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ARTE PRESSE

DISCOURSE ON CONTEMPORARY ART AND VISUAL CULTURE.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 2009

Artists Anonymous - Lucifer Over London



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Riflemaker Gallery

Placing art before ego. Not a popular concept in today's art market that is obsessed with \$50 million diamond skulls and \$12 million sharks. However, this philosophy is at the very heart of the Berlin based artist collective simply known as Artists Anonymous.

Comprised of three members who work together as painters, photographers and filmmakers the group is a throwback to the 1970s phenomenon of the art group that is not often seen in today's contemporary art world. Working across mediums and without individual ego, they are bound together by certain rules such as no alcohol, drugs or independent artwork. They remove the individual artistic hand from their works, so the viewer's focus is placed solely on the art – as the collective wants it.

ABOUT ARTE PRESSE

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OUR CONTRIBUTORS - Maggie Shafer is the managing partner in MMS Contemporary Art Advisory (www.markinshafer.com). The group specializes in assisting American clients collecting in the London and European art market. Ola Wlusek completed her MA in Contemporary Art Theory at Goldsmiths College, University of London, UK. Currently she is the Curatorial Work Study at Walter Phillips Gallery, The Banff Centre. In her spare time she enjoys travelling and writing about contemporary artistic practices. Denise Ryner is completing the final year of her undergraduate degree in Fine Art History and Semiotics at the University of Toronto. She is also working as a Curatorial Assistant at the Justina M. Barnicke Gallery. Giulia Tamiazzo, born in Florence, Italy, is a freelance writer based in Vienna, Austria. One of her main research topics is Neuroaesthetics, which explores the various impacts of artistic and architectural works on our sensual awareness.

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Their current exhibition at Riflemaker entitled Lucifer Over London is presented over three floors and consists of photography, painting and video. The artwork is provocative and demonstrates the innovative techniques behind their practice, namely the use of the ‘afterimage’. In the afterimage, the group uses the photographic negative of a painted picture in order to create a new impression of an original work. The resulting image reverses the composition and changes the color palette. Often displayed in pairs along with the original oil work each can easily stand alone based on its own merit.

In the pairing entitled Tourists (2008), the oil painting is rendered in washed-out red, rose and rust tones. The faces of the three figures within the work are obscured and there is very little detail in the piece overall, producing a sense of vagueness and tension. The afterimage not only reverses the composition, but also the tone of the piece. There is a high level of detail and the palette contains soothing shades of blue and green with a splash of red and yellow. The subdued atmosphere present in the afterimage stands in stark contrast to the work on which it was based. Along with the paired works, the exhibition also includes afterimages without an oil painting as a reference. One such work, entitled Miss Piggy (2009), shows a young woman in curlers playfully gazing upwards, her mouth slightly ajar. As Artists Anonymous often appear in their own artworks, one can only assume that this is a portrait of the female member of the group. The bright and stylized colours create a surreal image that appears to be a painting rather than a photograph. In the basement of the gallery, there is a small theatre showing a work entitled Cinema Anonyme (nd). The film consists of different vignettes starring the artists. Shot in documentary style, the first part of the film shows the group explaining their process of creating afterimages. It becomes immediately apparent through the use of mock serious tones, fake infrared camera work and elaborate lab costumes that this explanation is tongue-in-cheek. As a stifled giggle is heard off camera, the audience is alerted to the fact that the group does not take themselves too seriously.

The second part of the film is shot in the style of the afterimage. Much edgier by comparison to the earlier vignette, the film shows mainly the outlines of figures who at times are fighting, nude or listlessly resting against a wall or chair. The bright, fantasy like colours combined with the lack of distinguishing detail of the actors, prevent the viewer from relating to the work. No words are spoken; instead there is off-tune singing and organ music acting as the soundtrack. Like the oil paintings and their afterimages, the artists bounce the viewer back and forth from

ARCHIVE

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Micah Lexier, (the title is an arrow)

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comfortable, accessible situations to those of tension and confusion.

Lucifer Over London is currently showing at Riflemaker in London until Saturday

21 November 2010. 79 Beak Street London W1F 9SU TEL: +44 (0) 20 7439 0000 FAX: +44 (0) 20 7439 0070

<http://www.riflemaker.org/>

Maggie Markin Shafer

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