

Nikolas Gambaroff
“Tales from the Crypt”

40

All Winners

April 30th – June 6th, 2014 opening reception: Tuesday, April 29th, 6-8pm

Submariner

Meyer Kainer is pleased to present Nikolas Gambaroff's first solo exhibition in Vienna.

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Witches Tales

In recent years, Nikolas Gambaroff has mainly appeared as a painter. One could speak of a repressed painter, sometimes in a literal sense, as the actual paint used within his artworks is enclosed between the layers of printed matter, such as newsprint, supermarket posters or coupons; or, as seen in a recent series of works shown in 2013, paint is absent altogether. Here paintings were composed of reflective polyester window film, singed into shape and texture, reflecting the environment and - if imagined in the artist studio during the process of making - providing an excellent sphere for narcissistic engagement. During the production process, the painting is constantly looking back at the artist, imaged as the artist himself, creating a feedback loop into ego-eternity. A selfie machine so to say.

Tales from the Tomb

Let me try to re-phrase this.

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Fantastic Four

The loop or a conflicted, tension-ridden relation to repetition could be named as a key moment in the artist's work... Maybe it would be best to let the professionals take a shot at it.

The incredible Hulk

Fig. 1)

Gambaroff's work addresses the production and display of painting, as well as its position as the dominant sign of art. In recent years he has employed a decollage technique using mass-produced materials, such as newsprint, advertisements and supermarket posters. Gambaroff layers his materials, applying paint between the layers in the form of painterly motifs, such as cursive writing like lines (akin to a mute writing; reminiscent of Hanne Darboven's script like waves or Cy Twombly's scribbles) or alphabets (monograms), and abstract brushstrokes. With this reductive means of mark making, he then removes portions of the surface to expose the underlying layers.

The newsprint and posters imbue the works with the language of mass media, relating to painting's history as a dominant form of pictorial representation. Familiar headlines, public figures, movie ads and luxury merchandise are partially revealed within the collaged layers, collapsing the text and images into nonsensical fragments.

Fig. 2)

Nikolas Gambaroff's work deals with modes of display, distribution, authorship, and the painting as cultural object.

Gambaroff's paintings are constructed through a process of embedding marks or motifs within layers of collaged and torn printed matter (often newsprint) and gesso on canvas or panel. Familiar headlines, public figures, movie ads, and luxury merchandise are partially revealed within the collaged layers of newsprint, engaging the language of mass consumption and collapsing the existing structure of text and image.

Gambaroff addresses issues of artistic production, from the social and economic value of painting to the varied processes of its construction and reception. Gambaroff's work cycles through the tropes of artistic production, describing an arc from subjective painterly self-expression to the standardized procedures of a more conceptual practice.

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The Losers

I see the temptation, but can this really be it?

Silver Surfer

For this exhibition, Gambaroff presents a selection of new paintings. Differing from former iterations of paintings (newsprint and poster), this new series of paintings seems not to be focussed on a mediated here and now (represented in an index of current events and realities) but rather to frame a materialized body of time in the form of different examples of comic books.. Used are comic books seemingly chosen (with no particular theme in common) to describe a timeline from the 40s up until now.

Why this change of focus from a here and now (it was Gambaroff's practice to use the newspaper of the day he made his paintings) to a retrospective look at the trajectory of comic books with all their fictional narratives and fantastical elements?

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Swamp Thing

(This question will need to stay un-answered for now, what can be said is that these paintings open up frames upon frames upon frames. Images and utterances. Speech as a sign.)

Animal Man

The show also incorporates several tables that the artist refers to as "games". They appear to be game settings or model constellations. These table settings are made out of paintings standing on aluminum telescopic legs, as well as wooden and acrylic game figures that are arranged in constellations, groupings, formations. These schematic remakes of social spheres can be manipulated and rearranged by the public during the opening hours of the show.

Watchmen

Gambaroff suggests the viewer identify with the figures and arrange imaginary or real social contexts within the limits of the tables. Each table wants to be the whole world within itself – a diagrammatic scheme of it. The inside is everything, the outside as a void.

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Hardboiled

(In his own words, the artist thinks, "it would be helpful to imagine these settings as social spheres, imagining constellations and attitudes, group dynamics and underlying power struggles. Maybe the viewers find themselves in the same game as me, engaged in a schematic modeling of the social, trying to make diagrams of our social surroundings. Psycho-Sculpting.")

2000

Y the last man

Gambaroff was born in Germany in 1979, and currently lives and works in New York and Los Angeles. He studied at the University of the Arts in Berlin, and received an MFA from Bard College in New York. Recent solo exhibitions include: Gio

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Marconi in Milan, The Power Station in Dallas, White Cube in London, and Balice Hertling in Paris. The artist's work has been included in exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, the Sculpture Center in New York, the New Museum in New York, and the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, the ZKM, Karlsruhe, Künstlerhaus, Halle für Kunst & Medien, Graz among others. Gambaroff's work is held in public collections at the Museum of Modern Art, New York and The Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago.

Ex Machina

TBC