

Thomas Bachler - *My Trilemma*
31st of October - 22nd of December 2009



Illusory Worlds - Statesmen - Cyanotyp - 70 x 100 cm - 2009

Thomas Bachler - My Trilemma

Ulf Saupe Gallery is proud to present the exhibition **“My Trilemma”** by **Thomas Bachler**. Bachler, born 1961 in Detmold, moved with his family in 2003 to Dresden to teach photography and art at the University of Fine Arts in Dresden.

Through his photographic series, **Photobooks**, **Crime Scenes** and **Illusory Worlds** (Scheinwelten) the artist invites us to a deep reflection upon analyses of aesthetic processes, and social and historical coherence, but also upon the mental processes that guide human behavior.

Themes such as **GDR history** and **the development of the financial market** are keenly and humorously explored. Always following a strictly conceptual path, the works of Thomas Bachler build an absurd-real parallel world on the platform of art. He creates scenes of presence and absence, of questions without resolution, filled with an irony that, according to the action itself, is always assigned by photographic fact.

As well as the **pinhole camera**, Bachler uses the process of **image recontextualization**. Devalued banknotes, photos from the GDR's state security service (STASI) and ideological socialist literature diversify upon perception. Thomas Bachler's works invite us, through their conceptual mechanisms, to experience an intellectual autonomy that is difficult to imagine in the absence of the aesthetic phenomena proposed.

We are delighted to welcome you to the gallery.

Thomas Bachler – My Trilemma

The works of Thomas Bachler are based in the classical medium of photography and originate with a highly conceptual approach. This conceptualism allows for a grading of artistic methods that distance themselves from traditional genres such as painting and sculpture, as well as conventional applications of photography. The term “conceptualism” grafts onto the work its own origins, signaling the artist’s focus on aesthetic strategies, and focusing the observer’s attention on the art work’s mental spheres.

We are dealing with an artist whose intention is to systematically investigate and reprocess various procedures and phenomena in the (predominantly non-conventional) representational and manifestational forms of photography. It is an analysis that holds together the empirical nature of phenomena with their role as a product of collective remembrance.

Apparently inconsequential circumstances, which usually play out in front of us without drawing further attention, unexpectedly unfold themselves in Thomas Bachler’s complex presentation, achieving a gripping effect that touches on the uncanny. The reflections they invite include an analysis of aesthetic, social, or historical problems, culminating in human behaviors and the mental processes that regulate them.

In the series **“Photobooks”** Thomas Bachler makes use of propagandist publications intended by the socialist government to equip the “new citizens of the GDR”. Cut into the covers of the books are photographs of “suspected persons” or “enemies of the state” – photographs taken by Stasi collaborators in the course of their observations, and archived by the Secret Police.



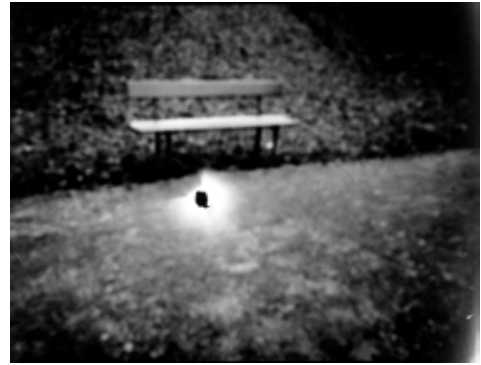
This point of access to these volatile files, stored for a decade by the Stasi and today archived at the Federal Authority for Stasi Records (BstU), would be unthinkable, but for BstU workers’ ready cooperation with research and willingness to make the records available to the artist.

By combining the two elements, book and photograph, the conceptual mechanism of collage introduces the graphic document to the propagandist political emblem.

Emerging from a dark corner of collective remembrance, the contrast unleashes a powerful aesthetic energy. Entirely independent of each other in their origins, united here in context, the two contrasting structural forms present an example of an aesthetic analysis of historic and social reality.

The extraordinary status of the photographic document reveals, in detail, the thought structures and working methods of a secret modern state police-force, and the history of its influence on society. Thomas Bachler has subjected this little-known era of repression to an arresting, refreshing and even humorous perspective.

The locations in the series **“Crime Scenes”** seem, at first glance, to show nothing extraordinary. That impression changes on learning the photographs’ back-story: they were obtained with a gunshot. The fired bullet hits an ordinary box. On impact, the shot becomes the aperture diaphragm in a camera obscura, transforming the ordinary scene into a crime scene.



Through open questions and loaded conceptual irony, presence and absence are deliberately confused. In relation to an ambivalent attitude towards conventional photography (including the hypothetical killing of the photographer) the strategy is accompanied, on another level, by a metaphorically-charged atmosphere. The effect is enhanced in the technical quality of the execution, transferring us in time and space to the other side of practiced perception.

The feeling of being in the middle of the scene is inescapable. We are incapable of fleeing the picture. The observer’s personality cannot be divorced from that of the artist; we too are webbed in the same mood of the tragic, comic and the uncanny. The persuasive momentum of Thomas Bachler’s works complicates the mere outline of his conceptual mechanism: we participate in a great freedom and thoughtful autonomy, hardly imaginable outside the aesthetic phenomenon.



“Illusory Worlds” are created with figurative fragments taken from banknotes, pulled from circulation in various countries. They are displayed here in the form of a photographic paper work, cyanotype. The appearance of the technique can be traced to the earliest years in the development of photography.

