our senses and combines the imperative assertion of an exclamation mark with the Socratic question mark that places everything in question. Art is his route out into the world, a provocative commentary in defiance of emptiness, nothingness and decadence.

The German titles of his actions arise from of the nominalisation of the verbs describing the respective action with the suffix _UNG. In the process, more important than a futuristic utopia is a liberating RestrukturierUNG (restructuring) in the now; Knecht's form of artistic activism doesn't want to make things better (Groys), but instead strives to dissolve the separating contours between the lived in world and the sphere of art, and to inspire contemplation of one's own position and of that which could be normality.

Ursula Ströbele