Kunsthalle Wien

MAKLEL **UDENBALH** BEWES Z

Museumsquartier #Odenbach 5/2 – 30/4 2017



Beweis zu nichts (Proof of Nothing) is the title of a poem by Ingeborg Bachmann, which addresses the ongoing victim-persecutor structure in post-war society. Bertolt Brecht underscored his own view on the topic by slightly paraphrasing not only this, but also other poems by Ingeborg Bachman, whom he greatly admired. His intervention is less subtle than it may appear. In Bachmann's version. the last line reads: "Wein! Aber winke uns nicht (Crv! But do not wave to us.)". Brecht changed it as follows: "Weine. nur winke uns nicht (Cry, just do not wave to us)".

In 1952. Bertolt Brecht and Fritz Cremer won the competition to design a memorial for the former concentration camp at Buchenwald. The Nationale Mahnund Gedenkstätte Buchenwald (National Buchenwald Memorial) was inaugurated in September 1958. The lengthy debate over an appropriate design for both the site and the memorial was not so much historically or aesthetically driven, but rather politically motivated: the aim was to show how a better, more socialist Germany had arisen from conflict and sacrificial death. Cremer's design shows the hallmarks of Socialist Realism. Inspired by Auguste Rodin's group of figures *The Burghers* of Calais, a group of men portrayed as equals fight an invisible enemy.

In his film about this memorial, Marcel Odenbach approaches not only the visualisation, but also to the reinterpretation and ideologization of remembrance and history. In this context, Ingeborg Bachmann's poem represents "corrections", which might seem insignificant but ultimately lead to a change of perspective.

An earlier film by Odenbach, Im Kreise drehen/Turning in Circles, is also dedicated to a memorial site, the former concentration camp Majdanek in the Polish city of Lublin. Here too the focus is on the materialisation of collective memory and the commemoration of victims across generations. These are some of the central motifs in the oeuvre of one of Germany's most celebrated video artists. Odenbach's works are profound explorations of the dilemma of dealing with the past. They not only reflect the lasting effects of National Socialism, but approach the issue from a universal perspective. Likewise, the artist examines the apparent "otherness" of foreign cultures, the legacy of colonialism, and political and economic systems of representation. Reflections on the familiar and the foreign, his own biography and its place in historical contexts are further important motifs in his work, which is defined by both an aesthetic and political approach.

In stillen Teichen lauern Krokodile/ In Still Waters Crocodiles Lurk, a video installation about the genocide that occurred in Rwanda in 1994, incorporates historical documentary material and excerpts from the UNO's film archive, but no imagery of the massacre itself. In an attempt to understand this country, faced not only with the task of convicting murderers but also reconciling its people, Odenbach presents everyday scenes that reflect Rwanda's beauty. The video installation refrains from passing judgement or offering an explanation. Instead the highly evocative images compel viewers to form their own opinions.

In recent years, Odenbach has not only produced video, film, and installations, but also numerous collages. Based on the montage principle used in film, they combine micro and macro views.

Clippings from newspapers and magazines are glued together. repeatedly photocopied, and coloured until they merge in a big picture, like pieces of a puzzle. While the surface presents a clearly discernible motif, the detailed view shows countless images that make up the whole. At first, the evocative overall impression becomes apparent. On closer inspection, it breaks up into successive fragments that seem to be subordinate to the big picture. These elements are also deeply saturated with pictorial and textual information. In their fragmentary structure, Odenbach's collages resemble reversible figures which only show one aspect while concealing others. Instead of representing things as they are, they display reality in overlapping layers and reveal the historical dimension of the present at close range.

At first sight, the almost 15-metre collage *Durchblicke* (Clear Views), one of Odenbach's largest paper works, shows a dense tropical jungle. Seen up close, this panorama is composed of numerous photographs which reflect Africa's colonial history. As it eludes immediate perception, this level requires close, intensive scrutiny, and thus a systematic examination of the sphere between the directly visible and the still effective, but often supressed shadows of the past underneath the surface.

Video Works



Marcel Odenbach, *Beweis zu nichts* (Proof of Nothing), photography of film set, 2016, © Marcel Odenbach and BILDRECHT GmbH, 2017, photo: Marcel Odenbach, Courtesy of the artist

Beweis zu nichts (Proof of Nothing), 2016 Two-channel video installation, colour, sound, approx. 15 min Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Gisela Capitain, Cologne. Produced for the eponymous exhibition at Kunsthalle Wien.

