

Press release: Exhibition:

This here Song

Ed van der Elsen
Esther Friedman
Markus Mittringer

Curator: Fiona Liewehr
Opening: March 7, 2019, 18:00 – 21:00
Duration: March 8 – April 20, 2019

rauminhalt _ harald bichler
space & content
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Tue. to Fri. 12 – 19, Sat. 10 – 15

English writer, painter and art critic John Berger died in 2017. Seeing was his life's motive and the "observing eye" the starting point of his intellectual engagement. Like no one else, Berger wrote texts that expressed exceptionally diverse considerations on "The Art of Seeing". In his thoughts on film, photography, painting, as well as in his poems, novels, artists' portraits and political essays, not to mention his groundbreaking BBC series "Ways of Seeing", it all comes down to one thing: the boundless openness of perception. His purpose was not so much about grasping a meaning, much rather about entering into an extraordinary dialogue with fellow artists, writers and philosophers in order to think, correspond, publish together. In so doing, he opened our eyes and senses to "another way of seeing". Pursuing the poetic approach of Berger, the exhibition *This here Song* draws parallels between three photographers of different generations and backgrounds: Dutch photographer, film and book-maker Ed(uard) van der Elsen, German-American photographer Esther Friedman and Austrian photographer, author and critic Markus Mittringer. A fictional encounter of three people, a remix displaying a compelling lightness, associative, playful and non-hierarchical.

This here Song is dedicated to all the anecdote and memoirs of the photographer and the photographed, between the picture and its viewers and all the people who are willing to open their eyes.

Ed van der Elsen (1925-1990) is considered as one of the most important Dutch photographers, film and book-makers of the 20th century, as well as a pioneer of street photography. He studied sculpture in Amsterdam before devoting himself completely to photography in 1946. In the 1950s he moved to Paris and began working as a freelance photographer for Dutch magazines, documenting the bohemian scene of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, gathering mostly young people who found in alcohol and drugs an escape from their grim daily life of the Post-War years. Following the advice of Eduard Steichen, whom he met in Paris, he developed in 1956 his first photographic novel "Love on the Left Bank". On his extensive travels to Africa, Asia, the United States and Mexico, he shot striking portraits of the people he met, as well as socio-critical photographs and films documenting his environment and personal life. Ed van der Elsen said he had been driven, like a hunter seducing and challenging his counterpart, often capturing highly complex everyday scenes in partially blurry snapshots-like photographs. Ed van der Elsen's work has been exhibited worldwide, notably at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam (2017), the Jeu de Paume in Paris (2017), the Museum Boerhaave in Leiden (2014), the Netherlands Fotomuseum in Rotterdam (2010), The Metropolitan Museum of Tokyo (2003), the Palazzina di Giardini in Modena (2002) and in the exhibition "Family of Man", conceived in 1955 by Eduard Steichen for the MoMA, New York, travelled among other destinations to Tokyo, Berlin, Paris, Amsterdam, Munich, London and Moscow.

His most important publications include: "Love on the Left Bank" (1956), "Bagara" (1957), "Jazz" (1959), "Sweet Life" (1966), "Eye Love You" (1977), "Amsterdam!" (1979) and "Once Upon a Time" (1981).

Esther Friedman was born in Mannheim and spent her teenage years between Mannheim and New York, where her family had moved. She studied German literature at Brooklyn College and attended radio, TV and film classes at New York University, discovering her passion for photography. In 1974, the then 19-years-old moved to West Berlin and completed a photography apprenticeship with Hans Pieler. In 1976, Esther Friedman met the American singer James Osterberg, aka Iggy Pop, at a fashion show that took place in the artist loft "Fabrikneu" in Kreuzberg. She had designed the catwalk covered in photographs with Martin Kippenberger. Iggy Pop had just broken up with the Stooges and moved from Los Angeles to Berlin with his friend David Bowie. Esther Friedman and Iggy Pop became lovers and moved in with Bowie in a house in Schöneberg.

For seven years Friedman documented their common life, the tours, the stage performances of the stars, as well as the private trips to Los Angeles, Wales, Haiti and Puerto Rico. Friedman's Berlin photographs paint a vivid picture of the walled city which in the 70s and 80s was to become a shelter for artists, squatters and hedonists from all over the world. In all its decay and excess, Berlin offered more artistic freedom than any other place. Friedman also managed to make a sensitive close-up portrait of Iggy Pop and David Bowie, since her Berlin stay coincided with one of their most important creative phases. After she split from Iggy Pop Esther Friedman stopped photographing and became a successful gallery owner. She now lives in Frankfurt am Main.

Esther Friedman's photos from that time are shown for the first time in Vienna.

Markus Mittringer (* 1965 in Linz) is a photographer, author and art critic. After studying art history, philosophy and theatre at the University of Vienna, he worked as an art critic for the daily newspapers "Die Presse" and "Der Standard", collaborated to "Monopol" and the "FAZ", wrote catalogue entries for The Vienna Secession, MUMOK and the Tate Liverpool. Since more than twenty-five years, he has been an active but distant participant in the Austrian and international art scenes, which he addresses with subtle criticism, may it be with his camera or his pen. With elegant restraint, he casts a sharp look on the tumultuous bustle of a scene driven by spectacle addiction, underlining small movements and situations invisible to others who, high on their imperative will to experience, have a restricted faculty of perception. He listens carefully, quietly analyses the words spoken without judging or commenting on it precipitately. Photographers and critics such as Markus Mittringer are feared. He is not just "there", but right in the middle of it, without lapsing into a hectic self-representation or trying to capture every moment and every protagonist indistinctly. He appears as a voyeur who misses nothing. One can never be completely sure of what he is thinking, what situations and constellations will catch the focus of his camera or incite him to express himself straightforwardly. This is how his unobtrusive literary images come to life. As acute observations of almost casual social scenes, they act as a revelatory mirror. Markus Mittringer's photographic and linguistic narratives are dense and open up a ramified association sphere full of sensuality, a sphere from which stem these ephemeral freezing condensates of a reality film captured by the critic, as well as weirdly moving sharp-tongued linguistic images.

Event:

Content No. 1

April 4, 2019 at 19:00

Sweet Life

About the artist books of Ed van der Elsken.

Talk with Bernhard Cella, Roland Fischer-Briand and Fiona Liewehr
(in German)

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