



Ulrich Seidl

Stills 1998 – 2014

04.12.2014 – 14.02.2015

Press Conference: 3 December , 2014 at 10 am

Opening of the Exhibition: 3 December , 2014 at 7 pm

Speaker: Franz Schuh

In the presence of Ulrich Seidl

“I love taking pictures up close and personal. Showing people exactly as they are, physically. This unadorned state is exactly where I find something like beauty.” Ulrich Seidl

For the first time, the Gallery OstLicht dedicates a show to Ulrich Seidl's photographic works. The exhibition includes stills taken from films from the late Nineties to today: *Models* (1998), *Hundstage* (Dog Days), 2001, *Brüder, lasst uns lustig sein* (Brothers, Let Us Be Merry), 2006, *Import Export*, 2007, the *Paradies* Trilogy *Liebe, Glaube, Hoffnung* (Paradise. Love, Faith, Hope), 2012 and *Im Keller* (In the Basement), 2014.

Ulrich Seidl's unerring eye and his instinct for composition are undisputed. His tableaux, generated with almost photographic meticulousness, provide far more than fleeting insights into the often oppressive subjects of his oeuvre as a filmmaker: composed with the greatest accuracy down to the most minute detail, their clear aesthetics and severe geometry render them convincing.

In Seidl's photographs, objects and individuals become compositional elements in space. A precise visual order takes over here. In his stills, the documentary element inherent in his films recedes almost entirely into the background. They are defined by the character of the specific staging and the static picture's inherent tension between aesthetics and existence. By singling out specific film frames and thereby withdrawing any action from the film, alienation – a hallmark of his symmetrical picture settings – becomes more pronounced than ever. Thus, Seidl's uncompromising compositions work even when completely isolated from his films, and, transferred to the medium of photography, they exert profound fascination as independent works.

Especially in Seidl's latest film, *Im Keller* (In the Basement), the photographic gaze of the film author and director dominates. Arranged picture by picture, minute-long tableau depictions succeed each other, the protagonists remaining almost motionless in one position. “The photography for *Im Keller* (In the Basement), has all the director's style characteristics,” the journalist and author Stefan Grisse mann writes. “Seidl's visual mannerism is the trump card in each of his games: as the only element that he never leaves to coincidence, it beats any other artistic ambition which might develop on the set. There is no escaping the prison of these images.”

THE FILMS

Im Keller (2014)

The film essay about daily life in Austrian cellars sketches the relationship between inhabitants and their underground, often hidden rooms, taking the viewer on a stroll through the abysses of the human soul. 25 different cellar variations, shown in typically symmetrical tableaux, illustrate this study of completely private places where people pursue their daily work, indulging in extraordinary leisure-time pleasures and questionable longings.

Paradies Trilogy: Liebe, Glaube, Hoffnung (2012)

The *Paradies* Trilogy tells of three women of one family, each of them spending their vacation time: a sex tourist, a proselytizing Catholic and a young girl in a diet camp.

PARADIES: Liebe is about older women offered sex services by young African men seeking to secure a livelihood. In reduced camera frames, the film explores topics such as longing, the power of skin colour and the market value of sexuality.

In *PARADIES: Glaube*, Ulrich Seidl examines what it means to take up the cross. For Anna Maria, a single woman of about 50, paradise lies with Jesus. She dedicates her entire being and activities to him. Thus she spends her vacation going house to house with a travelling statue of the Mother of God, proselytizing. At the same time, she carries on an acrimonious, petty war with her estranged Muslim husband.

PARADIES: Hoffnung, the third part of the trilogy, is about overweight girls and first love. While her mother, Teresa, travels to Kenya (*PARADIES: Liebe*) and her aunt is busy proselytizing for Jesus Christ (*PARADIES: Glaube*), the teenager spends her vacation with other young people in a draconian diet camp in the Austrian provinces. Between sports and nutrition counselling, pillow fights and first cigarettes, she falls in love with a doctor 40 years her senior, the camp's director.

Import Export (2007)

Two young people looking for work travel to find a new beginning in life. Olga is from a part of Europe where existential poverty is the rule. She thinks that happiness lies in the West and finds work as a cleaner at an Austrian geriatric ward. In the meantime, Paul accompanies his stepfather on a business trip from Austria to the Ukraine. Both protagonists embark upon a journey in search of happiness and fortune which cannot avoid the fundamental questions of life and leads through the abysses of humanity, sexuality and death.