Proceeding from Im Kreise drehen/ Turning in Circles, a video work Odenbach dedicated to the Maidanek memorial. Beweis zu nichts (Proof of Nothing) focuses on the Buchenwald memorial. How did the former GDR. as a declared antifascist Germany, deal with the legacy of the Holocaust? In 1951, the sculptor Fritz Cremer and Bertolt Brecht won a competition. Their design was completed in 1958. The bronze sculpture represents a group of male figures inspired by Auguste Rodin's Burghers of Calais (1884-1886), which reflects the ideology of this former state. The memorial itself is embedded in a site which almost seamlessly connects with the architectural language and symbolism of the Third Reich.

Beweis zu nichts (Proof of Nothing) approaches the group of sculptures in circular movements; the film resembles an endless tracking shot,

without beginning or end. During its initial description of the material. the camera explores the figures and specifies each detail with archaeological precision. As it moves on to unearth the deeper levels, the tracking shot becomes a journey through time. Lavers of documents are exposed which cover the group of figures like a coat of paint while infusing it with meaning at the same time. The circling camera bores deeper and deeper into the memorial, thus exposing its interior. Finally. the circle reaches completion: the site has been filled with meaning and the architecture has become part the landscape.



Marcel Odenbach, *Deutschstunde* (German Lesson), video still, 2006, © Marcel Odenbach and BILDRECHT GmbH, 2017, Courtesy of Galerie Gisela Capitain. Cologne

Deutschstunde (German Lesson), 2006 Video, colour, sound, 7 min. Courtesy of Galerie Gisela Capitain, Cologne and Anton Kern Gallery, New York

Schoolchildren read out sentences from autobiographies about Jewish life during the time of National Socialism. These scenes are interspersed with shots of a spinning top on a table. Not only the readers' varied intonation, but also the gravity with which they carry out their assignment show that the younger generation is also committed to remembering and is very much aware of the importance of this task.



Marcel Odenbach, Im Kreise drehen/Turning in Circles, video still, 2009, © Marcel Odenbach and BILDRECHT GmbH, 2017, Courtesy of Galerie Gisela Capitain. Cologne

Im Kreise drehen/Turning in Circles, 2009

Blu-Ray DVD, colour, sound, 15:50 min. Courtesy of Galerie Gisela Capitain, Cologne and Anton Kern Gallery, New York

Im Kreise drehen/Turning in Circles is a filmic exploration of the mausoleum in the Polish concentration camp Majdanek near Lublin and its function for collective memory. At the beginning, we see two young men in white shirts rolling in the grass. This scene is followed by a slow and gradual examination of the monumental memorial designed by Wiktor Tołkin in 1969. Inspired by Socialist and Futurist design, it holds the ashes of murdered people like a giant offering bowl. The camera stays close to the concrete surface as it surveys the structural and material composition of the mausoleum. A sequence of texts provides the viewers with information on what they are seeing. Subsequently, the images of the mausoleum's walls become superimposed with historical photographs of Jews from the Warsaw Ghetto. As the camera probes its way from the exterior into the interior, the edifice's dimensions gradually become apparent. At the end of the film, the two young men visit the mausoleum as tourists and try to prevail against the cold atmosphere of the concrete. The structure in its entirety is only shown during the closing credits.



Marcel Odenbach, In stillen Teichen lauern Krokodile/In Still Waters Crocodiles Lurk, video still, 2002/2004, © Marcel Odenbach and BILDRECHT GmbH, 2017, Courtesy of Galerie Gisela Capitain, Cologne

In stillen Teichen lauern Krokodile/In Still Waters Crocodiles Lurk, 2002/2004
Two-channel video installation, b/w and colour, sound, 31:30 min.
Courtesy of Galerie Gisela Capitain, Cologne and Anton Kern Gallery, New York

In stillen Teichen lauern Krokodile/ In Still Waters Crocodiles Lurk deals with the Rwandan genocide, which occurred between April and June 1994 and produced almost only Tutsi victims. In this half-hour video projection in two parts, Odenbach uses documentary material and films from the UNO's archive to fathom the effects of this genocide in a country which, years after the crime, is still faced with the task of convicting the murderers while conciliating its people at the same time. Refraining from showing the atrocities, the seven chapters instead present seemingly everyday scenes defined by eminent quiet and languidness: farmers in the banana fields, prisoners in a brickyard, cows, or rain falling on an idvllic landscape of rolling hills. Only the soundtrack repeats the rousing propaganda from the radio which incited the Hutu to lynch their former neighbours. The video installation itself neither passes judgement, nor does it offer a historical explanation. The strongly evocative images encourage viewers to act as observers who are called upon to form their own opinions.



