

MICHAEL SAILSTORFER

10 000 STONES

28 May – 31 August 2008

Press preview: Tuesday, 27 May 2008, 11:00 AM

Transformations, context shifts, laying claim to space - Michael Sailstorfer's works rapidly reveal the artist's interest in everyday objects and the materials of our immediate environment, and his fascination for the specific identity and history of these objects. Sailstorfer subjects his objects to stringent scrutiny; they are dismantled, dissected, deformed, adapted, reassembled in novel forms and rededicated as poetic-realistic installations. In this process, both the space which they take up and the space that surrounds them are of essential significance. Space becomes the battleground for such antagonistic concepts as home(land) and distance, mobility and stasis, motion and the past. The exhibition in the Schirn presents five works that impressively showcase the artist's poetic, political and ironic vocabulary. Sailstorfer has created his large light installation "Untitled (Junger Römer)" ("Untitled (Young Roman)") especially for the Schirn. The work illuminates the urban space from its "table" – a concrete structure in the Schirn's exterior space. Also, and for the first time, the installation "Wohnen mit Verkehrsanbindung" ("Living with transport connection"), to date known only as photographic documentation, has been transported to an exhibition space open to public viewing.

The light installation "Untitled (Junger Römer)" ("Untitled (Young Roman)"), the recreation of an old illuminated sign from the former German Democratic Republic with a rhythmically flashing program, confronts visitors even before they enter the Schirn proper. The title of this powerful, eight-meter-long neon skeleton, erected in a prominent location outside the Schirn, is a play on both the song title "Junge Römer" ("Young Romans") by the Austrian singer Falco and the neighboring "Römer", Frankfurt's historic City Hall. The original of the display, the illuminated sign of a radio manufacturer of the former GDR, may still be glimpsed today as an advertising ruin perched above the rooftops of Berlin's central Mitte district. For the Schirn, Sailstorfer programmed a cycle that causes his neon creation to flash just as it might have over East Berlin in the days of the GDR. Two circles on a horizontal pattern of lines propagate, wave-like, outward, concluding in a colorful finale of light. This almost psychedelic "quasi-readymade", bearing the Falco title, emitting radiantly pulsing sound-wave patterns, and sited in the heart of Frankfurt's old city, undergoes a metamorphosis typical for Sailstorfer: in this work, he links the memory of a tune that evokes the feeling of the 1980s in Germany with the memory of a country that no longer exists to create something new in an entirely different place.

Inside the Schirn, a baby carriage-size machine cheerfully spews popcorn, which will eventually fill the room entirely. Its name, "1 zu 43 bis 47" ("1 to 43 to 47"), refers to the size ratio of the

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surface of a kernel of corn to a popped kernel, which with its folds, recesses, projections and curves represents the infinite variety of becoming. While the scent of fresh popcorn emanates from one corner, a wide car tire spins endlessly in another corner, assaulting the visitor with the smell of scorched rubber. Michael Sailstorfer conceived of his "Tire" during a short visit to Yokohama, where he viewed a tire warehouse. "Zeit ist keine Autobahn – Frankfurt" ("Time is no highway – Frankfurt") is the title of this new version, adapted for the Schirn exhibition, which contrasts the motion of the tire with the immobility of the room: a rubber tire is attached to the wall in such a way that it rubs against the wall as it rotates, gradually consuming itself turn by turn. An enormous expenditure of energy noisily comes to nothing – an artistic effort in the tradition of Sisyphus and Don Quixote, a fate that confronts us in our own lifetimes and actions, a "revolution" against the limits of the possible with comic absurdity.

