

Vilma Gold

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Josef Strau

My Divid'ed House

8 February 2014 - 8 March 2014

Private view 7 February 6:30 - 8:30pm

In an quite aimless, objectless trial once Josef Strau sought to follow the very early example by Italo Calvino (twentieth century journalist and writer). As early as in the early seventies, that suggests, although more theoretically than practically, to write a story structurally based on the search capabilities of the computer and that as well makes the search mode the theme of the story.

For him the application of the Calvino model primarily became an attempt to first of all recover the many of his own texts from earlier on, (something he should have done already anyways, but the procedure turned into an impossible one), as lots of the text seemed to have disappeared in old folders partly lost through bad file organization or computer crashes. Following the idea of Calvino Josef Strau made attempts to use very recent search software for recovering words and sentences sometimes instead of documents to reactivate parts of sleeping text recombined for new use.

During the same time period he discovered as well the extreme high resolution capabilities of the latest digital cameras - in particular here the new sensor of the sony rx-1 r - and their capability to read the text of the printed older text posters from far away and to record even the more occult texts in gloomiest light conditions. The "reading" productivity of both tools determined a new way to finally present the almost complete poster text works of the Josef Strau. Turning this therefore very special exhibition into the first publication of the complete works of the artist- in the form of a complete archive of the printed original text, as well as the photographic results of highlighting some of them in their original form and some recovered parts re-edited.

Becoming a new text by following the structure of Italo Calvino's, "The Burning of the Abominable House", the short resulting new text therefore, could have as author of the recovered fiction Calvino himself, be named "The Reconstruction of the Abominable House".

But apart from the text mode within the works of the exhibition it is as well for the artist a, "statement", of recovering photography as a tool to continue exploring the infinite search for a solution to turn production and representation of both text and image into one practice and procedure; the cameras reading activity seen as substitution for the reading imperative of the gallery audience.

As the whole exhibition with the photos from stories is relating often to memories of houses, particularly childhood house fantasies; the space of the gallery, although decorated with the text posters and the photographs appears very empty, but is immaterially somehow loaded with imagination of rooms and memories. This emptiness is only partly occupied by a little extra space, more a sculptural space than a room defined by a work that continues and alternates the older lamp practice of the artist. This enclosed space contains space dividing objects turned into lamps, beating fences into lamps.

Josef Strau lives and works in New York and Berlin. He has had solo exhibitions Malmö Konsthall, Sweden (2008) Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, (2007), Vilma Gold (2008 and 2007) and at Dépendance, Brussels (2010 and 2007). Recent solo exhibitions include 'Edition, Repetition, Competition and Jewlery of Flower and Redemption' at House of Gaga, Mexico (2013), Greene Naftali, New York, (2012), Galerie Francesca Pia, Zürich (2011), White Heat, presented by Künstlerhaus Stuttgart and Hermes und der Pfau, Stuttgart, (2009) and 'a Moctezuma. Welcome To Our Garden In Contese...' hosted by Thea Westreich Wagner and Ethan Wagner (2014). Recent group exhibits include Frieze Projects, London (2013), CAPC, Bordeaux (2011) and Badischer Kunstverein, Karlsruhe, Germany, (2011) Temporäre Kunsthalle, Berlin, (2009). Strau is published in many different catalogues and art magazines, including 'Wolfgang Tillmans, Serpentine Gallery' (2010) and Bernadette Corporation (Koenig publishings). He was also the Curator of Galerie Meerrettich in the Glass Pavillion at the Volksb Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz, Berlin, (2002-present). Josef Strau has an upcoming solo exhibiton at The Renaissance Society, Chicago later in 2014.

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