Marcel Odenbach, Im Schiffbruch nicht schwimmen können (Foundering and You Can't Swim), video still, 2011, © Marcel Odenbach and BILDRECHT GmbH. 2017. Courtesv of Galerie Gisela Capitain. Cologne

Im Schiffbruch nicht schwimmen können (Foundering, and You Can't Swim), 2011 HD video, colour, sound, 8:15 min. Courtesy of Galerie Gisela Capitain, Cologne, Anton Kern Gallery, New York and Galerie Stampa. Basel

Three men of different ages from Sub-Saharan Africa, immigrants living in France, are looking at a painting in the Louvre: The Raft of Medusa painted by Théodore Géricault in 1819. As one of the best-known history paintings, this monumental work represents a piece of French colonial history and its failure. In 1816, the Medusa was dispatched to take over the Senegal colony from the British as it had been adjudged to France. The frigate's shipwreck transformed the crew sailing under the banner of equality, liberty, and fraternity into cannibals fighting for their survival.

For his video work, Odenbach conducted long interviews with the three Africans about their flight, their motivation, and their lives. They talked about homesickness, their fears, and feeling foreign in their own country. Odenbach used only a few passages from these long conversations, solely in the shape of written statements. The men sit in front of the picture in silence. Sitting at the coast, one dreams of faraway

places. But what happens when these dreams from afar come home? The sea seems endless and peaceful, but also full of perils. "Hope and home - for me as a German this also always means salvation and flight." (Odenbach)

Collages



Marcel Odenbach, *Die gute Stube* (The Parlour), 2011, © Marcel Odenbach and BILDRECHT GmbH, 2017, photo: Vesko Gösel, Cologne, Courtesy of the artist and Anton Kern Gallery, New York

Die gute Stube (The Parlour), 2011 Collage, ink on paper, 170 x 140 cm Sammlung Philara, Dusseldorf

Die gute Stube (The Parlour) shows the interior of the Berghof, Adolf Hitler's residence on the Obersalzberg. Although the room is designed to provide a panoramic view of the mountains, the drawn curtains on the left direct the viewers' attention to the interior and its furnishings. In combination with the partly visible window on the right, this leads to an overlapping of outside and inside. While our eyes rest on

the curtains obscuring the vista, we are also deprived of the view of the Obersalzberg due to the angle chosen by the artist. This partially blocked vision is like a metaphor for the dictator's perception, whose presence is palpable despite his absence. The bourgeois sitting room, which seems completely at odds with the horrors of the Nazi era, enhances the menacing atmosphere in this picture.



Marcel Odenbach, *Durchblicke* (Clear Views), detail, 2007, © Marcel Odenbach and BILDRECHT GmbH, 2017, photo: David Ertl, Cologne, Courtesy of Anton Kern Gallery, New York

Durchblicke (Clear Views), 2007 Collage, ink on paper, 142.5 x 1463 cm Courtesy of the artist and Anton Kern Gallery, New York

At first sight, the almost 15-metre long panoramic collage Durchblicke (Clear Views) shows an impenetrable jungle landscape made up of proliferous vegetation. To "see through" this thicket, as the title suggests, is simply impossible. Inspected at close range, however, the metaphorical meaning of the title becomes apparent in the shape of unexpected insights into Africa's complex colonial history. The story of exploitation and suppression, which are only gradually being processed and recognised as an equal part of

European history, is presented in numerous photographs. From a distance, we see a deserted, exotic landscape. Only once we approach it, the picture reveals the other side, where the fascination of the exotic gives way to colonial crimes.



Marcel Odenbach, *Meldung* (Notification), 2016, © Marcel Odenbach and BILDRECHT GmbH, 2017, photo: Vesko Gösel, Cologne, Courtesy of the artist

Meldung (Notification), 2016 Collage, ink on paper, approx. 150 x 190 cm Courtesy of Galerie Crone, Berlin and Vienna

The collage *Meldung* (Notification) was inspired by a file note on Polish workers who were forced to work in Wolfen, and apparently failed to wear the badge that identified them as Polish forced labourers. The company in question was the Agfa Filmfabrik Wolfen (Agfa Film Factory Wolfen). Since the early 20th century, Agfa had been the leading producer of photochemical products. During the Nazi era, the enterprise acquired a predominant position in the Third Reich and supplied the needs of the military, state and NS party organisations at the outbreak of the war. A growing number of forced labourers, many of them from Poland, were put to work in the Wolfen Film Factory.



