

BEYOND
Bernhard Prinz

10th September – 29th October 2022
Opening 9th September, 6 PM

Wanting to know everything about a work of art is the greatest appreciation of all those aspects of it that remain in hiding. In Bernhard Prinz's photographs and spatial installations, some things seem to lie beneath surfaces that the observer can only partially see through. Suggestiveness is a theme that has served as a contextual framework for the artist's work since the 1980s until today. Prinz portrays people, places and objects, and in doing so he repeatedly manages to question not only what is shown, but also the way it is shown. BEYOND, Bernhard Prinz's third solo exhibition with Bernhard Knaus Fine Art, brings together recent works by the artist.

Horizontal and vertical lines traverse a monumental wall surface. One recognizes different kinds of veins - sometimes the material curves outward through them, at times they are indentations catching the eye as holey formations. These ornamental compositions result on the one hand from the process of creation of the individual concrete elements that make up the climbing wall, and on the other hand from its intended use. It remains open where the boundaries between the natural and the traces of human activity run. Rather, both flow together in this imitation of nature, as lifelines in matter, as signs of time. The longer one looks at the work BEYOND, starting point as well as eponym of this exhibition, the more questions arise. What is depicted? Where and how did it originate? And does one see the image of something existing or is it all a matter of fiction?

The networks of associations that emerge around the works of Bernhard Prinz are closely related with their titles. MUT UND WILLE, LAMENTO, or BURKA are literal settings created by the artist, through which the structures captured in the photographs are expanded by a level of meaning. Instead of serving as simple explanations, however, it is up to the observer to take up and continue these linguistic components as offers for a dialogue with the respective work. This is also true for the two portraits ÄON and OHNE TITEL (ABWÄGUNG). They refer to Prinz's earlier series of portraits, in which the gaze of the person portrayed deeply captivates one. The captured tension between intimacy and cold rejection, between authenticity and attribution, fascinates across all temporal boundaries.

In his artistic works, Bernhard Prinz dedicatedly deals with the medium of photography and the formation of art-historical canons. In this context, the interplay of indexical representation, strategies of fictitious staging, and collective visual memory plays a central role. While the artist spent many years of his career staging photographic tableaux and portraits in the studio, he has also been pursuing site-specific approaches for some time. In doing so, he often explores architectures, memorials, or public spaces on his travels, alienating them in a way that causes their historical, social, and sociopolitical situatedness to disappear. Decontextualized, these spaces, which are often in intermediate stages, lose their specific location and thus also a clear legibility. Fittingly, the artist aims rather at recording an atmosphere, an aesthetic feeling.

Bernhard Prinz (*1953) lives and works in Hamburg. He has participated in a number of group and solo exhibitions, including documenta 8 in Kassel, shows at Serpentine Gallery in London, Vienna Secession, Museum Folkwang in Essen, and Pinakothek der Moderne in Munich. Prinz received, among other awards, the Villa Massimo Scholarship in Rome in 1994 and the David Octavius Hill Medal of the German Photographic Academy in Mannheim in 2005, which is awarded to outstanding personalities in the field of photography. Works by Bernhard Prinz are part of the collections of ZKM Karlsruhe, Kunsthalle Hamburg, Lenbachhaus Munich and the collections of other renowned museums.