The founding idea of “Apparent Worlds” aims at the value of pictures and the complex processes of transformation they have undergone in the course of time. Their genesis was subject not only to political and economic ideas of value in society, but also to the readings of the artist who, in turn, must submit to closely-defined specifications – to design the bills as forgery-proof while preserving his own handwriting, for example.

The value of the pictorial element progressively loses its meaning, just as the disappearance of the paper bill from circulation allows for the value of the actual document to be lost. At the end of this process of multiple transformation, only a physical shell survives (“rescued” through the artistic work), even though the banknotes once stood in complex historical and social cohesion, bearers of important meaning that originated, for the greater part, in the imagination.

The disappearance of the pictures from our present world generates a melancholy that appears as the product of inevitability. The pictures, once representing the proudest symbol, now confront us in the form of an archeology of their own origins – ideas and associated experience that disappear forever. - *Christian Dominguez*

Exhibition images



Installation view - Illusory Worlds - Room I



Installation view - Illusory Worlds (Detail) - Room I



Installation view - Crime Scenes - Room II



Installation view - Crime Scenes - Room II



Installation view - Photobooks - Room III



Installation view - Photobooks - Room III

Illusory Worlds - 19 Motifs

Cyanotype
70 x 100 cm - framed
Edition 1 / 5
2009



Illusory Worlds - *Chinese wall*



Apparent Worlds - *Eastberlin*



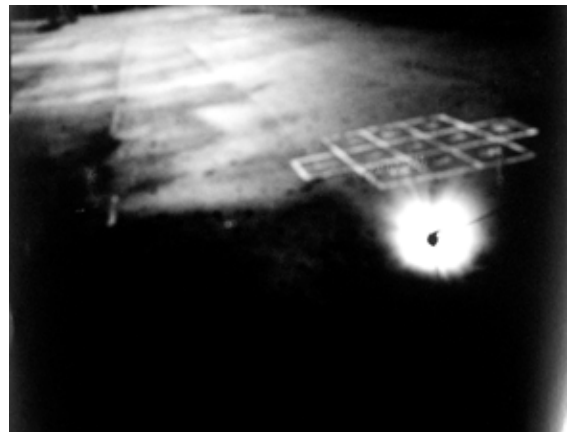
Apparent Worlds - *Revolutionaries*

Crime Scenes - 24 Motifs

Silver gelantine prints
18 x 24 cm - framed
Edition 1 / 5
1997



Park-bench



School-bench



Bus-station



Pedestrian bridge

Photobooks - 29 Motifs

Collage (Book and Archive-photo)
Unique piece
2009



Socialism - Your World
23,5 x 17 cm



Our Germany
29 x 22 cm



Political Economy Capitalism Socialism
22 x 15 cm



The Theory of materialistic Conscience
21 x 16 cm

Thomas Bachler Curriculum Vitae

- 1961** Born in Detmold (NRW)
- 1983 - 89** Studies in Visual Communication at the HbK Kassel University
- 1985** Organisation of the first Camera obscura congress in Germany, since then, various workshops, publications and works regarding the pinhole photography (non-lense photography)
- 1987** Founding of the "Author's Edition" for Photography and Art
- 1990** Rudi Baerwindt Award of the City of Mannheim
- 1990 - 97** Teaching (Photography, Art, Design) for the Goethe - Institute of the University for Applied Science in Würzburg, of the German Employee Academy Rostock and of the HbK Braunschweig
- 1994** Conception and Development (with Karl-Hermann Möller) of the distance learning seminar „Photography“ for the ILS Hamburg
- 2000** Interartes - Photo-award (Zürich)
Invited professor (half-position) at the HbK Kassel
- 2002** Curator of the exhibition „Photography as an experiment“, Kunsthalle Erfurt
- 2002 - 04** Seminar at the Art-University Dresden
- 2005** Dozent an dem Internat. Summeruniversity Dresden
Workshops und Lectures at the Artuniversity in Brisbane and Hobarth, Australien
Photography-workshop at the Liechtenstein University
Member of the German Artist Foundation and the New Photographic Society

Shows

- 2009** „Scheinwelten“ Liechtenstein University, (E)
„Fotografie und Psychologie“, Galerie Lortzing Art, Hannover (with Karen Weinert),
„Menschen des 21. Jahrhunderts“ Textilmuseum Crimmitschau (with Karen Weinert)
„Lichtblicke“ Landesmuseum Oldenburg, (Catalogue)
„Skinscapes“ Marburger Kunstverein
- 2008** „Die zweite Avantgarde“ Moritzburg Foundation, Halle
„Liminal“ Carnegie Gallery, Hobart, Tasmanien
„Ansichten von Park und Schloss Benrath“ Science Institute Bonn
- 2007** „Einfache Bilder“ K4 Galerie Saarbrücken, (Katalog, E)
„Movements in Still Time“ Lornsdale Gallery, Toronto, (Katalog)
„Duales System“ Galerie Bautzner 69, Dresden, (Catalogue, E)
- 2006** „Mensch!“ Kupferstichkabinett Dresden, (Catalogue)
- 2005** „The Borderline of Photography“ Queensland Centre for Photography, Australien
„Art Frankfurt“, K4 Galerie
- 2004** „One Artist Show“ single Stand at the Art Frankfurt, (E)