Marcel Odenbach, Heimat 3 (AdVB) (Home 3 (AdVB)), 2016, © Marcel Odenbach and BILDRECHT GmbH, 2017, photo: Simon Vogel, Cologne, Courtesy of Galerie Gisela Capitain, Cologne

Heimat 3 (AdVB) (Home 3 (AdVB)), 2016 Collage, ink on paper, 150 x 350 cm Courtesy of the Galerie Gisela Capitain, Cologne

Heimat 3 (AdVB) (Home 3 AdVB) shows the furnishings of the German chancellor's bedroom in the former government bunker to the south of Bonn, the erstwhile German capital. Amidst great secrecy, the bunker was constructed inside the tunnel of a never completed railway line between 1960 and 1972. It was supposed to serve the German Federal Government as a shelter and as underground headquarters in case of war. During the final phase of the Second World War, various arms manufacturers moved into the tunnel. On the outside, they had established a satellite camp to accommodate forced labourers working at the Buchenwald Concentration Camp. The train tunnels themselves were mainly used to build ground equipment and vehicles for V-2 rockets.

Designed during the Cold War era, the government bunker encompassed 897 offices, 936 bedrooms, and other facilities. A supply of drinking water, a power generator, an air filter, provisions, and an expansive infrastructure were supposed to enable a thirty-day stay without contact to the outside world, so that the Federal Republic of Germany could continue to be governed, even in case of an escalating nuclear war.

The bunker was first used during a NATO command post exercise in 1966. It was last used in March 1989, also for an exercise.

In 1997, the Federal Government decided to give up the government bunker as they could not find a civilian use for the facility. As a symbol of the Cold War, the surviving part of the bunker of just under 200 metres was extended and turned into a museum, the Dokumentationsstätte Regierungsbunker (Government Bunker Documentary Centre).



Marcel Odenbach, *Jeder Schuss ein Treffer* (Every Shot a Hit), 2009/2010, © Marcel Odenbach and BILDRECHT GmbH, 2017, photo: Vesko Gösel, Cologne, Courtesy of Gisela Capitain, Cologne

Jeder Schuss ein Treffer (Every Shot a Hit), 2009/2010 Collage, ink on Paper, two parts, 150 x 195.3 cm each Private collection, courtesy of Galerie Gisela Capitain, Cologne

Over the last two decades, Africa has become a central topic in Odenbach's work. Jeder Schuss ein Treffer (Every Shot a Hit), a collage in two parts, features a zebra that was obviously killed during a safari. The other panel shows the inside of a canoe with a fishing rod and plastic bags from a duty-free shop. Africa's reputed exoticism is reflected in game-hunting expeditions undertaken by Europeans

who enjoy shooting impalas, zebras, or gnus. The word safari derives from the Swahili language and refers to any kind of journey. Once the word found its way into the former colonial masters' languages, its meaning changed to journeying with the intention of killing.



Marcel Odenbach, *kurz und bündig* (short and precise), 2016, © Marcel Odenbach and BILDRECHT GmbH, 2017, photo: Vesko Gösel, Cologne, Courtesy of Gisela Capitain, Cologne

kurz und bündig (short and precise), 2016

Collage, ink on paper, 190 x 150 cm Courtesy of Galerie Gisela Capitain, Cologne

Bertolt Brecht greatly admired the poems by Ingeborg Bachmann. Yet – or perhaps: because of this – he has remarked on a few, in order to make them even clearer in his sense. In his copy of the volume *Die gestundete Zeit* (Time Deferred) from 1953, nine of the 24 poems have handwritten comments: some lines are underlined in red, numbers in the margins suggest the switching of lines, and in one case, a line was added. Even if the changes are subtle, the tiny shifts say a lot about the difference between these

two poets: Bachmann's poetry with its antithetical evolvement and frequently coded metaphors for personal and human fate is juxtaposed with Brecht's poetry with its decidedly causative approach and intentionally reduced possibility of interpretation for the sake of a more unambiguous message. One of the "revised" poems forms the starting point of this collage.

Programme

All tours are free with admission!

Curator's Tour

Thu 23/2, 6 pm

Curator Vanessa Joan Müller, leads a tour through the exhibition and will discuss topics approached in the video and paper works by Marcel Odenbach.

Sunday Tours

Every Sunday at 3 pm, our art educators take visitors on a tour through the exhibition and provide insight into Marcel Odenbach's extensive work. The topics range from the reflection of the familiar and the unknown to coming to terms with the past and the principle of montage in the artists' collages and film works.

