

MARCUS GEIGER *WENN2* curated by Stefan Bidner
VIENNA January 18 – March 21, 2020

The MacGeiger of art

For decades, Marcus Geiger has produced and collected black-and-white photographs of his works, thus creating a unique kaleidoscope. The thirty-four “original copies” presented by Galerie Thoman mirror the essence of the artist’s oeuvre and grant insights into his creative process that is very much interwoven with his personality. Geiger is a precise sceptic with an equivocal intellect. At a first glance we find ourselves confronted with a traditional gallery exhibition, comprising thirty-six framed works. And already we have literally been taken in by the artist.

By designating black-and-white copies as originals, Geiger confuses the art consumer’s expectations. The idea still prevails that a copy is a sort of replacement of the original. In 1935, in his essay “Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit” (Engl. The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction), Walter Benjamin provided an explanation. The original, he claimed, was marked by its uniqueness, its aura, because it had first stood in a ritual context. From the latter it had gradually distanced itself. Its artistic value, and thus its exhibition value, had gradually come to the fore. In the process of reproducibility the observer’s gaze had accelerated and everything was heading towards a culture of diversion. Benjamin’s thesis refers to a media change from image to photograph or film. Geiger himself ignores all that by simply designating his pictures “original copies.” For the exhibition opening, the artist moreover has produced a bar, as it were, erected outside the gallery premises. Very significantly, he used pieces of waste timber he found in the gallery’s basement to build a fully functional counter, including embedded ashtrays.

The term *bricolage* (from French *bricoler*, Engl. to tinker, to fiddle), introduced into anthropology by Claude Lévi-Strauss in 1962, refers to a behaviour through which the actor (*bricoleur*) solves problems with the help of the resources available, instead of acquiring special means, specifically designed for the problem (cf. Wikipedia).

Classic examples of a *bricoleur* are the TV serial hero Angus MacGyver and the artist Marcus Geiger.

PS 1: The exhibition Marcus Geiger *WENN2* celebrates a friendship between the artist Marcus Geiger and curator Stefan Bidner spanning twenty-five years.

PS 2: Special thanks to Klaus and Elisabeth Thoman.

Mag. Stefan Bidner

Marcus Geiger was born in Muri, Switzerland, in 1957. Between 1978 and 1982, he studied at the University of Applied Arts with Prof. Lois Egg in the master class for stage design. Since then, he has been living and working in Vienna. International recognition he mainly achieved through projects in urban and institutional spaces, altering their

perception by laying bare suppressed, displaced or overseen connections and systems, for instance at the Manifesta 3 in Ljubljana, the Vienna Secession, the social housing project Brauerei Liesing in Vienna, or the 6th Berlin Biennale. His works have been exhibited, among other places, at Belvedere 21 in Vienna, Kunsthaus Zürich, Kunstverein München, Kunstmuseum St. Gallen, the BAWAG FOUNDATION and the Generali Foundation in Vienna. From 2010 to 2011, Geiger was visiting professor at the Academy of Fine Arts Prague.