

HAUS AM WALDSEE

PRESS RELEASE

Johanna Diehl The Truth Resides in the Folds

29 November 2019 to 1 March 2020

At the end of November 2019, Haus am Waldsee will open the first institutional solo exhibition in Berlin by the award-winning architectural photographer and artist Johanna Diehl (*1977). Freely inspired by Walter Benjamin, she develops her work out of the idea that the essence of history lies in the folds of memory. Diehl traces the hidden in Europe's recent memory. She finds convincing images and surprising forms of presentation. For the exhibition, which is made possible by the Hauptstadtkulturfonds, two new film works were created as part of her new series „Dead Dad Wild Country“.

In earlier photo series starting in 2009, the artist explored architectural testimonies such as synagogues that were half-destroyed and rededicated to sports halls, cinemas and factories in Eastern Europe, telling of past geopolitical conflicts. For her, it is essentially about the question of identity in modern-day Europe and the overwriting of history in public spaces.

In recent series, biographical references have come to the fore. Diehl is particularly concerned with the traumas of the Second World War, which until today have continued to have an effect over several generations. For the exhibition at Haus am Waldsee, new parts of the series „Alienation“ were created, which are based on archives of her own family.

After sifting through the estates left to her and extensive studies in public archives, Diehl has noted an emotional deficiency within the family, and a denial of the Nazi past during the first decades after 1945. On the basis of primary sources such as family photos and diaries, as well as the production „Mars“ by Johann Kresnik in Heidelberg in 1983, she has dealt with the effects on the psychological environment. Fritz Zorn's biographical report, which was received world-wide and published one year after his early death from cancer in 1977, was also found in the library of her father who committed suicide in the early 1980s.

The exhibition starts with „Prelude“, a hanging in the first room that displays new works such as „MARS“, „Dead Dad Wild Country“ and „Broken Repertoire“ and refers to Fritz Zorn's literary-biographical report „Mars“ from 1977. In this, the Swiss author refers to the emotional strain caused by his parents' generation, which were often barely able to establish emotional contact with their children due to traumas from the Second World War. Many adolescent people of the post-war years suffered from this situation.

Dead Dad Wild Country

Also on show will be a series which Johanna Diehl has entitled Dead Dad Wild Country. In this series from 2018 she examines the fate of her father, who took his own life in 1983, at the age of 39. Against a backdrop of that post-war silence Diehl uses the photographs, objects and



documents left behind in her father's estate to analyse the relationship between her father and his mother, i.e. the artist's grandmother, whose estate was also left to her and is now being processed as historiographical material in Diehl's photo series. A number of motifs such as travel photographs from the 1960s and 1970s stem from Africa, South America, the US, and Asia, and illustrate a yearning for luxury and adventure. Instead of photographs of her absent father Johanna Diehl has chosen to incorporate into her own work the props from a stage production of *Hänsel und Gretel* that Johann Kresnik produced at the Volksbühne Berlin in 1995, with costumes by Penelope Wehrli. Diehl inserts costume objects as partial objects, i.e. disembodied organs, into the picture to signal the empty space left behind by her absent father. She also discerns an analogy between costume elements inside which the dancers struggled to move freely and the psychological damage inflicted on an entire generation as a visible symptom of inner scarring.

MARS

Another new film work references the book of the same title by Swiss author Fritz Zorn. In these autobiographical confessions the protagonist publicly reveals his family background as part of Zurich's 'Gold Coast' society. The author highlights the fact that it was the silence and supposed harmony of this entire entourage that made him terminally ill. Mars was celebrated as a cult book in Switzerland in the 1980s. Evidently, Johanna Diehl's father, too, had carefully read the book. A copy of the book was left behind in his estate.

Broken repertoire – 7 études for dissected piano

The work entitled *Broken repertoire* refers to the music of Walter Haupt for the aforementioned play Mars, in the Heidelberg production of 1983. The composer opted for a 'dissected' grand piano (i.e. a piano 'prepared' with surgical precision) as the sole sound generator and all-important prop. The instrument stood in vicariously for bourgeois society and its way of life. From these multi-channel recordings the composer extracted a composition for eleven dissected pianos. The pianos pleaded, groaned, moaned, and howled in protest at the unconventional percussive treatment to which they were being subjected by leather, rubber and metal parts, as if replicating the inner outcry of Fritz Zorn's own torment.

