



WAR

6 May - 3 June

GOFF + ROSENTHAL, NEW YORK

ARTISTS ANONYMOUS

For their first US show, the Berlin-based collective Artists Anonymous transformed the ordinarily austere Goff + Rosenthal gallery space into a kind of funhouse labyrinth, a disorientating and utterly engaging multi-sensory assault that utilised painting, photography, sculpture, video, carpentry, performance and audience participation. Members of the group go by their given names only, just like members of their acronymic namesakes Alcoholics Anonymous. It is unclear exactly how many members it includes – they prefer their audience to focus on the work rather than on their persons.

WAR is the latest in a series of what the group call 'Apocalyptic Warrior' installations, others were titled Hunger, Pollution, Drugs, and AIDS. Within it, several images reoccur, in particular an axe-wielding, mohawked punk set against a backdrop of swastikas, somewhat like musical leitmotifs, both in positive and inverse, or negative, versions that the group calls 'afterimages'.

Upon entering the gallery, one immediately encounters a narrow hallway with snapshots of a young man, apparently a member of the collective with whom the rest are no longer in touch and who is the model for the punk, pasted on its walls. One sees him – to give only a few instances – naked, riding a pony as a child, in a bar with friends. Sod covers the floor of the hall and a small niche to the right, where an overturned bucket with two surgical gloves on it stands

below a heavily impastoed, and reversed, copy of Gerhard Richter's famous painting *Betty* (1998), in this case made to look like a carpet pattern; on the adjacent wall hangs a photograph of the painting in a lightbox, with the 'afterimage' inversion of colours (i.e., reds became blues, etc.). The hallway, which has a downward-sloping ceiling and uneven floors and walls, leads to a stretch of bunny carpeting and a box upon which is a small sculpture: a portrait painting for the face, with yellow cartoon-like hands and feet protruding from it; a tiny hole in one of the walls opens on a completely mirrored, diorama-like room. Across from it, a small, arched opening at floor level opens on another little room. Further on is a wall covered in painted text discussing 'the American serial killer' Jeffrey Dahmer near two video screens, inset in the walls, depicting the punk's face.

Elsewhere one finds a room with shiny, mirror-like wallpaper, a painting and its afterimage; a military uniform on a hanger; drooping flypaper; a set of distorted furniture attached to a wall-sized photograph of a room with distorted furniture. One could fill reams describing the installation. It was, in short, cunningly assembled, tightly stitched together by the leitmotif imagery, and, contrary to the sober A.A. model, utterly intoxicating. *Daniel Kunitz*