Sun 5/2, 3 pm Ideologies of Remembrance with Martin Pfitscher

Sun 12/2, 3 pm The Banality of Evil with Martin Pfitscher

Sun 19/2, 3 pm Consequences of Seeing with Wolfgang Brunner Sun 26/2, 3 pm Good Parlour. Still Ponds with Martin Pfitscher

Sun 5/3, 3 pm Ideologies of Remembrance with Michael Simku

Sun 12/3, 3 pm The Banality of Evil with Wolfgang Brunner

Sun 19/3, 3 pm Consequences of Seeing with Wolfgang Brunner

Sun 26/3, 3 pm Good Parlour. Still Ponds with Michael Simku

Sun 2/4, 3 pm Ideologies of Remembrance with Daniela Fasching

Sun 9/4, 3 pm The Banality of Evil with Daniela Fasching

Sun 16/4, 3 pm Consequences of Seeing with Wolfgang Brunner

Sun 23/4, 3 pm Good Parlour. Still Ponds with Michael Simku

Sun 30/4, 3 pm Ideologies of Remembrance with Daniela Fasching

Combined Tours

Sun 19/2, 19/3 11 am–1 pm

Kunsthalle Wien and Jewish Museum Vienna, Judenplatz Meeting point: box-office Kunsthalle Wien Sun 2/4, 30/4 11 am–1 pm

Kunsthalle Wien and Jewish Museum Vienna, Dorotheergasse Meeting point: box-office Kunsthalle Wien

On the basis of works selected from the exhibition *Beweis zu* nichts at Kunsthalle Wien and the permanent collection at the Jewish Museum Vienna, this tour reflects on the function and materialisation of collective memory and the possibilities and importance of remembrance and history.

In cooperation with the Jewish Museum Vienna



Seminars

Dialogical Seminar

Two public seminar sessions provide a work in progress insight into artistic, performative, and interventional methods of engaging with the appropriation of history that will be developed in the context of the exhibition.

Mon 20/3, 3–7 pm Composite (H)Storytelling

Mon 27/3, 3–7 pm Performing the Body of History

A Collaboration with the annual project Dialogical Interventions of the University of Applied Arts Vienna, direction: Martin Krenn, department KKP (Art and Communication Practices) For information and registration please contact: dramaturgie@kunsthallewien.at

Film Evening

Wed 5/4, 7 pm Film evening at the mumok cinema Marcel Odenbach, *Ein Bild vom Bild machen* (Making a Picture of the Picture), 2016, HD video, 15 min.

Marcel Odenbach / Lukas Marxt, Fishing is not done on Tuesdays, 2017, HD video, 15 min

Followed by a conversation with Marcel Odenbach

Ein Bild vom Bild machen (Making a Picture of the Picture) was made in celebration of the 40th anniversary of the Ludwig Museum in Cologne. The film's protagonist is the chocolate manufacturer and art collector Peter Ludwig: Odenbach superimposes shots of the Ludwigs' villa with documentary film material in which Peter Ludwig talks about his preferences and ambitions in the field of cultural politics. Also candidly discussed are comments on his vanity, his tendency to be easily offended, and his need for recognition as a collector. The couple's garage contains a portrait the sculptor Arno Breker made of the Ludwigs in the 1980s. A few scenes later, the camera briefly lingers over a bronze sculpture depicting a spear carrier in front of an eagle in the garden of their estate in Aachen: yet another work by the National Socialists' favourite sculptor.

The film Fishing is not done on Tuesdays, which Odenbach made together with Lukas Marxt, focuses on a modern concrete house on the coast of Ghana. The circling bird's

eye view of treetops becomes the first element of a visual grid which defines the whole film. Visual axes generated by architectonic lines dissect the surroundings and imbue them with a certain rhythm. Everyday scenes are zoomed into this abstract ornament: fishermen can be seen on their boats. or during their morning prayers before work. Fishing is not done on Tuesdays, and on Sundays the loudspeaker system is used to spread the Christian message. The rhythms of the village become superimposed with the noise from rotors, the sound of music and the sea. The fort-like house on stilts, however, is at the centre of this setting. From within its gridded interior the outside world presents itself as a landscape.

Both the screening and the subsequent conversation with the artist came about in cooperation with the mumok cinema.

Colophon

Exhibition

Kunsthalle Wien GmbH

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CFO:

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Martin Pfitscher Michael Simku

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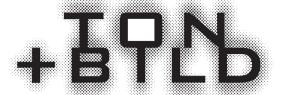


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