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Mladen Bizumic

Kodak: la présence de l'image

Exhibition from February 1st, 2014 to March 8th, 2014

Tuesday - Saturday, 11 am-7 pm - Opening on Saturday, February 1st



"You Press the Button, We Do the Rest", George Eastman's Kodak advertising slogan 1888

"Kodak created, U.S. Government "V-Mail"... with communication with our man on distant fronts...Serving Human Progress Through Photography", Kodak poster during the WWII

"It's always summer in snapshots", Kodak poster, 1949

"Kodak Natural Reflection Film - The film that sees you naturally! New! Most natural skin tones!", Kodak film packaging, 2000

"Live forever!", Kodak TV Advertisement, 2005

"I would not recommend it to anyone to file for bankruptcy...", Antonio Perez, CEO Kodak, 19 January 2012

"Are you a former Eastman Kodak Co. employee laid off since the company filed for bankruptcy in January 2012? We would like to interview you for our story"., Democrat and Chronicle, Rochester, NY, 2012

Galerie frank elbaz is pleased to present *Kodak: la présence de l'image*, the first solo exhibition at the gallery by Vienna-based artist Mladen Bizumic. The exhibition revolves around a story of the Kodak's bankruptcy and the materiality of photographs. Historical materialism, deriving ultimately from Marx and developed by Lukács, manifested itself in writing about art that emphasized contexts and conditions of production over the most traditional topics such as iconography. Bizumic sets up displays of photographs that are 'works' plus their x value. The x value stands for a number of contextual factors such as architecture, location, framing devices. There is a constant tension between the works and their display, the content and the context. Bizumic's oeuvre is not about choosing one or the other but about the constant, precise and affirmative change of attention values. This fills space with time, opens up potentialities and creates new points of perception.

The exhibition's narrative is closely connected to the iconic photography company Kodak filing for Chapter 11 Bankruptcy Protection on the 19th of January of 2012. Founded by George Eastman in 1880, Kodak marketed the world's first flexible roll film in 1888 and turned photography into an overnight popularity with a \$1 Brownie camera in 1900. For almost a hundred years, Kodak was one of the main photography labels of the world. Based in Rochester, N.Y. Kodak has had also a manufacturing facility in Chalon-sur-Saône, south of Dijon, which played an important role in the history of photography. It was here in 1827, that inventor Joseph Nicéphore Niépce created the first surviving photograph. Operated by Kodak-Pathé, the plant was set up in 1961 where a variety of film products was produced. When Kodak announced its closure in 2006, it was a shock to the city's population. At that time, came a stunning reversal of fortune - a seismic shift to the digital technology that Kodak pioneered but couldn't capitalize on. The first digital camera was invented by Kodak's engineer Steve Sasson in 1975 but the Board of directors had refused to market it. In 2014, Under Chapter 11, Kodak continues to operate while seeking to reorganize its finances...

Even in the digital age, when the materiality of many images evaporates into a series of electronic pulses, the desire for the material object remains. In *Kodak: la présence de la image*, the materiality of photographs takes two diverse and interrelated forms. First, it is the plasticity of the image itself, its chemistry, the paper it is printed on, the toning, the resulting surface variations. Second are the presentational forms, such as frames, with which photographs are inseparably enmeshed. Both these forms of materiality carry another key element in each individual work - the physical traces of history and usage.

Furthermore, the works in the exhibition are either made out of Kodak photographic paper or depict various Kodak products such as the first digital camera from 1975; the 1964 Kodak Pavilion of the New York World's Fair ; the Kodak sponsored 1984 Winter Olympic Games in Sarajevo; or the Kodak EasyShare camera ad featuring the Barbados-born pop-star Rihanna in 2011. Shredded photographs rearrange the material of the image but also extend and complicate its indexicality. Materiality is closely related to social biography. A photograph cannot be fully understood at any single point in its existence but should be understood as belonging in a continuing process of production, exchange, and meaning. Rather than implicating passive media consumption on the one hand, or the supremacy of individual vision on the other, Bizumic's approach acknowledges the importance of materiality in the age of globalization and it allows us to look at photographs as socially salient objects.

By Lizi Mud McBane, Vienna, 2014

Born in 1976 in Sremska Mitrovica, former Yugoslavia. Grew up in New Zealand. Lives and works in Vienna, Austria.

Exhibitions (selection): 10th Istanbul Biennale (curated by Hou Hanru); the 9th Lyon Biennale (invited by Saadane Afif & Valerie Chartrain); Te Papa – The Museum of New Zealand, Wellington; Zacheta - Museum of Art, Warsaw; Contemporary Art Centre, Vilnius; Steirischer Herbst Festival, Neue Galerie am Landesmuseum Joanneum, Graz; MAK – Museum of Applied Arts, Vienna; Fondation d'entreprise Ricard, Paris; amongst other venues.

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