

Dirk Reinartz – Show Box

6 January – 24 February 2016

Galerie m is kicking off this year's exhibition program with an unusual installation: in the so-called "Feature Room" with its less than 5 square meters of space, twenty-four photographs by Dirk Reinartz (b. 1947 Aachen, d. 2004 Berlin) are on view. Under the common theme "Deutschlandbilder" ("Images of Germany"), works from seven different series have been brought together here, ranging from early shots of Hamburg's trendy St. Georg neighborhood (1981) to color photographs from the series "Innere Angelegenheiten" (Internal Affairs), which spans the years 1989 to 2002.

Dirk Reinartz, who studied with Otto Steinert at the Folkwang School in Essen, made a name for himself with photo reports for *Stern* and *ZEIT* magazines in the 1970s and 80s. In these, and also in freelance works produced during his travels through Germany, he engaged intensively and tirelessly with his home country, always on a quest to uncover the true nature and self-image of its inhabitants. His photographs reflect the issues of the day and their impact on specific areas, such as Germany's division into West and East or the closure of the steelworks in Rheinhausen. But Reinartz also frequently photographed places and details that can be seen in their singularity as "typically German" – sometimes exposing their contradictions in humorous fashion. Starting in 1985, several books of Reinartz's photographs were published, including "Kein schöner Land," "Deutschland durch die Bank / Benchmarking in Germany" and "Innere Angelegenheiten."

The current exhibition at Galerie m juxtaposes photos from various series to trace common themes and motifs that Reinartz continually revisited throughout his career. The installation of pictures densely arranged on the wall thus becomes a kaleidoscope, continually suggesting new connections and angles while coaxing the viewer to delve ever deeper into the photographer's work.

Hamburg: St. Georg, 1981

Dirk Reinartz' series "Hamburg - St. Georg" ties in with his early series "New York" in content and form. He creates a photographic portrait of the quarter in Hamburg that does not affirm the clichés that dominate the quarter's reputation, but rather picks the everyday life out as a central theme.

Kein schöner Land, 1989

Over a period of 10 years, Dirk Reinartz used his camera to document his homeland, the Federal Republic of Germany. He presents the results here: seventy-nine uncannily un-homelike images of Germany – failed attempts to discover a homeland in the oversettled, parceled-out landscape pockmarked with clod-like, neatly lined up concrete buildings. These black & white photographs open up a new view of our everyday world by showing us things we see so often that we no longer take notice of them. They present the ordinary in all its bizarreness and lack of dignity. Where practical expedience has joined forces with bureaucratic ignorance, places have grown up that might form the setting for a science fiction film. Although people are rarely seen in these images, every one of them resonates with their presence.

Besonderes Kennzeichen: Deutsch, 1990

Photographer Dirk Reinartz and journalist Wolfram Runkel visited several places on their voyage of discovery through Germany: a farm in what was then known as the eastern zone border region. A high-rise in Hamburg. People in Jena and people in Erlangen, all of whom had done well in the world. Foreign youth in a satellite town. Cologne at Karneval time. Families seeking political asylum in the Germany. And then finally women and men who view themselves as typically German.

Diverse milieus, diverse people. Reinartz didn't simply photograph them --- he made sure that what was typical about them shone through. The result is a German gallery, featuring jovial Karneval merrymakers, an authoritative fireman from Jena and a devoted-looking nurse from Worpswede.

These portraits are accompanied by Wolfram Runkel's reportage. He succeeds in getting inside the screwiest attitudes and ways of life and bringing them closer to the reader with his detailed descriptions and accounts. These pictures and stories from Germany show that the good old German virtues are still alive and well today – virtues like orderliness, punctuality, industriousness. In both Germany-West and Germany-East. The only thing is that those who make a cult out of them often display something anarchic or even naively amoral in their behavior.

Deutschland durch die Bank, 1997

The bench in and of itself does not exist. It depends on who is sitting on it. And why. Theoretically speaking, there are as many benches as there are people. And, also theoretically, there would be a society in which everyone has his or her place. Utopian. In practical terms, what would more likely happen is that the entire population would be left on the shelf. One feels compelled to distinguish between a bench as seat or a workbench, or in particular a bank (in German, Bank means bench or bank, trans.) where money is at work

Nowhere are happiness and unhappiness so closely connected as on the bench/at the bank. But

happiness is also of a historical nature. And the culture of sitting has a dynamic history, even when we just sit through it. Children of the revolution talk of sit-ins, fathers of stability talk of sitting it out, and Adorno would have agreed with them: the dialectics of the bench/bank. Or more precisely: of the buttocks – it's a good thing not every punch line must be taken sitting down.

Innere Angelegenheiten, 2003

The series offers us new insights into the world around us while also taking a clear stand on the situation. Reinartz saw his photography as a tool and medium for reflecting on reality.

Streets, squares and buildings give the public life a profile. But what happens, when public life doesn't take place in those areas? They become boring, desolate and barren.

„Innere Angelegenheiten“ deals with the way people arrange their living environment. The photographs report the human beings, who are not shown in the pictures, the life, which doesn't occur in the pictures and the expectations and desires, which are buried in the perfectly installed wasteland.

The photographs were taken from 1989 until 2002 by Dirk Reinartz throughout Germany, but still appear dateless.

The series consists of color photographs as a continuation of Reinartz's b/w-project „Kein schöner Land“, with many astonishing details and tales about a neat republic. The photographs have no titles to prevent associations to concrete places and give the pictures their generality.