



SASSA TRÜLZSCH
Blumenthalstr. 8
10793 Berlin
+49 30 88 929 775
info@sassatruezsch.com
www.sassatruezsch.com

ROSEN / WOJNAR:
CharlieHotelEchoEchoSierraEcho

Living Art Museum, Reykjavik
20 May - 26 June 2010



Rosen/Wojnar

„Cheese“, 2010
video DVD, 23'20"
courtesy of Sassa Trülzsch, Berlin

installation view:
CharlieHotelEchoEchoSierraEcho
Living Art Museum, Reykjavik

A video displays the artists at work. They are performing as stage workers by preparing situations. In this video they build a photo studio and they are introducing one work of art after the other. They place each work by itself in a chair in front of the provisional backdrop and suggest that portraits are being taken. Ten artworks, all from the collection of the Living Art Museum, are waiting to be portrayed. For the installation, the chairs used for the portraits are placed in front of the video. They are watching the video and on the other hand, they are inviting the viewer to take a seat.



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Rosen/Wojnar

„Set #2“, 2010
Cement, wood, maconit

„Bench #2“, 2010
Cement, lackered wood
70 x 220 x 35 cm

Installation view:
CharlieHotelEchoEchoSierraEcho
Living Art Museum, Reykjavik

The five sculptures consists of ordinary cement, that was casted in the paper bags it was delivered in. They are placed on a wooden frame. The frame is a reference to a variety of meanings. Are the objects sitting, or are they standing, is it a production line or a stage for a contest of beauty?



Rosen/Wojnar

„Set #2“, 2010
Cement, wood, maconit

Installation view:
CharlieHotelEchoEchoSierraEcho
Living Art Museum, Reykjavik

The two sculptures consists of ordinary cement, that was casted in the paper bags it was delivered in. As an installation, they are standing as characters in front of a concave fillet made by construction wood. It is the ideal photographic situation to be mugged as an object.



Rosen/Wojnar

„Bench #2“, 2010
Cement, lackered wood
70 x 220 x 35 cm

The five sculptures consists of ordinary cement, that was casted in the paper bags it was delivered in. They are placed on a wooden frame. The frame is a reference to a variety of meanings. Are the objects sitting, or are they standing, is it a production line or a stage for a contest of beauty?



Rosen/Wojnar

„Autograph #1-10“, 2010
Marker on invitation card
29,7 x 21 cm

Installation view:
CharlieHotelEchoEchoSierraEcho
Living Art Museum, Reykjavik

The invitation card is mostly the first image of a show. For the installation in the NYLO Museum the invitation cards became drawings. They are interpreting the meaning of the image on the invitation. By this they are introducing the exhibition.



Rosen/Wojnar

„Autograph #2“, 2010
Marker on invitation card
29,7 x 21 cm

The invitation card is mostly the first image of a show. For the installation in the NYLO Museum the invitation cards became drawings. They are interpreting the meaning of the image on the invitation. By this they are introducing the exhibition.



Rosen/Wojnar

„Autograph #7“, 2010
Marker on invitation card
29,7 x 21 cm

The invitation card is mostly the first image of a show. For the installation in the NYLO Museum the invitation cards became drawings. They are interpreting the meaning of the image on the invitation. By this they are introducing the exhibition.

Rosen/Wojnar: CharlieHotelEchoEchoSierraEcho
Living Art Museum, Reykjavik

„We stage works of art. We find the stages everywhere: in our studio, in galleries, in museums, in nature. Sometimes the stage is a portrait studio, sometimes it's a backdrop, sometimes it's a DJ set. And we find the works of art everywhere: we borrow them from collectors, we work in museums, we order them from fabric manufacturers or go to cement factories.“

The statement from the German artist duo, Rosen/Wojnar, gives an insight into their work methods but moreover reveals a forthright attitude towards art in general. Nikolai von Rosen and Florian Wojnar, who live in Berlin and Zurich, have been collaborating for over a decade, exploring the realms of the creative processes inherent not only in art making but also in the presentation of art and in the art experience. Clearly defying traditional categorization rooted in the art mediums, Rosen/Wojnar may still be said to rely on certain tools, such as those of openness and fluidity. Their work playfully transcends the traditional procedure of production and consumption of art, for example by thwarting the notion of the origin of the art object.

What in a work of art is created, found, arranged, brought forward, manipulated or concealed? The artists contest the binary concepts of object and subject with emphasis on situation and reception, considering the viewer as an essential collaborator. In their work there is an underlying allusion to the transformation of matter, which can take place within a social system such as that of art. However, the idea of the artist as alchemist, creating something of value out of nothing, relies on the viewer's willingness to take part in the process.

In light of the ongoing process within The Living Art Museum of examining the institute's history, its collection and archives, Rosen/Wojnar were invited there to do some research and express their take on it in an exhibition during the Reykjavik Arts Festival. The title reflects their point of departure, composed of a communication code for the letters of the alphabet, spelling out the term CHEESE. Acknowledging the photographic theme of the festival, a coded signal is announced, asking someone to smile before a picture is taken. As is often the case in their work reflecting the artist/viewer relationship, the question of who is on which side of the camera remains open but the institutional authority is highlighted, this time by way of systematic, not to say military, mode of communication. Both the title and the artist's statement emphasise the notion of staging and this continues to be the case in the exhibition itself. A central object on display is a tall swaying form, reaching upward from the floor and like a steep ramp. On the one hand it suggests a geometric sculpture in line with minimalist aesthetics but on the other – and in direct context with separate works in the exhibition – it brings to mind the backdrop paper roll in the studio of a professional photographer. This is the first of many perplexities at stake in the

exhibition.

A video projection displays the artists working in a makeshift photo studio where they introduce one work of art after the other. They place each work by itself in a chair in front of a provisional backdrop and suggest that portraits are being taken of the art. All from the collection of the Living Art Museum, the random works are treated like individuals and sat in chairs found in the museum's possession. In the exhibition space there is a single photograph that might have come about in a similar session, it shows an object placed on a blue vintage chair in front of a red backdrop. The sculpture is in line with other three-dimensional works by Rosen/Wojnar that they have exhibited before, made by pouring mixed cement into the paper bag that the dry material is delivered in and then the paper is removed after the material hardens. The image poses the question of where the real work of art is – is it the sculpture posing in a chair in the studio, or is it the photograph on display in the museum? As it turns out, the red backdrop in the portrait is also a work by Rosen/Wojnar, from their series of arranged monochrome canvases. This detail in the photograph brings the viewer to the works in the back of the Living Art Museum. There are a couple of paintings on display, but people should have realised by now that things are not as straightforward as they seem.

Rosen/Wojnar take pains to make sure that a work on display in their exhibition cannot be traced directly to their four hands. Their practice throws the ideas that we may have about art into confusion and demands that we take part in the creative process around it. They enjoy turning things inside out and shifting roles. For all we know, there is a hidden camera in the gallery, so when they say CHEESE! we should perhaps smile just to be on the safe side.

Markús Thór Andr sson