



Never Leave me. 2018

ROMAN SCHRAMM
IN CONVERSATION WITH
ELISA R. LINN

ELISA R. LINN Where does a project begin for you? What does your process look like?

ROMAN SCHRAMM There are many different processes going at the same time: Sometimes I start playing with salt dough, which might sound a little bit like Kindergarten. Sometimes I find objects that I want to stage. I construct a mise-en-scène for each object, and then I take photos of it. Finally, there's this huge amount of raw material that I assemble into collages in Cinema 4D or Photoshop.

ERL How much of your work is constituted in the studio space and how much in post-production on the computer?

RS The ratio always varies. At the moment I'm producing more "classic" photographs that will not be reworked very much with Photoshop. On the other hand, I also compose complex collages, where the virtual space, its surface, and artificial quality have a relatively huge weight in contrast to the original image itself.

ERL What role does intuition play in your process?

RS My work is process-based, which stands in contrast to other photographic approaches. I'm usually working on several works and images at the same time—one could compare it to the practice of a painter who is reworking a canvas, moves to the next one, returns to the last one, and vice versa. I always let myself be guided by the image and don't want to plan too much in advance. I believe more and more that things develop during the process and in dialogue with the image.

ERL So would you compare your way of working to the metaphor of a scientist in a laboratory?

RS The idea of a laboratory is too one-directional, and too much about trying and testing out what leads to a specific result. It's more about a sort of considered communication, a questioning and an answering back.

ERL Do you believe in reliable strategies when it comes to your work?

RS My strategy is to work with a kind of experimental setup I have in my head and to trust in the outcome, which is always very different. It is a lot about gestures, what kind of presence the image actually has, and being aware of how I have to deal with objects when I photograph them. The work is not finished with the production of the image, but extends to the presentation and exhibition of a framed photograph.

ERL In your earlier works, you often dealt with the mecha-

nisms of marketing strategies, which were theorized by the father of motivational discourse, Ernest Dichter, or Edward Bernays, one of the first public relations counselors. How important are these strategies for you still when thinking about seduction and manipulation in your work?

RS Branding strategies and these references no longer really exist in my work. In the past, I worked deliberately with aesthetic strategies to develop a sensibility for rules of perception and attraction. Now these rules have been organically incorporated into the work itself. The image manipulates me, and thus it also manipulates the viewer.

ERL So it was more about analyzing instead of practicing these methods as in your series "Strategie im Reich der Wünsche"?

RS Yes, it was about analyzing and re-assembling. When I photographed a mobile made from a toy construction set from the nineteen-fifties, for example, it was about confronting the idea of engineering with something more fragile. The object is used in a way that opposes not only its function but also the reasoning behind how it was initially conceptualized.

ERL The concept of your newer work complex "Ja-Straße" is also about positive affirmation in terms of figuring out and experimenting in all possible directions. This sounds almost a little bit reckless?

RS Yes, a little bit reckless! There is still a kind of process of selection and narrowing, but not in the sense of creating a consistent series. Sometimes a photograph is printed on glossy paper, another image is layered with oil color, another one gets a more dominant frame than others—it's like playing with outbreaks.

ERL "Ja-Straße" seems to be a very personal title that comes across almost like a life motto....

RS Well, it has a lot to do with my personal life. It is also about not searching for the other (or the alien) but looking at what already surrounds me, what is already there and flies to me. That also implies not being overly thoughtful and dealing instead with the things that life provides, the everyday encounter of objects that coincidentally appeal to me. This way, I sometimes end up modeling a mountain with salt dough.

ERL How did you end up with what you're doing now? And what meaning does collaboration have in your work?

RS When I was younger I was pretty much driven by a conceptual artistic approach and interested in photography that was about research. That approach eventually transformed into an interest in an intuitive way of working that was closer to my relationship to life.



Ja 4, 2015



Since my studies at Hochschule für bildende Künste Hamburg, collaborations have been very important for me and have influenced my individual work. For example I do the artist magazine "SKULPI," for which I invite different kinds of people to have an exchange, and they submit contributions that sometimes provoke a reaction from my side. That is really different from my private process of working—there I let people in with whom I already cultivate a continuous dialogue.

ERL How would you describe the difference between working with inanimate objects and human beings?
RS Neither objects nor people's photographic appearance can be foreseen or planned. In a portrait session, time is confined, it's a little like a dance or performance that is happening within a set framework where certain things have to be navigated in a more subtle way and depend on a momentary atmosphere. Working with objects is more controllable, as it's easier to photograph them again and again. I usually don't rework or Photoshop the portraits that I'm taking. In this sense it is a completely different approach in comparison to the process-like collages.

Very special thanks to Caroline Müller and Anna Thoma