

# KÖNIG GALERIE

**ANNETTE KELM  
LIGHT DOUBLE**

29 SEPTEMBER – 25 NOVEMBER 2018  
ST. AGNES | CHAPEL  
OPENING: 28 SEPTEMBER, 6 – 9 UHR

In the jargon of professional photography, the term “light double” refers to people with whose help photographers optimize lighting conditions before the actual photo session. This method is often used when time is short, with only a few minutes available for the shoot. In the studio, on the other hand, the method allows photographers to take their time trying out and playing through various lighting scenarios.

The photographic double portrait by Annette Kelm from which this exhibition takes its title shows the artist, musician and publisher Sonja Cvitkovic and the gallerist Johann König. Since they are both wearing the same orange bomber jacket and have adopted a similar pose, it remains unclear whether someone acted as a light double. But the distribution of light and shadow in the lower half of the images actually point to diverging lighting conditions – the difference between hard artificial and softer natural light. In the juxtaposition of two corresponding images, hierarchical constructions and their effects become visible.

Kelm positioned her models on a three-step aluminium ladder in front of a screen to which a piece of fabric with blue, grey and white stripes is attached with magnets. More magnets have been used to attach a shooting target and a darts board. These motifs have played a role in various past works, as in the series *Untitled* (2006) that shows the reverse of targets riddled with holes. Light Double also refers to *Untitled (Portrait on a Ladder)* (2009) in which the same ladder already served as an object to sit on. The ongoing history of a studio and the props it contains is thus inscribed in the background. In this context, the picture *Big Sur* (2018) can be read as another point of orientation: while the title refers to the famous stretch of California coastline that is a focus of longing in America, the arranged metal springs belong to the historical inventory of the converted Berlin industrial building in which Kelm now has her studio. As if on a stage, Kelm sets up a “mechanical theatre” and combines it with specific coastal vegetation. By bringing the objects into the space, she gives them the character of readymades, in turn making the space itself into a key tool in her practice.

Kelm’s pictures often feature situations that point to her interest not in closure and sealing but in permeability and openness, as when she emphasizes the fragmentariness of what is shown, or when details like the folds in a scarf foreground an arrangement against spatial depth. Folds, as they appear in *Holiday Season* (2018), have a function, contrasting with the all-too-smooth surfaces and fetishized objects in commercial photography, whose visual vocabulary the artist appropriates in an ironic, conceptual way. *Tomato Target* (2018) places a tomato plant with unripe fruit at the centre of a nested

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OPENING HOURS  
TUE – SAT 11AM – 7PM  
SUN 12PM – 6PM

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arrangement in which the motif of a target is referenced associatively in the sense of multiple perspectives and focusses.

Themes of seeing and showing, the constructedness of pictures, and discrete revelations of the circumstances of her artistic production run through her oeuvre, in which documentary and staged photographs stand side by side. The documentary image *Ludwig Stiftung Aachen, Basement 2018* (2018), included in the show, can also be interpreted in this way, dealing as it does with both what is not shown and what is obvious. A year ago, when Kelm was invited by the Ludwig Foundation to photograph the famous collector couple's former house, in the basement she came across this scene with a crucifix, a rococo dwarf, remnants of wallpaper and two marble busts of the house's former inhabitants by Arno Breker (official state sculptor to the Nazis). Different times and aesthetics, profanity and holiness, come together in a vaulted brick cellar. The heaviness of the anti-modern rustic style feels oppressive. Like everything in the basement, the two heads (which the artist photographed as she found them) have a history: in 1986, the collector, patron and chocolate factory owner Peter Ludwig and his wife Irene caused a cultural and political scandal. It became known that they were planning to install two marble portrait busts by Arno Breker in the newly built Wallraf-Richartz-Museum / Museum Ludwig in Cologne. Writing a few years ago about the house built for the Ludwigs in Aachen's Südviertel neighbourhood in the 1950s, Eduard Beaucamp stated that "beauty and domestic harmony" were the uppermost guiding principles: "Nothing pushes itself into the foreground, there is nothing out of character that breaks with the bourgeois canon." Kelm vehemently contradicts such an interpretation by placing the betrayal of humanist values, and hence the abjectness of the bourgeoisie, at the centre of the picture.

Annette Kelm (\*1975, Stuttgart) lives and works in Berlin. She belongs to the most important representatives of contemporary photography from Germany. Beside important group exhibitions like the 54<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale (2011) and the survey show on portrait in contemporary photography at the Kunstmuseum Bonn and the Kunsthalle Nürnberg (2016), her works have been presented within solo exhibitions at international institutions such as Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna (upcoming in 2018), Kestnergesellschaft Hanover, Germany (2017), the Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit (2016), VOX. Center of Contemporary Image, Montréal (2016), Kölnischer Kunstverein (2014), Städel Museum, Frankfurt am Main (2012), KW - Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin (2009), Kunsthalle Zürich (2009) and Witte de With, Rotterdam (2008). At the time of the opening Kelm's works are also on display in a solo exhibition at the Fosun Foundation, Shanghai, and from December at Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna.

In 2016 Annette Kelm has recently received the Camera Austria-Prize and is represented in collections of the Tate Modern, London; Museum of Modern Art, New York, Centre Pompidou, Paris; Kunsthaus Zürich, Switzerland and the Guggenheim Museum, New York amongst others.

Text: Kito Nedo