Kunstverein Nürnberg
Albrecht Dürer Gesellschaft

Private Sphere
Alex Müller, Andreas Oehlert, Kathrin Sonntag
23 April – 1 June 2008

The preoccupation with the private sphere — that is to say, the exploration of stories and objects with private connotations — has been a broad and fascinating arena of inspiration for artists. The artists represented in the exhibition treat the topic of the private in its broadest sense in their works by incorporating objects, stories, and 'residues' from this world. In so doing, the conscious use of psychologically charged symbols, which in turn develop a network of references and contexts in the shape of free forms, stands firmly in the foreground.

In the playful manner of their staging, the works of Kathrin Sonntag (b. 1981, lives in Berlin) revolve around the essence of things and our perception, that is to say, the shift in our perception. In so doing, she makes poetic reference to the fundamental questionability of things per se as paranormal phenomena. The artist has created a space for the exhibition *Private Spheres* comprising large striped surfaces on the windows as well as a table object and photographic evidence. The starting point for her contribution was the found photograph of a séance conducted by the medium "Mary", taken by Fernand Girold in 1910. The enraptured expression of the participants, and the putative depiction of the prevention of any form of manipulation of this magical moment are extended, as it were, into the space of the Kunstverein, which, by means of light and shade, itself becomes the location for this apparition. Further works by the artist also investigate the supposed slant and definition we give to photographic images, for example, in the slide series *Mitternacht* (2006), which can be viewed in the basement. Likewise, Sonntag accentuates phenomena that are normally concealed and thus grants us unforeseen perspectives.

Andreas Oehlert (b.1966, lives in Führt) likes to get to the bottom of things in his stagings. He uses personal found objects and heirlooms as well as stories from his memory or experiences, which he then treats thematically in his works. His most recent photographic work *Stage Beauties* depicts these very found objects and heirlooms duly combined with absurd materials. In a similar way to the large installation *itsnicetobenice* (2000), the domestic idyll is enacted on a small stage and, at the same time, subject to an abrupt dislocation. The idea of "being beautiful" is already alluded to in the title and the work is reminiscent of all manner of "poses" taken from different areas of life, for example, from glitzy parties, but also the idea of posing in one's own self-styled living-room idyll.

Similarly, Alex Müller (b.1971, lives in Berlin) works with found objects from our everyday world, and transfers them into her painted sculptures and multidimensional panel paintings. It becomes abundantly clear in the exhibition that a textual strand plays a significant and poetic role in Alex Müller's works, over and above her delicate painterly and sculptural works. The work *Martha, der Hutmacher in Hof* (2008), devised specifically for the Milchhof, is lying there in the hall of the Kunstverein rather like a memory game. The alphabetic system, devised here by the artist, follows the Roman alphabet, and once decoded it is possible to read statements by other artists, such as Francis Bacon, and Mike Kelly, or song titles by David Bowie, and other iconic figures. This individual system of symbols crops up on other recent panel paintings throughout the whole exhibition, and in this way links her different works to create an elusive, multilayered, mysterious narrative.

Via staged settings comprising domestic objects, and photographs, all the way to sculptures made from diverse materials, the exhibition *Private Spheres* offers an associative field made up of psychologically charged allusions, and an open narrative structure.