

IDENTITÄTSHÜLLEN

ALMA, ANONYME KÜNSTLER,
CLAIRE FONTAINE, GENERAL IDEA,
THE OTOLITH GROUP

May 16 – July 5, 2009

«He was the first to discover this island and named it after his name”. Drawn from a dictionary, this example used to define the verb “to name”, points out the evocative power of names. The existence of an island that one has never seen, or of an unknown person, can only be acknowledged once it receives a name. The decision to name someone or something allows us to identify it for a general purpose.

However, if a name does not refer to a person or place, but to a group of people, then it identifies the ideas and the structure of that group. Its individual members, in turn, remain abstract. The starting point of this exhibition is artists’ groups that have created fictitious characters. These characters are foregrounded as the incarnation of the ideas of the group.

In these constellations, the artist himself is not on the front burner. The same situation occurs with craftsmen who do not sign their work. Illustrated books, prints, objects or toys coming from the Robinson Crusoe library, which is part of the collection Peter and Elisabeth Bosshard, are also featured in the exhibition. These artefacts, made by anonymous artists, come from various time periods and all depict the same story from different points of view. A gift from the artists’ group ALMA to the collectors completes this selection and relates as well to Crusoe’s tale on the desert island.

The fictional realm offers a certain freedom to express a point of view. The exhibited artists’ groups explore here the possibilities offered by this realm. The fictional figure of Miss General Idea is portrayed as a muse and transformed into an emblematic figure by the artists’ group General Idea, whereas the members of Claire Fontaine consider themselves to be assistants of this “collective artist”. In the exhibition, the works by the latest evoke an “elsewhere” – America – and are based on Kafka’s eponymous book. Considered to be one of his most joyful texts, it reports a confrontation with the continent that nevertheless remains a bitter experience for its

main character Karl Rossmann. In a video work, Dr. Usha Adebaran-Sagar, a hypothetical descendant of a member from The Otolith Group, describes our current social structures and their consequences, as if observed from outer space in the future. These characters provide a shell for the discourse and opinions of each group.

The artists' groups can be regarded as working communities that provide space for each member of the group. Their structure is personal without being individual. Indirectly, this working structure implies the invisibility of the artists behind the name of the group, which also occurs in the case of an anonymous maker or fabricator. In the exhibition, the question of knowing "who did what" becomes obsolete. The focus instead is on the possibility of a plural subjectivity, leaving the notion of author aside to concentrate on the multi-layered discourse expressed by the visual shapes. Just like a tale is not only about the facts that it narrates, the visual forms shown here serve as indirect mediators of opinions and ideologies. We are faced with shells for identities, able to contain various individualities and opinions.

The exhibition displays works that suggest an elsewhere, an unknown territory to be explored, whether it is the Island of Robinson Crusoe, the future, or the America experienced by Karl Rossmann. The double exhibition in Rapperswil-Jona also suggests an elsewhere in its form: a collaboration with the exhibition space CEAAC in Strasburg extends its structure. The artists' group Bad Beuys Entertainment, concurrently exhibiting in Strasburg, has written a text about the issues developed in the exhibition in Rapperswil-Jona. Likewise, the artist group Claire Fontaine has written a text about the show in Strasburg. The exhibition thereby turns into a frame open to the unknown.

This exhibition is made possible with the generous support of the city Rapperswil-Jona, Kanton St.Gallen, Swisslos, Avina Stiftung, Ortsgemeinde Rapperswil-Jona.

Alf Hofstetter und MAx Markus Frei develop their common artistic activity under the name **ALMA**. Their practice is mainly dealing with conceptual painting and with the duality within their working process. The two swiss artists also work with performance, objects, installations or music. Between 1987 and 1998 they developed a comprehensive collaboration. Since 2007 they started working together anew.

Claire Fontaine is a Paris-based collective artist, founded in 2004. After lifting her name from a popular brand of school notebooks, Claire Fontaine declared herself a "readymade artist" and began to elaborate a version of neo-conceptual art that often looks like other people's work.

The media-based collective **General Idea** was founded in 1969 by three artists. They worked and lived together in Toronto and New York until 1994, when two of them, Partz and Zontal, passed away. AA Bronson continues to work under his own name.

The Otolith Group was founded in 2000 by its core members, Anjalika Sagar and Kodwo Eshun who live and work in London. The group works with media archives, histories of futurity, the legacies of non-alignment and tricontinentalism. Their artistic work explores the moving image, sound and text. It also functions internationally as a public platform for curatorial practice and discussion on contemporary artistic production.

The exhibition of the artists' collective **Bad Beuys Entertainment** *Braun Braun Braun* after a proposal by Keren Detton for the CEAAC in Strasburg will be on view from June 6 to September 27, 2009. www.ceaac.org

FURTHER ACTIVITIES:

Sunday, May 17, 2-5 p.m.
International Museum's Day
«Kunst, Tratsch und Trank»

Sunday, June 7, 2 p.m.
Guided tour by the exhibition by the cultural mediator of the Alte Fabrik, Fanny Vogler. Meeting point at Alte Fabrik.

Sunday, June 21, 2 p.m.
Guided tour of the exhibition for families followed by activities for children

Alte Fabrik
Klaus Gebert Strasse 5
8640 Rapperswil-Jona
Opening hours: Wed–Fri 5-8 pm ; Sat–Sun 2–5 pm

Kunst(Zeug)Haus
Schönbodenstrasse 1
8640 Rapperswil-Jona
Opening hours: Wed 14–20h / Thu–Fri 14–18 Uhr / Sat–Sun 11–18 Uhr

Please consider the different opening hours between the two exhibition places!

Kulturförderung
Kanton St.Gallen

SWISSLOS



AVINA STIFTUNG

Ortsgemeinde
rapperswil-jona