Johanna Diehl is keen to revisit this idea of a 'dissected' grand piano in her own exhibition. By analogy with Fritz Zorn, the artist sees the intervention being made in the body of the instrument as symbolic of the body of her own deceased father, who also had to play the role of the 'good son' as he sat at the piano in a bourgeois household. But unlike Walter Haupt's production, Johanna Diehl's piano has been prepared using objects from her grandmother's private estate.

The second part of the exhibition at the top floor of Haus am Waldsee features a condensed showcase of works that provides an overview of Johanna Diehl's oeuvre to date. In each group of works – "Utopie / Eurotopians", "Alienation", "Marini / Fallender Reiter", "Italien / Fascismo / Modernismo" and "Ukraine Series", new questions arise about topics such as conflict and identity. In a dense hanging, series contexts are abandoned in favor of thematic archipelagos. Through the polyphony of this special hanging, an attempt is made to make „visual comprehension“ a tangible experience. This term was shaped by the great uncle of the artist, Arnold Bode. In 1955, he founded the documenta in Kassel. Bode referred to an approach to images that understands thinking as a dialogical process of setting oneself in relation to others. The viewers themselves create focal points and associative references.

Johanna Diehl was born in Hamburg in 1977. She lives and works in Berlin. Diehl studied photography and visual arts at the Academy of Visual Arts Leipzig under Prof. Timm Rautert, Boris Mikhailov and as a master student under Prof. Tina Bara, as well as at the École nationale supérieure des beaux-arts de Paris under Christian Boltanski and Jean-Marc Bustamante. Her works have been shown at national and international exhibitions (Bucerius Kunst Forum, Hamburg; Anderson Gallery Buffalo/NY; Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich; Academy of Arts, Berlin; ZKM Centre for Art and Media, Karlsruhe; Multimedia Art Museum, Moscow) and are included in

the Collection of Contemporary Art held by the government of the Federal Republic of Germany, the Ann and Jürgen Wilde Foundation for Photography and Art Studies, the DZ Bank Art Collection, the Bavarian State Painting Collections, and the Collection at the Pinakothek der Moderne in Munich. The artist has received numerous awards and scholarships, including the Foundation Stiftung Kunstfonds, Bonn, the Akademie Schloss Solitude, Stuttgart, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation (EHF), Berlin, and the Germany Academy Villa Massimo (Casa Baldi) in Rome.

Curated by Katja Blomberg and Johanna Diehl

A catalogue with an article by Annette Tietenberg is published by Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König in German and English. It is released on 15 January 2020 at a price of € 24.

Events:

Fri, 13 December, 8 pm: **Christmas concert** Johann Sebastian Bach: *Six Sonatas for Violin and Piano*, with Johannes Roloff (piano) and Rahel Rilling (violin). Pre-sale: 18 Euro, Box office: 20 Euro

Thu, 23 January, 7.30 pm: **Artist talk** Katja Blomberg and Susanne Weiß with artist Johanna Diehl. Admission incl. exhibition 7/5 Euro

Thu, 6 February, 7.30 pm: **Book presentation** Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Ullrich. *Selfies. Digitale Bildkulturen*, Wagenbach 2019. Admission incl. exhibition 7/5 Euro

Thu, 13 February, 7.30 pm: **Artist dinner** in the style of the 1960s with Johanna Diehl. Tickets € 45 plus beverages. Definite booking until 6 Feb: kuenstleressen@hausamwaldsee.de

Sat, 22 February, 6 pm: **Performance** *Scores of nervousness (Partituren des Nervösen)*. *Poem for one player, portable speakers and steel corset* by Raphael Sbrzesny. Admission incl. exhibition 7/5 Euro

High-res images are available in the press section on our website.
Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

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