

Galerie Francesca Pia

Press Release

September 2011

JOSEF STRAU

3 Exercises: anrufen, bekennen, wegwerfen

2. September – 15 October 2011

Opening: Thursday, 1 September 2011, 18-20

Like in his last exhibitions Josef Strau deals with the difficulty, maybe even the impossibility of fusing text and image as a true connection within the art space, but focuses here in Galerie Francesca Pia particularly on three different narratives that he combines with a sculptural installation.

Different from earlier exhibitions, he formalizes the otherwise often informally connected written fragments, which again appear both in images as well as in take-away posters as pure text layout. The three “short stories”, which are repeatedly reprinted in different images, are connected through the proposal to take them as examples of performative or even real acts of three art exercises: calling/confessing/throwing away. All three acts resemble both a conceptual procedure in the art space as well as real acts described in different theological texts.

The first part describes an attempt to call for a spirit partly as connotation to the old theological practice in music and art of the so-called invocation. In this case describing a first small attempt of calling the spirit of David in the city of Florence. David being sometimes named the king of the kingdom of poetry, among other kingdoms, and as well being the “patron” and strong presence in the urban situation of Florence. Spending the whole time in Florence during the development and production of the exhibition, Josef Strau quotes a few other Italian and mostly Florentine narratives and images, which echo through the written stories and their framing images. For instance, the work by Ketty la Rocca particularly her works where she exchanges lines and means of art by written text, particularly her work “describing” David of Michelangelo as well as the images of the hands with the inscriptions of words and sentences.

In other anecdotes the text part of the exhibition resembles hints of confessions of the artist’s life during the production of the exhibition. The third short story evolved around a scene from the extraordinary Italian novel by Giorgio Bassani “The Garden of the Finzi-Continis”. In the descriptions of the lives of a few young people in Ferrara during the year before some of them will be deported and later will disappear during the Shoah, a tennis court plays a central role. Sometimes it could be even understood as a metaphor for certain modern art practices, sometimes the text develops within its realism a kind of dark theological quality. Through some transformation hopefully in both ways, this idea of tennis might also touch the installation in the space of the Galerie Francesca Pia.

GalerieFrancescaPia

In all his recent and former exhibitions, Josef Strau continually uses lamps as a signifier that can absorb and highlight different codes and narratives. The lamps are not only reading lamps but kind of personages that – even when attached to them by chains – become partly independent from their connected narratives.

Josef Strau lives in New York and Berlin and has published in various catalogues and magazines, most recently among others on Wolfgang Tillmans, Nora Schultz, Ei Arakawa, Isa Genzken.

Selected solo exhibitions: Konsthall Malmö, Greene Naftali Gallery, New York, Galerie Daniel Buchholz, Cologne and Berlin, House of Gaga, Mexico City, Docking Station in Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam

Until 2006 Josef Strau ran the Galerie Meerrettich in the Glasspavilion of the Volksbühne, Berlin.

Text: Josef Strau