Brüder, lasst uns lustig sein (2006)

"Brothers, let us be cheerful, keep up your spirits against adversity," the Slave Song from Mozart's *Zaide* advises. The soundtrack illuminates two men in low light dedicating themselves to purpose-free pleasure: they are masturbating, as one masturbates when one is ordered to get in the mood and have fun. Even in this execution of lust, the film anticipates the melancholy that ensues, making Nietzsche's postulation that all lust desires eternity an eternally unfulfilled utopia. Ulrich Seidl was commissioned by the Mozart Year 2006 to create this "Mozart Minute".

Hundstage (2001)

Amidst the atmosphere of an oppressively hot summer, six stories sharing the same place and time of action depict daily life, caught in a no man's land between highway exits, shopping malls and suburban one-family homes. The film touches upon days full of loneliness, loss and longing, making life visible in its fragility and intimacy.

Models (1998)

Lisa, Tanja and Vivian are in their mid-twenties, attractive and dream of personal happiness and professional success. They are in a constant battle with their bodies; as models they are depending on their appearance. Always on the lookout to make a career, to be loved, to find the right man, to reach the ideal body, they hurry from casting to casting, talk on the phone for hours

with girlfriends, men, mothers, agencies and photographers, wait mostly in vain for jobs and rush from one disco night to the next.

ULRICH SEIDL

Ulrich Seidl was born in Vienna in 1952 and grew up in Horn in the Waldviertel. He studied at the Vienna Film Academy and made his directing debut in 1980 with the short film *Einsvierzig*. Ulrich Seidl has won numerous international film prizes for his documentaries such as *Good News*, *Tierische Liebe* and *Models*. In 2012, *PARADIES: Glaube* won the jury's special prize at the Venice Film Festival. Seidl's first feature film, *Hundstage*, had already been granted the same distinguished award at the same festival eleven years before.

In 2003 he founded the Ulrich Seidl Filmproduktion GmbH, and ever since he has also been producing his own films. *Import Export* was admitted to the competition of the 60th Film Festival in Cannes in 2007. This was followed by the *Paradies* Trilogy in 2012: *PARADIES: Liebe*, *PARADIES: Glaube*, and *PARADIES: Hoffnung*. These three films were shot within four years and premiered at the International Film Festivals in Cannes, Venice and Berlin. *Im Keller* had its premiere in August 2014 as part of the Venice Film Festival.

So far, Ulrich Seidl has worked in theatre twice: in 2004 his piece *Vater unser* was premiered at the Volksbühne Berlin, and in 2009 Seidl developed and directed *Böse Buben / Fiese Männer* for the Munich Kammerspiele and the Wiener Festwochen, based on texts by David Foster Wallace. His photography exhibition *PARADIES.Liebe / Glaube / Hoffnung* was shown in 2013 at BAWAG PSK Contemporary in Vienna, at C/O Berlin and as part of the Melodist International Film Festival in Kiev and the Photography Month in Bratislava.

FILMOGRAPHY

1980 *Einsvierzig* / 1982 *Der Ball* / 1990 *Good News – Von Kolporteursen, toten Hunden und anderen Wienern* / 1992 *Mit Verlust ist zu rechnen* / 1994 *Die letzten Männer* (TV) / 1995 *Tierische Liebe* / 1996 *Bilder einer Ausstellung* (TV) / 1997 *Der Busenfreund* (TV) / 1998 *Spaß ohne Grenzen* (TV) / 1998 *Models* / 2001 *Hundstage* / 2001 *Zur Lage* / 2003 *Jesus, Du weißt* / 2004 *Vater unser*, Aufzeichnung, Volksbühne Berlin / 2006 *Brüder lasst uns lustig sein* / 2007 *Import Export* / 2012 *PARADIES: Liebe* / 2012 *PARADIES: Glaube* / 2012 *PARADIES: Hoffnung* / 2014 *Im Keller*

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Opening Hours

Gallery: Wed-Sat 12-6 pm and by appointment
Library: Wed-Fri 12-6 pm