

FOTOGRAF

artificial worlds



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Roman Schramm

Between Grey and the Colors of the Rainbow



After about fifteen years of the unconditional dominance of the photographic image as the main vehicle of visual information in the age of the Internet, it has now partly retreated from this exclusive position. The still images which in the past two decades inundated the dynamically evolving web have gradually been replaced by an even more accessible form of visual information: the moving image. Animation and various forms of video-sequencing have lately become a fixture of news servers, web pages and above all social networks.

While in recent years the international photography scene has been enthralled by a wide range of sometimes contradictory trends – first eagerly received, then increasingly widespread, fulfilled and finally deflated – today photography is radically changing – rapidly and in real time, exploring the newly formed morphology and syntax which have put the final full stop to the traditions of 20th century photography.

Among those striving to re-define and co-form the new technical image of our time is a member of the younger generation of German artists, Roman Schramm (b. 1979). His approach is also symptomatic in that together with the visual appearance of photography, he reconstructs its very essence, where photography continues to reflect visual reality, but at the same time builds and constructs the world which becomes our updated everyday reality. More than ever before, contemporary technologies challenge creativity to new dimensions. Almost as we speak we are abandoning the customary mode of three dimensions as we become enamored with effects which both slowly and abruptly expand our horizons.

Yet with many artists – Roman Schramm not excepted – their approach to photography shows a deliberate return to the roots of Modernism, and in particular the early avant-gardes. These sources of inspiration are reflected in the style of contemporary photographers in their penchant for using an upgraded modification of original techniques for example collage, as well as using the intellectual methods of composition of avant-garde art – various types of combinatorics, juxtaposition and coupage – all methods used in Dada and Surrealism or in what was referred to as "artificialism" in the Czech lands, a type of art defined by dreamlike narrative, fragmentariness and often erotic undertones. With Roman Schramm, these methods become vehicles of meaning, taking on the form of overlapping and intertwined visual layers and creating a contrast to the polished and often neutral grey backdrop.

The motifs of visual fragments in the series *Today's Lies, Tomorrow's Truth* (2013) merely hint at rather than reveal the relationships of the figures present in the compositions. The overall perception of the series does not result from the viewer's encounter with the first picture, nor from having seen the whole series – it only materializes in the viewer's mind, forming a peculiar added value, raising it to the power of a second order in a way, a structure formed by the projection of all the components. Only

their multiplication implies the logic and diversity of the separate images and their variations and permutations which make it possible, in the gallery installation, to interconnect the motifs of the marbled color "base", oscillating between a two-dimensional and a three-dimensional hallucinatory effect with partly abstracted details derived from nature, or a contextualized image of a couple who are most likely engaged in overcoming a barrier in communication. These are further accompanied by photographs of pairs of Magritte-like eyes and other accumulations of real and virtual motifs which defy the principles of gravity. Still, there is yet another penultimate level that must be included in the overall perception of the whole project – the manner of the installation, where the images are mounted on brightly colored panels, accompanied by minimalist sculptural interventions.

In the series *Arbeit und Leben* (2013) Schramm again structures the image by combining real motifs with constructed forms, which – in spite of their origins in virtual reality – cast their own shadows, imprints of a reality to which they do not physically belong in the actual sense. These photographs also spark a subsequent multiplication of possible readings of their various levels of meaning, "generating narratives" to which the series further adds the application of findings from the field of color theory. Skills gleaned from this area put a finishing touch to the "charisma" of the cycle, which employs motifs of juxtaposition and addition particularly in the principles of its color composition or color analysis, as Roman Schramm, with a keen eye for both the detail and the whole, molds his world into the form of an absolute – and yet somewhat cold and detached – perfection.

Roman Schramm's photographs have a highly natural and organic way of combining spatial compositions of feminine legs sheathed in rainbow-colored stockings and the disarming fragility of yellow mimosa blossoms with a myriad of archetypal patterns, artistic styles and even marketing strategies. An undisguised joy of playfulness and the discovery that both audiences and critics are thrilled by his meticulously (sometimes almost distressingly so) constructed reality keep taking Roman Schramm a step further each time along his route to the imaginary hall of fame.

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- p. 20: Exhibition view, *Today's Lies, Tomorrow's Truths*, 2013, Croy Nielsen, Berlin
- p. 21: It's not you, it's me, 2013, c-print, 70 x 55 cm
- p. 22: Mimosa, 2012, c-print, 70 x 55 cm
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- p. 23: Sweet Tooth, 2013, c-print, 70 x 55 cm
- p. 24: Voice of Turquoise, 2013, c-print, 75 x 98 cm
- p. 25: Don't Do Anything That Isn't Play, 2013, c-print, 70 x 55 cm
- p. 26: The Profession of Being, 2013, c-print, 70 x 55 cm
- p. 27: In Search of the Obvious, 2013, c-print, 70 x 55 cm
- p. 27: Untitled, 2013, c-print, 70 x 55 cm







