

TIM RODA

1977 GEBOREN / BORN IN LANCASTER (USA)

LEBT UND ARBEITET / LIVES AND WORKS IN NEW YORK (USA)

In seinen Fotografien arbeitet der US-amerikanische Künstler Tim Roda auf mehreren Ebenen mit dem Vertrauten, dem Unbekannten, der Erinnerung und dem Surrealen. Die schwarzweißen Tableaus Rodas zeigen dem Betrachter eine seltsame, stilisierte und inszenierte Welt. Die immer gleichen Personen treten in unterschiedlichen Kostümen auf, in skurrilen, bisweilen unheimlichen Szenerien, in Innenräumen voller Gerümpel und Requisiten, wie in einem Arsenal der Erinnerung. Die Akteure stehen in einer rätselhaften Beziehung sowohl zu den anderen Personen als auch zu den Gegenständen und dem Ort. Die Tableaus erscheinen höchst narrativ, geben ihre Geschichte dem Betrachter jedoch nicht wirklich preis. Obwohl genau durchkonzipiert und inszeniert, wohnt den dargestellten Szenerien auch etwas seltsam Privates, Laienhaftes inne. Dies wird noch unterstützt durch die Präsentation der Fotografien. Sie werden von Roda ungenau, schief ausgeschnitten; es gibt Kratzer, große Entwickler- und Fixierflecken. Diese nicht gerade kunstvolle Behandlung der fotografischen Abzüge wirkt zum einen zwar extrem trashig, zum anderen impliziert sie aber auch, dass Roda anscheinend noch selbst im Labor Abzüge herstellt, zumindest nicht bei einem hoch technisierten Großlabor arbeiten lässt. Die Flecken wiederum unterstreichen den Charakter von Erinnerungsstücken. Roda verarbeitet in seinen Serien wohl Erinnerungen an seine eigene Kindheit, seinen exzentrischen Vater. Wenn er wiederum seinen Sohn auf den Fotografien handeln lässt, überlagern sich die Ebenen Realität, Inszenierung und Erinnerung. Für den Betrachter ergeben sich komplexe Bildinhalte, die zwischen Vertrautem, Biographischem, Sehnsüchten und Fremdheit oszillieren.

The photographic work of US-American artist Tim Roda is a multi-layered approach to the familiar, the unfamiliar, to memory and the surreal. Roda's black and white tableaux invite the viewer to enter a strange world with a stylised and staged atmosphere. The photos always show the same people, appearing in different costumes in bizarre and sometimes eerie settings, in interiors full of junk and props, like an arsenal of memories. The protagonists are in mysterious relation to each other, to the objects and the location. The images seem highly narrative, but the plot is not really comprehensible to the viewer. Although precisely conceived and set up, the scenes are pervaded by a strangely private, amateurish feeling. This aspect is reinforced by the way the photographs have been finished. Roda cuts them very roughly, the edges all crooked; the surfaces are scratched and show large stains of developer solution and fixer. While the artless treatment of the prints looks extremely trashy, it also implies that Roda makes his own prints and does not employ the services of a big high-tech lab. The stains reinforce the character of memories and the gaps between them. In his series, Roda probably deals with his own childhood and his eccentric father. By having his own son appear in the photos he shuffles the layers of reality, stage-setting and memories. The viewer is faced with complex scenes oscillating between the poles of the familiar, the biographical, longings and the unfamiliar.

Andreas Hoffer
Essl Museum, Kunstvermittlung / Art education

TELLING STORIES

SABINE SCHNAKENBERG

Tim Roda (p. 294), born in 1977, tells stories that draw from memories of the bizarre world of his childhood which was dominated by an eccentric father. In his work, the grown-up artist confronts his past in the very acute awareness that his life and that of his family has been indirectly but deeply marked by the events of his childhood. In individual images strung together he uses trashy props for performances with high symbolic charge, with his son Ethan, himself and, occasionally, his wife Allison as protagonists. "Every scene that has been created was first envisioned in my mind and then played out by my family. Although we are the immediate subjects, the work is filled with metaphorical reverberations of my family history and my memories of childhood. My son's ever-present, central role in the work serves as an identifiable entry point for the audience. ... I strive to produce a sensation that makes people both familiar and uneasy about the incongruence of life's experiences."³ (Tim Roda) Ethan can be seen as a key figure in the images set up by his father: an always silent and passive witness, he is involved in the performance of memories emanating from his father but also serves as his alter ego – within the transient qualities of the medium of photography he represents an innocent interface of past, present and future.

¹ Susan Bright, in: "Art Photography Now", London/United Kingdom 2005, p. 92.

² *ibid.*, p. 82.

³ http://mocp.org/exhibitions/2007/04/tim_roda.php, May 2007.

SHORT BIOGRAPHY

Dr. Sabine Schnakenberg (born 1966 in Bremen/D) studied art history in Paris (F), Vienna (A) and Kiel (D), with a focus on the history of photography. After completing her doctoral thesis she started out as scientific staff member at the F.C. Gundlach Stiftung in Hamburg (D); today she is responsible for the F.C. Gundlach photo collection at the Haus der Photographie at the Deichtorhallen in Hamburg. She publishes texts and works as a visiting lecturer at the Muthesius Kunsthochschule in Kiel.