The series "Wohnen mit Verkehrsanbindung" ("Living with transport connection") examines the contradiction between mobility and home. Originally created as a temporary installation along Bavarian country roads, it is one of Sailstorfer's numerous sculptural manipulations of public space. For this project, the artist furnished four bus-stop shelters in the towns of Anzing, Grosskatzbach, Oberkorb and Urtlfing with simple furniture and household appliances – bed, table and chair, shelf, sink, stove and refrigerator, electric light and toilet, "completing" them as fully functional, minimal dwelling units. Until now, this work, which Sailstorfer "undid" right after completing it, could only be viewed in the form of the black-and-white photographic documentation. For this exhibition at the Schirn, the artist transplanted the bus shelters from their home sites and re-furnished them again. For this first time, the shelters, which are part of the public transport networks of their home communities, are lined up and on display in a single exhibition. Their backdrop is no longer the Bavarian countryside but the Carolingian excavation site directly in front of the Schirn, right in the middle of the city. Perhaps the view of these historical relics is a further reference to the 10,000 stones that form the focus of Paul Auster's "The Music of Chance", from which the title of this exhibition derives. Auster's novel describes the arbitrarily irrational idea of two lottery millionaires, Flower and Stone, of moving a castle made of 10,000 stones from England to the US; former firefighter Jim Nashe and busted poker player Jack Pozzi must rebuild the stone blocks as a wall: a transformational effort that demands its sacrifice.

Sailstorfer's reference to the respective environment is a consistent feature of his work. The artist, who grew up in Velden/Vils in Bavaria's Landshut district, studied at Goldsmiths College, London, and currently lives in Berlin, approaches his work extremely playfully. In Sailstorfer's work, familiar signifiers of rural life, such as sturdy wooden cabins, a tree house in the yard or simply landscape and forest, are depicted as naturally as they are ironically. Particularly the idea of simple housing in a rural environment recurs again and again in such works as "Wohnen mit Verkehrsanbindung" or the huts assembled from caravan and aircraft scrap, "D-IBRB" (2001) or "Heimatlied" ("Song of My Native Land") (2001/2002). The objects which the artist tears from their everyday context for his transformational experiments often originate from airplanes or cars, but are now stationary or simply moving in place, causing the ideas of settling down and mobility, homeland and freedom to collide.

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The 2008 video work "Untitled (Lohma)", also presented in this exhibition, shows a house that breathes. Slowly, ominously, the sheet metal body expands, seemingly threatening to burst and scatter its entrails across the snow-covered Thuringian landscape. But instead the motion reverses. The inflated building suddenly loses air, it pulls in its stomach and seems to suffocate. Another cut, it recovers and inflates, and so on. Although this house, made of unpainted corrugated sheet metal, without doors or windows, is ever so slightly reminiscent of the solitary, peaceful log cabin of Henry David Thoreau – the American writer and philosopher who described living the simple life in the woods in conjunction with his thoughts on social and economic behavior – it inhabits an artificial equilibrium ever on the verge of disaster. In fact, the disaster has long since occurred: the life of this house originated in the destructive force of an explosion within – an explosion which the viewer cannot see, but only guess at.

Destroy, transform, expand, dismantle and reassemble in ever new ways are the principles of Sailstorfer's work. The fact that the destruction of the natural basis for human life is also depicted is the melancholy root tone in his compositions, a root tone which permits absurd chords.

CATALOG: A catalog will be published for the exhibition, edited by Matthias Ulrich and Max Hollein. With a foreword by Max Hollein and text by Matthias Ulrich. German-English edition, approx. 70 pages, approx. 45 illustrations, soft cover, Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, ISBN 978-3-86560-465-1. € 14.90 (Schirn).

VENUE: SCHIRN KUNSTHALLE FRANKFURT, Römerberg, D-60311 Frankfurt, Germany.

DURATION: 28 May – 31 August 2008. **OPENING HOURS:** Tue., Fri.–Sun. 10 AM – 7 PM, Wed./Thu. 10 AM – 10 PM. **INFORMATION:** www.schirn.de, E-Mail: welcome@schirn.de, Telephone: (+49-69) 29 98 82-0, Fax: (+49-69) 29 98 82-240. **ADMISSION** (for "Michael Sailstorfer. 10,000 Stones" and "Terence Koh. Captain Buddha"): € 6, discount € 4; children under 8 admitted free. Family ticket € 12, Kombiticket for two exhibitions € 12, discount € 9. **PUBLIC TOURS:** Wed. 7 PM, Sat./Sun. 5 PM. **CURATOR:** Matthias Ulrich (Schirn).

PRESS: Dorothea Apovnik (Head),

Michaela Hille (Press Officer), Gesa Pölert.

SCHIRN KUNSTHALLE FRANKFURT, Römerberg, D-60311 Frankfurt,

Telephone: (+49-69) 29 98 82-118, Fax: (+49-69) 29 98 82-240,

Email: presse@schirn.de, www.schirn.de

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